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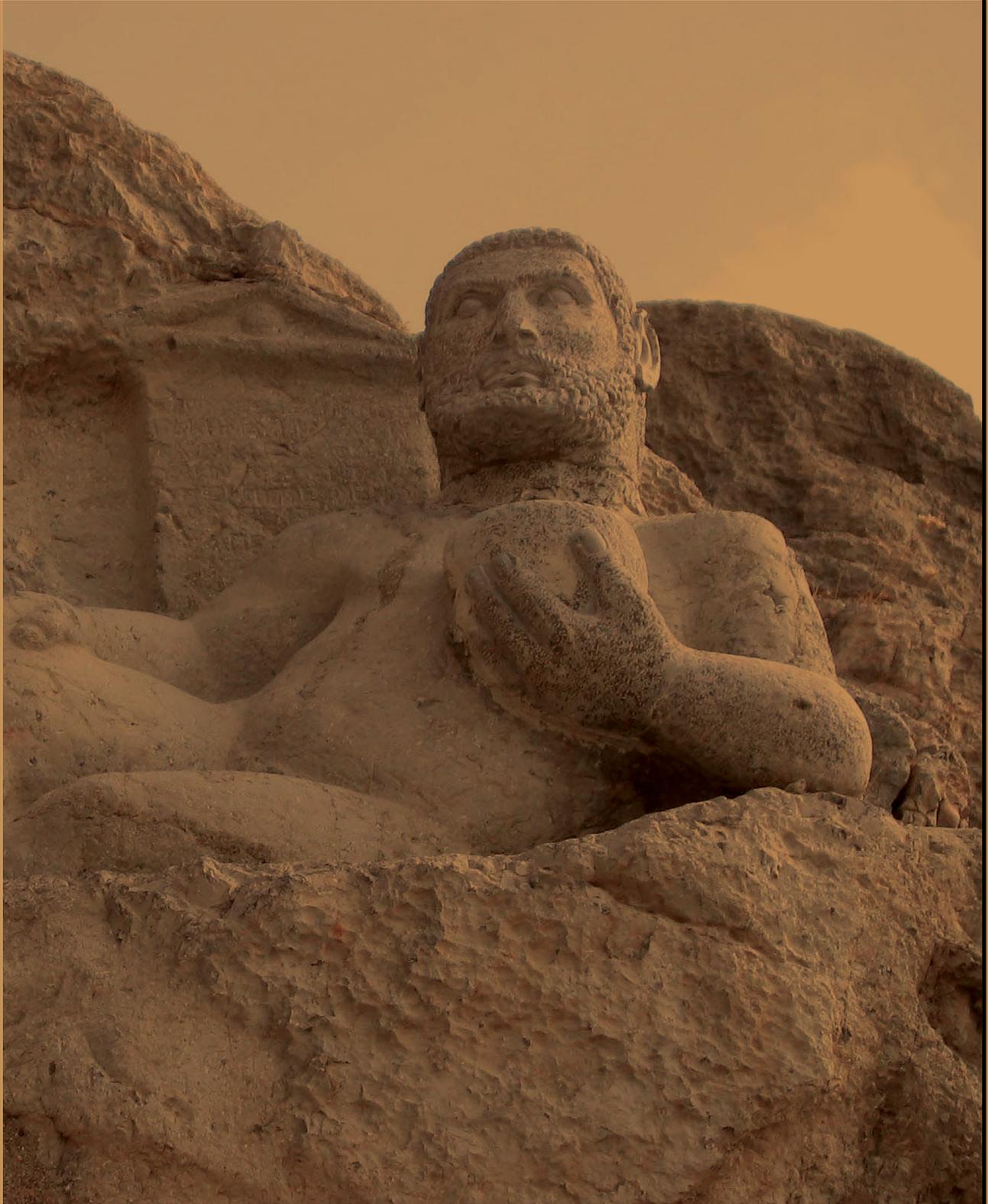
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Detail from above the entrance of Tehran's fire temple, 1286š/1917–18. Photo by © Shervin Farridnejad

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Special Issue: Hellenism and Iran

Collapse of Sasanian Empire

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Introduction

Sasanian Empire was one of the most important periods in the history, culture, arts, architecture, and political and cultural links of Iran, and these relations are attested with many other countries, near and far. The collapse of this dynasty was as bitter as its rule was glorious, and marked the beginning of numerous transformations in Persian literature. There is considerable scholarship on the cultural links between Iran and India, Iran and China, and Iran and Silla. However, the significant changes recorded in Persian texts after the collapse of the Sasanian Empire, including diplomatic migration to China-Silla and the migration of “Parsis” to India, are yet to be properly studied (Akbarzadeh: 2010, 420).

The cultural and artistic relations of the Sasanian Empire with lands to the east and west alike can be recovered through Sasanian (in Zoroastrian Pahlavi) and post-Sasanian (other Arabo-Persian) texts as well as through archaeological evidence.

However, with the collapse of the Sasanian Empire, both India and China (as well as Silla) once again demonstrated deep friendship towards Iran and Iranian culture. China warmly received Firuz, the son of Yazdgird, and his companions as political refugees; it also served as a bridge for cultural links between Iran and Silla¹ (cf. Akbarzadeh: 2014(a),7; Pulleyblank: 1991, Online).

¹- Mas‘ūdī (1970: 79) in making reference to different ethnic groups describes “China and Silla as the seventh ethnic group with the same kingdom and language.”

India, too, by accepting the Zoroastrians (Parsis) and offering them religious freedom, rendered a great service by safeguarding what became a shared heritage (Akbarzadeh: 2016, 226). With the collapse of the Sasanian Empire, we find a few Pahlavi texts dealing with diplomatic migration to China as well as religious migration to India (Bahar:1991, 141; Tafazzoli: 2001, 72). Post-Sasanian sources have likewise confirmed the impact of these migrations on the Persian texts. It is evident that the post-Sasanian sources are highly indebted to the written tradition, and even more to the oral tradition of the Sasanian era. Meanwhile, alongside China, Silla is described as a toponym linked to Fereydun, one of the key heroes of the Zoroastrian account of resurrection. Links between India, and the Far East (China-Silla) with Zoroastrian mythical hero-kings should be understood as part of a “transformation” of Persian literature. Evidently, forced migration of Sasanian princes to China and Silla (as the texts claim) on the one hand, and migration of the Parsis to India, on the other, count as important factors in this transformation. Interestingly, Sīstān and Rostam’s family appeared as part of the transformation.

However, *Wahrām ī Warzāwand* (“The Miraculous Wahrām”), a short Zoroastrian Pahlavi text, expresses the wish that a savior might return to Iran from Hindugān and save the country from the Arabs (cf. Cereti: 1996, 629-30). The *Zartošt-nāme* (1959: 1477 ff.) also desires a savior from Indo-Chinese territories might come to rescue Iran:

“When destroyer Arabs come, they destroy Iran entirely.
There is a (an Iranian) king in India and China, from Kayan’s dynasty:
He will campaign to rescue Iran, with a big troop from India and China.
He calls troops from Pars, Khorasan and Sīstān, a strong troop...
Bahram the king will rescue the world from evil...”

With the collapse of the Sasanian Empire, not only were India, China and Silla highlighted in these texts, but those toponyms were also associated with that of Sīstān. Furthermore, hero-kings like Jamšid, Garšāsb, Sām, Zāhāk, Farānak and Fereydun were linked to those toponyms.

Post-Sasanian Texts and Transformations:

According to the *Garšāsb-name*² (1938: 13, 46, 58, 62), “wandering Jamšid,” the mythical king of Iran who feared Zāhāk, visited Sīstān, where “he married Kurang’s daughter, one of Rostam’s ancestors.”

This text also refers to a savior, the “Zāhāk-killer” (Fereydun) who will appear in the future, and who will be born as a result of this marriage. Furthermore, the text (Ibd. 20-21) states “all brave members of Rostam’s family genealogically trace back to Jamšid as their ancestor.” The *Tārikh-e Sīstān* (2004:1-2) confirms this narration.

2- The story of Garšāsb is considered to be among the most ancient tales in Persian literature. The name Garšāsb is attested in Avestan texts (Reichert: 1911, 2, 97). The status of Garšāsb in the Avesta is like that of Rostam in the *Šāhnāme*. In the Avesta, he is an unrivaled hero with long hair, holding a mace in his hand. However, later and most probably as a result of political-religious developments and special social conditions in Iran in the early Islamic centuries, overshadowed by Rostam’s fame, he was turned into a second-class hero; he becomes the grand-ancestor of Rostam, and king of Sīstān. In many texts, such as the *History of Sīstān*, (2004:4) reference is made to his tales. The epic poem, Assadi’s *Garšāsb-name*, has more than seven thousand verses.

³ Sīstān does not appear in the archaic form of the Jamšid myth. Thus, *Ābān Yašt* (25-27): “Jam asked the Goddess Anāhītā, “Give me the blessing to be the greatest king of all countries and make me superior to all demons, people, sorcerers and fairies....” Anāhītā granted his wish (Duštkhah: 1987, 302). *Bundahišn* (MS. TD₂: 1980, 108) says “after Jam lost his glory, since he was afraid of demons, he chose a demon as his wife and gave away his sister, Jamag, to a demon as wife” (cf. Bahar 1991: 84).

Jamšid's stay in Sīstān is one of the major changes in the post-Sasanian texts. We also encounter a clear geographical connection between Sīstān and both India and China-Silla, where Jamšid plays a significant role. Rostam's family is also entangled with both India and China because of its ancestor Jamšid. As part of the transformation of Persian literature, Jamšid, as the center point of various tales, became entangled with these toponyms on the one hand, and genealogically with Rostam's family on the other.

The *Mojmal al-Tawārikh* (1939: 25, 39) records that, “Zahāk rebelled against Jamšid. He escaped to Zābolestān. Tūr was Jamšid's son from his wife, the daughter of Zābol the king.”

The *Sām-nāme* (2013: 29, 79, 82, 225, 184, passim) narrates that, “My father's name was Nariman, my ancestor was Jamšid. You know that my grandfather was Jamšid; his crown was brilliant like the sun.”

Despite the genealogical relations between Jamšid, Garšāsb and Sām (Rostam's family), a blood relation is also visible in the texts between Jamšid and Abtin, Fereydun and Farānak. This relation was not narrated in the Avesta or Zoroastrian Pahlavi texts; according to the post-Sasanian texts, it came about in Sīstān:

Mojmal al-Tawārikh (1939: 25-27): “Fereydun son of Athfian, son of Homāyūn, son of Jamšid.”

The *Frāmarz-nāme* (2004: 4595) enumerates the ancestors of Farāmarz, Rostam's son as: “Nariman, Kurang, Athrat, Sām, Garšāsb and finally Jamšid. The text (4599) also refers to Fereydun as his ancestor.”

The *Fārs-nāme* (1921: 36): “Fereydun's genealogy traces back to Jamšid.”

However, these statements raise the following questions: why did Jamšid appear as the ancestor of Rostam's family in Sīstān on the one hand, and yet was associated with Fereydun on the other? How did these changes occur in Persian texts?

As we know, the last Sasanian king, the wandering King Yazdgird, went to Khorasan by way of Sīstān. Firuz, his son, also stayed for two years in Sīstān and fought against the Arabs (Daryae: 2009, 37). Bahram, his brother, and probably Narsi, his son, received support from the first T'ang Emperors to campaign against the Arabs (Compareti: 2009, online). There is no document, however, which might lead us to assume that Yazdgird or Firuz contracted a marriage for political reasons to the daughter of one of the local rulers of Sīstān. Why then do the narrators link Sīstān to the wandering King Jamšid? Most probably, they equated the collapse of Jam's ideal kingship with that of the Sasanian Empire. In an earlier work, I identified the wandering king Jamšid with the wandering Yazdgird/Firuz in Sīstān (Akbarzadeh: 2014(b), 10).

The second change involves the connections between the Far East (China-Silla), India, and Sīstān. Here again, Jamšid, Zahāk, Garšāsb, Fereydun, and Rostam's family again play significant roles; all of these heroes also play roles in the Zoroastrian resurrection.

The *Garšāsb-nāme* states (1938: 19-20): “Jamšid went to India through Sīstān. He visited China through India. Zahāk captured him in China.”

The *Kuš-nāme* (Matini:1998, 75) meanwhile observes:

931. Zahāk sent Kuš to China from the West, and gave him the East entirely.

932. Zahāk told him: “Take complete vengeance on Jamšid's survivors”

2235. Taehur, Silla's king, told Abtin: you are welcome to yosur home [Silla].

Mojmal al-Tawārikh (1939: 40) “Zahāk commissions Kuš to go around the Orient [Far East] in search of Jamšid's survivors.”³

3- For more examples see Akbarzadeh: 2014(b), 1-8.

The questions arise, then, as to why should Zoroastrian heroes related to the resurrection be connected to toponyms in the Far East and India?

It seems that the presence of Sasanian princes (Iranian refugees) in the Far East led to an emphasis on China-Silla in the texts. Furthermore, their frequent movements between the east of Iran and China's borderland justify such geographical connections (cf. Agostini and Stark: 2016, 20).

This claim is further supported by the activities of Zoroastrians and local uprisings in Sīstān in the early Islamic period. Texts like the *Zartošt-nāme* (1959: 95), *Kuš-nāme* (1998: 2050 ff.), *Sām-nāme* (2013: 21-22), *Mojmal al-Tawārikh* (1939: 478-9, 481, 27), *Akhbār al-Sin* (2002:169), and the *Ajāyeb al-Makhlūqāt* (1983:103) refer to China and Silla very prominently. These two toponyms are described as being like "heaven", a "promised land", or the "land of the final Zoroastrian savior."

Most probably the Zoroastrian or nationalist creators of these tales imagined the world had ended with the collapse of the Sasanian empire, or more specifically with the futile campaigns of Sasanian princes supported by China (cf. *Šāhnāme*: 2002: 2128). Diplomatic migration to the Far East (China and Silla) must account for why Jamšid is now recorded as having died in China (Akbarzadeh: 2015, 40), why Fereydun was born from the daughter of Taehur,⁴ king of Silla, and destined to rescue Iran at the final resurrection; why Sām⁵ and Garšāsb⁶ (Rostam's ancestor) are linked with China when they are to kill Zāhāk (cf. *Sām-nāme*: 2013, 23; also *Bahman-nāme*: 1991, 244-7270).

Meanwhile the situation of India was a little different. Communities of Zoroastrians migrated to India, settled there and finally lived secure lives there generation after generation. India is also linked with Sīstān and these heroes. Jamšid,⁷ Zāhāk,⁸ Garšāsb,⁹ Sām¹⁰, Farānak and Fereydun¹¹ visited India. Ossuaries of most

4- *Mojmal al-Tawārikh* (1939: 27): "Fereydun was the son of Atfial [Athfian] son of Homāyūn son of Jamšid the king, and his mother was Fari Rang, the daughter of Taehur king of Bas(i)la Machin." Aḥmad Tūsī in the *Ajāyeb al-Makhlūqāt* (2003:190) wrote: "Faghfur, the king of Al-Sin [China] wrote a letter to Faridun, the king of Iran..." The *Kuš-nāme* (1998:5502-7) records that, "It was the messenger of Fararang, Taehur's daughter... She had written: 'You the prosperous king, may happiness be with you... My son is now prosperous, congratulations to you for the kingdom of Faridun.'" In the *Ḥudud al-Ālam* (1983, 60) we read that, "It has been said that China's king was one of Faridun's sons."

5- "Fereydun sent Sam to the Orient" (*Mojmal al-Tawārikh*: 1939:105).

6- *Tārikh-e Sīstān* (2004: 2, 41): "(Fereydun) sent him (Garšāsb) to China to capture the king of China. Fereydun, sent Qaran Kaveh to China to arrest Kuš the Elephant Tooth" (cf. Ḥabīb-al-Seyar: 2001, 227). *Mojmal al-Tawārikh* (1939:40) writes: "Zāhāk sent to India Garšāsb, great grandson of Jamšid, to help Maharaja ..."

7- The *Nawruz-nāme* (attributed to Khayam: 2016, 81) states: "Jamšid escaped (from Zāhāk) and went to India." *Mojmal al-Tawārikh* (1939: 40, 25) narrates that "Maharaja (>Maha-Raja) of the Indians fought against him (Jamšid) upon orders of Zāhāk. Jamšid's name was Jam ... In the *Šāhnāme*, the son of Tahmurith says ... Jamšid fled to inner India ..." Also, Maqdisi, in his "Creation and History," (1995: 594) says: "Jamšid excavated seven rivers and connected one of them to the Mehran River in Sindh." Here Maqdisi, however, makes no reference to the Far East.

8- In the *Farāmarz-nāme* (2004: 77-79): "Zāhāk, India's king, sent an official letter to Farāmarz."

9- Cf. *Garšāsb-nāme*: 1938, 90-202.

10- They built Sām's ossuary in India (*Mojmal al-Tawārikh*: 1939, 463); Sīstān and India were under Sām's authority. Zāl visited India to bring the coffin of his father, Sām, to Sīstān (Tha'labi: 1368 § [1989], 53, 81).

11- *Nawruz-nāme* (2016: 81): "Afridun returned from Hindustān and killed Zāhāk." *Mojmal al-Tawārikh* (1939:108): "Fowr, the king of the kings of the Indians, was the son of those chiefs who at the time of Zāhāk and Afridun ..." Gardizi (2006: 69) wrote that, "As soon as Afridun reached Babylonia, many people obeyed him ... then he entered the house of Zāhāk ... sat on his place as Zāhāk had left for India ..." (cf. *Tārikh-e Sīstān*: 2004, 8; Mas'udi in *Moruj al-Dhahab*: 1965, 19- 218). The *Šahriyār-nāme* (Diwan Othman Mokhtari: 1962, 809-812), says: "Farāmarz with Iran's troops went towards Sarandib [Ceylon]. He arrived near there, and sent a letter to Farānak. When Farānak received the letter, she was very upset. Because she was surprised, they attacked her." The question remains as to why a queen named Farānak appears in Sarandib – a part of India.

of them were built in India, according to the texts.¹²

Zoroastrians were not only involved in the uprisings against the Arabs in Sīstān (*Tārīkh-e Sīstān*: 2004, 74), but also used Sīstān as a gateway for their trips to India. I suppose that probably the Zoroastrian narrators made use of Rostam's dynasty as a sort of 'national' symbol of mobilization against the Arabs. If so, Farāmarz, Šahriyār¹³ and Azar-Burzin served as heroes representing the Iranian Zoroastrian past. As a result, being Iranian and Zoroastrian were united in the face of the "new arrivals" in the early Islamic period.

Surprisingly in the *Bahman-nāme*, because of Bahman's attack on Sīstān, not only did Farāmarz (Rostam's son) visit India, where he befriended India's kings and defended Zoroastrianism (cf. *Farāmarz-nāme*: 2004, 1460), but the name of "Azar-Burzin" as Rostam's grandson, the commander of India's army, is of special interest.¹⁴

Šahriyār, Rostam's grandson, also visited India, and sojourned, and this further supports my argument (cf. Akbarzadeh: 2018, 57). On the last page of the *Frāmarz-nāme*, a Zoroastrian copyist wrote, "I completed this story, thousands of salutes to Zoroaster, the prophet" (Zutphen-Khatibi: 2015, 368).

It seems that we are faced with three "narrations", comprising the "old tradition" (the myths of Jamšid, Fereydun, and Garšāsb in the Avesta, or of Rostam's dynasty in the *Šāhnāme*); a "new tradition" where China and Silla were highlighted; and another new tradition where India was highlighted in the texts. Heroes like Jamšid (as well as Zahāk), Garšāsb, Sām (and Rostam's son and grandsons) and Fereydun (as well as Farānak) sometimes appeared in the Far East and sometimes in India. Most probably these two new traditions can also explain acceptably why the *Zartošt-nāme* used "Indo-Chinese territories" as the place of the appearance of the final savior (1959:97).

Conclusion

The collapse of the Sasanian Empire and the subsequent flight of the royal family to China (a political event) and then of another group to Silla, as well as the compulsory migration of communities of Zoroastrians to India, were, in my opinion, a major event in Persian literature (see the diagram). Migration to China-Silla and India transformed the old narrations and epic stories which were a part of the identity and history of Iran. It is clear, for example, that Sasanian history was described in an epic and exaggerated manner in Ferdowsi's *Šāhnāme*.

The awareness of these two migrations led both Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian authors to elaborate a solid pretext for a form of waiting for the arrival of a savior from China-Silla, as depicted in some Persian literary works of the first few centuries of the Islamic era, as well as depicting India as a land offering

12- *Bahman-nāme* (1991: 425 ff.): "Bahman visited the ossuaries of Garšāsb, Nariman, Sam and Roštam in India (!)" Meanwhile, in very few reports can we find Zal's nam linked to India, China, or the heroes of the resurrection. Was his demonic birth the reason that the narrators omitted his name? The *Frāmarz-nāme* records that (2004, 87-90), "Farāmarz saw an inscription in a cave [ossuary]; it was a message from one of Jamšid's survivors in India: 'My name is Nušzād, Jamšid is my ancestor; our father was Jamšid.'"

13- The *Shahriyār-nāme* dates back to the fifth century AH (eleventh century CE) and was composed by Serajeddin Othman bin Mohammad Mokhtari Ghaznavi (d. 1149 or 1159 CE) (cf. Safa: 1945, 311). This story is a description of the braveries of Šahriyār, son of Borzu, son of Roštam.

14- Bahman (*Bahman-nāme*: 1991, 7001-7045) "asked, 'who is the commander of that navy?' The adviser answered: 'he is Azar-Burzin, Farāmarz's son [Roštam's grandson]'" Also cf. Zutphen-Khatibi: 2015, 366).

security to Iranian migrants. The two themes of waiting and security provided in turn a pretext for the geographical intertwining of certain myths with China-Silla, others with India. Undoubtedly, the special social, political and religious conditions of the early centuries of the Islamic era, and the rewriting of texts and history by some Zoroastrian priests should be considered an important factor in these changes.¹⁵

In fact, the presence of the Sasanian princes in China and Silla was equated with the deeds of the most important sacred and mythological hero-kings. In the original texts of the myth of Jamšid, Fereydun, Farānak, Zāhāk, and Rostam's dynasty (Garšāsb and Sām), there is no mention of China-Silla or India. The role these places came to play in narrations of these myths can surely be ascribed to the presence of Sasanian princes in the Far East or Parsis in India. It is clear that the Sasanian princes embarked on military expeditions against the Arabs with the help of China (and probably Silla); the shadow of these military expeditions and the hope for the redemption of Iran should be seen in the theme of waiting for a savior. The appearance of saviors from China and Silla serves as a reminder of the efforts of the migrant Sasanians for the salvation of Iran and their own return. These events have reached us through oral and later written traditions. Changes in the roles of these characters and their relations with India should be interpreted in association with the migration of Zoroastrians to India.

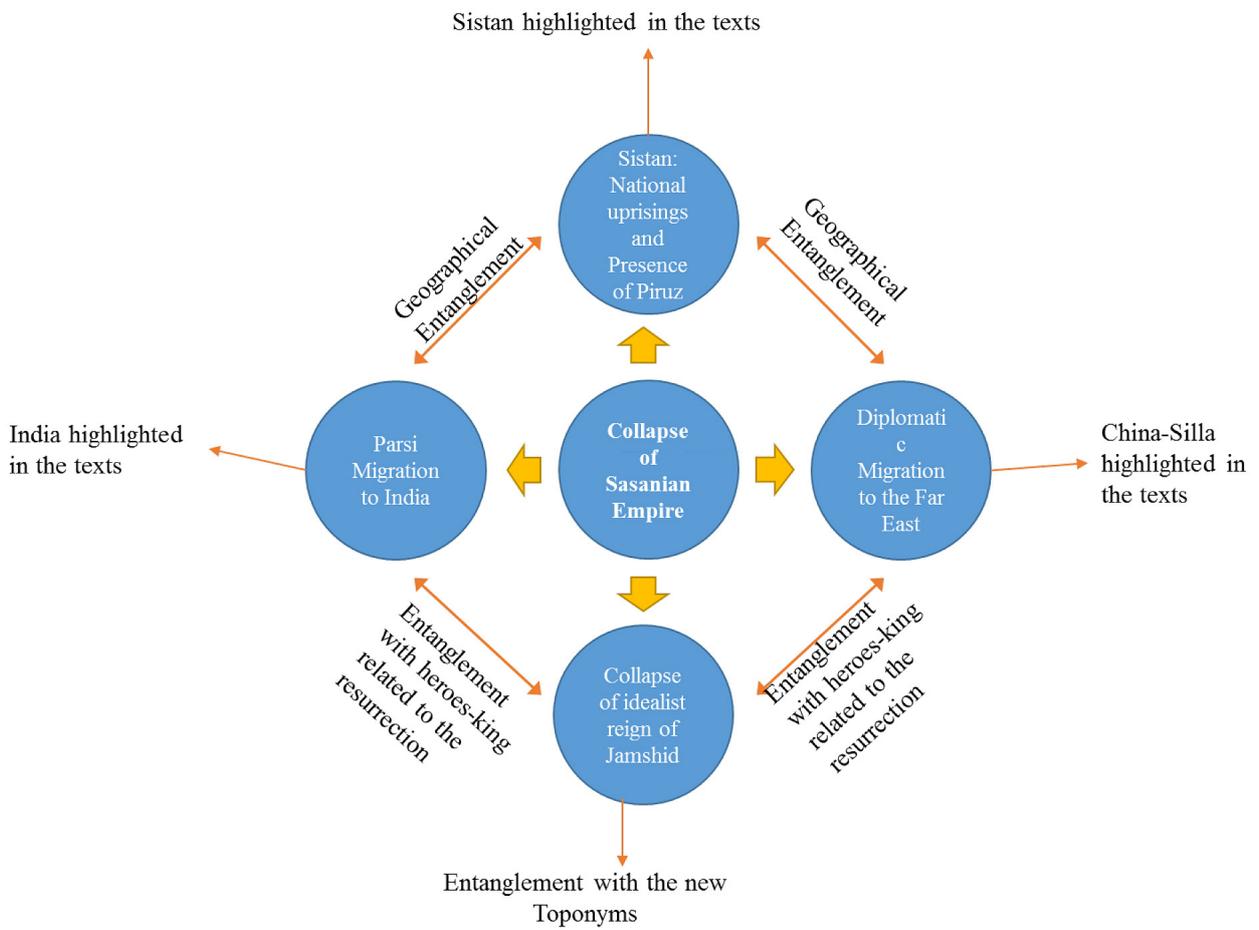
The entanglement of the Far East and India with Sīstān remind us of Yazdgird or Firuz's brief sojourns in Sīstān, as well as of Zoroastrians and national uprisings against the Arabs in this region. The toponym of Sīstān is associated with the name of Rostam's family in Persian texts; this association was an acceptable reason for Zoroastrians and rebels to make use of its name to excite people against the Arabs.

The fact is that with regard to the transformations discussed herein, we are faced with three types of narration:

- 1- The creation and continuation of the original myths as they had appeared in the Avesta up to the Pahlavi Zoroastrian texts, as well as in some of the post-Sasanian texts.
- 2- The emergence of changes in the ancient myths in which China and Silla find an important footing.
- 3- The emergence of changes in the ancient myths involving their intertwining with India.

The changes mentioned in numbers two and three and the distance of the resulting tales from the original myth was the result of the migration of Iranians to these three lands after the collapse of the Sasanian Empire, as well as the support they were accorded there. Clearly oral tradition played a significant role in relaying these changes to the Early Islamic centuries. This transformation of the form of the epic, itself a common mode of historiography in ancient Iran, was recorded by Muslim poets and authors. These tales should be considered as a part of the common heritage of Iran, China, Korea and India.

15- For example, according to Middle Persian and mostly New Persian texts, King Vištāsp, with his capital in Bactria, was the first protector of Zoroaster. Interestingly, he appears in India as a king in certain Persian texts (Akbarzadeh: 2016, 225).



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