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FABULOUS ORIGIN OF ESFANDEYĀR
AS ONE OF THE CHARACTERS IN ŠĀH-NĀME.

The name of Esfandeyār is connected with the name of Esfand, i. e. of the last month of the Iranian year, which corresponds to the sign of Pisces. This is perhaps partly the reason why the motif of Esfandeyār makes one think of the goldfish fable. It is true, that the story of Esfandeyār, presented by Ferdousi in Šāh-nāme, appears to be very similar to one of the versions of this popular fable. A similar fable, called On a Poor Fisherman, Goldfish and a Greedy Khan, may be found in the collection of Uiguric fables¹.

It must be noticed, that the similarity of the Uiguric fable to the above mentioned motif from Šāh-nāme is based not on the similarity of the plots but rather on the similarity of functions of the acting characters. The two characters from the Uiguric fable: the khan and the fisherman, and their relationship brings to mind the mutual dependence of the characters from Šāh-nāme: Goštāsp and Esfandeyār.

The following comparison, which consists of the summary of each of the stories, aims at pointing out the similarities in the proceedings of the main characters in the discussed texts.

KHAN

- 1.
2. Accepts the gift and promises to hand the reward to the fisherman after his catching another goldfish.
3. Still does not give the reward to the fisherman, and orders him to fetch the living water.
4. Again refuses to give the reward and orders the fisherman to build a gold throne.
5. Appoints new tasks for the fisherman: he is to bring the beautiful princess from a far-off town.

FISHERMAN

1. Catches the goldfish and offers it to khan in order to receive the reward.
2. Catches the second fish and goes to the khan to remind him of the reward.
3. Finds the water and brings it to the khan.
4. Fulfills the order and comes back to take the reward.
5. Brings the princess to the court and with her help kills the khan.

GOSTAP

1. Promises to give his daughter Homāy as wife and to abdicate in favour of anyone who will defeat the Turanian army.
2. Besieged by the Turanians asks Esfandeyār, who is imprisoned at his order, for help, promising to give his power to the helper.

ESFANDEYĀR

1. Fulfills the task appointed by Goštāsp, is allowed to marry Homāy, but he does not get the Iranian throne.
2. In spite of his animosity towards Goštāsp, he helps him, taking at the same time his bloody revenge on the Turanians.

3. He does not keep his promise but, renewing it, sends Esfandeyār to free his sisters from Turanian slavery.
3. Believing that this time Goštāsp will keep his word, agrees to undertake the task. After overcoming the "haft xān", he frees the sisters and returns to take the reward.
4. Refuses Esfandeyār's demands and, to get rid of him, sends him to Sistān to bring Rostam bound. He knows that Esfandeyār will be killed there, yet he promises him that after fulfilling this last task he will be given the throne and the Iranian crown.
4. Submits to Goštāsp's demands and is killed by Rostam.

In spite of the fact that the tragic history of Esfandeyār is not similar to the fable of the goldfish in particulars, the schemes of the stories are the same. In both cases the ruler demands something or appoints tasks his subject, and, to encourage him, promises him a reward. This repeats several times. The subject resists each time and feels deceived (this concerns both the fisherman and Esfandeyār). Yet he does fulfil all the tasks, led by blind obedience as well as by desire to get the promised reward. This lasts up to the moment when the subject realizes how he has been deceived. Finally, the fisherman succeeds and Esfandeyār, following his inevitable fate, is killed.

The motives of the rulers' behaviour differ, although in both cases they have the same goals. The khan is, as a matter of fact, prompted by greed, whereas in Goštāsp's proceedings we may find some other motives.

From Šāh-nāme we know that in his youth Goštāsp urged upon his father - Lohrāsp to abdicate on his behalf. When Lohrāsp refused, Goštāsp went to India. Brought back to Iran, he had shown repentance to his father, but they still felt animosity to each other. It is also known, that finally Lohrāsp did, of his own will, bestow the crown on his son. These facts may, to a certain extent, explain Goštāsp's attitude towards Esfandeyār. It is possible, that Goštāsp, treating his son so cruelly, was led by the memory of his own earlier experience, when he himself wanted to take over his father's power.

It is also worth mentioning, that in Šāh-nāme we frequently find the motif of promising the throne in the castle as a reward for help or for fulfilment of an order. This has no reference in the story of Esfandeyār. In this case the proceedings of all the characters, as well as in the Uiguric fable, are consistent and inevitably leading to the end.

As to support an argument, that a chosen fragment of Šāh-nāme may be regarded as a thread, based on a fable, I have availed myself of a work by a famous Russian student of fables - Wladimir Propp, antititled Morphology of the Fable².

What is Propp's method based on? While analysing a number of fables he observed that in many of them the names of characters, their features, sex and social status change, yet their activities, i. e. their functions remain the same.

The repeatability of the functions is astounding, Propp says. Although the characters in fables vary very much, they often do the same things. It is only the way the function is realized, which constitutes the variable. Propp observes that the recurrence of functions, in spite of their different performers, has been noticed by the historians of religion in myths and beliefs, but it has never before been noticed by the historians of fables. Similarly as the features and functions of gods are transmitted from one to the other, the functions of the fable characters are transmitted from one to the other.

The number of functions is very small, and the number of the acting characters - very large. This explains, according to Propp, the twofold property of the magic fable: on the one hand its amazing variety and vividness, and on the other, its no less surprising uniformity and likeness.

Propp qualified the functions of the fable according to the following two rules:

- he ignored the character-performer,
- he did take into account the place of their activities within the story (because the meaning of the function for the development of the plot should be accounted for).

By the term function Propp understands the proceedings of an acting character, defined from the point of view of its meaning in the development of the plot.

Generally speaking, the author offers the following rules:

- I) The functions of the acting characters constitute the constant invariable elements of the fable - no matter who fulfils them and how. They form the basic part of the fable;
- II) The number of functions in a magic fable is limited;
- III) The order of the functions in the fable is always the same.

Here, Propp points out that not all the possible functions must necessarily appear in every fable. It does not, however, change the rule of ordering. The absence of some functions does not affect the order of the order ones. Further on Propp stresses that functions cannot be divided into mutually exclusive sequences;

- IV) As far as the structure is concerned, all the magic fables belong to one type.

Following the above rules, Propp isolates thirty one functions. To each of them he gives a short explanation of its contents, a one-word qualification of the function and a formal symbol. Every function is then subdivided into several items.

Observing the particular functions isolated by Propp, let me compare them to the successive stages of the history of Esfandeyār from Šāh-nāme, so as to introduce finally a proper scheme.

The beginning of the story of Esfandeyār was given by Ferdousi after Daqiqi. I have made use of this part to discuss the first seven functions designated by Propp. These functions are proportionally less important because, as Propp says, the proper plot of a fable usually begins with function VIII. I did not want to omit these initial seven functions, yet I have dealt with them more freely. The proper scheme begins, however, from item VIII.

Function I is qualified as *departure*; exactly it says that one of the members of the family leaves home. It may be said that Esfandeyār left home, dispatched by his father to propagate zoroastrism.

I can make use of neither function II, qualified as *prohibition*, nor of function III - *transgression*, in spite of the fact that in this moment the antagonist appears. Gorazm - the relative, and at the same time the enemy of Esfandeyār, may be considered as the antagonist.

Function IV implies that the antagonist attempts to learn something about the main character, whereas function V provides that the antagonist manages to get news about his victim. It is known that Gorazm wanted to harm Esfandeyār, and craftily accused him before the king. Yet Daqiqi gives no details connected with these events.

We may, however, accept function VI, which says that the antagonist tries to deceive his victim in order to subdue him, or to seize his property, and is qualified as *stratagem*. "Gorazm, accusing the absent Esfandeyār before the king, certainly acted deceitfully. Esfandeyār, who submitted to his father's will and went to prison, was deceived, and this can be compared to function VII.

From this moment on, the proper plot of the fable starts. It begins, as I have already stated, with function VIII, symbolized

by A. This function has two variants; I have chosen the second one, function VIIIa, qualified as *lack of something*. It says that one of the members of the family lacks something what he would like to possess. As it is known, Gorazm, after being defeated in the war with the Turanians, missed someone who would have helped him. Prompted by Ġāmāsp, he decided to turn to Esfandeyār. Because it is a particular form, I have chosen item 6 of this function, which allows for some other forms of lack, i. e. symbol a⁶.

Function IX, with symbol B, is qualified as *mediation*, a *joining point*, and it contains of the announcement of a harm (a misfortune) or lack; the protagonist is asked or ordered to do something, sent somewhere, or redeemed. This function introduces the protagonist to the fable. Because Goštāsp sent Ġāmāsp to ask Esfandeyār for help, and at the same time, to promise him the throne, I have chosen item 1 of this function, qualified as an appeal for help with the following dispatching of the main character - symbol B¹. Propp adds, that the appeal usually comes from the king, and is often associated by some promises.

Function X says that the searching person agrees to, or decides to resist, and is qualified as *beginning of the opposition*. Esfandeyār agreed to help his father, so I can introduce symbol C, and at once symbol ↑, belonging to function XI, qualified as an *expedition*. Here I will omit the following four functions, what agrees with Propp's principle. These functions have no reference to the analysed text.

Next I introduce function XVI, with symbol B, saying that the main character and his antagonist enter the close struggle described as *struggle*. Esfandeyār entered the fight against the Turanians so here occurs item 1 of the function above mentioned, B¹, i. e. a struggle in the open field. The fight results in the victory, so it is function XVIII, with symbol Π, i. e. victory over the antagonist. Again, in the context of the fight of Esfan-

deyār against the Turanians I introduce symbol Π^1 , i. e. victory in the open field.

The following, XIX function, under symbol Λ , says about an eradication of the initial harm or lack, and is qualified as "eradication of the misfortune or lack". In Esfandeyār's case the situation is not a typical one. It cannot be said that he won something concrete, but he did annihilate the former threat. It is why item 4 of this function may be used. It provides that the annihilation of the initial harm is a direct result of the former activities - symbol Λ^1 .

Now follows the return of the main character, i. e. function XX, symbol $\downarrow$. Esfandeyār, having returned after his victorious fight, was sent by Goštāsp in order to free his sisters. Thus I must omit the several following functions to come to function XXV. This function, symbolized by 3 tells the protagonist gets a difficult task, therefore it can certainly be referred to in the story of Esfandeyār. The same concerns the next function, XXVI, telling about the fulfilment of the task, under the symbol P.

Here ends the first sequence of this fable, which is not always typical. In the end of his book, in the chapter on the classification of fables, Propp writes about two pairs of functions which, in various arrangements, appear in the majority of fables. These are:

- the pair of functions symbolized by B and Π , i. e. the struggle with the antagonist and the victory over him,
- the pair of functions symbolized by 3 and P, i. e. a difficult task and its fulfilment. Usually, the first of the two pairs appears before the second one.

On the basis of this four functions Propp isolates four groups of fables, in which the plot is developed by:

struggle - victory /B - Π /

task - fulfilment /3 - P/

development by both of them

development without both B - Π and 3 - P

The first sequence of the story of Esfandeyār refers to the third pair of functions above mentioned, i. e. the plot is developed by struggle - victory and by task - fulfilment. This is why I have written that the fable is not typical; Propp mentions that such an arrangement occurs rather rarely. In the majority of fables each of pairs of functions occurs separately.

From the first sequence of the history which I describe, after excluding the preparatory part, i. e. the few initial functions, we finally get the following scheme:

$$a^6 \mid B^1 \mid C \uparrow B^1 - \Pi^1 \mid \Lambda^1 \downarrow 3 - P$$

The second sequence differs to a high degree from the first one. It may be said to begin from the moment of Esfandeyār's return after completing his task and bringing his sisters home. This time the king commanded Esfandeyār to bring him Rostam bound. Thus as the first function appears here again function VIIIa, i. e. lack of something, with the allowance for various forms of lack - a^6 .

From the next function, IX, qualified as meditation, joining point, I have this time chosen item 2. It says that the protagonist is dispatched directly, by means of an order or request. The former case is often associated by threats, the latter by promises, or, sometimes, by both at the same time. As it agrees with the relation of Goštāsp to his son, I may use the symbol B^2 .

Next follow two functions, X, with symbol C, qualified as beginning of the opposition, providing that the searcher agrees, or decides to counteract, and XI, qualified as expedition, under the symbol $\uparrow$.

The two subsequent functions, XII and XIII, are connected with the person of so-called donor, or supplier. It is a very important character in the majority of fables, because it is he who supplies a magic means for the protagonist. The two above men-

tioned functions prepare for the delivery of this means to the protagonist. It can be said without any doubt that the story of Esfandeyār has the character of a magic fable. It has, however, some very particular features, namely, Esfandeyār does not need to be given any magic means, as he himself has magic properties. There is, in Šāh-nāme, a frequently repeated designation of Esfandeyār as a man of "bronze body" (ruin tan).

He had this magic property, that his body could be pierced by no arrow but by the only one, the tamarisk arrow which was used by Rostam. Taking into account these magic feature of Esfandeyār, I have to omit functions XII and XIII, i.e. those connected with the donor.

Function XIV, symbol Z, provides that the protagonist comes into possession of the magic means, and is qualified as supply or receiving of the magical means. Because I want to use this function, and as I cannot fit any of its items given by Propp to the story of Esfandeyār, I will leave here the basic symbol Z.

The next function, XV, with symbol R, is qualified as translocation (special shift between two kingdoms), mediation on the way. It says that the protagonist moves, is carried or led to the place where the object of his search is located. Esfandeyār went to Zābulistan in a traditional way, so I have used item 2, providing that the character travels on land or water. Thus we have got symbol R².

In Zābulistan takes place the fight of Esfandeyār against Rostam, so I pass on to function XVI, under symbol B, providing that the main character and his antagonist enter direct struggle. As in the former sequence, I shall make use of version B¹, i.e. fight in the open field. The fact that Esfandeyār was killed in the fight, makes the scheme of this sequence complicated to a certain degree, because Propp does not give any definite symbol for the protagonist's death. I may only make use of function XVII, symbol K, which provides that the protagonist receives a

stamp. Item 1 of this function is closest to the described situation. It says that the stamp is marked on the body, i.e., that the protagonist could be wounded in a fight. Hence symbol K¹.

It is the last function of this sequence, the scheme of which may be presented as follows:

$$a^6 \ B^2 \ C \ \uparrow \ Z \ R^2 \ B^1 \ K^1$$

If we now compare the two sequence, we shall receive the following scheme of the story of Esfandeyār:

$$I. \ [a^6] \ B^1 \ C \ \uparrow \ B^1 - \Pi^1 \ \Lambda^4 \ \downarrow \ 3 - P$$

$$II. \ [a^6] \ B^2 \ C \ \uparrow \ Z \ R^2 \ B^1 \ K^1$$

Here are the meanings of the symbols:

- a⁶ - other forms of lack. Lack of something, if not verbalized in the fable, but evident from the situation, is marked by Propp by brackets.
- B¹ - appeal
- C - beginning of opposition
- ↑ - protagonist's expedition from home
- B¹ - fight in the open field.
- Π¹ - victory in the fight
- Λ⁴ - annihilation of the harm - direct result of the previous activities
- ↓ - protagonist's return
- 3 - difficult task
- P - fulfilment of the task
- B² - dispatch
- Z - coming into possession of a magic means
- R² - protagonist travels or is carried
- K¹ - marking the body with a stamp

The above scheme, based on functions specified by Propp, is not the only possible one to be deduced from the story of

Esfandeyār. In the whole Šāh-nāme there are numerous fable motifs, e.g. the story of Rostam. Even the fragment which I was concerned with, gives several possibilities of interpretation. The second sequence, for instance, could be inverted and discussed from the point of view of Rostam, not of Esfandeyār. The particular elements serve such purpose perfectly well: Rostam was forced to undertake a difficult task, i.e. to struggle against Esfandeyār. Then he came into possession of the magic means in shape of tamarisk arrow and defeated Esfandeyār.

A division of the story of Esfandeyar into more sequences, with a simultaneous concern for a larger part of the material, could form another possibility. One of the additional sequences could, for instance, be made of the fragment about Esfandeyār's "haft xān". This fragment could even be regarded as a separate story.

My purpose, however, was to present one general scheme, which could prove that the above discussed story composes a whole. In chapter IX of his Morphology of the Fable, Propp gives certain conditions on which we may treat a fable as a whole. He describes there eight possibilities. I have chosen the second of them, which provides that we deal with one fable if it consists of two sequences, of which one has a positive ending, and the other - a negative one. This possibility can be fitted to the story of Esfandeyār: in the first sequence he won the fight and returned home to his father, and in the other sequence - he was killed.

There is also another source one may refer to, in order to classify a certain text as a fable. This is so-called index of fables compiled by a Finnish scholar Aarne, which constitutes a list of fable plots. Aarne termed different plots as types and gave a separate number to each type. The index is a classification into three basic groups: animal fables, proper fables and anecdotes; each of them further divided into categories.

I employed an index taken from Afanasev's collection of Russian fables³. This index was worked out by a Russian scholar Andreev on the basis of Aarne's index. Andreev translated Aarne's index and extended it by addition of some new types obtained from several collections of Russian folk-tales.

Unfortunately Aarne-Andreev's index does not comprise the collection of Uiguric fables from which I have taken the fable about a fisherman and a golden fish. Nevertheless one can find a similar type of a fable that would correspond to Esfandeyār's history.

The story of Esfandeyār shows the greatest similitude to the type of a fable which was numbered 513 B in Aarne-Andreev's index. It belongs to the subgroup of magic fables in the category termed as a magic assistant and it is entitled "The Flying Ship". Here is the story:

The Czar promises his daughter to the one who will build a flying ship. The hero fulfils this wish. The Czar, however, does not want a peasant to marry his daughter and gives him difficult tasks to perform. With a help from some specialists (the shooter, the speedrunner, the glutton et al.) he carries out all the tasks appointed by the czar and finally marries his daughter⁴.

Even though the above type of a fable belongs to the "magic assistant" category, which has no reference to Esfandeyār's history, as far as its plot is concerned. It is most closely related with this story.

The motif of repeated efforts of getting rid of the hero by appointing him many difficult tasks is exactly the same.

Esfandeyār's death of a deeply symbolic significance poses a separate problem, although it is also neated in a fairy-tale background. Having been sent by Goštāsp to Šistān, Esfandeyār struggled with Rostam for a very long time. Seeing no other way of conquering Esfandeyār Rostam decided to employ magic. He sought Simurq's advice how to do it. Rostam learnt from Simurq that he should prepare an arrow made of tamarisk and then try

to aim straight at Esfandeyār's eye, for this was the only possible way of killing him. Rostam obeyed Simurq's directions and managed to kill Esfandeyār.

Apparently both in myths and in folk-tales the circumstances of a hero's death are often similar. J. G. Frazer in The Golden Bough reports the fable about a Norwegian God Baldur. Being afraid of Baldur's death the gods wanted all creatures living on earth to swear that they would not do any harm to Baldur. Mistletoe was the only one that did not swear, because it was too young to do it. And it was just from the stroke inflicted by mistletoe that Baldur died⁵.

The analogy between Esfandeyār's history and Baldur's myth is certainly based on the fact that the life of each hero is bound to only one plant; in Esfandeyār's case it is tamarisk whereas in Baldur's case - mistletoe.

Frazer's research proves that Baldur's connection with mistletoe has its grounds in the beliefs of some primitive nations. These nations were convinced that human life or soul, for the sake of its own safety, may stay outside man's body. This is connected with savage peoples' notion of life as a concrete, material object. Life understood in this way need not necessarily abide within an individual; it may stay outside and can be preserved due to certain relationship or distant influence. Man stays healthy as long as this object which he calls his life or his soul remains wholesome and immaculate. When it becomes damaged - man suffers, when it becomes worn out - man dies.

In accordance with this belief, a primitive man takes his soul out of his body and keeps it in a safe hiding. It has its roots in a firm faith that so long as a soul stays undamaged in its hiding place a man himself is immortal. Nothing can possibly kill his body because there is no life inside him⁶. It is worth stressing that the concept of inner soul occupies much place in folk-tales all over the world. Frazer gives many examples of fables in which hero's life or soul were closed in different objects, animals or plants⁷.

Coming back to the Norwegian fable, Frazer thinks that the view of Baldur's life embodied in mistletoe wholly reflects the primitive way of thinking. He says that the fact of Baldur's, being killed by a stroke of mistletoe twig may seem incongruent, since his life was placed in this very plant. However, if man's life is materialized in a particular object with which his own existence is inseparably connected and whose destruction causes man's own death; one may speak about this object as being not different from man's life or death; as it often happens in fables. Then, if man's death is an object, there is no wonder that he dies from the stroke inflicted by this object⁸.

Apparently the essential similarity between Baldur's and Esfandeyār's deaths lies in the fact that both of them died from the stroke of an object in which their lives or souls were abiding. The confirmation of Esfandeyār's dependency upon tamarisk can be found in Šāh-nāme.

I shall recall the words that Simurq addresses to Rostam, pointing the tamarisk tree:

be - d - in gez bovad hoš - e Esfandeyār
to in čub rā xārmāye madār

The following line can be translated. "There is Esfandeyār's soul in this tamarisk, you should not disregard this withe"⁹.

It follows clearly that it was tamarisk with which Esfandeyār's being was connected. The hero himself realized that. Having been pierced by an arrow made of tamarisk and already dying he addressed Pašutan:

be - mardī marā purdastān nakošt
negah kon bar in gez ke dāram be - mošt
be - d - in čub šod ruzgāram be - sar
ze Simurq va az Rostam čāregar

"Rostam did not kill me like a man
look at that tamarisk I keep in my hand,
my life was bound to this tree
to Simurq and crafty Rostam"¹⁰.

Both Esfandeyār's and Baldur's lives were bound to plants possessing particular properties. The proof to the tamarisk was a plant worshipped by Iranians can be found in *Šāh-nāme*. Simurq, while giving advice to Rostam how to use the tamarisk arrow says:

abr časm-e u rāst kon har do dost
čēnān čun bovad mardom gez - parast

"Aim at his eye and shoot as if you were the praiser of tamarisk"¹¹.

Frazer also puts emphasis on the exceptional properties of mistletoe in his work. He stresses the fact that many nations worshipped it as a plant possessing miraculous healing properties.

Lots of information concerning mistletoe has been derived by Frazer from Plinius' work. He wrote: "There is nothing more sacred for Druids than mistletoe and the tree it grows upon; provided it is an oak tree".

According to Plinius, Druids were firmly convinced that everything growing on an oak tree was sent from Heaven and signified that the tree had been chosen by God himself. For this reason they did not cut down mistletoe with an iron sickle, but with a golden one, and they did it in such a manner which would prevent its falling in the ground. They probably thought, that this heavenly plant would be desecrated and would lose its miraculous properties, if came into contact with the earth¹².

There were different opinions as to the proper time for mistletoe harvest in different nations. In many countries it was collected in March, in others during winter, or else in the day of summer solstice.

I have already mentioned the ritual of cutting down the mistletoe by Druids, described by Plinius.

According to Chevalier this ritual was probably related to November feasts which used to signify the beginning of a new

Celtic year and thus corresponded to the symbols of immortality and mistletoe rebirth¹³.

Similar one can associate tamarisk with the process of rebirth. On the other hand Esfandeyār's death reminds us of the ceremonies connected with New Year's Eve festivals. Nouruz, which stands for Persian New Year's Eve, is at the same time the holiday of Ahuramazda and the day of creation of the world and men. On Nouruz Day "the renovation of formation" takes place. According to the legend handed down by Dismagi, the king used to announce: "This is the new day of the new month of the new year; all that has been worn out by time must be renovated"¹⁴. Men's fortune in the forthcoming year was also settled on this very day. On Nouruz Night one could see innumerable lights and fires. The purification by water and revels were also practiced for these were believed to bring abundant rains in the forthcoming year¹⁵.

Kazwini says that on Nouruz Day God raised people from the dead, "gave their souls back to them and ordered heavens to pour rain on them and that's why on that day people still splash water on one another"¹⁶.

I have mentioned New Year's Eve ceremonies connected with water because tamarisk has a very close relationship with water or rain, and hence it is indirectly connected with New Year's Eve festivities.

Ferdousi notices the direct relationship between tamarisk and water pointing to the fact that this tree was growing on a seaside. I shall recall the words spoken by Simurq to Rostam:

baze kon kamān rā va in čub - e gaz
be - d - in - gune parvarde dar āb raz
"tie a string to your bow and to this tamarisk tree,
in this way nourished in water"¹⁷.

In many countries tamarisk tree has a connection with rain. In China it is known under the name "The Lord of Rain" and

what is worth stressing, stands for a symbol of immortality¹⁸. In Japan tamarisk forecasts rains and it is called a divine and magic tree of rain¹⁹. When the inhabitants of one of the villages in northern Burma want a rainfall they chose the largest tamarisk in the neighbourhood and call it the sanctuary of the spirit (Nat) who controls rain. They bring gifts of bread, coconut, bananas and fowl to the guarding spirit of the village as well as to the spirit bringing rain. Then they pray: "Our lord Nat, take pity on us poor mortals and do not hold rain from falling. We are bringing you an abundance of gifts, so make it rain night and day". Next there follow revels in praise of the spirit of tamarisk and later three elderly women clad in beautiful robes sing the song of rain.

I have already mentioned earlier the relationship between Esfandeyār's death and New Year's Eve festivals, celebrating the coming of spring. In the traditions of many ancient nations New Year's Eve festivities went together with the ritual killing of a dragon or more often - a sea monster.

Among Jews there was always the traditional fight between Jahwe and Rahab the sea-monster at the end of each year. Jahwe conquered the monster, won victory over the waters and that signified the recurrence of creation and at the same time the redemption of mankind²⁰.

Babylonians devoted their New Year's Eve celebrations to Marduk God the Creator (Marduk created the universe from Tiamat's body). After being given absolute power by the congregation of gods, after receiving the sceptre and the throne, Marduk begins his fight with the sea monster - Tiamat. We witness a really heroic fight. Marduk's main weapon is the net that his father gave him. Marduk binds Tiamat, puts him in irons and finally kills him. He also puts in irons all gods and demons who helped Tiamat and throws them into dungeons and caves²¹.

The subjugation and the ritual killing of a dragon constituted the climax of old Iranian New Year's Eve festivals celebrating

the coming of spring. Unfortunately the traces of these fetes are missing from Zoroastrian writings, so that one cannot explain the mythical sense of these Iranian rites in any other way but by comparing them with Buddhist New Year's Eve holidays. In the beginning it is made clear that the country is oppressed by a heavy drought. A heavenly hero appears, captures the fortress in which the dragon defends himself and kills the monster. This deed causes the captured waters to run freely and puts an end to the imprisonment of women in the fortress. It starts raining and the rain fertilizes the soil again: the young god indulges in delights with the liberated women²².

An Indian god Indra, who conquers the sea monster Vrtra (Vrtra - one who gathered waters) can be compared with Rostam's killing of Esfandeyār. Esfandeyār's death is very much similar to the New Year's Eve rituals which have been described above.

As I have already mentioned, tamarisk, according to the beliefs of many nations, is associated with water. But at the same time it is a tree connected with crops, with fertility. For example in India, tamarisk is used for fertilizing other trees. When an Indian plants a mango grove, neither he nor his wife may taste a fruit from the tree, until this tree is wed to one of another species; usually to tamarisk growing in the vicinity of the grove.

The name Esfandeyār corresponds on the one hand to Avestian Spentodata, that is the name of a mythical mountain; on the other hand to the name of Pisces, that is the last sign of Zodiac. And so the last moments of Esfandeyār's, like the fights with dragons, can be associated with New Year's Eve festivals. Rostam - the sunny hero with the help of a tamarisk with the shed a sea of blood from Esfandeyār's eye - the frozen mountain²³.

Esfandeyār's eye, that is the most sensitive part of his body, can also be associated with spring for another reason. Persian words čašm = eye and čašme = spring are cognate. Hitting Esfandeyār's eye may symbolize the loosening of waters in the time of spring.

NOTES

¹ O bednom rybake, zoloty rybke i žadnom khane [in:] Ujgurskie narodnye skazki, comp. and trans. by M. N. Kabirov, V. F. Sankhmatov, Moskva 1951, p. 18-24.

² V. Propp, Morfologiya skazki, Moskva 1969.

³ A. N. Afanasev, Narodnye ruskie skazki, vol. III, Moskva 1957.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 472-473.

⁵ J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, part VII, vol. I, London 1913, p. 101-105.

⁶ Ibidem, part VII, vol. II, p. 95-96.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 96-152.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 279.

⁹ Ferdousi, Šāh-nāme, vol. IV, Tehrān 1967, p. 336, beyt 3699.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 341, beyt 3829-3830.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 336, beyt 3710.

¹² J. G. Frazer, op. cit., part VII, vol. II, p. 76-81.

¹³ J. Chevalier, P. Gheerbrand, Dictionnaire des Symboles, vol. II, Paris 1974, p. 397.

¹⁴ A. Christensen, Le premier homme et le premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des Iraniens, vol. I, Uppsala 1918-1931, p. 149.

¹⁵ M. Eliade, Traité d'histoire des religions, Paris 1949, p. 344.

¹⁶ A. Christensen, op. cit., vol. II, p. 147.

¹⁷ Ferdousi, op. cit., p. 336, beyt 3709.

¹⁸ J. Chevalier, P. Gheerbrand, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 256.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ M. Eliade, op. cit., p. 343.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 20, 32-35.

²² W. Duleba, Between Myth and History (an introduction to the Polish translation of Šāh-nāme). Cf. Ferdousi, Księga Królewska. Wybór, przełożył i opracował W. Duleba, Warszawa 1981.

²³ Ibidem.

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REMARKS ON DAULAT IN HAFIZ

In the Pažmān-e Baxtyāri's edition of the Divan of Hafiz, containing 489 ghazals, there are 82 baytts in which the Arabic word daulat and its Persian-Arabic derivatives like daulat-sarāy, daulat^vāh(i), daulati and naudaulat(i) make their appearance¹. The word daulat is usually translated as "fortune; luck; chance", but everybody who tries to grasp the exact meaning of a verse in which it appears realizes soon that the sense of the term is extremely fluent and elusive. Lisān-ul-‘arab (vol. 13, s.v.) gives as the basic meaning of both the readings: dau-lat and dūlat, "a turn in financial affairs and in combat" (ad-daulatu wa 'd-dulatu al-‘uqbatun fi 'l-māli wa 'l-ḥarbi sawā'an) and presents the other forms and meanings as a matter of varying opinions (qila). The Dictionary of Steingass s.v. gives the following renderings for daulat: "Going round each other in combat; good turn of fortune; felicity, wealth, victory; power, dominion, empire; a state, reign, dynasty"; for dulat: "change of time, fortune, or happiness; felicity in the next life".

With all these meanings in mind one is still left wondering, how e.g. 264/4 should be interpreted correctly, i.e. without losing the joke-like interconnections between the terms used by the poet:

daulat-e pir-e moyān bād ke bāqi sahl-ast
digari gu be-rau vo nām-e mā az yād be-bar