Sharwīn of Dastabay: Reconstructing an early Persian Tale

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Abstract

The article discusses a little-known lost Persian tale, The Story of Sharwin of Dastabay, *and traces references to it in Arabic, Persian, and Byzantine sources. The earliest references to the story come from the mid- to late eighth century, and it seems to have remained well known in Arabic and Persian literature until the early twelfth and possibly the early fourteenth century, while Byzantine literature shows that at least some of its elements circulated already in the mid-sixth century. The article also discusses how the story may have been transmitted both in Iran and, crossing the linguistic boundary, in an Arabic context. Though much of the story remains unknown, it is clear that it relates to later epics and reveals something of the literary context of Firdawsi and his* Shahname.

Keywords: *Shahname*; Firdawsi; Persian non-religious literature; Byzantine literature; reconstructing narratives

Non-religious Persian literature of the sixth to ninth centuries has been poorly preserved. This is equally true whether we speak of works written, or composed, in Middle Persian or Early New Persian or of their Arabic translations and Classical Persian rewritings.

On the other hand, Arabic bibliographical and historical sources, Ibn al-Nadīm's (d. in the 380s/990s) *Fihrist* over all, provide us with a number of titles of Arabic books, mostly lost, said to have been translated from (Middle) Persian. Many of these belong to history, wisdom literature, or entertainment literature, notorious for their pseudepigraphs and distorted titles.[1] Thus, coming across a title in, e.g., Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, translated from Persian into Arabic

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[1]To pick but two examples, *The Book of Mazdak* has nothing to do with Mazdak, see A. Tafazzoli, "Observations sur le soi-disant Mazdak-nāmag," in *Orientalia J. Duchesne-Guillemin emerito oblata* (Leiden, 1984), pp. 507–510, and J. Hämeen-Anttila, *Khwadāynāmag. The Middle Persian Book of Kings* (Leiden–Boston, 2018), pp. 35–36; and the famous *Nāme-ye Tansar* (ed.) M. Mīnuwī, Tehran 1311 AHSh) is generally considered a pseudepigraph. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* may be taken as an example of a work almost certainly translated from Middle Persian, although with some modifications, see F. de Blois, *Burzōy's Voyage to India and the Origin of the Book of Kalīlah wa Dimnah* (London, 1990). The situation is somewhat different in scientific and philosophical literature, for which see D. Gutas, (1998), *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture. The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th centuries)* (London–New York, 1998).

but lost, there are several possibilities. The book may never have existed, and its title may be a misunderstanding either by Ibn al-Nadīm or his source. If it existed, it may be an Arabic book that only claims to derive from Persian—as we know from al-Jāḥiẓ's (d. 255/868) *Faṣl*,[2] pseudepigraphs were selling well in the ninth century and probably later, too. It may go back to Persian materials other than written books: an Arabic author may have retold Persian stories, which he had received through oral transmission, popular or learned. Finally, he may have translated from a Middle Persian manuscript with more or, usually, less fidelity to the original.

While all this might entice one to ignore such titles, the small number of preserved Persian texts forces us to make the best use we can of the information gleaned from Arabic sources. The aim of this article is to study one particular case, the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay*, only known from a few passing mentions in our sources and never properly studied before.[3]

Evidence in Arabic

Arabic and later Persian historical sources have some vague knowledge of an Iranian nobleman from the Sasanian period by the name of Sharwīn of Dastabay.[4] He makes his first appearance in a poem by Abū Nuwās (d. *circa* 198/813):[5]

بما يتلون في البستاق رمزا ‖ كتاب زردُّش داعي المجوسِ
وما يتلون في شروين دستْبي ‖ وفرجردات رامين وويس

By what they (the Persians) read allegorically in the *Avesta*,
the book of Zarathustra, the proselytiser of the Magians,
and by what they read in *Sharwīn of Dastabay*[6]
and the chapters[7] of *Wīs and Rāmīn*.[8]

Sharwīn of Dastabay is given by Abū Nuwās as the title of a story, rather than a personal name. His commentator, Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 350/961 or 360/971) writes:[9]

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[2]Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Faṣl mā bayn l-ʿadāwa waʾl-ḥasad*, in al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasāʾil*, (ed.) ʿA. M. Hārūn, 2 vols., (Cairo, n.d.), i, pp. 333–373, here pp. 350–351.

[3]Mīnuwī's brief note in M. Mīnuwī, "Yakī az fārisiyyāt-e Abū Nuwās," *Majalle-ye Dānishkade-ye Adabiyyāt*, I/3 (1333 AHSh), pp. 14–15 [offprint], is the basis on which all later scholars have built. E.g., Dh. Ṣafā, *Ḥamāse-sārāyī dar Īrān az qadīmtarīn ʿahd-e tārīkhī tā qarn-e chahārdahum-e hijrī* (Tehran, 1374 AHSh), p. 108, merely repeats some of the information Mīnuwī gives, and A. Tafaḍḍulī, *Tārīkh-e adabiyyāt-e Īrān pīsh az Islām*, 3rd edition (Tehran, 1376 AHSh), pp. 274–276, has only minor additions.

[4]For the name and the character, see F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (Marburg, 1895), p. 290.

[5]Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, (eds.) E. Wagner and G. Schoeler, 5 vols. (Wiesbaden/Stuttgart/Berlin, 1958–2003), v, pp. 143–146 (no. 148, verses 18–19). The verses come from a list of oaths by various Persian and/or Zoroastrian terms by which Abū Nuwās swears his love for a Persian boy.

[6]For metrical reasons, the geographical name has to be read Dastbay in the poem.

[7]From Middle Persian *fragard*, see H. S. Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi. II: Glossary* (Wiesbaden, 1974), p. 75, s.v. *frakart*.

[8]Mīnuwī,"Yakī," pp. 14–15, E. Wagner, *Abū Nuwās. Eine Studie zur arabischen Literatur der frühen ʿAbbāsidenzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1965), pp. 190–195, and L. Harb, "Persian in Arabic poetry," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 139 (2019), pp. 7–11, contain useful translations and commentaries to the poem, but none goes particularly deep in discussing Sharwīn and his story.

[9]Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, V, p. 146.

وشروين أحدوثة جرت في قديم الزمان يُتغنى بها ودستبي الكورة التي أحدث فيها مدينة قزوين والفرجردات
كالقصائد ورامين وويس أحدوثة لهم معروفة.

> *Sharwīn* is a story that took place in ancient times, and it is sung. Dastabay is the district in which
> the city of Qazwin is located. *Firjardāt* are like *qaṣīdas*, and *Wīs and Rāmīn* is a well-known story of
> theirs (the Persians).

The expression أحدوثة جرت في قديم الزمان simultaneously refers to the event and the story. There
is little in Abū Nuwās' verse or Ḥamza's commentary to show what kind of story this was.
As we shall soon see, elsewhere Ḥamza only refers to Sharwīn as a trusted administrator, but
the juxtaposition of *Sharwīn of Dastabay* with "the chapters of *Wīs and Rāmīn*" might imply a
love story, romances and heroic epics being the most common types of literature Arabic
authors would have us to believe Persians had been writing or composing, which also fits
tenth/eleventh-century and later Classical Persian literature.

In the poem from which these verses come, Abū Nuwās uses Persian words and Zoroas-
trian concepts correctly, which gives credence to the real existence of *Sharwīn of Dastabay*,
too. The *Avesta* and *Wīs and Rāmīn* were really existing books, and there is no reason to
assume otherwise in the case of *Sharwīn of Dastabay*.[10] Abū Nuwās was well informed
about Persian literature: Zarathustra's *Avesta* was well known, but *Wīs and Rāmīn* was not.
This, in fact, is the earliest reference[11] to the work which we know in the later version
by Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī, written in 447/1055,[12] and which Gurgānī himself tells us to
have existed in an earlier version.[13] As there is conclusive evidence for the existence of
Wīs and Rāmīn, we should also, *a priori*, take *Sharwīn of Dastabay* seriously.

Abū Nuwās mentions Sharwīn also in a few other poems. In a *hijā'* poem[14] on a man of
Sindi origin, who tries to pass for a Khurasanian, he refers to *ḥuṣūn al-shaykh Sharwīn*
"fortresses of the old Sharwīn", *Sharwīn* explained by Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī in his commentary
to be a general name for one of the minor kings of Khurasan.[15] Abū Nuwās also uses it in a
fragment of two verses of *mujūn*, which mentions *Bukhārā-khudhāh* and *Sharwīn*.[16] As
Dastabay is not in Khurasan, it remains unclear whether these refer to the Sharwīn of the
story.

Sharwīn is further mentioned in context of wine drinking in a poem by Muḥammad ibn
Ḥamza ibn Nuṣayr, also known as *Wajh al-Qarʿa*, a little-known singer and poet from the

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[10]For this and other *fārisiyyāt* of Abū Nuwās, see Mīnuwī, "Yakī"; Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*, pp. 190–195, 213–215;
G. Schoeler, "Abū Nuwās' poem to the Zoroastrian boy Bihrūz: an Arabic 'sawgand-nāma' with a Persian
'kharja'," in *The Rude, the Bad and the Bawdy. Essays in Honour of Professor Geert Jan van Gelder*, (eds.) A. Talib,
M. Hammond, and A. Schippers (Gibb Memorial Trust, 2014), pp. 66–79; Harb, "Persian".

[11]See C. L. Cross, *The Poetics of Romantic Love in Vis & Rāmin*, PhD thesis (Chicago, 2015), p. 32.

[12]See D. Davis, "Vis o Rāmin," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*; F. de Blois, *Persian Literature. A Bio-Biographical Survey
Begun by the Late C.A. Storey*, V/1–3 (London, 1992–1997), pp. 161–167.

[13]Gurgānī, *Wīs o-Rāmīn*, (ed.) M. Rawshan (Tehran, 1377 AHSh) pp. 37–38 (vv. 29–55). The details of this
passage are not reliable, but the reference to an existing earlier story is clear.

[14]Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ii, p. 104, with Ḥamza's commentary in ii, 106. On this poem, see Harb, "Persian,"
pp. 11–14.

[15]Note, however, that this is not supported by the list in al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiya ʿan al-qurūn al-khāliya*, (ed.)
P. Adhkāʾī (Tehran, 1380 AHSh/2001), pp. 116–117, nor elsewhere in literature, though Sharwīn is attested as a
royal personal name and a geographical name.

[16]Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, v, pp. 278–279. In Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, v, p. 467, this verse is discussed from a gram-
matical viewpoint.

time of the Caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136–158/754–775) and, thus, slightly earlier than Abū
Nuwās:[17]

<div dir="rtl">

فديت من بات يغنّيني || وبتُّ أسقيه ويسقيني

ثم اصطبحنا قهوةً عُتّقتْ || من عهد سابور وشروينِ

</div>

> I would ransom (by my life) the one who sang to me through the night
> while I gave him wine to drink and he gave it me to drink.
> At morning, we drank more wine, kept ageing
> from the times of Sābūr and Sharwīn.

The verses further confirm that Sharwīn was at this time famous enough among Arabic lit-
erati to be alluded to without explanation. He is presented in a context of wine drinking,
with some erotic overtones. Anticipating what will follow, it would be tempting to define
this as an all-male scene. However, the masculine forms refer back to the pronoun *man*,
without revealing the gender of the poet's wine-drinking companion and the mention of
singing actually tips the scales in favour of a female boon companion.

Discussing the Sharwīn of the Sasanian times, al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1422), *Khabar/Persia* II,[18]
quotes from an Arabic poem, which I have not been able to locate elsewhere:

<div dir="rtl">

يا أيها السائل عن ديننا || نحن على ملة شروينِ

(وكان له مذهب في اللواطِ وشرب الخمرِ. وينشد:)

نشربها صرفاً بلا مزنة || ونُدخل القثاء في التينِ

</div>

> A poet has said:
>   Oh you, who ask about our religion:
>   we follow the way (*milla*) of Sharwīn.
> Sharwīn followed the way of homosexuality and wine drinking. The poet said (in the
> same poem):
>   We drink it unmixed, without water,
>   and we drive a cucumber into a fig![19]

Here Sharwīn is explicitly associated with homosexuality and wine drinking. As we will soon
see, in several sources Sharwīn is associated with a (male) servant, Khwarrīn, or in Arabic
sources Khurrīn. However romantic the story may have been in the original, Arab poets
were ready to use it irreverently. The verses resemble some *mujūn* verses by Abū Nuwās:[20]

<div dir="rtl">

يا أيها السائل عن ديننا || قد ذهب المردانُ بالدينِ

نحن أناس حسنٌ ديننا || نكسّر القثاء في التين

</div>

> Oh you, who ask about our religion:
> beardless boys have taken away our religion.

[17]Al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, 25 vols. (Beirut, 1374/1955), xv, pp. 285–286.
[18]J. Hämeen-Anttila (ed.), *Al-Maqrīzī's al-Ḫabar ʿan al-bašar (Vol. V, section 4) Persia and Its Kings*, Part II.
(Leiden–Boston, forthcoming), here §7.
[19]I.e., practice anal intercourse.
[20]Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, v, p. 57 (no. 76).

We are people of a good religion:[21]
we're smashing the cucumber into the fig!

The hemistich يا أيها السائل عن ديننا is also found in a two-verse poem on wine drinking composed or quoted by al-Walīd ibn Yazīd (d. 126/744) and widely circulating in early ʿAbbāsid literature, which provides us with a probable date for the verses quoted by al-Maqrīzī, too.[22]

Further mentions come from Ibn al-Faqīh's *Mukhtaṣar*,[23] written in 290/903 or soon after. Ibn al-Faqīh quotes two poems which mention Sharwīn and Khurrīn. The first is anonymous, purported to have been found written on the Wall of Shīrīn. The middle section of the poem reads:

أما رأيتَ صروف الدهر ما صنعت || بالقصر قصر أبرويز وشيرينِ
أما نظرتَ إلى إحكام صنعته || كأنه قطعة من طور سينين
قد صار قفرا خلّاء ما بها أحد || إلّا النعام مع الوحشية العين
من بعد ما كان أبرويز أشحنها || بالدارعين وكتّاب الدواوين
وكلِّ ليث شجاع باسل بطل || كمثل خُرينها أو مثل شروينِ

Have you not seen what the ever-changing Time has done
to the castle, the castle of Abarwīz and Shīrīn?
Have you not looked at its solid work,
like it was a piece of Mount Sinai?
Yet it has become abandoned and ruined with no one
but ostriches and wide-eyed wild cows living there
after Abarwiz had filled it
with iron-clad men and scribes of offices
and every brave lion, fearless hero,
like Khurrīn[24] or like Sharwīn.

Technically, the poem dates Sharwīn and Khurrīn to the time of Kisrā Abarwīz (r. 591–628), but the date is perhaps not to be taken seriously in this *Ubi sunt?* poem. What is significant, though, is that Sharwīn and Khurrīn are the only names, aside of Kisrā Abarwīz and Shīrīn, who are mentioned in the poem, which speaks volumes of their fame.

The second mention comes in a poem by an Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, which describes the royal arch, *ṭāq*, depicting Kisrā Abarwīz surrounded by his noblemen. The first four lines read:[25]

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[21]I do not think that there is an allusion here to Zoroastrianism as *beh-dīn* "good religion".

[22]See al-Walīd ibn Yazīd, *Dīwān*, (ed.) Ḥ. ʿAṭwān (Beirut, 1418/1998), no. 46, with further references, including al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, (eds.) M. J. de Goeje et al., 3 vols. (Leiden, 1879–1901), i, p. 1742, translated in C. Hillenbrand, *The History of al-Ṭabarī* XXVI: *The Waning of the Umayyad Caliphate* (Albany, 1989), p. 89, and al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, vii, p. 5 (and cf. vii, p. 6 for a sequel to the poem) and most recently discussed in S. Judd, "Reinterpreting al-Walīd b. Yazīd," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 128 (2008), pp. 439–458, here p. 453. Cf. also the single line in Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, v, p. 293 (no. 292).

[23]Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*, (ed.) M. J. de Goeje (Lugduni Batavorum, 1885, reprinted Beirut, 1967), p. 159.

[24]The final *-hā* vaguely refers to the castle. Note the sudden change from the masculine to the feminine two lines earlier.

[25]Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 216.

بِوَسْتانَ طاقٌ ليس في الأرض مثله || وفيه تصاوير من الصخر محكمُ
وبرويز فيه والمرازب حوله || وشيرين تسقيهم وشيخ مزمزم
وبهرام جور والمقاول مُثِّل || وشروينُ فيهم قاعد متعممِ
وخرّينُ قد أجرى وأومى بسهمه || إلى طِفلة حسانة لا تَكلَّمُ

In Wastān,[26] there is a royal arch unlike anything on earth,
with pictures, made of stone, solid.
Abarwīz is there, surrounded by the *marzubān*s,
Shīrin pouring wine to them, and an old man reciting prayers,
Bahrām Gūr and the chieftains[27] standing,
among them Sharwīn sitting, wearing a turban,
and Khurrīn driving on (his horse?) and pointing with his arrow
to a young and beautiful girl, who is not saying a word.

The poem does not tell us much about Sharwīn, but it is slightly surprising that he has been
elevated above all the *marzubān*s, chieftains, and even the Sasanian king, Bahrām V Gūr
(r. 420–438), who stand, while he is sitting. The characters being from different centuries,
the poem does not even make a claim of dating Sharwīn to any specific time.

Here, Sharwīn is again mentioned in connection with Khurrīn, implying that they belong
to the same story. Their occurrence in both poems with the famous love pair Kisrā Abarwīz
and Shīrīn may imply that the story has romantic, besides the obvious heroic, elements.
Whether the beautiful girl is a further character in the story or whether she is the witch
in disguise, mentioned in the *Mujmal* (see below), remains uncertain.

Al-Dīnawarī (d. not later than 290/902) is the earliest historian to mention the story, set-
ting Sharwīn to the time of Kisrā Anūshirwān (r. 531–579):[28]

ووكل بقبضه وتوجيهه إليه في كل عام شروين الدستباي فأقام مع ملك الروم هناك ومعه خرين مملوكه
المشهور الخبر وكان نجدا فارسا بطلا.

Kisrā appointed Sharwīn al-Dastabāy to receive and forward it (the money the Byzantine
Emperor was to pay) to him every year, and Sharwīn stayed there with the King of Byzantium
together with his servant Khurrīn, whose story is well known. He[29] was a courageous knight and
a hero.

Here, Sharwīn is primarily seen as Kisrā's agent, appointed to receive the tax money on
Kisrā's behalf and forward it to Kisrā, in addition to being a hero. As often, the anonymous
Nihāyat al-arab agrees with the information given by al-Dīnawarī, though using different
words.[30]

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[26]Identified in a marginal note to the manuscript as "a village".

[27]*Miqwal*, as a matter of fact, is a Yemenite word (Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, (ed.) ʿA. Shīrī, 18 vols. (Beirut,
1408/1988), xi, p. 353a, s.v.), here misused in a Persian context.

[28]Al-Dīnawarī, *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, (ed.) V Guirgass (Leiden, 1888), p. 71. Al-Ṭabarī does not mention Sharwīn
of Dastabay.

[29]Referring either to Sharwīn or to Khurrīn.

[30]*Nihāyat al-arab fī taʾrīkh al-Furs waʾl-ʿArab*, (ed.) M.T. Dānishpizhūh (Tehran, 1374 AHSh), p. 325. The cor-
respondences between the two works are well known, see Hämeen-Anttila, *Khwadāynāmag*, pp. 92–99, and the lit-
erature mentioned there, but the exact relations between the two and the dating of (various parts of) the *Nihāya* are
still uncertain. Parts of the *Nihāya* may well be earlier than al-Dīnawarī's work. M. R. Jackson Bonner, *Three*

Ḥamza, *Ta'rīkh*, p. 17,[31] quotes from the lost book of Mūsā al-Kisrawī, who was active around 870.[32] Mūsā dates Sharwīn to the time of Yazdajird Ia,[33] but does not mention Khurrīn:

> The Yazdajird forgotten and dropped (from the king lists) was greater than his son Yazdajird the Sinner. It was he who was king at the time of Sharwīn al-Dastabī,[34] not the Sinner. People were pleased with his governing, and he was merciful and kind, unlike his son. His faithfulness was such that when a contemporary Byzantine king was dying and left behind a small son, he expressed his will that this Yazdajird send someone from his kingdom to Byzantium to act as his viceregent and control the affairs for his son until the latter grew up. Yazdajird sent Sharwīn Barniyān,[35] the head of the district of Dastabā, and gave him the kingship of Byzantium, which he regulated for twenty years. Then Yazdajird returned the trust by giving the kingdom of Byzantium to the deceased king's son and calling Sharwīn back after he had designed a city there, which he called Bāshirwān, Arabised as Bājirwān.

Besides the date, Ḥamza brings to the story the motif of guardianship, Sharwīn acting on behalf of Yazdajird as the viceregent of Byzantium during the minority of its lawful king, at the behest of the former king. The second noteworthy detail is that Yazdajird Ia is defined through Sharwīn, strongly implying that the latter was a famous character around 870. In the Sasanian king list of his *Āthār*, p. 145, al-Bīrūnī likewise defines Yazdajird Ia as *ṣāḥib Sharwīn*, most probably depending on Ḥamza.

Evidence in Persian

The anonymous *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*, written in 520/1126, whose author often uses Ḥamza as his source, gives a brief description of the story, which is yet the most detailed we have:[36]

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neglected sources of Sasanian history in the reign of Khusraw Anushirwan (Paris, 2011), p. 54, briefly discusses the passage, but as he appears to be unaware of any other occurrences of Sharwīn in Arabic and Persian literature he is not able to go beyond speculation. For the yearly taxes collected from Byzantium, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, i, pp. 959–960, and al-Maqrīzī, *Khabar/Persia* II, §148.

[31] Ḥamza, *Ta'rīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ wa'l-anbiyā'* (Beirut, n.d.). Also translated by R. G. Hoyland, *The 'History of the Kings of the Persians' in Three Arabic Chronicles. The Transmission of the Iranian Past from Late Antiquity to Early Islam* (Liverpool, 2018), pp. 36–37. The anonymous *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa'l-qiṣaṣ*, (eds.) S. Najmabadi—S. Weber (Edingen–Neckarhausen, 2000), p. 68 (ed. Malik al-Shuʿarā' Bahār, 2nd edition. n.d. & n.p.), p. 86, quotes this passage, translated into Persian. Further quoted in al-Maqrīzī, *Khabar/Persia* II, §103, and cf. §6.

[32] For Mūsā, see Hämeen-Anttila *Khwadāynāmag*, pp. 76–89.

[33] Several Arab and Persian historians make a distinction between Yazdajird the Soft and Yazdajird the Sinner, thus actually dividing into two the character of Yazdajird I (r. 399–420), perhaps inspired by the change in his policy towards Christians, for which see S. McDonough, "A second Constantine? The Sasanian king Yazdgard in Christian history and historiography," *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 1 (2008), pp. 127–141. In this paper, I will call Yazdajird the Soft "Yazdajird Ia".

[34] Written *al-Dastanī* in the edition. It would seem that when combined with the article *al-*, DSTBY should be read as a *nisba*. In al-Dīnawarī's *al-Dastabāy*, we probably have the geographical name with the article.

[35] Mohl's partial edition (J. Mohl "Extraits du Modjmel al-Tewarikh relatifs à l'histoire de la Perse," *Journal Asiatique*, 4e série, I (1843), p. 410), reads Yarīnān, which Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 290, suggests emending to Narīmān. Both complete editions of the *Mujmal* read Parniyān.

[36] *Mujmal*, p. 74 (ed.) Bahār, p. 95. I wish to give special thanks to Dr Azin Haghighi (Edinburgh) for discussing this passage with me. Its language is somewhat distorted, and there is reason to believe that the passage suffers from some corruption.

اندر عهد یزدجردِ نرم قصهء شروین وخورین بوده است. وآنکه روم خوانند نه روم بوده است. وشنیده ام
روم حلوان خوانده ند وروم خود روم است. وأن تاه دزد که خورین اورا بکشت راه داشته است آنجا که
اکنون طاق گرّا خوانند. وشروین را آن زن جادو دوست گرفت که مریه خواننددش واورا مدّتی آنجا ببست
چنانکه در قصه گویند. وخدای داند کیفیت آن. واندر سیر الملوک گفته است که شروین را نوشیروان عادل به
روم بگذاشت تا خراج بستاند دران وقت که او باز می گردید از جهت خروج پسرش زاد والله أعلم به.

> The story of Sharwīn and Khwarrīn took place during the reign of Yazdajird Ia the Soft. What
> they call "Rome" (within that story) does not mean Rome: I have heard that they used to call
> Ḥulwān "Rome" Rome itself is also called "Rome". And that solitary thief,[37] whom Khwarrīn
> killed, acted as a highway man in the place that is nowadays called Ṭāq-e Garrā.[38] The female
> witch, called Marye, fell in love with Sharwīn and held him prisoner there for some time, as
> told in the tale, but God knows best how that was. In *Siyar al-mulūk* it is said that Sharwīn
> was sent by Anūshirwān the Just to Rome to collect the taxes at the time when he returned
> because of the revolt of his son (Anūsh)zād, but God knows it best.

Even though the description is somewhat obscure, it contains several recognisable elements
familiar from *nāme* literature and folktales:[39] adventures in a foreign country, here "Rome;" a
solitary highwayman; and a female witch falling in love with and capturing the hero. We will
come back to these elements below. After mentioning them and dating this Sharwīn to the
time of Yazdajird Ia, the *Mujmal* turns to a respectable historical source, *Siyar al-mulūk*,[40] and
quoting it gives a very sober picture of Sharwīn the Tax Collector, dating him to the time of
Anūshirwān. While first defining Rome as Ḥulwān, here the author seems to accept Rome
as Rome, i.e., Constantinople. The *Mujmal* does not mention the theme of guardianship.
Strictly speaking, we are here dealing with two separate Sharwīns, although Arabic and Per-
sian historiography does allow for contradictory reports to stand side by side, so we cannot
say whether the author meant to separate the two Sharwīns from each other or merely
reported the different opinions concerning one Sharwīn,

A much later, but occasionally well-informed source, Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī's (d. *circa* 744/
1344) *Tārīkh-e guzīde*,[41] dates Sharwīn to the time Shāpūr II (r. 309–379), also mentioning
Khwarrīn, writing شروین وخورین, with the variant شیروتن وخورتن, a welcome reminder of
how confused little-known Persian names could become, not only in Arabic, but also in
Persian, and how two obscure names tend towards rhyming. This date is unique, though
perhaps vaguely supported by the verses of Muḥammad ibn Ḥamza ibn Nuṣayr, quoted
above.

Ḥamdallāh first very briefly narrates the same story as Ḥamza in slightly different words
(and with a different date), adding that Sharwīn did not receive permission (from the
new king of Byzantium) to return to Iran until the reign of Bahrām (IV, r. 388–399).
Then he continues:

نام شروین در اشعار پهلوی بسیار است وکتابیست در عشق نامهء او (شروینیان) خوانند.

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[37]Or thief called Tāh? The passage may be corrupt.

[38]In Ḥulwān, cf. *Lughatnāme*, (www.vajehyab.com), s.v.

[39]I use this term to refer to semi-popular romantic and heroic epics, mostly featuring various Sistanians and
usually bearing a title *hero's name + nāme*.

[40]Elsewhere (*Mujmal*, p. 2), the author identifies this as Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's (d. *circa* 139/756) book of this title, but
the same title was used for many other books, too.

[41]Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī, *Tārīkh-e guzīde*, (ed.) ʿA. Nawāʾī (Tehran, 1387), p. 110.

> The name of Sharwīn is often mentioned in heroic (*pahlavī*) poems. There is also a book about his romantic adventures (*'ishqnāme*), which is titled *Sharwīniyān*.

The end is problematic and its syntax curious. *Sharwīniyān* could refer to a group of people, but elsewhere in the admittedly scanty material, there is no mention of any group of relatives or dependants of Sharwīn. It would also be possible to take the verb *khwānand*, not in the sense "(which) they call", but in the sense "(which) Sharwīnians read/recite", in which case Sharwīnians would refer to a group of storytellers specialising in the story of Sharwīn. Yet, there is no evidence for such groups in the fourteenth century, although similar specialised storytellers are known from the nineteenth century.

In any case, Ḥamdallāh either refers to a book title or to storytellers reading from such a book, which in both cases would by his time have been in Classical Persian, assuming that he is not merely quoting an earlier author. Note also that for Ḥamdallāh, the term "Pahlavi" would have meant "heroic", not the Middle Persian used in Zoroastrian books, and much less "Parthian", which is the etymological origin of the word (*Parthava > Pahlav-).

The scattered Arabic and Persian evidence allows us to reconstruct some main lines of the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay* and its development. There are two historical currents of material related to Sharwīn, with some overlap between them. First of all, historical sources know of a Persian nobleman Sharwīn of Dastabay, who was sent to Byzantium to help the infant king in ruling the Empire. Secondly, they mention that Sharwīn, together with his servant Khwarrīn or Khurrīn, was sent to ascertain that payments were secured and sent to Iran. The latter function may also be located in Ḥulwān, not Byzantium. This happened either at the time of Shāpūr II, Yazdajird Ia, or Khusraw Anūshirwān.

Evidence in Greek

The first current finds surprising confirmation in Greek sources. In his *Persian War*, Procopius (d. 570) relates[42] that when he was dying Arcadius appointed Isdigerdus (Yazdajird I) guardian over his son Theodosius II, who was still a minor. This, obviously, does not corroborate the historicity of the fact itself, but it does show that the story circulated already in the sixth century. Procopius does not mention any character who would take the role of Sharwīn.[43] In his version, Yazdajird receives a letter from Arcadius, accepts the commission, threatens by war any who would plot against Theodosius, and keeps his word honourably. Later, Agathias (d. 582), in his *Histories*,[44] repeats this, quoting Procopius, but adding no new details. Agathias speaks very highly of Procopius, who has been able to preserve this otherwise undocumented story. However, Byzantine scholars disagree as to whether or not this should be taken at face value or as sarcastic criticism of Procopius for taking common gossip for historical information.[45]

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[42]Procopius, *History of the Wars*, I: Books 1–2, (ed.) H. B. Dewing (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1914) 1.2.1–10.

[43]In *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, www.iranicaonline.org, s.v. "Byzantine-Iranian relations", Shapur Shahbazi erroneously claims that Procopius mentions a tutor sent by Yazdajird to bring Theodosius up.

[44]Agathias, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, (ed.) R. Keydell (Berlin, 1967) 4.26.3–7; translated in J. D. Frendo, *Agathias: The Histories* (Berlin–New York, 1975), p. 129.

[45]Cf. G. Greatrex, "Deux notes sur Théodose II et les Perses", *Antiquité tardive*, 16 (2008), pp. 85–91, here p. 86.

Theophanes Confessor (d. 818) adds an interesting detail in his *Chronographia*. Sub AM 5900 (AD 407/8), he otherwise keeps to Procopius' narrative, but adds that Isdigerdes dispatched "Antiochos, a most remarkable and highly educated advisor and instructor" before writing to the Roman Senate. Antiochos "stayed at the Emperor's side and wrote many letters on behalf of the Christians" in Iran.[46] Sub AM 5905 (AD 412/3), he says that "Antiochos the Persian departed, and the blessed Pulcheria gained complete control of affairs".[47] Much later, sub AM 5936 (AD 443/4), the final fall of the eunuch Antiochos—now back in Byzantium—is mentioned.[48]

Since at least 1905, Byzantinists have been arguing about whether or not we should accept Antiochos as a historical character. The discussion is conveniently summarised in Greatrex, "Deux notes", who himself supports taking Antiochos as a historical character. No Greek source introduces a character similar to Khwarrīn or tells any more details about this Antiochos, so the romantic and/or heroic story is not corroborated by Greek evidence, only the story of the guardianship and the sending of a tutor/viceregent to Byzantium.

Whether historical or not, Antiochus takes the same role as Sharwīn in the guardianship story. There does not seem to be any ready explanation for the names, which are neither phonetically nor semantically related. The Arabic tradition knows him as Sharwīn, which shows that the story reached the Arabs through Iran, as might be expected.

Discussion

However, Arabic and Persian sources also know Sharwīn as tax collector, so it is not evident that Sharwīn would have originally had anything to do with the guardianship at the time of Yazdajird. Moreover, we have seen his connection to Ḥulwān and the "new Rome" (al-Rūmiyya) built by Kisrā Anūshirwān,[49] which could quite well be the original context of Sharwīn the Tax Collector, historical memory only later connecting him with the guardianship motif and retro-placing himself in the time of Yazdajird. So instead of a guardian sent to Byzantium and simultaneously collecting taxes there, we may have an early story about Yazdajird acting as the guardian of Theodosius II (and, on the Greek side, Antiochos acting as his tutor) and another story, perhaps set to the time of Khusraw Anūshirwān, about an official called Sharwīn sent to Byzantium, or Ḥulwān, to oversee the collection of taxes, and these may have been combined into a viceregent-cum-tax collector called Sharwīn. Whether two separate stories or one, this historical, or pseudohistorical, story was later developed into a heroic and/or romantic tale.

First signs of a romantic and/or adventurous nature of the story come already at the end of the eighth century in Arabic poetry, and the romantic and/or heroic tale becomes more detailed in the anonymous Persian *Mujmal* from the early twelfth century. The *Mujmal* brings other characters into the story: a (most probably formidable) highwayman and a

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[46] *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, (eds.) C. Mango – R. Scott (Oxford, 1997), pp. 123–124.
[47] *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 127.
[48] *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p. 151.
[49] See, e.g., al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), *Taʾrīkh*, i, p. 898; Miskawayhi (d. 421/1030), *Tajārib al-umam wa-taʿāqub al-himam*, (ed.) S. K. Ḥasan, 7 vols. (Beirut, 1424/2003), i, p. 129; al-Maqrīzī, *Khabar/Persia* II, §147.

female witch in love with Sharwīn, presumably young and beautiful, at least when she assumes such a form, perhaps already alluded to in a poem quoted by Ibn al-Faqīh.

The *Mujmal* is an interesting source. It is often our earliest source to describe *nāme*s that we otherwise only know from much later copies and scattered references. Its author's wide knowledge of the *nāme*s explains why he, rather than anyone else, is able to present some details of the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay*. He starts by dating the story to the time of Yazdajird Ia, having perhaps received this date from Ḥamza. He mentions Sharwīn and Khwarrīn as a pair, though not necessarily a romantic pair. It might be pointed out that he does not identify Khwarrīn as Sharwīn's servant. He gives a variant date to Sharwīn to Khusraw Anūshirwān's time from *Siyar al-mulūk*, but in this connection only mentioning him as a tax collector, not a romantic hero.

The romantic and/or heroic side of the story is highlighted by the two episodes the author of the *Mujmal* mentions, a solitary highwayman killed by Khwarrīn and a female witch in love with Sharwīn and kept him as her captive. Here we come to recurrent motifs in the *nāme* literature and storytelling. Already Firdawsī (d. 411/1019) has a witch who tempts Rustam in a romantic scene during his Seven Labours (*Haft khān*) and an occasional highwayman, but it is only in the other *nāme*s that we find these themes fully developed. Thus, *Kuk-e Kūhzād*, later included in some recensions of the *Shāhnāme*, relates young Rustam's battle against the highwayman *Kuk-e Kūhzād*, and much of the *Burzūnāme* focuses on how a bewitching temptress captures a series of Iranian and Sistanian heroes.[50]

It should be pointed out that though the existing *nāme*s are later than Firdawsī, some derive from stories prior to Firdawsī, who himself mentions *Bīzhan and Manīzhe* as a pre-existing tale, and many of those listed in the *Mujmal* may also date from before him. *The Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay* further confirms the pre-Firdawsian existence of tales that later became codified as *nāme*s.

The popular *nāme*s, as well as the romantic parts of Firdawsī's *Shāhname*, such as *Bīzhan and Manīzhe*, are heteroerotic, but later epic tradition with its *Maḥmūd and Ayāz*[51] also knows male love pairs. The verses quoted in al-Maqrīzī's *Khabar* would favour such an interpretation. The use of Sharwīn's character in *mujūn* poetry also speaks for this interpretation, in which case the story would be a predecessor of *Maḥmūd and Ayāz*. All Persian epic heroes, starting with Rustam, quaff huge quantities of wine, yet they do not qualify as *mujūn* characters, so one could claim that there was more to Sharwīn than meets the eye.

In Arabic historical literature, Sharwīn only merits a short mention, but more interesting are the allusions to him in contexts that require some knowledge of the romantic/heroic story told about him, as poetic references would not have worked if the audience was completely unaware of Sharwīn—an individual case, especially in a *fārisiyya*, could be explained as a baffling and comic appearance of an incomprehensible name, but the repeated allusions in late Umayyad/early ʿAbbāsid poems make this improbable.

On the other hand, there is no evidence in Arabic of any written work, whether original or translated, on Sharwīn. Ibn al-Nadīm mentions several stories of Persian origin in his

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[50]*Burzūnāme mansūb be-(…) ʿAṭāʾī Rāzī wa-Dāstān-e Kuk-e Kūhzād*, (ed.) S. M. Dabīrsiyāqī (Tehran, 1383 AHSh).

[51]*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, "Ayāz" (J. Matīnī).

Fihrist,[52] but not the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay*. While the existence of such a book cannot be excluded, it is more probable that Sharwīn was familiar to the Arabs in the same way as most Persian heroes would have been: the literati were aware that there was a story which involved romance and adventure and that Sharwīn had Khwarrīn either as a sidekick or a love interest. This much would already make the allusions work and the sources do not show any deeper knowledge of the story.[53]

In Persian, the situation is different. Even though Persian historians were capable of using Arabic sources and the story could have been an Arab invention, based on the historical existence of Sharwīn of Dastabay, its wide occurrence and the ability of Persian authors to tell us more about the story than the Arabs speaks in favour of its primary existence in Persian.

Whether these stories transmitted into Arabic were based on oral lore or on Middle Persian books, is yet another question. In trying to answer this, we have little concrete evidence and our study must remain speculative. The existence of Middle Persian books and a vivid tradition of oral singing of epics is too often accepted without further study. Both questions are too general to be answered in this article, but let us briefly discuss how the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay* may have been transmitted.

First of all, we have little evidence for long, non-religious Middle Persian texts. The idea of a voluminous *Khwadāynāmag*, comparable to Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, is based on a number of misunderstandings, and the existence of a Middle Persian *Alexander Romance* is dubious.[54] There would seem to be more evidence for the one-time existence of Middle Persian fable collections later translated into Arabic, such as *Kalīla and Dimna*.[55]

Strictly historical works are better attested, and some have even been preserved, such as *Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr*. Al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956) mentions some historical and legendary Middle Persian texts that had been translated by his time.[56] Shāhmardān ibn abī l-Khayr mentions in his *Nuzʾhatnāme* (written around 500/1100), extensive Middle Persian books on legends and history, covering some 1,500–2,000 pages,[57] but there is no further evidence for the existence of such a gigantic library of Middle Persian texts, and his information remains suspect.

In addition, there is some evidence for the prior existence of written, probably new Persian stories in prose or verse dating from the tenth century or earlier Middle Persian stories that have been preserved in later versions. Much of this information comes from the *Mujmal*, which mentions a *Garsāsfnāme*, prior to Asadī Ṭūsī's version (written in 458/1068), a

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[52]Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, (ed.) R. Tajaddud (Tehran, 1381 AHSh). One might expect to find it on p. 364, which lists Persian story books under two headings, or on pp. 365–366, which list love stories, though mostly Arab ones. None of the stories, moreover, would match whatever corrupt form we can imagine of Sharwīn, Dastabay, and Khwarrīn to appear in.

[53]Cf. how poorly Rustam was known in Arabic sources, see Hämeen-Anttila, *Khwadāynāmag*, pp. 174–199.

[54]For the *Khwadāynāmag*, see Hämeen-Anttila, *Khwadāynāmag*, and Hoyland, *History*. For specifically the *Alexander Romance*, see Hämeen-Anttila, *Khwadāynāmag*, pp. 45–51, and Ciancaglieri's studies referred to there.

[55]See F. de Blois, *Burzōy's Voyage*.

[56]*Kitāb al-Sakīsarān* (*Murūj al-dhahab*, (ed.) Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille, Revised by C. Pellat, 8 vols. (Beyrouth, 1966–1979), §§541, 543) and *Kitāb al-Baykār* (*Murūj* §§479–480) narrated epic stories involving Sistanian heroes, while *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar* (*Kitāb al-Tanbīh*, (ed.) M. J. de Goeje (Lugduni-Batavorum, 1894, reprinted Beirut, n.d.), p. 106) and *Kāhnāmāh* and *Āyīnnāmāh* (*Tanbīh*, p. 104) related to Sasanian times. For these and other lost Middle Persian books, see Hämeen-Anttila, *Khwadāynāmag*, pp. 30–45.

[57]Shahmardān ibn abī l-Khayr, *Nuzʾhatnāme-ye ʿAlāʾī* (Tehran, 1362 AHSh), here p. 342.

Farāmarznāme, and a few other stories, all related to the mythological and legendary part of Iranian history.[58] *Wīs and Rāmīn* and *Bīzhan and Manīzhe* seem to be the only romantic tales that can securely be traced back to times before Firdawsī.[59]

Thus, written Middle Persian historical and legendary texts did exist, whether in prose or verse, but references to romantic or heroic epics, with mainly Sistanian heroes and not set in the Sasanian period, probably refer to New Persian versions of stories that may well have circulated as oral stories for a longer period. If the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay* did exist as a written Middle Persian story, it would still be necessary to postulate the existence of an oral, probably learned, tradition to explain how Abū Nuwās and other Arabic poets and their audience came to know it without a translation, of which we have no traces. Written existence in Middle Persian would also probably mean that the story was not of excessive length.

The other possibility is that the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay* circulated in an oral form in Persian, which by the late Sasanian and early Islamic times would have been an early form of New Persian, possibly with some Middle Persian elements, depending on the age of the story. How fluid or fixed[60] such texts were, is beyond our evidence, as the vacillation concerning the date and the role of Sharwīn probably comes from historical literature, not the story itself.

If the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay* was transmitted orally, was it sung, recited, or freely told in prose to the audience? Since Boyce's 1957 article on *gōsān*s,[61] the existence of oral singers of tales in Iran prior to the time of Firdawsī has often been taken for granted, even though Boyce's evidence is far from conclusive and she, in fact, provides little evidence for the existence of such performers specifically in Late Sasanian and early Islamic times.[62] Even though the word *gōsān* is attested once or twice in contemporary texts, it is questionable whether at that time it signified a singer of tales or a musician.

There are, however, occasional references to stories having been sung in early Islamic Iran, and even though not conclusive, they do give us reason to assume that at least occasionally tales were indeed sung.[63] The case of Firdawsī is a bone of contention and I will come back to it in a later article, but it seems clear that Firdawsī's main source was the written *Prose Shāhnāme* (completed in 346/957), while he may have used oral tales as secondary sources.[64]

Turning now back to the evidence specific to the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay*, we see that Abū Nuwās speaks of Persians reading, or reciting, (*yatlūna*) this story, and juxtaposes it to

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[58]*Mujmal*, p. 2.

[59]For all these, see also Hämeen-Anttila, *Khwadāynāmag*, pp. 167–173. In addition, of course, there are occasional references to romantic stories and love pairs, such as Kisrā Abarwīz and Shīrīn, or the less well-known story of the Indian marriage of the Parthian Balāsh, see Hämeen-Anttila, *Khwadāynāmag*, pp. 80–81.

[60]With "fixed" I refer to a story that is recognised as a separate entity, even though there may be fluidity in its performance.

[61]M. Boyce, "The Parthian *gōsān* and Iranian minstrel tradition," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, N.S. 89 (1957), pp. 10–45.

[62]It should be evident that while Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* can be used as a valuable source for the main events of Persian history, reading books and singing tales to the kings are literary *topoi* that cannot be considered factual reports of Sasanian times. For the heated discussion concerning singing of tales in the early Islamic period, see, e.g., O. Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Ithaca, 1994) and M. Omidsalar "Unburdening Ferdowsi," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 116 (1996), pp. 235–242.

[63]See Hämeen-Anttila, *Khwadāynāmag*, pp. 23–25.

[64]See also Hämeen-Anttila, *Khwadāynāmag*, pp. 141–146, 158–167.

the *Avesta*—a book written down by this time, although recited, most probably by heart, during ceremonies—and *Wīs and Rāmīn*. Ḥamza, commenting on this verse is somewhat contradictory. First, he terms the story as an *uḥdūtha*, which primarily calls to mind a prose story, instead of using words such as *ughniyya* or *qaṣīda*, the latter used by him to explain the *firjardāt* of *Wīs and Rāmīn*. Then, however, he says that it is *sung* (*yutaghannā bihā*), an important addition to our meagre corpus of references to singing of tales at the time.

Ḥamdallāh mentions a book on Sharwīn's romantic adventures, which was read/recited. Keeping strictly to what Ḥamdallāh says, by his time the story would have been read by storytellers from a book, a method which we know quite well from later times. After Ḥamdallāh, references to this story peter out, and it is quite possible that he only reflects his sources, so there is no saying that the story did live on until the fourteenth century, and even if it did, it left few traces in literature. The evidence is far from conclusive, and the eighth/ninth century *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay* may as well have existed as a book or been performed by singers of tales or both.

Even though much remains uncertain, there are a number of reasonably firm conclusions we can draw from the evidence. The first and foremost in importance is that there already existed in the sixth century, as shown by the Greek evidence, a story about Antiochos the Persian in a role later ascribed to Sharwīn of Dastabay. Early Arabic evidence shows that the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay* was famous enough to be known by an Arabic audience. Although the Persian evidence comes from books later than Firdawsī, these are known to draw from early sources and, supported by the Arabic evidence, it may be considered relatively certain that the story did circulate in Early New Persian, too. Furthermore, this gives credence to the existence of the so-called orphan stories, such as *Bīzhan and Manīzhe* and some of the *nāme*s as separate stories before Firdawsī.

There is a crucial difference between the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay* and most other stories claimed to derive from pre-Islamic and early Islamic times. While there is no reason to deny that there must have existed tales at the time, we usually lack concrete evidence for them and the result is that conclusions tend to be rather speculative. In the case of the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay* the information we have is admittedly meagre but it is firmly anchored to existing textual evidence from the sixth century onward.

The study of lost books is always complicated. When working on the basis of a single mention in, e.g., Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, one is in danger of misunderstanding, as the case of *The Book of Mazdak* shows. The case of the *Story of Sharwīn of Dastabay* shows that a careful collection and analysis of small shreds of evidence may bring us closer to understanding the literature of late Sasanian and early Islamic Iran.

Sharwīn of Dastabay: Reconstructing an early Persian tale
Sharwīn of Dastabay

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