Alexander the Great in the *Shāhnāmeh* of Ferdowsī

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Although there are many works on Alexander the Great in Persian,[1] none of them is as close to the Syriac version and even to the Greek version of Pseudo-Callisthenes as the *Shāhnāmeh* of Ferdowsī. Although traditions about Iskandar in Persian literature were retraced on an Arabic source representing Pseudo-Callisthenes,[2] the story of Alexander in the *Shāhnāmeh* has some important characteristics which cannot come from an Arabic source but a Persian. It is obvious that the source of Ferdowsī had passed through an Arabic intermediary, for example because of the transformation of "p" to "f" in some proper names such as Philip to Fīlqūs or Porus to Fūr. Even though this source were in Arabic, as it is Christianized and not Islamized, this source must have belonged to an era in which still Islamic legends about Alexander had not been formed yet. The purpose of this paper is to examine these elements and to suggest that Ferdowsī ´s source on Iskandar was a pre-Islamic Persian source when the Alexander legends still had not been mixed with the Islamic legend concerning *Dhu'lqarnain*. I try to demonstrate that there are pieces of evidence which show that many accounts of Iskandar in the *Shāhnāmeh* had formed in Pre-Islamic Persian concepts.

Before starting to study the legend of Alexander in Ferdowsī ´s work, it is important to consider some details about Ferdowsī's sources, because it is impossible to understand the chapter on Iskandar without studying it in the

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[1] The versions that have survived in Persian can be divided into two groups: in meters *mathnavī* in poetry (Ferdowsī, *Shāhnāmeh*, ed. Moscow, vol. VII-VIII. Nezāmī, *Iskandarnāmeh* (*Sharafnāmeh* and *Eghbālnāmeh*). Dehlavī, *Āīne-ye Iskandarī*. Jāmī, *Haft Orang*), and in prose: *Iskandarnāme-ye Manthūr*, anonymous; and Tarsūsī, *Dārābnāmeh*. There is also a popular Romance in Safavid period known as *Iskandarnāmeh of 7 volumes*. See: Ismael Sa´adat, *Dānesh-nāme-ye Zabān va Adab-e Fārsi*, vol. I, Tehran, 1384 (2005), pp. 402-410.

[2] Doufikar-Aerts, F., *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, Peeters, 2010, p. 13.

context of the whole *Shāhnāmeh* and it is important not to study it as an individual part:

The Epic in Iran and Ferdowsī's sources

The most reliable information that we have about Ferdowsī and his sources is what he himself mentioned in *Shāhnāmeh*. He at the beginning of his work indicates that "there was a book from ancient times in which there were a lot of stories".[3] He continues that this book was dispersed (*parākande)* in the hand of *mūbads.* So one man who is mentioned as *Pahlavān dehqān nežād* (an Iranian noble)[4] compiled and gathered together all these stories about the kings and heroes of Iran in prose. And then he tells how Daqīqī started to compose the book in poetry but he was murdered by a slave so he himself continued Daqīqī´s work when a friend gave him this *Nāme-ye Pahlavī*.[5] In fact, he indicates in quite a number of passages that his poem is based on an "old book," that is to say, on one or more sources written in New Persian prose. Many scholars[6] agree that this ancient book refers to the *Shāhnāmeh* of Abū Mansūr Ebn Abd al-Razzāq who was the feudal ruler of Tūs, traditionally held to be the birthplace of both Daqīqī and Ferdowsī. This book itself is based on different versions of an official chronicle relating the history of Iran, known by the standard designation of *Xwadāy-nāmag*[7] (Book of Kings), which was translated into Arabic according to the later sources which cite more than twenty Arabic translations of the epic.[8]

Christensen distinguishes between two traditions, a "religious" and a "national" one. The *Kīyānian* dynasty, in which Alexander is included as a Persian king, belongs to the national tradition. Macuch argues that the central position of the *pahlavāns,* "heroes" or "Parthians" in the original sense of the word in this chapter indicates that members of some important noble families who claimed descent from the Arsacid house, which makes them

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[3] Ferdowsī, *Shāhnāmeh*, ed. Moscow, vol. I, p. 21.

[4] For the meaning of *Pahlavi* and *Pahlavān* in *Shāhnāmeh* see: Lazard, G., "Pahlavi/Pahlavâni dans le Šâhnâme," *Studia Iranica*, 1/1, 1972, pp. 25-41.

[5] *Shāhnāmeh, op. cit. supra,* pp. 22-23.

[6] See Safā (1369 S/1990), p. 179; Bahār (1374 S/1994), vol. I, pp. 235-6; Nöldeke (1930, reprinted 1979), p. 26; Rypka (1968), p. 152; Minorsky (1964), p. 261.

[7] See Barthold (1944); pp. 121-57; Christensen (1944), pp. 59-62; Mary Boyce (1968), pp. 57-9; Shahbazi (1990), pp. 208-29; Yarshater (1983), pp. 359-477; M. Macuch (2009), pp. 172-180.

[8] See Barthold (1944), p. 144ff.

the Parthian *par excellence*, had created a version of the national history favorable towards themselves.[9] Tafazzolī also mentions that the chapter on the *Kīyānians* is based on Parthian sources.[10] Furthermore, if there was a version of "Book of Kings" favorable towards the Parthian, the chapter on Alexander would have been included in it.

What Ferdowsī himself stated about how this book was assembled implies that the material, on which the *Shāhnāmeh* is based, has been collected from more than one source[11] and more than one narrator or author; this explains some contradictions in the *Shāhnāmeh* especially in the case of the chapter on Alexander. Safā uses this chapter as an example of the faithfulness of Ferdowsī to his sources[12] but at the same time he argues that the chapter on Iskandar had a different source from the rest of the *Shāhnāmeh*, because in two cases, one in the chapter on Ardeshīr and another in Khosrow Parvīz´s response to the letter of Qeisar-e Rūm, Iskandar is mentioned with the adjectives that we can often see for him in Pahlavi literature, *gojastak* (cursed, hateful).[13] In the chapter on Ardeshīr, son of Bābāk, Iskandar is mentioned with the greatest Iranian enemies, Zahhāk and Afrāsiyāb. But this is not the only similarity between Zahhāk and Alexander, the account of the death of Mardās, Zahhāk´s father in the *Shāhnāmeh,* shows striking similarities to the death of Nectanebus in Pseudo-Callisthenes. In *Shāhnāmeh*, Zahhāk, with Satan´s help, led his father to a well into which Mardās fell, broke his back and died.[14]

I suggest that this is not due to the fact that Ferdowsī used a different source in writing this chapter, because this part is not an independent part in *Shāhnāmeh* but is part of the history of the *Kīyānian* dynasty normally identified as the Achaemenid dynasty; it is a part between the legendary and historic parts. The contradictions on Iskandar can be explained if we take into account that the original *Xwadāy-nāmag* itself probably had many authors or versions. Apart from this, on the one hand, the existence of common episodes on Alexander in authors of Persian origin like Tabarī and Dīnawarī and the fact that all these authors mention Iskandar as a Persian king of the *Kīyānian* dynasty shows that this chapter must have been included in the "Book of Persian kings". Neither the historians Tabarī, Dīnawarī and Esfahānī nor Ferdowsī develop the prophetic role of Alexander as *Dhu'l-*

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[9] See M. Macuch (2009), p. 176.
[10] Tafazzolī, A., (1376 H. S./1997), p. 271.
[11] Dick Davis (1992), p. 10.
[12] See Safā (1990), pp. 198-199.
[13] *Ibid*.
[14] *Shāhnāmeh,* vol. I, pp. 45-46.

qarnain and it can be another evidence of their pre-Islamic sources. On the other hand the existence of books like *Dārābnāmeh* of Tarsūsī shows how the figure of Alexander was mixed with these legendary kings (Dārā and Dārāb) and demonstrates that there must have been a written source on Alexander in pre-Islamic Persian tradition.

The chapter on Iskandar (or Sekandar when the rhythm demands it in some verses) in the *Shāhnāmeh* contains 1261 verses. According to the words and references which appear in the story and the information that Ferdowsī himself gives us, I have divided it into three principal "layers": Persian, Christianized and Arabic, which show the historic transmission of the legend.

The Persian episodes

The *Shāhnāmeh* contains some episodes that exist neither in Greek nor in the Syriac version and I call them the Persian part. This part begins in the kingdom of Dārāb and concerns the battle between Fīlqūs (Philip) and the Persian king. It contains the Persian version on Alexander´s birth and it must have been the most ancient part of the legend on Alexander in pre-Islamic Iran. I would like to analyze the important words and some proper names in this part:

In Greek and Syriac Pseudo-Callisthenes the Persian king is Darius, but in the *Shāhnāmeh*, and also in Tabarī and Dīnawarī´s works, as in the Pahlavi texts he appears as Dārā son of Dārāb (in the Pahlavi texts he is mentioned as Dārā ī Dārāyān). Apart from this name, no trace has been left from the factual history of ancient western Iran. Dārā ī Dārāyān was pictured as the last sovereign of the *Kīyānian* dynasty. In the Iranian adaption of the Alexander Romance, Alexander is linked to this dynasty by making him the son of Dārā, bestowing on him the legitimacy of kingship.

The word Rūm appears in this chapter of the *Shāhnāmeh* with the name of Fīlqūs and Iskandar. In *Shāhnāmeh* as well as the Pahlavi texts,[15] Alexander is not Macedonian, not even Greek, but an inhabitant of Rūm or Arūm.
The other word is the name of the kingdom of Fīlqūs and Iskandar: Ammūriye[16]. At the time of Ferdowsī there were works on Alexander where

[15] Pahlavi texts where appears Alexander are: *Ardāvīrāfnāme*, *Bondaheš, Kārnāme-ye Ardešīr-e Pāpakān, Nāme-ye Tansar*, *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšah*r. In these texts Alexander is mentioned as Aleksander.

Macedonia was mentioned.[17] So, why in Ferdowsī´s source did Alexander come from this city in Asia Minor? The importance of Amorion in the Arabic sources is due to the conquest of this city by the Caliphate Mo'tasem according to the historian Mas'ūdī (Mas'ūdī IV, 358-59) in August 838 and the amount of Greek manuscripts that were acquired after the sacking of the city.[18] I suppose that this link is in relationship with Alexander´s mother, called Nāhīd,[19] which is the new Persian form of the name of the Iranian goddess Anāhitā (or Anāhīd). Although in Persian poetry the word "Nāhīd" normally refers to the planet Venus,[20] the symbol of beauty, in some cases, for example in Daqīqī´s and Ferdowsī´s poetry, it refers to the ancient meaning.[21] It seems that here it is a proper name and it does not have the astrological meaning because of the link with Amorion. The name Amorion is generally linked to the Proto-Indo-European *ma* 'mother', which leads to the conclusion that, at its foundation, the settlement was associated with the Mother Goddess cult, widespread in ancient Anatolia.[22] It is noticeable that an isolated inscription of great interest came to light near ancient Amorion, at Ghomme, which confirms the evidence of Iranian religion there.[23] As Mary Boyce states, the Amorion stele thus bears witness to the existence of a group of Zoroastrians, evidently prosperous, peacefully maintaining their ancestral customs in the interior of a Phrygia that had become strongly Hellenized during several generations of Roman rule.[24] The epithet "Mother" is unknown in the worship of Anāhīd, but is standard in that of Anatolian Cybele. In some inscriptions Anāhīd is also repeatedly named alone, with the cult title "Meter" which indicates that there was an assimilation of her concept to that of Cybele.[25] In the *Shāhnāmeh* once appears Ammūriye with the

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[16] Ferdowsī, *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VI, p. 375. The name of the city is mentioned four times in the reign of Dārāb, see p. 375 once and it is said that it is the reign of Fīlqūs, in p. 376 it is mentioned three times in the battle between Dārāb and Fīlqūs.

[17] For example Hunayn Ibn Ishāq, ed. Christy Bandak (2007).

[18] Gutas, D. (1998), p. 178.

[19] In *Shāhnāmeh*, Nāhīd is mentioned five times in the reign of Dārāb, ed. Moscow, pp. 377 (once), p. 378 (twice) and p. 380 (twice).

[20] In the Pahlavi books (some of which represent lost Avestan texts), the two are still sometimes treated as separate divinities, with Ardwīsūr as the personification of the mythical river, and Anāhīd, the fertility goddess, identified with the planet Venus, see Boyce, M. (1985a), pp.1003-5.

[21] For the examples see Yāhaqqī, M. J. (1369 S/1990), p. 417. And also see Sharīfī, (1387 S/2008), p. 1400.

[22] See Ivison, Eric A. (2007), Kazhdan, A. (1991), Lightfoot, Chris (2006).

[23] See M. Boyce and Frantz Grenet (1991), p. 261.

[24] *Ibid*., p. 261.

[25] *Ibid*., p. 243.

word "mother" in the wedding of Alexander with Rowshanak, Dārā´s daughter:[26]

"He called his mother form Ammūriye" ز عموریه مادرش را بخواند

Apart from this link, Anāhītā reappears in another Persian Alexander Romance two centuries later in Tarsūsī´s work *Dārābnāmeh*,[27] represented by Būrān Dokht, daughter of Dārā.[28] In *Dārābnāmeh* there are more relationships between Būrān Dokht and the goddess. In this popular Alexander Romance Būrān Dokht is associated with water. Anāhītā, as water-divinity, appears in *Yašt* 5 (known as the *Ābān Yašt*, q.v.) which is one of the longest and best preserved of the Avestan hymns.[29] These verses contain ancient epic material in brief where kings and heroes' names appear and in this respect, it is one of the most important parts of the *Avestā* where the legends of Ancient Iran, the base of the national epic are preserved.[30]

In the *Avestā* and the Middle Persian texts, there is not any direct mention to the "bad breath" but there are some words related to *Ahrīman*. One of these words is "bad smell" which appears in *Avestā* as gantay/gaintī.[31]

The herb that cures the bad breath of Alexander´s mother is mentioned in *Shāhnāmeh* as "*Eskandar*", and in Dīnawarī´s and Tabarī´s Persian variant it is *sandar.* The herb is, as likely as not, garlic.[32] More interestingly, the healing power of the herb may be indicated by the garlic, which was so esteemed by the Iranians as a medicine and a means of warding off the evil eye.[33] If we consider the "bad breath" as a sign of *Ahrīman*, the identification of the herb as garlic makes sense.

The only important thing that is due to the Greek version in this episode in the *Shāhnāmeh* is the birth of the horse in the same night that Alexander was born. Alexander´s horse is hardly known in the Arabic Alexander tradition, but Tabarī mentioned the horse called (A)būkefārasb,[34] ends to a Persian word "asb" (asp) which means Horse, so this name is composed by two

[26] Ferdowsī, *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VII, p. 10.
[27] Tarsūsī, *Dārābnāmeh*, ed. Dhabiollāh Safā.
[28] See W. L. Hanaway (1982), pp. 285-295.
[29] Mary Boyce (1985b), p. 60.
[30] Safā (1369 H. S./1990), p. 35.
[31] Nyberg (2003), p.81.
[32] Stoneman, R (2008), p. 25.
[33] Shahbazi, A. Sh. (2002).
[34] *Annales*, 666 cited from Doufikar-Aerts (2010), p.208.

parts: būkefār (Bucephalus) and asb "horse", which indicates a Persian source.

Besides Ferdowsī and Tabarī, this legendary mount is only found in Quzmān and some detail about their mutual birth days is also mentioned in Ethiopic Romance.[35] The explanation of the horse´s name in the *Shāhnāmeh* does not coincide with these Arabic sources. In the *Sīra* studied by Dr. Doufikar-Aerts[36] the horse is *bull´s heads*, like in Greek, the horse was called Bucephalus, because he had on his haunch a mark shaped like an ox´s head.[37] In the *Shāhnāmeh* the horse has a lion´s head and short legs.[38]

The historical information in this part is important, the poet places emphasis on the name of the cities and how long each battle takes.[39] It is noticeable how important is for the poet where each detail happens. For example Jahrom is where there is the key of the royal treasure,[40] the royal family is in Isfahan and Alexander is crowned in Estakhr (with a kīyānī crown). The poet´s emphasis on the name of the cities is very remarkable. There is not such an interest in the Greek or the Syriac version.

Another factor that shows the familiarity of the source with Persian rituals and traditions is in the funeral of Dārā where it is mentioned that Alexander prepared a *dakhme* (tower of silence, *dakhmag* in Middle Persian) for the Persian king. Using the word "*dakhme*" and other points about the Zoroastrian religion in the last words of Dārā might have belonged to a Persian version.

As we have seen above, Ferdowsī normally mentions the source with some specific words such as *daftar-e Pahlavī*, *mūbad*, *dehqān* or *gūyande-ye Pahlavi*. In the case of Alexander´s chapter, Ferdowsī mentions various times a "Pahlavi" source. Once, in the reign of Dārāb and another time in the episode of the Indian king Keyd. This episode starts with these words[41]:

چنین گفت گوینده ی پهلوی شگفت آیدت کاین سخن بشنوی

"Thus spoke the Pahlavi narrator, you will be astonished when you hear this story".

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[35] See Doufikar-Aerts, F. (2010), p. 208.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 209.
[37] Stoneman, R., (1991), p. 47.
[38] *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VI, p. 379.
[39] In general three battles take place, the first one in Euphrates River during eight days, the second in a vast camp during three days and after the victory he stays there four months; *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VI, pp. 385-399.
[40] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 392.
[41] *Shāhnāmeh,* vol VII, p. 12.

Although the poet appears to invoke oral informants, this can be shown to go back to his written sources; in other words, when the poet says that he has "heard" a story from such-and-such a person, he is merely repeating in verse what his source had already said in prose.[42] This episode is one of the most beautiful and complicated episodes on Iskandar, and is worth an independent study. The Indian Keyd also appears in the Pahlavi *Kārnāmak ī Ardashīr Pābakān*[43] as Indian Kēd. The word "Kēd" itself is a Pahlavi word which means "wise, magician"[44] as in Arabic sources he always appears as Indian philosopher or the wise Kand/Kayd/Qaydār/Qīdār.[45] Another interesting character in this episode in *Shāhnāmeh* is the man who interprets the Keyd´s dreams, Mihrān, who in *Kārnāmak* appears as Mihrāk[46] although there is not any common function in their character: the similarity is only in their names. But it shows that the story of Indian Keyd can probably come from the Iranian pre-Islamic sources.

The Christian references

The Christian references in the *Shāhnāmeh* are hardly made in accordance with typical Christian belief. Christian writings in Middle Persian consist largely of translation from Syriac.[47] As a native of Tūs, Ferdowsī must also have been in touch with the Christian community, which in his time had a street of its own *kūy-e tarsāyān* (Christian town or Christian street) in the town; nevertheless, his Christian references in the *Shāhnāmeh* generally echoed statements and sentiments that he found in his sources.[48] But the most interesting detail is that these Christian references appear normally in the episodes that have a Persian background, like the Persian version of Alexander´s birth or in the episode of Indian Keyd. There are some Christian writings in Middle Persian, regarded as a branch of Syriac literature.[49] By the end of the third century CE, Christianity was firmly established in parts of western Iran, and even in Sassanian rule individual Christians sometimes

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[42] François de Blois (1998).
[43] *La Geste d'Ardashir Fils de Pābag*, tr. du Pehlevi par Frantz Grenet, pp. 106-107.
[44] Wolff (1998), p. 678.
[45] See Doufikar-Aerts (2010), p. 87.
[46] *Ibid*., pp.90-108-117.
[47] See Sims-Williams N., (2009), pp. 266-70.
[48] Qamar Āriān (1991).
[49] Sims-Williams, N., (2009), p. 266.

achieved high positions in the imperial administration.[50] After the independence of the Persian church form the Patriarch of Antioch, they called themselves Nestorians. The fifth century is seen as the beginnings of a Christian literature in Middle Persian. So it is not surprising that there are Christian elements in the Alexander chapter, as a result of the translation of the Romance from Syriac into Middle Persian.

The Arabic background

There are many evidences that demonstrate that the Alexander chapter in the *Shāhnāmeh* had passed through an Arabic translation. In some verses Ferdowsī repeats exactly the statements and the words in Arabic which were in his source. For example in the battle between Dārā and Iskandar where Alexander´s army carry a flag in which is written these words: "lovers of the Cross" (*Moheb-e salīb*).[51]

همای از بر و خیزرانش قضیب نوشته بروبر محب صلیب

Also after the Fūr's death starts some episodes that reflect a vast field of Arabic words and elements. Iskandar goes to *haram* (حرم), "the house of Abraham" where it is called *Bait-ol-harām* by God. There is nothing mentioned related to Islamic traditions; Iskandar goes to Mecca just to help Nasr Qotaib, the governor of Mecca who is the grandchild of Ismail and Abraham, to release the descendent of Ismail.[52] All these elements could have been in a Christian text too. On the other hand, it is very interesting to mention the information that Mas´ūdī gives in *Morūj* concerning the Sassanian kings and their respect for *Bait-ol-harām*. He affirms:" The ancient Persians, for respect to *Kaba* and to their ancestor, Abraham, went on a pilgrimage to *Bait-ol-harām*, and the last Persian king who went to *Kaba* was Sāsān son of Bābak, the ancestor of Ardashīr Bābakān, the first Sasanian king".[53] He continues with some poems on how proud the Persians were of this issue.

Another problematic Arabic word appears in the episode of Queen Candace, which is read as Andalus (*Andolos* اندلس).

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[50] *Ibid*., p. 267.
[51] *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VI, p. 384.
[52] *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VII, pp. 41-43.
[53] Mas´ūdī, *Morūj*, ed. Dār al-hojra (Qom, Iran), vol. I, p. 103.

> "There was a queen in *Andolos* اندلس with a great wisdom and innumerous army, she was called Qaidāfe"[54]

So how can we explain the reference to Andalus if the text is not Islamized and had been formed in the pre-Islamic period? This episode is one of the most similar episodes to the Greek and Syriac versions in which there are many Christian references:[55] In Umāra´s text the episode of Queen Candace, called Qandefa there, is between the folios 60a-67a, and is situated between the meeting of Alexander with the Pharaoh and the Amazon episode.[56] We can find the episode of Qandefa in Aljamiado-Moorish version published by A.R. Nykl (1929), and also in the Ethiopian version made from an Arabic text. In the version edited by García Gómez (1929), *Un texto arabe occidental de la Leyenda de Alejandro*, it is between the episode of the trip to Egypt and Yemen and she is called "Candafa of Samora", in the *Nihāya*'s manuscript Candace appears as Qandāfa "Queen of the west".[57] Candace also appears in Quzmān's manuscript.[58] In Arabic versions Queen Candace also returns in different guises as Ghaydāqa and Raydāqa.[59] But in none of these Arabic versions is Candace the queen of Andalus as appears in the *Shāhnāmeh*. If we take into account that Ferdowsī's source was not Islamized and there are many Christian references in this chapter, the word "اندلس" cannot be read as "Andalus". I suppose that this mistake comes from the problem that in Arabic alphabet, especially in Persian, the vowels do not appear. Another problem is that according to the rhyme and meter in poetry we have to read it as "*Andolos*" which can be translated as Andalus. But this meaning does not fit in the *Shāhnāmeh*, especially in the Alexander chapter, according to the background of its sources. I suggest that the original word must be a city in Asia Minor which was considered as the "west" for the Persians. The Christian references appear in Alexander's conversation with Qaidāfe when he swears not to send his army to her kingdom.[60]

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[54] *Ibid*.
[55] *Shāhnāmeh*, vol VII, p. 59.
[56] Doufikar-Aerts (2010), p. 42, note. 118.
[57] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 31.
[58] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 85, note. 282.
[59] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 248.
[60] *Shāhnāmeh*, vol. VII, p. 59.

> "I swear by the Messiah's religion, by his just commands, by the grand Cross, I swear in the name of *zonnār*[61] (girdle), *shammās* (deacon) and Holy Spirit".

In the episode of the search for the Water of Life, Ferdowsī mentions again his source as: *dehqān* and *Pahlavān.*[62] In another case he repeats: "In the dark night he was remembering the Almighty, and then he thought of another water, which the *dehqān* called Water of Life".

The continuous episodes are similar to the Syriac version and in some cases to the Greek version. In his way to Babylon, another time appear references to some important figures of *Kīyānian´s* chapter, Iskandar passes through an island in which there are images of Afrāsīyāb and Kay Khosrow, painted on bones. It is an island where the only food is fish. The people give Iskandar the Key of Khosrow´s treasure.[63]

Although at the beginning of the chapter, the construction of Alexandria is not mentioned, at the end of the episode, Alexandria is mentioned in relation to the city where Alexander is buried.[64] The figure of Aristotle (Aristātālīs or Aristālīs) in the *Shāhnāmeh* is not very distinguished; he is only mentioned at the beginning of the kingdom of Alexander and at the end relating to Alexander´s funeral.[65] After Alexander´s death, it is said that "a Christian priest" washed his body and prepared him for the funeral.[66] At the end Ferdowsī says that Iskandar killed 36 kings and built ten cities.[67] He is happy to have passed through "Alexander´s wall" (*sadd-e Eskandarī*).

Conclusion

The study of the Alexander legend in the *Shāhnāmeh* is very complicated not only because of the contradictory figure of Alexander in the Persian tradition, but also because of the variety of the sources of *Shāhnāmeh* and different versions of *Xwadāy-nāmag* itself. But basing on different "layers" that I have examined above, taking into account the sources of *Shāhnāmeh* on the

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[61] A cord worn around the neck with a pendant cross, worn by Christians. 'A.-A. Dehkhodā, (1358 H. S./1979).
[62] *Shāhnāmeh,* vol.,VII, p. 80.
[63] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 100.
[64] *Op. cit. supra*, pp. 107-8.
[65] *Ibid*.
[66] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 106.
[67] *Op. cit. supra*, p. 111.

one hand, and on the other hand, the account on Alexander in the Arabic sources of a Persian author, like Tabarī and Dīnawarī who like Ferdowsī included Alexander in the *Kīyānian* dynasty, I suggest that the Alexander chapter, especially Alexander´s birth and the episode of the Indian Keyd, was included in *Xwadāy-nāmag*, translated from Syriac into Middle Persian in the last Sassanian period. Faustina Doufikar-Aerts suggests the probability that more than one Arabic translation from the Syriac was in circulation.[68] I suppose that it is due to this reason that there was a Persianized version in Middle Persian, derived from Syriac which was translated into Arabic in the Islamic period, most probably in the Abbāsid period[69], and it turned into an important source especially for the Persian authors although they wrote in Arabic, even the author of *Nihāya* used this Arabic translation of *Xwadāy-nāmag*. This is the reason why this text is similar to Dīnawarī´s and Ferdowsī´s versions, and also why Ibn al-Muqaffa is mentioned in the text[70], who appears in the sources as the translator of *Xwadāy-nāmag*.[71]

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[68] Doufikar-Aerts (2010), p. 281.

[69] Gutas shows that the function of *bayt al-hikma* in the early Abbāsid was to transcribe and preserve books on *Iranian* national history, warfare and romances. See Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, London and New York, 1998, pp. 54-5.

[70] The Alexander passage in the *Nihāya* was handed down by the author of Pseudo-Asmayī in the name of the famous translator Ibn al-Muqaffa. F. Doufikar-Aerts (2010), p. 30.

[71] On the Pahlavi texts translated by Ibn al-Muqaffa see Dodge (1970), p. 260.

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