POSSIBLE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN HISTORICAL EVENTS AND THE PLOTS OF IRANIAN PRINCES EXILED IN CHĪN AND B.SĪLĀ DEPICTED IN *KŪSHNĀMA*

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Given the Iranian literary tradition of retelling history by combining legends of pre-Islamic provenance with Islamic-era historical knowledge, this article seeks to place the wealth of information embedded in the Iranian epic *Kushnāma* (Book of Kūsh) against the historical context in which its creators composed the epic by consulting select historical and geographical works. According to this epic, after the Iranian king Jamshīd was killed by the Tāzī chieftain Żaḥḥāk, his descendants took refuge in Chīn, Māchīn and B.sīlā. The study for this article utilizes classical Muslim works and Chinese sources in order to elucidate the possible connections between historical events and the plots of tales about exiled Iranian princes as depicted in *Kushnāma*. For example, the ancient East Asian kingdoms of China and Silla are the prototypes for Chīn, Māchīn and B.sīlā in *Kushnāma*. As a result, this article proposes that *Kushnāma*'s narrator might have integrated aspects from a variety of sources—most importantly, the long-standing oral and written traditions of Iranians, and fragmentary evidence pertaining to ancient China and the Korean Peninsula as recorded in Perso-Arabic literature—into the epic's narrative. Analysis of such a narrative demonstrates that information acquired as a consequence of long-distance East-West exchanges assimilated into the collective memory of Iranians who lived in the early twelfth century. It further indicates that the features of such an exchange phenomenon bear a close resemblance to the material and cultural exchanges that occurred at a much earlier time all over the Eurasian continent.

Keywords: *Kushnāma*; Chīn (China); B.sīlā (Silla); Peroz; Iranian epic

Kushnāma is an epic composed in Persian[1] by Īrānshān b. Abī al-Khayr[2] at the beginning of the twelfth century. Its basic plot relates to the exile of the

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[1] The term Persian in this paper refers to the New Persian language, in other words Pārsī or Fārsī-yi Darī.

descendants of Jamshīd, one of the great kings in the mythical history of Iran, to the lands of Chīn, Māchīn, and B.sīlā, and to their resistance against the assaults by Kūsh and his son, the Tāzī[3] rulers of Chīn and Māchīn. Thus, more than half the length of *Kūshnāma* tells stories that take place in ancient China and its neighbouring regions. Moreover, the epic once calls itself "a story from the king of China" (dāstān az shāh-i Chīn) in its own verses, a fact that would naturally interest East Asian readers. This article attempts to discuss the possibility of connecting the plots of tales about Iranian princes living in exile in the "eastern world" told in *Kūshnāma* to historical events.

1. THE SPREAD AND EVOLUTION OF LEGENDS CONCERNING THE EXILE OF JAMSHĪD'S DESCENDANTS

In Iranian mythology, Jamshīd was one of the pioneers of the human civilization. He is called Yīma in the *Avesta*, and his parallel character in Indian mythology is known as Yama or Yamarāja, who appears in Vedic scriptures. In Persian literary tradition, Jamshīd was attacked and killed by the Tāzī chieftain Żaḥḥāk at the end of his reign when he ruled over the world. One thousand years later, Firīdūn, from the same stock as Jamshīd, overthrew Żaḥḥāk and ascended to the throne as ruler of the world. Being a part of the mythical history of Iran, these legends are recorded in various classical Muslim historical works; however, stories about Jamshīd's flight during his final days, and especially the exile of his descendants, diverge to give different accounts.

According to Hishām b. Kalbī, as retold by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī in *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* (History of al-Ṭabarī), when Jam (i.e., Jamshīd) became an unjust tyrant, God therefore gave al-Ḍaḥḥāk (i.e., Żaḥḥāk) power over him. When al-Ḍaḥḥāk marched against him with 200,000 men, Jam fled, evading his pursuer for a hundred years until he was finally captured and killed.[4] However, this account mentions neither the places to which Jamshīd fled nor the predicament of his descendants' exile. When al-Ṭabarī described the victory of Afarīdhūn (i.e., Firīdūn) over Żaḥḥāk, he cited the words of Hishām b. Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib, who claimed that Jamshīd's

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[3] In this article, the term Tāzī is equivalent to the word Arab. The way in which this article applies these two words depends simply on the original sources to which it refers.

[4] Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk)*, vol. 1, *General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, ed. Ehsan Yar-Shater (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 352.

descendant—Firīdūn—was born in Danbawand,[5] although we are still unable to ascertain from this information the places to which people of Jamshīd's lineage had fled. *Murūj al-ẕahab wa maʿādin al-jawhar* (Meadows of gold and mines of gems), written by Ibn ʿAlī al-Masʿūdī in the first half of the tenth century—a bit later than *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*—addresses Jamshīd, Żaḥḥāk, and Firīdūn. Unfortunately, the extant text is most likely a compendium of the original book, of which a large part was scattered and lost. Thus, the records in this book that relate to Jamshīd, Żaḥḥāk, and Firīdūn are brief and simple. They show only that Jamshīd was killed, failing to provide any information about the flight and exile of the fallen king and his descendants.[6] *Tārīkh-i Balʿamī* (History of Balʿamī), compiled in the second half of the tenth century, added the following on the basis of *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*: According to the Persians (Pārsiyān), Jam fled to Zāvulistān;[7] a daughter of the king of Zābul met him and became his wife; after their son's birth, Jam fled to Hindūstān and later died there.[8] Among the three early Muslim historical works mentioned above, *Tārīkh-i Balʿamī*, which was compiled relatively later, obviously supplements the story of Jamshīd—with his refuge in Zābulistān, his marriage, the birth of a child, and his flight to Hindūstān.

The flight of Jamshīd and his descendants has been recounted in the tradition of Persian epics as well. According to Firdawsī in *Shāhnāma* (The book of kings), after Jamshīd lost his throne, he hid for a hundred years in the world, before he was discovered near daryā-yi Chīn[9] where Żaḥḥāk captured and killed him.[10] Firdawsī adds that Żaḥḥāk also apprehended and killed Ābtīn, Firīdūn's father, without mentioning where this event happened. His epic also describes how Farānak, Ābtīn's wife, brought little Firīdūn to Hindūstān and Alburz-kūh for shelter.[11] Only a few verses that relate to these issues can be seen in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*. In contrast, Asadī Ṭūsī wrote about 400 verses in *Garshāspnāma* (The

[5] Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk)*, vol. 2, *Prophets and Patriarchs*, trans. William M. Brinner, ed. Ehsan Yar-Shater (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 23.

[6] Masudi [Masʿūdī], *Huangjin caoyuan* [黄金草原; *Murūj al-ẕahab wa maʿādin al-jawhar*; Meadows of gold and mines of gems], vol. 1, trans. Geng Sheng (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2013), 266.

[7] Zāvulistān is more often written as Zābulistān in Perso-Arabic literature. In Chinese sources, it appears as Caoguo 漕国, Xieyu 谢颱, and other names.

[8] Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Balʿamī, *Tārīkh-i Balʿamī: Takmila va tarjuma-yi Tārīkh-i Ṭabarī* [The history of Balʿamī: A supplement and translation of *Tārīkh-i Ṭabarī*], vol. 1, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Bahār (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Zavvār, 1974 [SH 1353]), 132–33.

[9] Daryā-yi Chīn means "sea of China" or "river of China" and may refer here to Āmū Daryā—in other words, Oxus.

[10] Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma* [The book of kings], vol. 1, Moscow copy (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Hirmis, 2003 [SH 1382]), 25.

[11] Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 1: 31–32.

book of Garshāsp) to narrate the following: Jamshīd initially escaped to Zābulistān, however, after his marriage and the birth of his child, he fled to Hindūstān and later Chīn, where Żaḥḥāk seized and slew him.[12]

The plots depicted in these two epics *Shāhnāma* and *Garshāspnāma* seem brief when compared to the 4,000 verses in *Kūshnāma* that detail the stories of refuge by Jamshīd's descendants in Chīn, Māchīn, and B.sīlā. According to *Kūshnāma*, when he faced Żaḥḥāk's attack, Jamshīd sent his family to hide in the jungle of Arghūn in the territory of Chīn. This makes sense because his wife was a daughter of Māhang, the king of Chīn. Hunted by Żaḥḥāk's brother Kūsh, Ābtīn led his clansmen to Māchīn, where they crossed the sea to B.sīlā, which was once called "another Māchīn" in the epic. Kūsh-i Pīldandān, son of Kūsh, chased them to the coast of Māchīn and from there attacked B.sīlā. Later, when Kūsh-i Pīldandān went to Żaḥḥak's court, Ābtīn launched a counterattack against Chīn and Māchīn with the help of Ṭīhūr, the king of B.sīlā. Fearing the might and fierceness of Kūsh-i Pīldandān, who returned to the eastern realms, Ābtīn eventually retreated to B.sīlā. While there, he married Ṭīhūr's daughter Farārang. She bore him a son, Firīdūn. One day, in a dream, Ābtīn saw Jamshīd, who instructed him to return to Iran. Immediately, Ābtīn led his clansmen secretly to Āmul by way of a northern sea route. In the end, Żaḥḥāk killed Ābtīn. In time, however, Firīdūn avenged his father by defeating Żaḥḥāk, and made himself king of the world.[13]

These three Persian epics—*Shāhnāma*, *Garshāspnāma*, and *Kūshnāma*—were composed in the early eleventh century, mid-eleventh, and early twelfth century respectively. As each new version appears, the odyssey of Jamshīd and his descendants grows progressively more complex.

Several Muslim works of general history compiled later than *Kūshnāma* also keep account of such events. *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa al-qiṣaṣ* (The collection of histories and tales) was written by an anonymous author just a dozen years later than *Kūshnāma*. It seems that some of the information presented in this book was extracted from Iranian epics such as the abovementioned *Shāhnāma*, *Garshāspnāma*, and *Kūshnāma*. Regarding the exile of Jamshīd and his descendants, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa al-qiṣaṣ* provides the following story. When the Tāzī chieftain Żaḥḥāk rose against him, Jamshīd ran away. He wandered alone in the world, a stranger to all. Eventually, he settled in Zābulistān, where he fathered a child with a daughter of the king of Zābul. Twenty years later, when his secret was about to be revealed, he took flight to Hindūstān-i andarūnī, where he remained to rule as a king for a

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[12] 'Alī b. Aḥmad Asadī Ṭūsī, *Garshāspnāma* [The book of Garshāsp], ed. Ḥabīb Yaghmāyī and Parvīz Yaghmāyī (Tehran: Dunyā-yi Kitāb, 2010 [SH 1389]), 47–64.

[13] Īrānshān b. Abī al-Khayr, *Kushnāma* [The book of Kūsh], ed. Jalāl Matīnī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī, 1998 [SH 1377]), 187–446.

century and fathered several more children.[14] This piece of information accords closely with that told in *Garshāspnāma*. Another part of *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa al-qiṣaṣ* mentions that Jamshīd fathered two sons with a daughter of Māhang, malik-i Māchīn (the king of Māchīn).[15] In turn, one of these two sons fathered Ābtīn, Firīdūn's father.[16] As this book introduces Firīdūn's pedigree, it also identifies his mother as Farīra[n]k, daughter of Ṭ.hūr, the king of jazīra-yi B.s.lā of Māchīn-i andarūnī.[17] This content is almost the same as that preserved in *Kūshnāma*. *Tārīkh-i guzīda* (Historical excerpts), another work compiled after *Kūshnāma* and completed in the first half of the fourteenth century, gives only some records in brief. It says that Żaḥḥāk drove out Jamshīd and seized his throne;[18] thereafter, the fleeing king wandered the world until his death.[19] The brevity of this book's recollection of the story is understandable because the book's title, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, "Historical excerpts," reveals its purpose, to provide a general history in the form of a compendium.

Over time, the accounts of Jamshīd and his descendants in exile became more accurate and detailed in both classical Muslim historical works and Persian epics. Of all these works, *Kūshnāma* offers the most detailed account, both in terms of identifying the places involved and also the details reported about the recorded events. Therefore, this essay proceeds with a discussion of the possible origins of some of the plots described in *Kūshnāma*.

2. REGIONS IN WHICH JAMSHĪD'S DESCENDANTS TOOK REFUGE: ANCIENT CHINA AND SILLA

Kūshnāma's wealth of relatively accurate geographical information on the ancient world stands out as one of its peculiar features. Its 10,000 verses contain more than one hundred geographical names that can be substantiated by historical and geographical records that refer to places all over the known world at the time. In the centuries before the epic was composed, both the eastward conquest of the Arab caliphates and the westward migration of the Turks had taken place. This double sweep across the Iranian cultural world brought its inhabitants abundant

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[14] Malik al-Shuʿarāʾ Bahār, ed., *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa al-qiṣaṣ* [The collection of histories and tales] (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Khāvar, 1939 [SH 1318]), 39–40.

[15] According to *Kūshnāma*, Māhang was the king of Chīn.

[16] Bahār, ed., *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa al-qiṣaṣ*, 25.

[17] Ibid., 27.

[18] Ḥamd-Allāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda* [Historical excerpts], ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 2008 [SH 1387]), 82.

[19] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, 81.

information about world geography, parts of which were subsequently reflected in the plots of some Iranian national epics.

The names Chīn and Māchīn mentioned in this epic indeed refer to the territory of China and not to imaginary places in mythology. The toponyms used by ancient Iranians communicating with their Chinese contemporaries derived from Iranian oral and written traditions that had developed from the pre-Islamic era, according to Jalāl Matīnī, editor and annotator of the contemporary publication of *Kūshnāma*.[20] Early historical and geographical works written in Arabic, such as *Tārīkh-i Ya'qūbī* or *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik* by Ibn Khurdādbih, refer to China using the term "al-Ṣīn," a loanword from the Persian name "Chīn."[21] *Ḥudūd al-'ālam: Min al-Mashriq ilā al-Maghrib* (The regions of the world: From the East to the West), written in Persian in the tenth century, refers to the territory of China as Chīn or Chīnistān.[22] The term Māchīn, derived from Sanskrit, is an abbreviation of Mahācīna.[23] In the first half of the eleventh century, Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī wrote in *Taḥqīq mālil-Hind*: "Behind them [the mountains Haramakôt] there is Mahâcîn, i.e., Great China."[24] Composed in the same period of time as *Taḥqīq mālil-Hind*, Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* repeats the term Māchīn many times. However, what Māchīn actually designates is ambiguous; in its original contexts, Māchīn usually appears as part of the phrase "Chīn va Māchīn," which signifies the vast region lying to the east of Iran. Thanks to his analysis of Tawghāj in *Dīwān lughāt al-Turk* (Compendium of Turkic dialects), compiled by Maḥmūd Kāshgharī in the late eleventh century, Zhang Guangda distinguishes the two terms: Māchīn/Māṣīn (the [Northern] Song dynasty) lies in the east; Chīn/Ṣīn (the Khiṭāy/Khitan Empire/Liao dynasty) in the middle; and Barkhān (Kara-Khanid Khanate) in the west.[25] After that, information about

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[20] Jalāl Matīnī, "Firīdūn va sarzamīn-i āftāb-i tābān" [Firīdūn and the land of shining sun], *Īranshināsī* [Iranian studies] 5 (1990 [Bahār SH 1369]): 160–77.

[21] Paul Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo,* vol. 1 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale Librairie Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1959), 270.

[22] Manūchihr Sutūda, ed., *Ḥudūd al-'ālam: Min al-Mashriq ilā al-Maghrib* [The regions of the world: From the East to the West] (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Ṭahūrī, 1983 [SH 1362]), 59–63; V. Minorsky, trans. and ed., *Ḥudūd al-'Ālam: The Regions of the World* (London: Messrs. Luzac & Co., 1937), 83–86.

[23] Henry Yule, trans. and ed., *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, vol. 1, rev. Henri Cordier (London: Hakluyt Society, 1915), 150.

[24] Edward C. Sachau, trans. and ed., *Alberuni's India: An English Edition, with Notes and Indices*, vol. 1 (London: Kegan Paul, 1910), 207.

[25] Maḥmūd Kāšγarī, *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects (Dīwān Luγāt at-Turk)*, part 1, ed. and trans. Robert Dankoff with James Kelly (Cambridge: Harvard University Printing Office, 1982), 341. Zhang Guangda, "Guanyu Mahemu Kashigali de *Tujueyu cihui* yu jianyu cishu de yuanxing ditu (shang)" [关于马合木·喀什噶里的突厥语词汇与见于此书的圆形地图(上); On *Dīwān lughāt al-Turk* of Maḥmūd Kāshgharī and the round map seen in it (part 1)], *Zhongyang minzu xueyuan xuebao*

China brought to Iranians by the westward-moving Turks, as well as the spread and circulation of *Dīwān lughāt al-Turk* in the Islamic world, led to the separate designations of Chīn and Māchīn in Persian literature. In *Kūshnāma*, *Jahānnāma* (The book of the world), and *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* (The comprehensive histories), composed respectively at the beginnings of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, the name Chīn refers mainly to the territory east of Āmū Daryā adjacent to Iran, namely today's Central Asia and Northwest China, while Māchīn refers to the eastern, middle, and southern parts of China, AKA China Proper—a region that lies beyond Chīn and therefore does not border Iran. Such a situation accords with what is commonly seen in the history of China, namely, nomadic khanates of the west and north confronting agricultural empires of the east and south.

As one of the earliest Persian sources that used the terms Chīn and Māchīn to refer to two distinct but adjacent regions, *Kūshnāma* appeared around thirty years later than *Dīwān lughāt al-Turk*. According to *Kūshnāma*, Chīn borders on Iran. Passing through the land of Chīn, one can reach Māchīn, which faces a vast sea. Therefore, although *Kūshnāma* is an epic in Persian that describes ancient legends, the geographical information provided by this epic accords to a large extent with the historical facts of the Islamic era. Except for a few geographical names such as Pīlgūshān, Qaṣrīn, and Ifrīqīya that derived from literary fiction, the majority of names of places located to the east of Iran in *Kūshnāma*—such as Khumdān, Arghūn, Khallukh, Kujā, Tatār, Tubbat, Farkhār, Kābul, Qandahār, Balkhash, and Mukrān—could all be identified within the context of historical sources, most of which are historical place names in Central Asia and Northwest China.[26]

Being the safe haven for Jamshīd's descendants in the eastern world, B.sīlā is a realm of great importance in *Kūshnāma*, with its name appearing more than sixty times in this epic. Descriptions of B.sīlā in *Kūshnāma* by and large concur with records of Silla (Sīlā/al-Sīlā or Shīlā/al-Shīlā) in Muslim historical and

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[中央民族学院学报; Journal of Minzu University of China], no. 2 (1978): 29–42. The revised and supplemented edition of this article is collected in Zhang Guangda, *Xiyu shidi conggao chubian* [西域史地叢稿初編; A preliminary edition of collected manuscripts concerning the history and lands of the Western Regions] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 57–82; and Zhang Guangda, *Wenshu dianji yu Xiyu shidi* [文书 典籍与西域史地; Ancient texts, books, and records concerning the history and geography of the Western Regions] (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008), 46–66.

[26] Concerning Chīn and Māchīn, as well as ancient geographical names related to them, see Liu Yingjun, "Yilang shishi *Kushi wangji* suozai gudai Zhongguo dili xinxi chuyi" [伊朗史诗库什王纪所载古代中国地理信息刍议; A study of the geographic information on ancient China contained in the Iranian epic *Kūshnāma*], in *Xiyu wenshi* [西域文史; Literature and history of the Western Regions], vol. 10, ed. Zhu Yuqi (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2015), 233–52.

geographical works: It is an island (jazīra) surrounded by high mountains, set in the eastern sea, facing Māchīn across the sea with whom it enjoys good relations, possessing fertile grounds and rich cities full of people with good figures and beautiful faces. Meanwhile, by comparing the diverse manuscripts and published versions of some Muslim historical and geographical works, we find that the term B.sīlā, along with variations such as K.sīlā, L.sīlā, V.sīlā, Sīlāhī/Silāhī, is an error or corruption in the transcription of Sīlā/al-Sīlā or Shīlā/al-Shīlā into Perso-Arabic script. Thus, it can be deduced that the prototype of B.sīlā depicted in *Kūshnāma* is Silla, an ancient kingdom in Northeast Asia.[27]

3. POSSIBILITY OF CONNECTING THE PLOTS OF *KŪSHNĀMA* WITH HISTORICAL EVENTS

As most of the geographical names that appear in *Kūshnāma* could be studied within the context of historical sources, relevant plots in this epic may have connections with historical events as well. This section will discuss such possibility in two ways.

3.1 Context One: The Nature of Iranian National Epic

The composition of Iranian national epics in Persian literature thrived with the efforts by the Samanid court to revive ancient Iranian culture, the materials of which include scattered works in Pahlavī collected and edited by Iranian literati, as well as oral and written legends circulating in the Iranian region. Thus, these epics in Persian are records of Iranian collective memory comprising mythical stories and authentic historical accounts. Accordingly, the narrative of *Kūshnāma* developed within the framework of Iranian legends circulating during the pre-Islamic era and integrated with knowledge that Iranians acquired during the Islamic era.

The long-circulating legend of Żaḥḥāk in Iran evolved from the collective memory of military conflicts between the Indo-Europeans who migrated to the Iranian plateau and the ancient Semites who lived in Mesopotamia. According to

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[27] For details, see Liu Yingjun, "*Kushi wangji* suozai B.sīlā yu Dongya guguo Xinluo" [库什王纪所载B. sīlā与东亚古国新罗; B.sīlā depicted in *Kūshnāma* and the ancient East Asian kingdom of Silla], in *Marco Polo and the Silk Road (10th-14th Centuries): Proceedings of an International Conference Held in Peking University, China, 19–20 November 2016*, ed. Rong Xinjiang and Dang Baohai, 145–57 (Beijing: International Academy for Chinese Studies, Peking University).

the *Avesta*, the evil figure Azhī-dahāka came from Babylon;[28] it is a demonized image originated from chieftains of ancient Semites in ancient Iranian literature and also the prototype of Żaḥḥāk in Persian literature.[29] Joseph Arthur Gobineau[30] and Ẕabīḥ Allāh Ṣafā both believed that the stories described in *Kūshnāma* developed mainly from the Iranian collective memory of the Semite's invasion of Iran and the Iranian resistance.[31] Ẕ. A. Ṣafā suggests that Azhī-dahāka was a powerful king from Babylon (Bawrī) to the west of Iran who launched military attacks on Iran from Assyria (Āshūr) or Chaldea (Kalda) before the rise of the Media (Māda) and Achaemenids (Hakhāmanishī). The memory of these invasions persisted in the minds of Iranians, who created a series of legends including those about Żaḥḥāk and Kūsh-i Pīldandān. As time passed, the Iranians linked Żaḥḥāk with the Arabs, who descend from the Semite tribes just like the Assyrians and Chaldeans.[32] Nevertheless, the fact that Persian literature describes Żaḥḥāk as a Tāzī chieftain probably derived from the influence of the Arab conquest of Iran. During the Rashidun and Umayyad caliphates, in the early stage of Islamic history when the Islamic world expanded drastically, several Muslim generals were known by the name of al-Ḍaḥḥāk (Żaḥḥāk in Persian). According to Muslim historical works such as *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, al-Aḥnaf b. Qays led Muslim troops in pursuit of Yazdgird III, the last Sasanian emperor. The pursuers gave chase as far as Khurāsān, until Yazdgird III was killed at Marw.[33] Al-Aḥnaf b. Qays was sometimes called al-Ḍaḥḥāk, though probably erroneously.[34] In other words, according to some records, the mighty Arab commander who brought the Sassanid dynasty to its end was precisely Żaḥḥāk.

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[28] Jalīl Dūstkhᵛāh, trans. and ed., *Avistā: Nāma-yi mīnū-yi āyīn-i Zartusht* [Avesta: The sacred book of Zoroastrianism] (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Murvārīd, 1976 [MS 2535]), 144–45.

[29] E. Yarshater, "Zuhāk," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* vol. 11, new ed., ed. P. J. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 554–55.

[30] J. A. Gobineau (AKA Le Comte de Gobineau) was a French private collector. One of the earliest researchers to work on *Kūshnāma*, he presented the unique manuscript copy of the work to the British Museum.

[31] Ẕabīḥ Allāh Ṣafā, *Ḥamāsa-sarāyī dar Īrān* [Epic composition in Iran] (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1954 [SH 1333]), 298.

[32] Ṣafā, *Ḥamāsa-sarāyī dar Īrān*, 456.

[33] Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk)*, vol. 14, *The Conquest of Iran*, trans. G. Rex Smith, ed. Ehsan Yar-Shater (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 51–60.

[34] Ch. Pellat, "Al-Aḥnaf b. Ḳays," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* vol. 1, new ed., ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 303–304; P. K. Ḥitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State: Being a Translation from the Arabic, Accompanied with Annotations, Geographic and Historic Notes of the Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān of al-Imām abu-l 'Abbās Aḥmad ibn-Jābir al-Balādhuri*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University; London: P. S. King & Son, 1916), 500.

The flight of Jamshīd and his descendants to the east accords with the flight of the Iranian royal family to the east in the wake of their dynasty's fall as told in various sources. Under attack by Alexander the Great, Darius III of the Achaemenid dynasty fled east.[35] It is said that after his empire was overthrown, Sāsān of the Achaemenid royal family fled into the wild, and that Ardashīr Bābakān, the founder of the Sassanid dynasty, was one of his descendants.[36] Indeed, the legend of Sāsān in Iranian literature, such as *Kār-nāmak* of Ardashir in Pahlavī literature and Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* in Persian literature, speaks of Sāsān and his descendants living in exile in India.[37] According to Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, Sāsān—son of Dārā (Darius III) of the Kayāniyān dynasty—fled to Hindūstān (India) after his father's death and hid in the mountains; after which, four generations of descendants bore his name.[38] The story in *Garshāspnāma* about Jamshīd's refuge in Hindūstān might have been affected by such a legend. When the Muslim army toppled the Sassanid dynasty, the satrap of Ṭabaristān invited Yazdgird to take refuge with him, but Yazdgird chose instead to flee east, since he wanted to either join the ruler of the Turks or go to China.[39] His son Pīrūz (Fairūz) fled further east, settling among the Turks and marrying a Turkic woman.[40] This historical event might have been the prototype for the depiction of the flight of Jamshīd's descendants and their refuge in Chīn, Māchīn, and B.sīlā in *Kūshnāma*.

There are many examples that demonstrate how records of events in historical works grafted onto Iranian national epics. An episode of *Kūshnāma* could be one of them: Ābtīn wished to marry Farārang, one of the daughters of Ṭīhūr, king of B.sīlā. But the king did not want to marry his favourite daughter to him, so he showed Ābtīn many of his other well-dressed daughters, leaving Farārang in their midst, slovenly dressed and without make-up. Ābtīn chose her anyway.[41] Such a plot is cast in the same mold as the story in Iranian literature of Mihr Ustād, who chose the daughter of khāqān-i Turk for the Sasanian emperor Khusraw I Anūshīrvān. When Bal'amī translated *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* into Persian, he added to the conversation between Hurmuz IV and Mihr Ustād the following: Ustād was

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[35] Arrian, *Alexander the Great: The Anabasis and the Indica*, trans. Martin Hammond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 88–91.

[36] Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk)*, vol. 4, *The Ancient Kingdoms*, trans. Moshe Perlmann, ed. Ehsan Yar-Shater (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 83.

[37] Richard N. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1983), 284.

[38] Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 1: 1179–80.

[39] Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 14, *The Conquest of Iran*, 59.

[40] Ḥitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, 1: 493.

[41] Abī al-Khayr, *Kūshnāma*, 338–53.

sent to the Turkic court as an emissary of Khusraw I Anūshīrvān; facing many well-dressed Turkic princesses, he selected the daughter of khāqān-i Turk and his khātūn,[42] despite her lack of make-up and poor dress.[43] In Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, the same scenario is described in the story about Kisrā Nūshīnravān (i.e., Khusraw I Anūshīrvān) and his marriage to the khāqān-i Chīn's daughter after Haytāl (the Hephthalite Empire) was annihilated by an alliance between Iran and Chīn.[44] Ẕ. A. Ṣafā considers that the original source of such records in Iranian literature might represent a translated and revised Persian version of *Khudāynāma*, which was compiled in Pahlavī during the late Sassanid dynasty, or one of the *Shāhnāma*-hā-yi manṣūr—for instance, *Shāhnāma* composed by Abū al-Mu'ayid Balkhī.[45]

Marital connections between the royal families from Iran and Chīn, Māchīn and Turks can frequently be found in Persian epics and early Muslim historical works. According to *Kūshnāma*, one of the daughters of shāh-i Chīn married Jamshīd; one of the daughters of shāh-i B.sīlā, another Māchīn, was Ābtīn's wife, that is, Firīdūn's mother. Pīrūz, son of Yazdgird III, married a Turkic woman, according to ʿAḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī. During the Samanid period, Abū Dulaf Misʿar b. Muhalhil traveled east to China from Bukhārā, and he mentioned the marriage of Nuh I, Samanid emir, to a Chinese princess in his travel notes.[46] Scholars including Henry Yule, Z. V. Togan, C. E. Bosworth, J. Marquart, Ma Yong 马雍, Feng Chengjun 冯承均, Cen Zhongmian 岑仲勉, and Xu Xuya 许序雅 have studied this case and made various deductions. Most likely, the Chinese princess was a daughter of a ruler of the Kara-Khanid Khanate or the Kingdom of Khotan.[47] The region covering Central Asia and Xinjiang of China inhabited by Sogdians, Khotanese and Turks was often called Chīn in Persian epics. As mentioned above, one of the daughters of khāqān-i Turk, who married Khusraw I Anūshīrvān in *Tārīkh-i Balʿamī*, is recounted as the daughter of khāqān-i Chīn in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*. In addition, there is a coincidence between Ābtīn's marriage

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[42] Hurmuz IV's mother.

[43] Abū Alī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Balʿamī, *Tārīkhnāma-yi Ṭabarī* [The history book of Ṭabarī], ed. M. Rawshan (Tehran: Surūsh, 1985 [SH 1374]), 765.

[44] Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, 1: 1514–22.

[45] Ṭabarī, *Bahrām Chūbīn: Az tarjuma-yi Tārīkh-i Ṭabarī* [Bahrām Chūbīn: From the translation of *Tārīkh-i Ṭabarī*], trans. Balʿamī, ed. Ẕabīḥ Allāh Ṣafā (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1973 [SH 1352]), 7.

[46] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 1: 138–40. Part of the *Travel Notes* of Ibn Muhalhil were translated from the French translation into Chinese by Zhang Xinglang and published in one of his works; see Zhang Xinglang, comp. and annot., *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian* [中西交通史料汇编; Compilation of sources regarding exchanges between China and the West], vol. 2, new ed., rev. Zhu Jieqin (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 780–91.

[47] Xu Xuya, *Zhongya Saman wangchaoshi yanjiu* [A research on history of the Samanid dynasty in Central Asia] (Guiyang: Guizhou jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), 107–11.

with the princess of B.sīlā during his refuge there and the historical event of the Sogdian migration to Northeast Asia. From the first half of the tenth century, Jiuxinghu 九姓胡 (Sogdians) migrated from Yingzhou 營州 and Bohaiguo 渤海國 (the Kingdom of Bohai/Balhae) to the Korean Peninsula via Liaodong 遼東, and some of them forged marital connections with the royal family of the Kingdom of Silla during its final years.[48]

The compilation of classical Muslim historical and geographical works such as *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* and *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik* thrived a bit earlier than did the composition of Iranian national epics such as *Shāhnāma and Kūshnāma*. Among the commonalities of the two categories stands the fact that the creators of both collected and edited records of historical events and the folk hearsay that circulated during the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras. Additionally, many of the authors were Iranian: some of the Muslim historians and geographers who wrote their books in Arabic actually came from Iranian stock. The difference between the two categories results from the fact that the first one stresses historical textual criticism, while the second one emphasizes literariness. Consequently, certain content in Persian epics inevitably bears some connections to historical events, and the plots of Iranian princes living in exile in *Kūshnāma* probably relate to the Arab conquest of Sassanid Iran.

3.2 Context Two: The Centuries before *Kūshnāma*'s Composition

Whether the stories that describe the refuge of Jamshīd's descendants in Chīn, Māchīn, and B.sīlā derived from Muslim historical works or Iranian oral tradition, they resulted to some extent from the flourishing exchanges between East and West. For example, the fur trade between Northeast and Central Asia can be traced in *Kūshnāma*. According to this epic, kings of B.sīlā presented many valuable furs such as sable and calabar to Kūsh-i Pīldandān, king of Chīn, and Firīdūn, king of Iran.[49] From this information, one finds out that Silla abounds in sable and used to send them to China and Iran as prized gifts in ancient times. At the end of the twentieth century, Russian scholars such as V. E. Shavkunov (Э. В. Шавкунов) advocated a concept of the "Sable Road," which refers to the sable trade route established by the Sogdians, linking Central Asia and Northeast Asia,

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[48] Liu Yonglian, "Jiuxinghu zai Chaoxian bandao shiji kaolue: Jiuxinghu zaici yimin Chaoxian bandao de luxian ji shitai chuyi" [Historical traces of Sogdians on the Korean peninsula: On the route and historical status of the second wave of the Sogdian migration to the Korean peninsula], in *Hailu jiaotong yu shijie wenming* [海陆交通与世界文明; Maritime-land exchanges and world civilizations], ed. Chen Chunsheng (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2013), 100–53.

[49] Abī al-Khayr, *Kūshnāma*, 419, 447.

where the Mohe 靺鞨, Koguryǒ 高句麗 and Jurchen 女真 people lived (e.g. the Kingdom of Bohai). The Sable Road remains a hypothesis, since it is unresolved whether the route was distinct from the Silk Road. Nonetheless, academics concur on Sogdian participation in this intra-Asian fur trade.[50] Furthermore, *Kūshnāma* mentions a trade caravan that relayed ceaselessly between Chīn and Māchīn: Besieged in the mountains in Chīn, Jamshīd's clansmen encountered such a caravan; Ābtīn asked the group's merchants to help him to deliver letters to Māchīn's king for him, and then led his clansmen to Māchīn on a path through arduous mountains and across the sea to reach B.sīlā.[51] According to the epic, merchants transported edibles from Māchīn to Chīn to sell and returned with clothes and carpets.[52] This shows that Chīn and Māchīn respectively abounded with woolen textiles and foodstuff, at least in the collective consciousness of Iranians alive when *Kūshnāma* was composed. This relay contributed to building an economic structure that benefited trade activities and provided merchants with handsome profits. The commercial activities of the Sogdians in history bear similarities to this case. According to Rong Xinjiang:

> Between Sogdiana and Yingzhou in Northeast China, they [Sogdians] established a series of colonies in the narrow zone between the empires of China's central plain and the nomadic khanates of the northern grassland, and some of the merchants went even further to the capital cities of the central-plain empires of China and the seats of the nomadic khanates of the north. From the beginning of the fourth century to the first half of the eighth century, the Sogdians, so to speak, established a complete network of commercial transportation and trade between Central Asia and northern China via the overland Silk Road.[53]

In the past century, Chinese and other scholars have achieved great successes where Sogdian merchants are concerned. Even in recent years, new academic monographs such as Étienne de la Vaissière's *Histoire des marchands sogdiens* have been released. Many records of Sogdian merchants have been discovered in Chinese sources that date back to ancient times. For example, *Da Tang xiyu ji*

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[50] Wang Xiaofu, "'Heidiao zhilu' zhiyi: gudai Dongbeiya yu shijie wenhua lianxi zhi wojian" [A query into "the Sable Road": On the cultural connections between Northeast Asia and the world in ancient times], *Lishi yanjiu* 3 (2001): 81–90.

[51] Abī al-Khayr, *Kūshnāma*, 257–68.

[52] Ibid., 258.

[53] Rong Xinjiang, "Bosi yu Zhongguo: Liangzhong wenhua zai Tangchao de jiaorong" [Persia and China: Interaction and exchange between two cultures in the Tang era], in *Zhongguo xueshu*, vol. 3, no. 4, ed. Liu Dong (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2002), 62.

大唐西域記 (Record of the regions west of the Great Tang [empire]) reports that the people of Suli 窣利—the Sogdians—lusted for wealth; among them, fathers and sons calculated interest, and rich men possessed high social position regardless of their origin.[54] *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (New book of the Tang) discusses the people of Kangguo 康國—the state of Kang at Samarkand, AKA Sogdiana—their adeptness in commercial affairs, and their interest in pursuing wealth: By age twenty, the men among them go to any state that would bring them profits.[55] All of these texts show that the Sogdians were experts in conducting business deals and lived primarily on international trade. B.sīlā's delivery of sable to Iran and Chīn via diplomatic corps and the caravan trade between Chīn and Māchīn described in *Kūshnāma* could be deemed as projections of Sogdian caravan commercial expeditions between Central Asia and East Asia, as well as Northeast Asia, in the Iranian epics.

Sogdian trade flourished mainly along the northern land routes during a period of time that spans from the Northern dynasties (Beichao 北朝, 386–581) to the early Tang dynasty.[56] Although the Persians were seen in China in earlier times, they began to actively conduct business with China only after the An Lushan Rebellion (An-Shi zhi luan 安史之亂) and traded mostly with China via the sea route, as Persian ships busily transported goods on the Indian Ocean and South China Sea.[57] The prosperity of the maritime Silk Road provided Arabs and Persians with an important way to understand East Asia. Records that relate to China and Silla in some of the Muslim historical and geographical works compiled in the ninth century and later—such as *Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa al-Hind* (An account of China and India), its subsequent "sequel," and *Taqwīm al-buldān* by Abū al-Fidā' (the *Geography* of Abulfeda)—evidently were written on the basis of information acquired by Muslims along the maritime Silk Road. In literary works, just as the image of the Persian merchants frequently emerges in the literary sketches written in the middle and late Tang period, it is reasonable that plots involving China and Silla should appear in Persian epics.

The dominion of the High Tang covered a vast territory that stretched from Northeast Asia to Central Asia. The imperial court pursued an open foreign policy, providing favorable conditions for close contact among ethnic groups inside and

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[54] Xuanzang and Bianji, *Datang Xiyuji jiaozhu* [大唐西域記校注; A collation and annotation of *Da Tang Xiyu ji*], annot. Ji Xianlin et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 72.

[55] Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi, *Xin Tangshu* [新唐書; New book of the Tang], vol. 20, juan 卷 221 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 6244.

[56] Rong Xinjiang, "Bosi yu Zhongguo," 69.

[57] Ibid., 63; W. Watson, "Iran and China," in *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3, *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, part 1, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 552–53.

outside its territory. Many people came to Tang China from such places as the Turkic region, Sogdiana, Persia, the Kingdom of Bohai, the Korean Peninsula, and Japan. Some of them settled down in Tang China; some even became officials in the Tang court; while others travelled back and forth between the empire and their homeland. They played an important role in facilitating material and cultural transmissions between Central Asia and Northeast Asia. The people who traveled to Tang China from the Korean Peninsula were especially numerous, and they represented a variety of social groups that included emissaries, merchants, scholars, monks seeking the Buddhist dharma, refugees, and prisoners of war.[58] In the seventh and eighth centuries, when the Tang Empire and the Sogdian states enjoyed close relations, indeed, someone painted images of Korean warriors, members of the Tang diplomatic corps dispatched to the state of Kang by the imperial court, on the western wall of the "Hall of Ambassadors" in Afrasiab, now in ruins but once the oldest part of the ancient city of Samarkand.[59] Clearly, exchanges among East Asia, Northeast Asia, and Central Asia were convenient and unobstructed during that period, so much so that perhaps historical events that took place in distant China and Silla subsequently migrated into Iranian collective memory to eventually become the prototypes of certain plots in Persian epics drawn from folk history.

4. POSSIBLE PROTOTYPE OF IRANIAN PRINCES' LIVING IN EXILE DEPICTED IN *KŪSHNĀMA*: THE REFUGE OF PEROZ III AND NARSEH IN TANG CHINA

As mentioned above, the story of Jamshīd's descendants' life in exile in Chīn, Māchīn, and B.sīlā, rich in detail, most likely gets its historical prototype from the activities of Yazdgird III's descendants—his son Peroz III and his grandson Narseh—in Tokharistan and Tang China. In order to better understand this relationship, this section investigates Peroz (Pīrūz/Fayrūz) and Narseh (Narsieh/Narses), particularly their refuge in Tang China and their efforts to resurrect the Sassanid Empire, and then compares the findings with certain plots that structure *Kūshnāma*.

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[58] Jiang Qingbo, *Ru Tang Sanhanren yanjiu* [入唐三韩人研究; Research on Koreans who entered Tang China] (Guangzhou: Jinan daxue chubanshe, 2010), 228–30.

[59] Yang Sen, "Dunhuang bihua zhong de Gaogouli, Xinluo, Baiji ren xingxiang" [敦煌壁画中的高句丽、新罗、百济人形象; Images of people from Koguryŏ, Silla, and Paekche in Dunhuang frescoes], *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 2 (2011): 102–12; Maerxiake [Boris Marshak], *Tujueren, Suteren yu Nana nüshen* [The Turks, the Sogdians, and goddess Nana], trans. Mao Ming (Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe, 2016), 55–56.

Records concerning the exile of Peroz III and Narseh in Tang China appear in Chinese official histories such as *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (compiled 941–45), *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (compiled 977–83), *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 (compiled 1005–?), *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (compiled 1044–60), and *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒 (compiled 1066–84). In the past century, Chinese scholars such as Zhang Xinglang 张星烺, Xiang Da 向达, Zhang Guangda 张广达, Wang Zhilai 王治来, Xue Zongzheng 薛宗正, Jiang Boqin 姜伯勤, and Rong Xinjiang 荣新江 researched these and other records regarding issues related to these exiles. From these records, Rong Xinjiang constructed a chronological summary of the events of this resistance by Beilusi 卑路斯 (Peroz III) and Ninieshishi 泥涅師師 (Narseh) against the Arabs (Dashi 大食) and their flight to the Tang.[60] Building on the achievements of Western scholars, Matteo Compareti also organized the records of Peroz and Narseh in *Jiu Tangshu* and *Xin Tangshu*, for an encyclopedia essay he entitled "The Last Sasanians in China."[61] Much has been achieved. However, in order to facilitate comparison between two stories of exile—one of Iranian princes as told in *Kūshnāma*, the other of the last Sasanians in Tang China as recorded in historiography—it is important to first develop a more comprehensive picture of the search for refuge in Central Asia and China by Yazdgird III and his descendants, reconstructed here thanks to key information extracted from Chinese, Muslim, and Western works.[62]

According to Chinese records, from 638 to 648, several Persian emissaries traveled to the Tang court on missions to seek help for Yisihou 伊嗣候 (Yazdgird III) because the Sasanians were under attack by the Arabs. Certain records in Muslim works like *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* support this claim: When al-Aḥnaf b. Qays approached Marw al-Shāhijān in Khurāsān, it reports, Yazdgird III left it for Marw al-Rūdh, located on the banks of the Murghāb River. There, he sent emissaries to the ruler of the Turks, to Sogdiana, and finally to the emperor of China, carrying letters he wrote asking for reinforcement.[63] Later, on the occasion of the Khurāsānī rebellion, Yazdgird returned to Marw al-Shāhijān, but was soon after killed, in 651. Knowing that al-Aḥnaf b. Qays's army was on the march to Balkh,

[60] Rong Xinjiang, "Bosi yu Zhongguo," 59–60.

[61] Matteo Compareti, "Chinese-Iranian Relations xv. The Last Sasanians in China," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, accessed July 26, 2017, published July 20, 2009, http://www.iranica online.org/articles/china-xv-the-last-sasanians-in-china.

[62] The three paragraphs that follow are based on the summary of records in the Chinese official histories cited in Rong Xinjiang, "Bosi yu Zhongguo," and supplemented by combining certain content in classical Muslim historical works as well as scholarly research findings in modern times. This article provides citations only for supplemented and revised content. As for the detailed information of the original Chinese sources, please refer to Rong, "Bosi yu Zhongguo."

[63] Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 14, *The Conquest of Iran*, 53–54.

the ruler of the Turks who came to aid the Persian emperor immediately left Balkh, together with Yazdgird's family and other dependents. Crossing the Āmū Daryā, they encountered Yazdgird's messenger. The besieged monarch had dispatched him to the Chinese court, but the emissary was returning with the emperor's reply rejecting military assistance.[64]

After this, Yazdgird's son Peroz took refuge in Tokharistan.[65] According to *Kitāb futūḥ al-buldān* of al-Balādhurī, Yazdgird fled to Khurāsān via Iṣbahān (Iṣfahān), Karmān (Kirmān), and Sijistān (Sīstān), before he was killed at a miller's house that stood on the banks of the Murghāb River near Marū (Marw); then, it is claimed, Peroz (Fairūz) fell into the hands of the Turks and later married one of their women.[66] In 654, the slain king's son sent emissaries to the Tang court asking for military assistance, but the Tang emperor Gaozong 唐高宗 declined his request on the basis of great distance. In 655, the Arabs retreated and the local army of Tokharistan reinstated Peroz as the titular king of Persia.[67] In 661, Peroz sent emissaries to the Tang court again to ask for military assistance. At that time, the Tang had defeated the Western Turkic Khaganate (Xi Tujue 西突厥) and controlled the territory in Central Asia with the Jimi system (jimizhi 羈縻制). That same year, in 661, the Tang dispatched Wang Mingyuan 王名遠 to Tokharistan to set up Jimifuzhou 羈縻府州. According to Chinese sources, the Tang court also established Bosi dudu fu 波斯都督府 (the protectorate of Persia) in Jiling city 疾陵城, and conferred on Peroz the title of *dudu* 都督 (governor). In 662, the Tang court crowned Yazdgird's son as king of Persia, which means that they openly supported Persian restorationist activities.[68] In 667 and 671, Persian emissaries came to the Tang court and they were most likely sent by Peroz III. In 667, al-Ḥakam b. 'Amr al-Ghifārī, an Arab general dispatched to Khurāsān by Ziyād b. Abīh, launched a military campaign into the eastern mountainous regions of al-Ghur.[69] After conquering Lower Tukhāristān, he crossed the Āmū Daryā

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[64] Ibid., 60–61.

[65] According to *Murūj al-ẕahab wa maʿādin al-jawhar*, when Yazdgird III was killed, he left two sons, namely Vahrām/Bahrām and Fairūz/Peroz, and three daughters; his descendants generally settled down in Marw al-Shāhijān. See Masudi, *Huangjin caoyuan*, 1: 330–31. However, this piece of record is quite different from other sources, and its content ambiguous.

[66] Ḥitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, 1: 490–93.

[67] H. A. R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1923), 16. Gibb gave his suggestion based on a Chinese source.

[68] Xue Zongzheng, "Bosi Sashan wangyi lianhe Tuhuoluo kangji Dashi shimo: Jianlun Tang yu Dashi Zhongya duizhi xingshi de yanbian" [The joint resistance of descendants of the Sassanid royal family and the Tocharians against the Arabs: On the changing situation of the Tang-Arab confrontation in Central Asia], *Xinjiang shehui kexue* 6 (1988): 65–77.

[69] Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk)*, vol. 18, *Between Civil Wars: The Caliphate of Muʿāwiyah*, trans. Michael G. Morony, ed. Ehsan Yar-Shater (Albany: State University of New

(Oxus River), entered Chaghāniān at the head of his army, and drove Peroz to flee into China.[70] In 674, Peroz III could not keep a foothold in the Western Regions anymore, so he fled to Chang'an 長安, the capital city of Tang China, and died there years later.

In 678, the Tang crowned a new king of Persia: Narseh, son of Peroz III, by now a resident of the Tang capital Chang'an. In 679, Tang Gaozong 唐高宗 commanded Pei Xingjian 裴行儉, as "the emissary to the Arabs" (anfu Dashi shi 安撫大食使), to lead an army to Persia (Bosidao xingjun 波斯道行軍) as an escort for Narseh. In reality, the emperor intended to use the army to attack the military force of an alliance that had formed between remnants of the Western Turkic Khaganate and the Tibetan regime. According to Chinese manuscripts unearthed in Turpan, Tang troops escorted Narseh to Tokharistan via Humi 護密 (today's Wakhan) sometime around 680.[71] In 683 and 706, Persian emissaries appeared at the Tang court, perhaps dispatched by Narseh. In 708, after resisting Arab assaults for more than twenty years, Narseh returned to Chang'an, and soon after died of disease there.

Now let us review the course by which Jamshīd's descendants resisted Żaḥḥāk's army and escaped to the eastern world by referring to records of the Sasanian princes' exile in historical sources. Once in flight, Jamshīd's clansmen hid in a jungle named Arghūn in Chīn. The prototype for this place would most likely be Arghū, i.e., the Turkic name for a mountainous region that lay between the Sogdian city-states of Talas 怛羅斯 and Balasagun 八剌沙袞.[72] According to Chinese and Muslim historical sources, in the middle of the seventh century, before his flight to the Tang capital, Peroz escaped to Balkh with his father's family and dependents. They crossed the Amu Darya into Tokharistan, a region

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York Press, 1987), 92.

[70] Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, 16. P. Sykes, in *A History of Afghanistan*, states: "[In 667], under the governorship of Ziyad bin Abihi, the Oxus was crossed and Lower Tukharistan was invaded. During the course of this campaign Peroz, the son of Yezdigird III, the last unworthy Sasanian monarch (who had been murdered at Merv in A.D. 652), was defeated and driven back to China." P. Sykes, *A History of Afghanistan*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1940), 159–60.

[71] Jiang Boqin, "Tulufan wenshu suojian de 'Bosijun'" ["The army heading for Persia" as seen in the Turpan documents], *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 1 (1986): 128–35; see also Jiang Boqin, *Dunhuang Tulufan wenshu yu sichou zhilu* [Dunhuang-Turpan documents and the Silk Road] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1994), 49–50; Rong Xinjiang, "Tulufan wenshu 'Tang mouren zishu liguanzhuang' suoji Xiyu shishi gouchen" [Historical events of the Western Regions as recorded in the manuscript, "Self-written curriculum vitae of an officer in the Tang dynasty," unearthed in Turpan], *Xibei shidi* 4 (1987): 53–55.

[72] See Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, 1: 47–51 (term: Argon); Liu Yingjun, "Cong *Kushi wangji* kan gudai Yilang yu Dongya zhi jiaotong" [The travel routes between ancient Iran and East Asia as reflected in *Kushnāma*], *Xiyu yanjiu* 1 (2017): 63–75.

of Sogdian city-states then ruled by Turks, and settled there. Sogdiana was once occupied by the Sasanians and Hephthalites successively. After the Hephthalite Empire was destroyed by the alliance between the Sassanid Empire and the Western Turkic Khaganate, this region was ruled by the Turks. After Tang armies defeated the Western Turkic Khaganate in 657, the Tang court established Jimifuzhou to govern the region of the Soghdians and Tokharistan. In about a century from then on, Tokharistan and Sogdiana—located in the Amu Darya basin and the Syr Darya basin, including the Chuy Valley—were mainly under the thumb of the Tang emperor, who controlled them through the Anxi [da] duhu fu 安西［大］都護府 (The [grand] West-pacifying protectorate-general). In light of the above information, the Iranian princes' temporary refuge in Arghūn of Chīn as described in *Kūshnāma* conforms largely to the relevant claims made in specific records in historical sources.

Moreover, *Kūshnāma* continues, during the years of Ābtīn's refuge in B.sīlā, Kūsh-i Pīldandān journeyed to the court of Żaḥḥāk. This created an advantage that Ābtīn exploited. Thanks to help that came from the kings of Māchīn and B.sīlā, he defeated Kūsh's army to conquer Chīn and hold it for a period of time. During that period, people compelled to abandon their homes for safety and hide from Żaḥḥāk left Iran to seek Ābtīn and gathered around him. Later, Ābtīn retreated to B.sīlā with his men, for he dreaded Kūsh-i Pīldandān's return to Chīn. These plots are similar to the experiences of Narseh: For gathering his people and reviving the Sassanid Empire, Tang soldiers escorted him to Tokharistan; twenty-eight years later, he retreated to China as a large Arab offensive advanced eastward. The role that Chīn and Māchīn played in *Kūshnāma* closely resembles the part that the Sogdian city-states in Tokharistan played in the conflict between the Arab Empire and the Tang Empire in Central Asia. Initially, they were on good terms with their eastern allies (B.sīlā in *Kūshnāma* and the Tang Empire in history) and supported the Iranian royal family in exile; when the mighty commanders of their enemies (Kūsh-i Pīldandān in *Kūshnāma* and al-Aḥnaf b. Qays in history) went back to the west due to certain reasons, they assisted the Iranian resistance together with their allies; but finally, they were conquered by the invaders from the west (Kūsh-i Pīldandān in *Kūshnāma* and the Arab generals such as Qutayba b. Muslim in history). The geographic structure of these events depicted in *Kūshnāma* and in historical records do not fully correspond, but other structures—like logic of directionality and cause and effect—both do. This situation could be explained by the variability of collective memory and stories that were orally transmitted.

Now we can compare the plots about the exile of Jamshīd's descendants in *Kūshnāma* against the historical events that relate to Peroz and Narseh's efforts to resurrect the fallen empire and their taking refuge in China.

Plots in *Kūshnāma*	Possible Prototypes in Historical Events
Jamshīd married one of the daughters of Māhang, the king of Chīn.	Peroz married a Turkic woman. Such a plot may have been influenced by other events, such as Khusraw I's marriage to a daughter of the Turk's khāqān or the marriage of Samanid emir Nuh I to a Kara-Khanid or Khotanese princess.
Under attacked by Żaḥḥāk, Jamshīd sent his family to hide in the jungle of Arghūn in the territory of Chīn.	When al-Aḥnaf b. Qays led a Muslim army to Khurāsān, Peroz escaped to Tokharistan and settled down among the Turks.
When under attack by Kūsh at the order of Żaḥḥāk, Ābtīn led his clansmen to B.sīlā via Māchīn.	Dispatched by Ziyād b. Abīh, Al-Ḥakam b. ʿAmr al-Ghifārī invaded Tokharistan. Peroz fled to the Tang court in Chang'an and received safe haven.
Kūsh-i Pīldandān went to the court of Żaḥḥāk. Ābtīn conquered Chīn with the support of the king of B.sīlā. Iranians, forced to abandon their homes for safety, gathered around him.	Al-Aḥnaf b. Qays returned to the west. Tang Gaozong commanded Pei Xingjian to lead an army escorting Narseh, crowned king, to Tokharistan. Narseh mobilized his people and resisted the Arabs in Tokharistan for more than twenty years.
Ābtīn retreated to B.sīlā, for he dreaded Kūsh-i Pīldandān's return to Chīn.	Qutayba b. Muslim unleashed military operations in Central Asia. Narseh's men dispersed. He retreated to the Tang court, seeing no hope of reviving the Sassanid Empire.
Ābtīn married Farārang, a daughter of the king of B.sīlā, when he took refuge in B.sīlā.	Peroz married a Turkic woman. Such a plot may also have been influenced by the historical event of Sogdian migration to the Korean Peninsula and the marital connections between some of them and the royal family of Silla.

The record of Peroz's battle against the Arabs in the city of Jiling cannot be found in Muslim historical works, and no plot in *Kūshnāma* seems suitable as an analogy to this event. However, we can trace this event in other Persian epics such as *Garshāspnāma*. According to Henry Yule and Émmanuel-Édouard Chavannes, Jiling city as mentioned in Chinese sources probably refers to Zaranj (Zarang), the chief city of Sīstān (Sejistan), the Iranian eastern region lying to the south of Khurāsān.[73] Actually, Zarang was an alternative name for Sīstān in ancient times.[74] Whereas the name of Sīstān originated in the place of Sakas[75] and was

[73] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 1: 99; Feng Chengjun, *Xiyu diming* [西域地名; The place names in the Western Regions], rev. Lu Junling (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 107–108.

[74] Muḥammad Muʾīn, *Farhang-i Fārsī* [A Persian dictionary], vol. 5 (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1985 [SH 1364]), 841.

[75] It was Sakā or Saka plus "-stān," written in Persian as Sagistān→Sagizstān, in Arabic as Sijistān, and finally turned into Sīstān. Muʾīn, *Farhang-i Fārsī*, 5: 841; Aliakbar Dehkhodā, *Loghatnāme* [Encyclopedic dictionary], vol. 8, ed. Mohammad Moʾin and Jaʿfar Shahidi (Tehran: Tehran University Publications, 1994 [SH 1373], 12244.

transmitted among the Iranians during the pre-Islamic era, the geographical name Zābulistān appeared in early Islamic times referring to a region that covered the modern Afghan provinces of Ghaznī and Zābul. Indeed, it probably derived from Zunbīl, the title of a line of powerful rulers who checked Arab expansion for a long time.[76] In Perso-Arabic sources, Ghaznīn[77] and its neighboring area are together called Zābulistān,[78] which is located south of Balkh and Ṭukhāristān.[79] Sometimes this name also refers to the Ghaznīn city, while sometimes it refers to a relatively vast region, including even Sīstān. According to Muḥammad Taqī Bahār, Zābulistān was the name for the territory of Nīmrūz, which included Sīstān, Zamīn-Dāvar, Ṭūrān, Ghazna, and Qandahār, and reached as far as Kābul.[80] Persian dictionaries compiled in the seventeenth century such as *Farhang-i Jahāngīrī* claim that Zābul is the name for the territory of Sīstān, which is also called Nīmrūz.[81] *Burhān-i Qāṭi'* in particular defines Zābul as "the name of Sīstān,"[82] while explaining that Sagistān is "Zābulistān, namely Sīstān."[83] In Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, Sīstān is also called Nīmrūz;[84] while the terms of Sīstān and Zābulistān usually refer indiscriminately to the same place. Indeed, this situation influences the Persian epical tradition. Even though the historical evidence that supports Peroz's fight against the Arabs in Sīstān seems pretty thin, such an event could find an echo with the legends of Jamshīd and his descendants in exile in Zābulistān as depicted in Iranian epics. If true, this event would indicate that before Peroz went to the Tang court, he travelled a fairly broad region, spanning from Sīstān and Zābulistān in the south to Tokharistan in the north.

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[76] C. E. Bosworth, "Zābul, Zābulistān," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 11, new ed., ed. P. J. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 371.

[77] In Perso-Arabic sources, it is also written, for example, as Ghazna and Ghaznī.

[78] Sutūda, *Ḥudūd al-'alam*, 105.

[79] Yāqūt b. Abd Allāh Ḥamawī Baghdādī, *Mu'jam al-buldān* [A dictionary of countries], vol. 2, trans. 'Alīnaqī Munzavī (Tehran: Sāzmān-i Mīrāṣ-i Farhangī, 2001), 606.

[80] Muḥammad Taqī Bahār, ed., *Tarīkh-i Sīstān* [The history of Sīstān] (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mu'īn, 2002 [SH 1381]), 295.

[81] Dehkhodā, *Loghatnāme*, 8: 11024.

[82] Muḥammad Ḥusayn b. Khalaf Tabrīzī, *Burhān-i Qāṭi'* [The decisive proof], vol. 2, annot. Muḥammad Mu'īn (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1983 [SH 1362]), 993.

[83] Tabrīzī, *Burhān-i Qāṭi'*, 2: 1158.

[84] C. E. Bosworth, "Sīstān," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 9, new ed., ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 681–85.

CONCLUSION

The stories of Jamshīd's eastward flight and death, as well as the *Kūshnāma*'s story about the search for refuge in Chīn, Māchīn, and B.sīlā by Ābtīn and his clansmen, were most likely recreated by Iranians in the Islamic era as they recast legends of the pre-Islamic era. As they did, they probably combined collective memories of historical events involving the Sassanid princes Peroz and Narseh, like their refuge in Tang China and efforts to restore the Sassanid Empire. In retelling these legends, *Kūshnāma*'s creators embraced the consequences of the spread, circulation, and evolution of Jamshīd's legends among people in the centuries that followed the Sassanid demise. Furthermore, limited knowledge about Northeast Asia among Iranians of that era provided space for original legends and literary fiction to evolve. To evade Żaḥḥāk, a world-ruling king, Jamshīd's descendants must have looked for a place that was difficult to conquer; so B.sīlā, with Silla as its prototype, became one of the epic's important settings. Into these stories, the author of *Kūshnāma* might have assimilated aspects of the long-standing oral and written traditions of the Iranians, the Iranian collective memory concerning the last Sasanians in China, and certain fragments describing ancient China and the Korean Peninsula recorded in Perso-Arabic literature. Finally, on the basis of this article's discussion, we could perhaps advance further to consider elements of *Kūshnāma* that stand as evidence in the form of "folk history," in order to detect the frequent exchanges that occurred between Central Asia and East Asia in ancient times.

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