

ARTICLE

## Alexander the Great or Būrān-Dukht: who is the true hero of the *Dārāb-nāma* of Ṭarsūsī?\*

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### Abstract

This article presents a new reading of the *Dārāb-nāma* (Book of Dārāb, ca. eleventh–twelfth century), a medieval popular narrative in prose (*dāstān*) ascribed to the storyteller Abū Ṭāhīr Ṭarsūsī. While the narrative belongs to the Persian tradition of the Alexander romance, the Alexander figure it depicts bears little resemblance to that presented in high classical verse-forms by the likes of Firdawsī, Niẓāmī, Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī, or Jāmī. Although still a conqueror, legitimate ruler, and champion of Islam, the Alexander of the *Dārāb-nāma* appears in a strongly negative light: he is lame, cowardly, and sly. In fact, most of his success he owes to his once opponent and later wife, Būrān-dukht: could she be the true hero in the story? Drawing on a critical examination of characters based on Greimas’s actantial model, this study probes the authorial program and intended audience of the *Dārāb-nāma*, and suggests the work can be read as mock-epic, possibly to cater to a Zoroastrian audience.

**Keywords:** *Dārāb-nāma*; Abū Ṭāhīr Ṭarsūsī; *Iskandarnāma*; the Alexander romance; Būrān-dukht; *dāstān*; medieval storytelling; mock-epic; actantial narrative schema

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\* A scholar of classical Persian literature specializing in medieval storytelling and prose narrative, Marina Gaillard (1955–2015) was a permanent researcher at the CNRS and lecturer at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO) in Paris. Initiated in her doctoral thesis under the supervision of Charles-Henri de Fouchécour at the Sorbonne Nouvelle (1983), her pioneering work on *Samak-e ‘Ayyār* (1987) defined the contours of “narrative literature produced by professional storytellers in classical Persian prose”—coined as “semi-popular novel”—and brought attention to the literary value of Persian prose *dāstāns*. Her research developed to investigate narrative structures and character typologies, with a focus on the versatile figure of women ‘*ayyār* and chivalrous tricksters, opening up new avenues for scholars of premodern Persian literature and gender studies. Turning to Persian prose versions of the Alexander romance, she undertook what was to be her last major scholarly project, which culminated in the authoritative annotated translation of Abū Ṭāhīr Ṭarsūsī’s *Dārāb-nāmah* into French (2005). Her untimely passing left many of us bereft of a beloved friend, a gracious collaborator, and a generous mentor. Yet we trust that Marina Gaillard’s exacting yet inviting scholarship will keep on inspiring many more generations in the field. Expanding on her essay “Hero or Anti-hero” (*Oriente Moderno*, LXXXIX, 2 (2009): 319–331), the article titled “Alexander the Great or Būrān-Dukht: who is the true hero of the *Dārāb-nāma* of Ṭarsūsī?” is her last scholarly contribution. The editors want to thank Julia Rubanovich and Daniel Sheffield for their invaluable feedback on an earlier version of this article. Revised and edited by Anna Livia Beelaert, it appears here posthumously.

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The *Dārāb-nāma* (Book of Dārāb), dated from the fifth century H./eleventh century CE, or possibly the sixth century H./twelfth century CE, is a literary work relevant to the Persian prose folk narrative genre (*dāstān*).<sup>1</sup> Originally stemming from circles of professional storytellers, the *Dārāb-nāma* might have been narrated in public sessions designed for a specific audience. Abū Tāhir Ṭarsūsī (or Ṭartūsī or Tūsī, depending on the manuscript), the supposed narrator of this tale, if he indeed existed, seems to have been a prolific storyteller, as a fair number of tales are attributed to him from both the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods.<sup>2</sup>

What makes the *Dārāb-nāma* unique among the many extant versions of the Alexander romance in various languages and cultures, including Persian poetry, is its rather unattractive portrayal of Alexander as a man—despite his prophetic dimension and legitimacy—and the prominence of the female character destined to be his spouse, Rawšanak or Roxane, called Būrān-dukht in this text. These two features contribute to the narrative's particular ambiguity. As this ambiguity relies, to a large extent, on the relationship between these two figures, we may be justified in making this a point of inquiry. In this paper, specifically, we analyze the role of Būrān-dukht in relation to Alexander within an assessment of a new interpretation of the text, as suggested by the dynamics between the two characters.<sup>3</sup> We observe, in particular, the shift in Būrān-dukht's function after marriage, as she turns from one of Alexander's opponents, seeking vengeance for Dārāb's death, into his helper. Following the actantial model established by A.J. Greimas, the object of this narrative's quest is nothing short of world domination, with Alexander, the subject, being both the sender motivated by a thirst for conquest and the receiver seeking satisfaction.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, a different model appears, overlaying and eventually merging with the first, with the object of the quest becoming converting the world to Islam, faith now being the sender and humanity the receiver. Considering this long and little-known text stems from a literary genre that proceeds by means of depiction of actions rather than psychological analysis, it is useful to highlight a series of significant facts that allow us to clarify both characters' respective roles and assess the "heroic value" with which each is invested.

## 1. The birth of Alexander and his legitimation in the *Dārāb-nāma*

The *Dārāb-nāma* begins with the story of Dārāb the Elder, son to the king of Iran, Bahman, and the father of Dārāb the Younger (the latter loosely associated with the historical Achaemenid king, Darius III).<sup>5</sup> The Alexander romance makes up about two-thirds of the work, the text in its entirety constituting one continuous tale. Alexander (Iskandar) is represented as the grandson of Philip of Rūm, whose daughter, Nāhid, married Dārāb the Elder and was sent back to her father after a single night owing to her bad breath.<sup>6</sup> Previously, Dārāb had married another woman who, shortly before dying, had given him a son, Dārāb the Younger, who is thus Alexander's half-brother. Yet, the circumstances of Alexander's birth and descent are long kept a secret, which proves of considerable bearing on his life (he is often addressed as "the Rūmī without a father" by Būrān-dukht, the Iranians, and King Fūr of India), and prevents Dārāb the Younger from recognizing Alexander as his half-brother until the moment of his death, after the fratricidal combat.<sup>7</sup>

Alexander is therefore half Rūmī—Rūm meaning, in Sasanian times, the Eastern Roman Empire, the enemy of the Sasanian Empire (224–651 CE), the last great Iranian empire before

<sup>1</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Şafā; Tarsusi, *Darab-nama*, trans. Kondyрева; [Tarsusi], *Alexandre le Grand*, trans. Gaillard.

<sup>2</sup> Ṭartūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Şafā, vol. 1, 71–81; [Tarsusi], *Alexandre le Grand*, trans. Gaillard, 79–80, see also n. 63.

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Alexander's positive and negative features in the narrative, see Gaillard, "Hero or Anti-hero," 319–331.

<sup>4</sup> Greimas, *Sémantique structurale*.

<sup>5</sup> Reign 336–330 B.C.E.; Tafazzoli, "Dārāb ii. Dārāb(b) II," *Elr*, vol. 7/1, 2; Carra de Vaux-[H. Massé], "Dārā, Dārāb," *EF*. See also Briant, *Darius dans l'ombre d'Alexandre*.

<sup>6</sup> On this motif, see Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romances*, 55–65; Davis, "Sekandar, Skordion, and Darab's Queen's Bad Breath," 89–95.

<sup>7</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Şafā, vol. 1, 498, 505, 543, vol. 2, 36, 76, 168; [Tarsusi], *Alexandre le Grand*, trans. Gaillard, 195–196.

the coming of Islam that revived the glory of the past, restored the Zoroastrian religion, and was thus a vehicle of hostility against Alexander. Following a tradition included in several other texts from the Islamic period, Alexander is also half Iranian, legitimized through his father as a Persian king. According to this narrative, Alexander is related to the Kayānid lineage: a partly mythical, partly historical dynasty of kings in the unbroken line of Iranian rulers harking back to the creation of the world. The Sasanians, seeking to relate to the ancient past, associated their dynasty with the last Kayānid king, Bahman, who was given a son named Sāsān, the supposed ancestor of the first Sasanian king, Ardašīr the First.<sup>8</sup> In the Islamic period, the Persian national tradition—for example, in one of the versions given by Firdawsī in the *Šāh-nāma*—attached Dārāb the Elder and Dārāb the Younger (or Dārā) to the end of the Kayānid line, resulting in the “grafting” of Alexander onto the lineage as Dārāb’s half-brother.<sup>9</sup> Alexander also possesses divine glory (*farr*), a notion the origin of which is found in Mazdean religious literature. It is a splendor, a light, or a solar beam that radiates from the head of the king.<sup>10</sup> It is vested only in legitimate kings, and believed to have been borne by every ruler of the Kayānid dynasty.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, following other traditions and certain Muslim views, Alexander is considered a quasi-prophet of Islam. This belief is based on a Quranic verse featuring Dhū’l-Qarnayn, the “two-horned,” who is often identified with Alexander, though the latter is nowhere named as such in the Quran and this identification has been subject to controversy.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the image of a “Persianized,” world-conquering king portrayed in the *Šāh-nāma* episode associated with his rule, Firdawsī offers an ambiguous treatment of Alexander. Elsewhere in the text, Firdawsī ranks Alexander among the worst enemies of Iran, mentioning that he intended to eliminate Kayānid descendants and holding him responsible for the kingdom’s division; a division ultimately implemented to protect Rūm, his country, against new wars of revenge.<sup>13</sup> These two points of view are a reflection, on the one hand, of the traditional Sasanian heritage hostile to Alexander and, on the other, of the Islamic period, which was generally more favorable to the character. Throughout this study we pay particular attention to the relative points of these two periods and the way in which *Dārāb-nāma* negotiates between these two diverging traditions. Among the more interesting aspects of this text is its preservation, alongside elements of the Greek novel, of traces of Iran’s pre-Islamic past, which it combines with Arabic and Quranic elements from the Islamic period.

## 2. The Distribution of Narrative Roles between the Two Protagonists prior to Marriage

In his childhood, Alexander is educated by Aristotle and excels in all sciences.<sup>14</sup> From his adolescence however, some weaknesses appear in his temperament. When Philip—still unaware of Alexander’s true identity—catches him at night in the company of one of his daughters, Alexander runs away and abandons the young girl to fate at the moment she is about to be beheaded.<sup>15</sup> A little later, Alexander finds himself in difficulty at the court of Fīrūz-šāh (the King of Barbar, who, in the meantime, has married Alexander’s mother, Nāhīd, and is likewise unaware of his identity): upon being beaten, he immediately starts to yell, in a manner by no means suited to

<sup>8</sup> A.D. 224–241. Sāsān is the eponymous ancestor of the Sasanian dynasty.

<sup>9</sup> Firdawsī, *Šāh-nāma*, vol. 6, 351–353, 381, 406, vol. 7, 116–20; Firdousi, *Le livre des rois*, vol. 5, 16–19, 60–61, 92–93, 98–99, 270–279. For a comprehensive discussion of these varied versions, see Rubanovich, “Why so many Stories? Untangling the Versions of Iskandar’s Birth and Upbringing.”

<sup>10</sup> Duchesne-Guillemin, “Le *xvarōnah*,” 20; Lecoq, “Un problème de religion achéménide,” 301–326.

<sup>11</sup> Christensen, *Les Kayanides*, 31. Although this splendor was not only the prerogative of kings.

<sup>12</sup> Q 18:83–98, the Quranic verse featuring Dhū’l-Qarnayn.

<sup>13</sup> In the chapters concerning the Sasanian kings Ardašīr and Khusraw Parvīz; see also Yamanaka, “Ambiguïté de l’image d’Alexandre chez Firdawsī,” 343–345, 348–350.

<sup>14</sup> ʿArāsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Šafā, vol. 1, 394.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 397–98.

a *dāstān* hero. He only escapes punishment because the king yields to Nāhīd's tears, who releases him from prison with the aid of her wetnurse.<sup>16</sup> When the king catches Nāhīd and Alexander together, he suspects his wife of adultery and decides to put Alexander to death; again, the young boy is saved by a ruse planned by his mother.<sup>17</sup> Nāhīd and Alexander flee to Rūm, and when Philip's sons rebel against their father's decision to hand over the kingdom to Alexander, he allows them to kill his mother. He runs away and hides in an oven in the palace kitchen, wherefrom he is released by Nāhīd's wetnurse. Then, with the help of one of Philip's daughters, he dresses up as a maidservant. In this disguise, and with her help, Alexander kills Philip's usurper; and while Philip's daughter also gets killed in turn, Alexander manages to escape during the following battle. It is at this point in the narrative that he ascends the throne of Rūm.<sup>18</sup> Prompted by a dream to claim revenge against Firūz-šāh for his unjust treatment of Nāhīd, once again, strangely, Alexander avoids combat. He recognises the king, who comes to visit him in disguise, and has him captured, ordering his execution.<sup>19</sup> Finally, Alexander confronts his half-brother's army, but immediately after the first battle, he comes to an agreement with two emirs in the service of Dārāb, who then treacherously assassinate the king.<sup>20</sup> Shortly before this episode, Alexander quarrels with Aristotle and imprisons the sage.<sup>21</sup> In response to this punishment, Aristotle prays to God that the king forget all the sciences he learned. Indeed, Alexander loses all his knowledge (especially his ability to interpret dreams), to such the extent that he is no longer able to even read. This episode has been interpreted as Alexander's symbolic loss of his divine glory, an interpretation consistent with other such *farr* losses reported in the Persian tradition as punishment afflicting famous kings after they misbehaved or committed grave sins.<sup>22</sup> Yet, Alexander's divine glory is again mentioned further on in the text, as if this initial loss only truly affected his knowledge. The abatement of his abilities is no less conspicuous in the character's subsequent behavior.

Such is the picture the narrative draws of the "hero" who is to conquer the world: a man unwilling to personally engage in combat, yet ready to resort to dishonorable wiles and ruses to take advantage of the circumstances; one who owes his survival to women alone, and turns into an ignoramus.<sup>23</sup> Typically in *dāstāns* of this type, young princes or boys of noble birth destined to be heroes start their heroic exploits at around the age of fourteen, but Alexander in no way proves his valor.<sup>24</sup>

It is at this moment that Būrān-dukht makes her, rather spectacular, entrance into the story:

It is said that Dārāb [the Younger] had an extremely beautiful and accomplished daughter, unique at that time. At the age of eighteen, she had the face of Siyāvakhš, the splendor of Hūšang, and as regards strength and bravery she resembled Isfandyār.<sup>25</sup>

Siyāvakhš, Hūšang, and Isfandyār are three legendary figures of the Persian national tradition. Isfandyār, in particular, who gave Iran victory over the Turānians—as the peoples of the

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 410–16.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 417–20.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 423–36.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 436–40.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 460–64. This fact is not characteristic of the *Dārāb-nāma*, but it is likely significant that the narrative kept it. It is mentioned in some historical texts (Dīnawarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-tiwāl*, 34–35; al-Tha'ālībī, *Ta'rikh ġurar al-siyar*, 408–409). Referring to different sources, Ṭabarī gives versions of this episode either including or discounting Alexander's complicity in Dārāb's murder (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol. 1, 699–700; [Ṭabarī], *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 4, 92–93).

<sup>21</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Šafā, vol. 1, 444–49. This quarrel, which intervenes in a discussion of Iran's past, has been the subject of various interpretations. See Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romances*, 116; Piemontese, "Alexandre 'le circumnavigateur,'" 108; Rubanovich, "A Hero Without Borders," 227–29.

<sup>22</sup> Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romances*, 104–105, 298.

<sup>23</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Šafā, vol. 1, 447. He is also several times called a "child" or a "fool" by the sages.

<sup>24</sup> See for example, in the same literary genre: Biġamī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Šafā, vol. 1, 61.

<sup>25</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Šafā, vol. 1, 467; [Tarsusi], *Alexandre le Grand*, trans. Gaillard, 152–153.

East residing beyond the Oxus were called at the time—and achieved a great number of heroic feats, was a highly popular figure.<sup>26</sup> The text adds that Būrān-dukht uses a particularly heavy mace—the possession of exceptional weapons being a marked heroic trait.<sup>27</sup> The narrator also tells us that, out of love for her, Dārāb taught his daughter all the arts fit for a prince and “she did not regard anyone else as a real man.”<sup>28</sup> Immediately following her father’s death, she swears to avenge him. The effect of her arrival is due to a combination of factors: the suddenness of the appearance; the emphasis placed on her bravery, a common feature of heroes in this type of narrative; the character’s deep rooting in the glorious Persian tradition; and the stark contrast with the image of Alexander presented thus far.

The portion of the narrative preceding the marriage is composed of a set of episodes (six chapters in the print edition) addressing Būrān-dukht’s war of revenge against Alexander. From these episodes, I once again point to some of the most significant factors in the assignation of certain characteristics, such as bravery and “Persianness,”<sup>29</sup> between the two protagonists.

From a military standpoint, Būrān-dukht wins important victories over Alexander’s troops: she first seizes the fortress of Ḥalab (Aleppo) and the caravan carrying Alexander’s war treasury; then, she seizes the fortress of Iṣṭakhr, located in the province of Fārs (Persis). This southern Iranian province is likely the one that historically suffered the most from Alexander’s campaigns. It is also the one from which the first Sasanian king, Ardašīr, began his reconquest of Iran, thus positioning himself as the avenger of the past and the restorer of the world order destroyed by Alexander. Among the various incidents that transpired during the fight for the fortress, one highly symbolic episode emerges: Būrān-dukht takes refuge in a cavern from which she reaches a subterranean passage, entering through a door that shuts closed in front of Alexander. Thus, she enters a palace belonging to Jamšīd.<sup>30</sup> This palace communicates with the fortress’s prison and, according to Aristotle, was a secret refuge of the Kayānid kings. This is the site of Persepolis, where Darius the First undertook the building of the palace Iranians later called Takht-i Jamšīd (Jamšīd’s Throne). As Būrān-dukht escapes Alexander and he cannot get through the door, he blocks it off. By this act, the Rūmī, in a way, condemns the place that can be seen as the very soul of Iran, and only accessible to true Iranians, to obliteration.

In addition to her talents as a warrior, Būrān-dukht displays daringness and cunning, thus behaving like an ‘ayyār. The ‘ayyār are young men from the popular class who played an important social role across the Islamic East between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries CE. They are depicted in Arabic historical chronicles as brigands and troublemakers, sometimes engaged in activities against the authorities and sometimes collaborating with them. In Persian *dāstāns*, the ‘ayyār mostly appear as popular heroes exercising their talents as “soldiers of fortune” in the service of the best princely causes, even though they sometimes, depending on the situation, act as thieves, their work being based on trickery.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, these young men (and women in these narratives) are linked together by a special ethic, called *javānmardī*, a set of demanding principles based on the values of courage and

<sup>26</sup> Minorsky, “Tūrān,” *Et*<sup>1</sup>; Davis, “Tūrān,” *Et*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> The mace was of two hundred and fifty *man* or, further in the text, three hundred *man*. A *man* is approximately three kilograms. Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Ṣafā, vol. 1, 467, vol. 2, 148; [Tarsusi], *Alexandre le Grand*, trans. Gaillard, 153, 187.

<sup>28</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Ṣafā, vol. 1, 467; [Tarsusi], *Alexandre le Grand*, trans. Gaillard, 152–153. On the physical level, there is nothing said about Alexander’s education (for example horse-riding and skills in arms or hunting, which were among the arts taught to young princes or noble heroes).

<sup>29</sup> “Iranité.”

<sup>30</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Ṣafā, vol. 1, 535–52. In the Persian national tradition, Jamšīd is one of the first universal kings prior to the partition of the world. Clément Huart-[Henri Massé], “Djamshīd,” *Et*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> For a view on these different aspects, see Cahen, “‘Ayyār, i. General”; Hanaway, “‘Ayyār, ii. ‘Ayyār in Persian Sources”; Tor, “Towards a Revised Understanding of the ‘Ayyār Phenomenon.”

generosity.<sup>32</sup> Both these characters and their ethics play a significant role in several narratives in this genre. In all these episodes of the *Dārāb-nāma*, it is Būrān-dukht, not Alexander, who is constantly compared to this type of character in the most positive way, with regard to her ingenious behavior and fighting. It is she, moreover, who is acknowledged as a *javānmard*, which means that she displays in her daily behavior the quality of magnanimity considered in these narratives to be a worthy value for any social class: a virtue she displays throughout the entire narrative.<sup>33</sup>

Moving forward in these episodes, Būrān-dukht finds herself in situations that gradually bring her closer to Alexander: disguised as a man and endorsing various identities, she fights single combats in front of his eyes, or feasts with him and then escapes on several occasions. Alexander is certainly suspicious of her in some instances, but she acts so brilliantly and craftily that she brings out the king's lack of judgment and perspicacity by contrast. While fighting to keep the fortress of Halab, she is captured, but Alexander does not recognize her and she escapes the camp. She is finally caught out by foul play: while she swore to hang her fate on a single combat (against an ally of Alexander whose son she had killed), a trap is set on the battlefield and she is surrounded by an entire army. Alexander had sworn that, if she were victorious, he would hand her over to the kingdom of Iran and return to Rūm; she had promised to submit to him in case of defeat. Alexander is not responsible for the trap, but when he comes to see what is happening, he suddenly gets angry with the daughter of the king of Maghreb, Anṭūṭiya, his ally, as she "betrays" him and enters the battlefield to help Būrān-dukht. Thus Alexander almost takes a false oath, although admittedly due to his allies, shedding a negative light on the men united in his camp. What is more, Alexander breaks his word of honor to a woman, an act considered the height of ignoble behavior in this type of narrative, where Iranian heroes are typically depicted as observing proprieties impeccably. Although badly injured, Būrān-dukht succeeds in carrying off and killing her enemy. The following day, Alexander, who is looking for her and Anṭūṭiya, surprises the two women as they bathe in a river. Having been seen by the king in her nudity, Būrān-dukht agrees to marry him.

It has been suggested that Būrān-dukht's character might represent a popular image of the Zoroastrian goddess of the waters, Anāhītā. In the *Dārāb-nāma*, Būrān-dukht is in fact often associated with the motif of water as well as other symbols characteristic of the goddess who became, as her cult evolved, the goddess of war and the one whose approval was required for the investiture and legitimation of kings.<sup>34</sup> After flourishing in the Sasanian period, the cult of Anāhītā disappeared with the coming of Islam; yet, her memory survived in popular lore, and probably through popular religious stories preserved orally. In any event, Būrān-dukht surrenders, takes Alexander by the hand, puts him on the throne, and proclaims him king.<sup>35</sup> If we take the above hypothesis into account, the marriage can be better interpreted as such: the scene could represent a symbolic visit by Alexander to Anāhītā's sanctuary in Iṣṭakhr, and the double favor granted to him by the goddess, the cessation of hostilities and his investiture.<sup>36</sup>

Up to this point in the story, having nobly performed her duty of revenge, Būrān-dukht can be understood as the incarnation of Iran's resistance against the conqueror. In the end, Iran

<sup>32</sup> Literally: "quality of the young man." This ethic was developed specifically in the milieu of *fotovat* (= *javānmardi*) and *'ayyār*. See Fouchécour, *Moralia*, 354–355. See also Cahen and Taeschner, "Futuwwa," *EP*; Gaillard, *Le livre de Samak-e 'Ayyār*.

<sup>33</sup> Gaillard, "Le champ d'emploi des termes *'ayyār(i)* et *javānmard(i)*," 5–18.

<sup>34</sup> Hanaway, "Anāhītā and Alexander," 289–295; idem, *Persian Popular Romances*, 25–54; Boyce, Chaumont, and Bier, "Anāhīd."

<sup>35</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Šafā, vol. 2, 92.

<sup>36</sup> "In Persis the cult was centered at Iṣṭakhr (Persepolis), where Anāhītā was worshiped in her aspect of war-goddess, as she had been at Pasargadae in the Achaemenid period. Around the end of the 2nd century A.D., the temple of Anāhītā at Iṣṭakhr was in the custodianship of Sāsān, who was also a hunter and an intrepid warrior (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, 4). His son Pāpak killed the king of Iṣṭakhr and seized the throne" (Chaumont, "Anāhīd, iii.," 1007–1008). A connection can be established between these facts and the episode of the cavern mentioned above.



falls under Alexander's rule, but the account is constructed in such a way that this domination is not established through military victory and remains dubious insofar as Būrān-dukht is still referred to as the Queen of Iran, while Alexander, henceforth King of Rūm and Iran, is almost consistently referred to in the text as "the Rūmī." In the story, to be precise, Iran is neither defeated nor conquered by Alexander: at worst, the country has been "stolen" in a treacherous and perfidious way (and Dārāb was not killed in a clean fight); at best, it was conceded to him, owing to the modesty and wisdom of a woman. From this point on, after the marriage scene, the reading of the narrative becomes even more complicated.

In this type of epic folk narrative, warrior women—that is, noble women who fight on the battlefield following the rules of collective or single combat—can be divided into two major groups. The first are those who engage in more or less intense activity as combatants before they get married and then abandon this pursuit after marriage. Female characters that fit into this category are the most common. Those who belong to the other category, and continue to fight after marriage, are few. We have seen how Būrān-dukht might be considered an incarnation of a warrior goddess. Yet, after taking revenge for her father's death and symbolically leading Iran's resistance against Alexander to the point where she legitimizes his rule by enthroning him, perhaps her role as a combatant should have come to an end. However, two elements may have inspired the storyteller to keep her in this role. On the one hand, since Alexander is depicted as a prophet of Islam and Islamic customs should prevail, it would have seemed more socially appropriate for Būrān-dukht to settle as a wife, exercising her authority only "behind the curtain," in the private sphere. On the other hand, if she were merely an evocation of the pre-Islamic deity, Būrān-dukht would have no business in the wars waged by Alexander against the idolaters, in view of converting them to Islam. Becoming useless in her function, she could have easily let Alexander take her place, that he may finally take on a truly heroic dimension. However, the storyteller makes the opposite decision: not only does Būrān-dukht stay by Alexander's side on the battlefield throughout his voyage around the world, but on many occasions she is essential to his victory. Therefore, we ask, what was the narrator's intention in maintaining Būrān-dukht as a warrior and what implications does this have for the interpretation of the narrative as a whole?

### 3. The Distribution of Narrative Roles between the Two Protagonists after Marriage

Using a few examples, we can now discuss Būrān-dukht in her role as the subject's helper, as she appears in the latter part of the narrative. Here, her bravery, humane qualities, and stance towards the Islamic faith are emphasized.

#### 3.1. Courage

The worst consequences of Alexander's inadequacies are prevented only by the omnipresence of Būrān-dukht, both on the battlefield and over the course of the great many other challenges he confronts on his journey. This is, in fact, a supporting role she shares with the sages in the king's entourage.<sup>37</sup> While Būrān-dukht initially remains in place after their marriage and is entrusted by Alexander to govern Iran and Rūm, the daughter of

<sup>37</sup> "An Iranian princess is introduced into an Iranian version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes Alexander Romance; she fights against Alexander the Great, and achieves a measure of success. Later she marries him and goes on to fight with him in such a militant fashion that her prowess on the battlefield overshadows his and casts Alexander in a most unusual light. In addition to being a warrior, she is Alexander's advisor and organizer as well" (Hanaway, "Anāhitā," 288). For example, during the episode in the city built by one of the daughters of Adam, Būrān-dukht says to Alexander, who is afraid of going into this city: "You be quiet until I make a plan" (Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romances*, 117). In another circumstance, when he asks her "what plan to adopt, she says to him in exasperation" (ibid.): "I am only a woman. You who are men, it is up to you to make the plans!" She adds: "While there is fighting to be done, then, I shall fight!" (Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Šafā, vol. 2, 242, 259).

the king of Maghreb, Anṭūṭiya, also married to the king, joins him on his expedition around the world.<sup>38</sup> After they leave Iran and set out for India, Alexander loses his way and his army is wiped out. He asks for new troops to be sent, and Būrān-dukht gathers an army that soon comes to join him. Shortly thereafter, he is put to flight by the kings of India, Kaydāvar and his ally Fūr, and Anṭūṭiya is killed. Alexander retreats into Kābul and calls for Būrān-dukht to come with an army, “because without you,” he writes, “I cannot go to India.”<sup>39</sup> Leading the Iranian army, Būrān-dukht carries out a series of brilliant campaigns and captures King Kaydāvar, his daughter (also a warrior), the son of Fūr, and eventually King Fūr himself, whom Alexander later allows to escape. The only deed Alexander accomplishes in this war is the killing of Fūr, striking him from behind while he is on the run.<sup>40</sup> In the middle of one battle, Būrān-dukht gets angry when Alexander, as a result of the Iranians’ refusal to confront a formidable Indian adversary, declares that her men are scared and Rūmi forces should intervene. She exhorts her troops, renowned “the world over” for their bravery and valour.<sup>41</sup> During the arduous war against demons, Būrān-dukht fights until the point of total exhaustion, while Alexander resorts exclusively to prayer. She personally confronts danger in order to free Alexander every time he is taken prisoner, and saves his army several times.<sup>42</sup> By contrast, when she herself is abducted, she escapes alone and by her own means.

Until the defeat in India, it is Anṭūṭiya who assumes the role of Alexander’s “armed arm” later taken over by Būrān-dukht. Anṭūṭiya is killed in combat, and it is exactly at this point that Būrān-dukht arrives with her army. On the one hand, one woman follows another in coming to Alexander’s assistance; on the other, Būrān-dukht, who also avenges Anṭūṭiya, finds herself alone in this role, thus avoiding any possible competition between the two female characters.

### 3.2. Sensitivity and Attention Paid to Others

Arriving in the land of hermaphrodites, Alexander refuses to meet the queen, declaring: “it is against common sense to go and meet a woman.”<sup>43</sup> Būrān-dukht spontaneously announces that she will go and pay homage to this woman. Without any escort from her camp, she accompanies the queen to the island over which she reigns, and is overcome by an instinctive affection for her. The woman proves to be the daughter of Dārāb the Elder, thus making her Alexander’s half-sister and Būrān-dukht’s aunt. As for Alexander, he reacts in an appropriate manner and welcomes her with all honors after discovering her identity.<sup>44</sup>

In Mecca, a group of poor people come to offer a camel, four sheep, and a few kilograms of dates to Alexander. Without listening to what they have to say or taking the least interest in them, he orders they be given a thousand dinars and sends them off. They are, in fact, the descendants of Ismā‘īl, son of Ibrāhīm, the founder of the Kaaba, led by an old man, an ancestor of the Prophet. They had come to see Alexander to demand justice from the emir of the city, who was a usurper. But Alexander, not having listened to them, receives this emir immediately after them, paying him the highest honors. Būrān-dukht notices the distressed old man while riding through the camp, and inquires about his whereabouts. Finding out who they are and how they were treated by Alexander, she rushes to the king in the middle of an audience and reproaches his

<sup>38</sup> After the wedding, Alexander spends three festive years in Iran and says he is not interested in reigning; what he wants is to go around the world to see its marvels (Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Şafā, vol. 2, 93). Thus, he never at any time exerts his authority as a king over Iran.

<sup>39</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Şafā, vol. 2, 143. Another army will also come from Rūm, led by Aristotle and Ptolemy.

<sup>40</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Şafā, vol. 2, 225–27.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 175–76.

<sup>42</sup> For example, she rescues him during a battle in India and, with the help of Aristotle, averts a surprise attack. See also the wars against the cannibals and the sorcerers. Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Şafā, vol. 2, 180–182, 186–188, 261–262, 491; [Tarsusi], *Alexandre le Grand*, trans. Gaillard, 342–343.

<sup>43</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Şafā, vol. 2, 329.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 328–33.



conduct.<sup>45</sup> Thus it is only thanks to Būrān-dukht that Alexander reinstates the rights of the ancestors of the Prophet of the very religion for which he is supposedly fighting. Even then, he needs to return to the city in order to ensure his work. In fact, his brief presence makes little impact on the people he meets, who return to their old habits as soon as he is gone.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.3. Būrān-dukht's Connection to Religion

On the way to Sarandīb (Ceylon), there appears a city built by one of the daughters of Adam, whose gate is underwater. Only those possessing divine glory can access it, but Alexander quickly abandons the venture.<sup>47</sup> Būrān-dukht, on the other hand, pronounces the Greatest Name of God, which she learned from her father, enters the city and saves Alexander's army by killing the sorcerer casting spells on the soldiers. As for Alexander, who does not know this name, he is only able to enter after a dream shows him how to empty the water.<sup>48</sup> This episode illustrates that Būrān-dukht not only possesses divine glory (and perhaps a more powerful one than Alexander), but also knows the Supreme Name of God. This hundredth name of God remains concealed, ordinarily, but has the power to answer the prayer of the one to whom it is revealed—although this belief is not unanimous among Muslims. It gives the hero “almost unlimited power over the forces of evil and the supernatural, and like the *farr*, it is reserved only to the few.”<sup>49</sup> According to the narrative, Islam existed before the coming of the Prophet and therefore can be known by any being turning to God. Būrān-dukht can thus possess knowledge of this name. In this manner, the character combines the pre-Islamic Iranian tradition with the Islamic tradition and is associated with the “religion of Alexander,” without losing any of her Iranian traits.<sup>50</sup>

In the course of the war with the demons, it is Būrān-dukht who fights “for the divine religion.”<sup>51</sup> Alexander tries to persuade her to stay in a safe place, but she declares herself to be the first to enter the battlefield, arming herself from head to foot. At this point, the king of the *pari*:<sup>52</sup> comes and entrusts her with a tablet recording the Great Names of God; a tablet bequeathed to her by Ṭahmūras, one of the mythical Iranian kings known for having subdued the demons and ridden the world of Ahriman, the incarnation of evil in Zoroastrianism. Here one sees a happy union between the Persian religious tradition, in which demons are evil creatures, and the Islamic religion. Alexander, for his part, concludes the war by blinding the demons with the power of a handful of earth taken from the future birthplace of Muḥammad. This earth is given to him by the prophets Khizr and Ilyās (two popular figures in folk tales, legends, and prose narratives), and Alexander becomes associated with the Islamic tradition only.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 508–12.

<sup>46</sup> Būrān-dukht's attitude contrasts strikingly, for example, with the manner in which Alexander receives the delegation of Adam's descendants who came to meet him on the way to Sarandīb. Alexander—out of ignorance, if not arrogance—does not rise in front of them and answers their questions about his own religion with such clumsiness that every word he utters must be corrected. The scene concludes thus: “[...] Alexander did not say anything else for each of his words was turning against him” (Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Şafā, vol. 2, 224; [Tarsusi], *Alexandre le Grand*, trans. Gaillard, 206–209).

<sup>47</sup> In many situations, he is ready to give up, though he has himself asked to see some marvels. In other episodes, he appears obstinate, sometimes despite the advices of the sages.

<sup>48</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Şafā, vol. 2, 243–46.

<sup>49</sup> Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romances*, 189.

<sup>50</sup> She also refers to different kings and heroes of the Persian national tradition who overcame ordeals thanks to this name.

<sup>51</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Şafā, vol. 2, 462.

<sup>52</sup> Fairy-like supernatural creatures, male or female, endowed with the ability to fly, and benevolent as long as they are believers.

<sup>53</sup> In other narratives of this genre, when a hero is given divine help, it does not exempt him from making every effort to improve his situation by himself and fight a battle.

After years away from the country, the Iranians suggest that Alexander return to Iran before starting out again, but he is driven by a dream to continue his voyage. Four thousand men who used to share his table stay with him while Būrān-dukht, who is supposed to meet him again later, brings the army and treasury back to Iran.<sup>54</sup> The section on Alexander's voyage to the West is rather short, and Būrān-dukht no longer plays a role in these episodes.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, as previously, Alexander is in constant need of help from the sages or the prophet Khizr.

Alexander thus seems to act as a foil to Būrān-dukht. It is she, not he, who is depicted as a heroic figure in the purest sense of this literary tradition. As far as bravery is concerned, it should also be noted that, in the Persian tradition, face to face combat with a dragon is an ordeal gloriously overcome by most Iranian heroes, and considered a symbol of heroism.<sup>56</sup> However, in Firdawsī's *Šāh-nāma*, Alexander relies on a very mediocre strategy, poisoning the animal from a distance.<sup>57</sup> A similar version of this episode is told in another Alexander romance from Central Asia.<sup>58</sup> When looking at this version, we notice that here, too, the image of Alexander is equivocal, split between brave and less positive actions. We find a similarly ambivalent image in an anonymous Persian Alexander romance dating from between the middle of the eleventh century and the fourteenth century CE.<sup>59</sup> Likewise, the popular Arabic romance of Alexander does not portray the protagonist in a particularly heroic light.<sup>60</sup> It thus seems that a tendency to depict Alexander unfavorably runs deep in this type of literature. What makes Ṭarsūsī's tale exceptional, however, even compared with other popular versions, is his particularly negative depiction.

#### 4. How to Read the Narrative

Būrān-dukht's role, prior to marriage, is that of Alexander's opponent. Following marriage, she assumes the status of helper. Just three years into his rule over Iran, Būrān-dukht reveals herself as the principal actor in achieving Alexander's desire, although the marriage was the pivotal moment from which the story could have taken a radically different turn, reducing the young woman's role to that of a secondary helper. The role of warrior attributed to her character might appear logical if one considers her to be an incarnation of Anāhītā, but the question of why this role has been maintained throughout the second part of the narrative arises, and why her role is so integral to Alexander's quest. On the one hand, the essential point of Būrān-dukht's intervention is her provision of military support to Alexander, and with this, world conquest, the primary objective of his quest, the success of which could be attributed in good part to her actions. On the other hand, given that her military support frequently proves essential, it seems that Būrān-dukht also provides Alexander with the means to attain his second objective (which becomes merged with the first): converting the world to Islam. Nevertheless, the responsibility of conversion falls only on Alexander;

<sup>54</sup> Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Šafā, vol. 2, 517–18.

<sup>55</sup> "...the final sections of the *Dārāb-nāmah* [vol. 2, 562–591 (text); 380–405 (translation)] seem to retain, albeit in a much reworked form, significant vestiges of the Pseudo-Callisthenes in some of its eastern (probably Syriac) recensions that diverge from the one underlying the version of Firdausī" (Rubanovich, review of Gaillard, *Alexandre le Grand*, 85).

<sup>56</sup> Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Aždahā, ii. In Persian literature," 199–203.

<sup>57</sup> Firdawsī, vol. 7, 71–73; Firdousi, vol. 5, 202–5; Ismā'īlī, "Aždahā dar *Šāh-nāma*," 18–19.

<sup>58</sup> Bāqī Muḥammad b. Mawlānā Yūsuf, *Iskandar-nāma*, ed. Ismā'īlī, vol. 2, 117–118, 258, 384. There are two categories of combat against dragons in this text: the first occurs in a context of magic over the course of different adventures and the creatures, which can result from metamorphosis, are slain by arms; in the second, which correspond to traditional situations of symbolic ordeals, the dragon is killed by means of a dummy or carcasses of cows filled with petrol, and Alexander does not fight the animal himself.

<sup>59</sup> *Iskandar-nāma*, ed. Afshār; *Iskandarnamah*, trans. Southgate.

<sup>60</sup> For a summary of the contents of the manuscript Aya Sofya 3003 entitled "Sirat Al-Iskandar wa mā fiḥā min al-'Ajāyib wa 'l-Gharāyib," see Doufīkar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*; idem, "Sirat al-Iskandar: an Arabic Popular Romance of Alexander," 510–511, 514–516.

a mission he only partially succeeds in and the long-term effects of which remain highly uncertain. Not only does Alexander fail to reach all the places he intends to see, but he is told at the end of the narrative that many populations turned away from the faith after he left their country. Ultimately, as the person who pursues the quest is not necessarily the “hero” in the ordinary sense of the word, one may indeed question who the true hero of the narrative really is.

Alexander’s image in the *Dārāb-nāma* is quite far from the one depicted in the works of classical Persian poets from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries (Niẓāmī, Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī, or Jāmī for example), in which he appears as a conqueror, sage, and philosopher. It is conceivable that oral transmission has more accurately preserved some ancient sources, including hostile feelings towards Alexander originating in the Zoroastrian religious tradition and passed on through the Sasanian period. Iranian folklore, it has been noticed, often presents a negative image of Alexander. Even in the seventeenth century, travelogues written by Western travelers like Jean Chardin and Gabriel de Chinon report that Zoroastrian communities regarded Alexander as a destroyer, “the Devil’s son,” and “a monster from hell.”<sup>61</sup>

Indeed, the image of Alexander in ʿArṣūsī’s narrative can be understood in two different ways, depending on the audience’s point of view and sensibility. Firstly, one positive feature can be assigned to Alexander in his role as champion of Islam and his unflagging goodwill in accomplishing the mission of converting unbelievers, though this mission remains incomplete. If we consider that Abū Ṭāhir ʿArṣūsī may have emigrated from Iran and told this story to an audience comprised of combatants for the faith in the cities of Tarsus in Turkey—in ancient Cilicia—or Tartus in Syria, in the context of the war against the Byzantine Empire (end of the tenth century CE),<sup>62</sup> the aim of the text could have been to encourage these men in the war. Many of these combatants originated from precisely the same eastern Iranian province, Khurāsān, from which the storyteller (also called Ṭūsī, “from the city of Tus”) may have originated and/or to which he returned after the capture of these two cities by Byzantium at the end of the tenth century.<sup>63</sup> Secondly, from a different perspective and considering Alexander’s heavily negative features, the narrative appears to praise him so little that it could have been deemed acceptable by a number of Iranians sensitive to their past, i.e., the wars fought against “Rūm” and the disasters caused by the conqueror. Finally, if we consider Būrān-dukht’s role in connection to that of Alexander, we cannot dismiss the possibility of an audience regarding her as the story’s “true hero” and being favorable to “her side.” We would then have a third reading of the text, or perhaps more precisely, a more radical derivative of the second reading.

Could Alexander’s world conquest be, in part, an Iranian conquest, or at least a conquest unthinkable without the support of Iran? If so, what intention determined the organization of the narrative?

It is conceivable that the narrator was divided between diverging traditions. The memory left by Alexander in Iran made him responsible for the country’s division, the massacre of Zoroastrian priests, the destruction of Takht-i Ṭāqdīs (the legendary royal throne and ancient symbol of the sovereignty of Iran)—perhaps echoing the destruction of Persepolis and the sacred book of the Avesta—and for renewing the ancient hatred between Iran and Rūm.<sup>64</sup> Could the oral tradition have preserved this negative memory to such a degree that the narrator was unable to entirely obliterate or overwrite it in the tradition integrating

<sup>61</sup> See Darmesteter, “La Légende d’Alexandre chez les Parses,” 86–88, 96–97.

<sup>62</sup> Or possibly in the period of the second or third Crusades, see Piemontese, “Alexandre ‘le circumnavigateur,’” 98, 106; idem, “Anciens monuments sur l’eau,” 137.

<sup>63</sup> This hypothesis, based on a study of the narratives ascribed to Abū Ṭāhir ʿArṣūsī and his different *nisba*, ʿArṣūsī or ʿArṭūsī, has been developed by Ḥ. Ismāʿīlī in ʿArṭūsī, *Abū Muslim-nāma*, vol. 1, 81–91 (summarized in [ʿArṣūsī], *Alexandre le Grand*, trans. Gaillard, 82–85). Abū Ṭāhir is called Ṭūsī in most Turkish manuscripts of his *Abū Muslim-nāma*.

<sup>64</sup> According to the Iranian myth, Afrīdūn (or Farīdūn), the last of the kings of the world, divided his kingdom between his three sons, with Salm, the eldest, given the occidental part of the realm. Out of envy, however,

Alexander into the lineage of ancient Iranian kings?<sup>65</sup> On the one hand, one could imagine that the narrator attempted, by associating Būrān-dukht with the Islamic faith, to reconcile divergent traditions. Yet the result of this difficult undertaking is so ambiguous that it lends to quite an opposite reading. On the other hand, considering that the character of Būrān-dukht, as far as we know, is specific to this text only, we can surmise that the narrative is perhaps more than a mere combination of traditions from different periods of Iranian history. As a possible native of Khurāsān, a province where the memory of Iran's pre-Islamic past remained strong, could it be that the narrator retained and deliberately emphasized features unfavorable to Alexander by intensifying his imperfections as a human being—an aspect already present in the Greek romance?<sup>66</sup> Could the narrator be seeking to assert the durability of Iranian values despite Alexander's conquest and the establishment of Islam? Not only does Būrān-dukht surpass Alexander in combat, she also takes the initiative, makes up for his shortcomings, rescues him, advises him, admonishes him and, relying on her conscience and customs, intercedes in his conduct. Her influence over Alexander is as much one of domination as of civilization, the consequences of which evoke a cultural assimilation of sorts of the "conquering Rūmī." The amalgamation of these factors in a single narrative and the uncertainty of the narrator's purpose in combining them allow for different interpretations. I propose the following hypothesis as a possible reading of the text and its reception.

Insofar as Alexander, despite falling short of the great hero figure in the *Dārāb-nāma*, is integrated into the ancient Iranian lineage, he must display heroism enough to justify this without dishonoring Iran's glorious past. It is precisely Iran that assists him in attaining this heroism. As the personification of Iran in this role, Būrān-dukht embodies the Iranian identity and ancient Persian values most clearly in the text. Iranian help appears to be constantly essential to Alexander, and Iran comes out of this story conquering rather than conquered; it yields to historical events but stays strongly rooted in its past, retaining its honor.

Among the factors that may support this hypothesis are the names mentioned in the manuscript kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The manuscript was commissioned by Nūšīrvān b. Bahman-Šāh-i Pārsī, and Kayqubād b. Mahyār-i Pārsī was the scribe who copied it in India in 992 H./1584-5 CE.<sup>67</sup> As their *nisba*, Pārsī, indicates, they were Zoroastrians from the communities who emigrated from Iran to northwestern India around the tenth century to escape Muslim domination. Both are known historical figures: Nūšīrvān b. Bahman-Šāh-i Pārsī was a leading member of the Navsari Parsi community in the third quarter of the sixteenth century; Kayqubād b. Mahyār-i Pārsī was the son of the high priest of Navsari, Māhyār Vachā.<sup>68</sup>

If this copy was indeed made in a Zoroastrian milieu with the intention of entertaining an audience comprised of believers in the ancient faith, how did they interpret the narrative? It is difficult to know if an Iranian audience in the twelfth century, and *a fortiori* in the sixteenth century, would recognize Būrān-dukht as a representation of Anāhītā. A Zoroastrian audience, however, which had retained its traditions and a vivid memory of its past, would likely have associated her with the deity more easily, while still maintaining

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Salm and his brother Tūr killed their young brother Īraj who had inherited Iran. See Yuriko Yamanaka, "Ambiguïté de l'image d'Alexandre chez Firdawsī," 347–349; idem, "From Evil Destroyer to Islamic Hero," 65–70.

<sup>65</sup> The lack of documentation for the Sasanian period, unfortunately, does not allow us to retrace this process of integration.

<sup>66</sup> Pseudo-Callisthène, *Le roman d'Alexandre*, trans. Bounoure-Serret, xxix–xxxii.

<sup>67</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. suppl. persan 837; Ṭarsūsī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Šafā, vol. 2, 598.

<sup>68</sup> Nūšīrvān b. Bahman-Šāh-i Pārsī is named as a recipient in a letter sent from Iran with the messenger Farīdūn Marzbān (see Dhabhar, *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and Others*, Bombay, 620–622; Hodivala, *Studies in Parsi History*, 317). Māhyār Vachā is better known as the first Dastur Meherji Rana. Kayqubād notably visited the Mughal court on several occasions, and apparently copied the text of the *Dārāb-nāma* during his first visit to Agra. See Modi, *Dastur Kaikobad Mahyar's Petition and Laudatory Poem Addressed to Jahangir and Shah Jahan*, 60. Notably, Modi describes a manuscript of the *Dārāb-nāma* evidently copied from the BNF manuscript. Thanks are due to Daniel Sheffield for the information regarding these Zoroastrian figures.

hostility towards Alexander. To such an audience, Alexander's mission of conversion would not only be considered incomplete but read as a partial failure; a likely source of amusement for those whose faith had been destroyed by the forceful propagation of Islam. Paradoxically (or ironically), this mission, associated with the conquest of the world, could never have been achieved were it not for the help and support of Būrān-dukht. Was Alexander an object of amusement for a Zoroastrian audience and Būrān-dukht the heroine allowing Iran to be shown in good light in such an "adventure"? It is not implausible that such an audience could have received the *Dārāb-nāma* in the manner suggested here.

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