

Eastern nations in Ferdowsi thoughts

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Abstract: The western culture has always kept a close eye on eastern civilization throughout the history. Toward making a survey and getting an understanding of the eastern knowledge, customs, and conventions, a new field of study was created called orientalist. The dawn of eastern civilization was much sooner than the western one. The oldest city of the ancient world in Mesopotamia in Iraq, Jiroft in Iran, and Mohenjo-Daro in India were of incredible civilization. Formation of great empires in Iran, China and India were concomitant to stating of city dwelling in other parts of the world, so it puts us to shame to look into ourselves from western outlook.

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1. Introduction

East in general means Asia and non-European world, as opposed to western world whose people believe in Christianity. Asia is the world's vastest and oldest continent which roughly measures 43.4 million km². Its population is estimated to be 3.3 billion live in 54 countries; some of them are the world's biggest and most populated countries. Northern Sea is in north of Asia, Indian Ocean in south, Pacific Ocean in east, and Mediterranean Sea and central part of Russia in west.

At the beginning of Shahnameh, Fereydoon divides its territory among his three sons: Selm, Toor, and Iraj; Fereydoon revealed his decision to divide the world into three parts, i.e. first Rome and West, second Turkey and China, and third Iran, the gracious land. He granted Rome and West to Selm who really deserved it. Father ordered him to collect his troops and dispatch them to his territory. There he took the throne and was called the king. Fereydoon also granted China and Touran to Toor. Toor dispatched a great number of soldiers; he took the throne there and the nobles granted him various gifts and declared him as the king. As it was Iraj's turn, the father selected him as the king of Iran. He was granted both Iran and Neizeh Varan plain as well as the throne and the crown.

He was granted the position and ivory throne as he deserved it. All three took the throne like great kings (Shahnameh Ferdosi, 2002). Three brothers lived peacefully together for a while but the two elder brothers, Selm and Toor, were jealous of Iraj. They decided to take revenge as the father granted him the cream of the crops, Iran. Here we can see how Selm tries to persuade Toor and give him a look of hatred against Iraj. He says that "we have right to be angry as father was cruel to us both since he granted Iran and Yemen to Iraj and Rome and West to me. He

granted you Turks and China, which is not as good as being the governor of Iran".

Yemen was also a part of Iraj's territory. In Avesta (Iranian holy book) it is mentioned that "if I had not created each territory so as to give relaxation and peace of mind to the dwellers, all people of the world would have selected Iran for living. Iran Veij was the first nice land that I, Ahoora Mazda (God), created on the bank of Ditia River" (Avesta the oldest Iranian Songs, 2003).

Iranian Empire was the vastest one the world ever experienced till that era.

Sami, Hitia, Greece and Egypt were a part of territory of Iranian Empire, and Iranian princes and noblemen ruled over these areas. Babylon was also a part of Iranian kingdom; this has been referred to in Shahnameh (History of civilization, 2003).

The two brothers defeated Mesopotamia and captured everywhere. Nothing remained intact in Iran and Babylon and everywhere went up in smoke (Shahnameh Ferdosi, 2002). It is clear that Iran is considered as Aryans. Dr. Rezaie concerns Aryans as an important Indo-European race that gradually entered Iran since 1st century B.C. and mingled with indigenous dwellers of Iran (Ten thousands year of Iran history, 2003).

Dr. Joneidi describes Aryans as follows: they are hopeful, calm and nature-friendly. Defeating their enemies as well as natural problems and enjoying calm nature and high adaptability, they made a peaceful life and paved the way for rapid development in all aspects of living (Life and immigration of Aryans based on Iranian sayings, 1987). Mr. Henry Locus in history of civilization asserted that Medes and Parthian –Aryan tribes- could establish an empire of international importance for the first time (History of civilization, 2003). Mr. Child Virgordone asserted -with a biased view and

ignoring valid historical and archeological documents – that Aryans were a group of uncivilized bandits and due to exploring some roads they could take the throne (Aryans, 2007).

The archeological excavations revealed that local dwellers of Iran at the time of Aryan arrivals and simultaneous to Iron era did believe in resurrection day and buried some food with their dead bodies to provide them with their needs for their new lives (Archeology and Iranian art in 1st millennium B.C, 1995).

Zoroastrian was one the world's ancient religions. It combined Iranian prominent characteristics and conventions toward defending honesty and determination (History of civilization, 2003).

Iranian old books are full of fairy tales about evils and angles constantly fighting all through the story. Loofer Dalashoo believed it is impossible to fantasize communal or tribal dreams disregarding the immaterial creatures, demons and fairies. Disregarding supernatural creatures it is so hard to absorb and seize the attention of people (The Mysterious Language of Fictions, 2007).

The word mythology is of the same origin with "Historia" which means story and history. The world myth in book of "Iranian and Indian mythology" is defined as a symbolic manifest of the goddess, angle, and supernatural creatures. In fact this was the way they could interpret the existence. It is an imaginative farfetched story of how the world came into existence, evolved, and would destroy one day (An introduction to Iranian and Indian symbols in ancient era, 2006).

Ancient Iranians imagined the globe as around, flat plate. Originally everything was stable and untouched; there was no valley or mount. Stars stood still right above the earth. Everything was so calm and harmonious. Devil appeared and everything was unstable. Alborz protrude from the earth in 800 years. There exists a bridge from its tallest peak to guide the spirit of the dead to heaven and hell. The Lord, Tishtar, made the rain drops, blew wind, and created an endless sea, Varoukesh, on other side of Alborz peak. The first rainfall divided the earth into seven parts so that the man cannot travel through the earth, unless riding on the back of the divine cow, Serishok, which were a half man and a half cow creature. They were some of Iranian myth we get to know about through old sources, although it is possible to reconstruct some of them.

It is worth to remember that current Iran was a small part of the ancient one. This fact has not been mentioned in Soviet Union or Afghanistan history due to political reasons. Historians were pressed to mention Central Asia and Afghanistan as independent countries through the history (they lived

by tyranny of Russian empire) (Tajik, Aryan and Iran Plateau, 2004).

Here I am to refer to Mavara-o-Nahr, a small part of Great Iran. Called so by Arabs, it includes current Turkmenistan, a part of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. It was the main part of Iranian Empire ruled by Cyrus and Darius.

Being conquered by Alexander the Great, it was included in Greek territory but of course for a while, in Bacteria era in 2nd millennium B.C. This Greek government could not resist Parthian and Nomads of Central Asia.

Some believe that Greek empire could extend its eastern borders to Kharazm and Farghaneh, but based on historical documents Greek empire in its flourishing day could get to China borders. Anyway, political supremacy of Greek in central Asia lasted until 30 B.C.

Parthian could survive till 3rd century A.D. and dominated south-west and Middle Asia till then. 200 years of Greek dominance over Middle Asia (since Alexandria's invasion in 329 B.C. till 130 B.C.) has been of great concern to western historians (Khorasan and Mavara o Nahr, 1985).

Herodotus was the first to mention central Asia in his book and his information on the area is of great value. Avesta, Zoroastrian's holy book, is also concerned as a main source of value. Bisatoon inscription, Keztiaks the Greek physician, and book of memories wrote on Ardeshir king of Sassanid are other valuable sources.

It is possible to find some information on different races and geographical locations in all above-mentioned sources like "Morghian", Part which is a part of Turkmenistan and a part of Khorasan in north east of Iran, Kharaz in lower bank of Amou Darya river, as well as Saghd and Saghdian in subsequent centuries.

Blentiski asserted that prosperous civilization and great historical monuments in Pamir plateau, Kharazm, and eastern shores of Caspian Sea all stand for the fact that initially Aryans resided there.

Tajiks who lived in east of Iran originally dwelled in Great Khorasan including Middle Asia, a great part of Afghanistan and North East of Iran (Tajik, Aryan and Iran Plateau, 2004).

According to this survey, most of Iranian tribes settled in current Afghanistan in 2nd millennium B.C. There is no evidence about previous inhabitants of the area. As Iranian tribes abandoned their mother land in central and east of Europe in 3rd millennium B.C. going through Caucasus, they settled in Middle Asia, Afghanistan and Iran.

There exists undeniable evidence on Iranian residence in the area; not to forget that Iran was a

general name of the area in Middle Age and this name is rooted in Aryan.

In Shahnameh, Mavara-o-Nahr and its cities have been mentioned some times, like the following verse:

A senior from Mavara-o-Nahr located in head of the world (Shahnameh Ferdosi, 2002).

Through the history business was considered as a great means of communication between East and West and as its result a kind of recognition and mixture happened. Except through Silk Road which was extended from Syria and Mesopotamia to Iran, then India and China, a great part of business transactions were fulfilled through land and sea: from Syria to Mesopotamia and then to India through the sea and finally they continued eastward through the land (Ancient Iran from 550 B.C to 650 A.D, 1999).

Moving eastward, passing Iran we get to India. There exist ancient civilizations in this area since ancient time like Hindus River; its dwellers could build modern cities and irrigate their fields utilizing innovative techniques. They did business with their neighboring villages (World civilizations, 2005).

Bangladesh in east, China in north and Pakistan in west and north-west are neighbors of India (New Atlas of the countries, 2005). Indian peninsula is connected to Asia from its northern part. It has three different geographical zones. In north, Himalaya Mountain Range stretched like a wall and is concerned as traditional position of Gods, fertile lands in north west- Gang and sand rivers valleys-rain forests, rivers and glaciers. There it is possible to find heaviest rains next to deserts (Art through the time, 2007).

Indians and India are mentioned in Shahnameh so often. Stories like "clown and Ball" and "Chess" are originally from India, like:

There was a great man of honor in India armored with troops

As he was so determined that he could defeat every where

He could dominate Hindus as he was wise, gifted and enlightened

He was the king of Kashmir and China, God was pleased by his deeds (Shahnameh Ferdosi, 2002).

A great number of Indian cities were mentioned in Shahnameh like Shegni, Moulton, Denber, Kashmir and Qonouj, for instance look at this verse:

From Kashmir to China Sea in all cities they cheer us or:

Near Shangal the Indian Guard from Qonouj to Sand borders.

Indian athletes were considered as nice men in Shahnameh as in following verse:

There exists a nobleman named Sourg; he was a great athlete from India.

There are a great number of races and religions in India. The most common language is Indian language in north of India.

It is derived from Sanskrit. Urdu language is also derived from Sanskrit and is of concern among Moslems. In southern part of India, Dravidian language is so popular. It is not of the same origin with Sanskrit (Art through the time, 2007).

Himalaya Mountain Range in north protects the main land against Mongols' invasion. Immigrants should go through Balkh in north east and Iran (History of civilization, 2003). Indo-European languages and religious beliefs got to India through the same channel and so possessed a lot of common points with those of Iranians. Conquering the India, Invaders and Daviders which were a black-skinned race fought over the land and finally Invaders could overcome and dominated the north.

Southern dwellers could keep safe from Aryan invaders. The origin of Dravidians or Tamils who live in south is not so clear but it dates back to New Stone Age. Veronica Evans believes that the ancestors of Dravidians immigrated to India in 4000 to 2500 B.C. They constructed a brilliant civilization in Indus River Valley in cities like Harapa and Mohenjodaro. There is no written document on this civilization but the ruins of these two cities reveal some valuable documents on the origin of Indian Gods and religions. In other words, philosophical and cultural heritage of India was affected by two origins on the one hand Aryan linked to Indo-European culture and on the other hand Indus River Valley and Mesopotamia. Hindu religion is also derived from this origin (Indian Myths Ivan's Veronica, 2002).

Researchers and scholars did believe in similarities and close connections between Iranian and Indian myths; this is because of old thoughts and beliefs of Aryans.

Mithra, the Goddess of brightness, both in Rig-Veda and ancient Iran and Mithraism is one of important Gods.

Except in one case, the name Mithra is always considered as Varona alliance and their names have always been mentioned together except for one case. It is mentioned in Rig-Veda that: Mithra and Varona rule over the skies and watch the brightness (An Introduction to mythologies and symbols of Iran and India in ancient era, 2005). In Veda as Indian's old holy book, Mithras' name has been mentioned very often and it means the promise. In Avesta which is Iranian's holy book, Mitra has also been mentioned and there is a song in its praise called Mehrish (Mithraism religion, 1994). But it is worth to mention that the roles of Gods and Goddesses in Indian and Iranian holy books are opposite. For instance, Irman

or Satan is concerned as devil and could cause 9999 types of diseases but in Rig-Veda it is concerned as a good willing goddess praised so often with Mitra and Varona (Avesta the oldest Iranian Songs, 2003).

There are some other common well-known names in Indian and Iranian mythology. For instance, Yam or as Indian named it Yamais the same as Jamshidin in Farsi, Traitanan or Tertonen in Indian and Fereydoon in Farsi, and so many other names in two languages substantiate great historical ties between two nations. In this section, it is better to deal with Mazandaran which was frequently repeated in Shahnameh. According to Mr. Kariman, Mazandaran in Shahnameh does not refer to current Mazandaran. It was previously called "Bisheh Marva" or "Bisheh Tamisheh" or Tabarestan (A survey in Shahnameh, 1995).

As it gets near to Tamisheh, again his grandfather wished to see him (Shahnameh Ferdosi, 2002). Two different locations have been referred as Mazandaran in Shahnameh. One in Saudi Arabia about Yemen, Egypt, Damascus and so on and the second in Lahore, Multan, Kashmir, Badakhshan and Pamir plateau (A survey in Shahnameh, 1995).

Mazandaran name is mentioned in two different stories: one in Manoochehr and Nozar era, the latter was one of the kings from Pishdadian dynasty in east of Mazandaran:

All Gorgosaran and Mazandaran were conquered in a combat (Shahnameh Ferdosi, 2002).

The second is at Keykavous reign in west of Mazandaran:

You did attack Mazandaran with Kiany mace and arrow.

Mazandaran invaded by Keykavous could not be the same as the place wherein Saam fought demons. When Keykavous voiced his decision to capture Mazandaran, he was dissuaded by Zal and other athletes as none of Iranian kings ever tried to fight Mazandaran demons, while Zal should know of the invasion by his father Saam.

In Keykavous invasion there is no name of Gorgosaran and Sagsar, but it was quoted that on their way the troops went passed ra oasting desert and a dark land, fought with lion, monster and witch (A survey in Shahnameh, 1995).

Touranian who were a tribe lived in north and north-east of Iran at that time invaded Iran frequently. Their name has been mentioned so often in Shahnameh. Veiseh was assigned as the commander of Touran troops and deployed his soldiers to take revenge (Shahnameh Ferdosi, 2002).

Dividing the territory among Fereydoon's sons resulted in Iraj to be killed by his brothers and this was the beginning of hostility between Iran and

Touran in long term. It lasted 300 years in reign of five kings.

Killing of Sivash and taking his revenge fueled the fight. Finally after killing Afrasiab when he ran away to hide at a corner and returning the son of Siavash to Iran by Keykhosro who was the Iranian King, this long-lasting combat came to an end (National Iranian Epic, 2004).

The name Turks was mentioned in historical documents in 5th century A.D. for the first time. Named Tuchueh by Chinese, origin of Turks can be traced back to Hoons who are descendent from Assena and from Huinguu tribe. Pressed by emperor Tobie 3rd, 700 Turk families decided to immigrate Jun-Jun tribe borders in 433 A.D.

Divided into two groups, eastern one captured Mongolia and Oral Mountain. Western group took the control of Altai and Seyhoon (Ten thousands year of Iran history, 2003). All through Shahnameh it is possible to find a great number of the stories about Iranian and Touranian combats.

Thousands of Chinese and Turk fighters were dispatched for the fight

It is time to summon the troops from all Iran.

Sometimes Chinese emperor is considered as Touran king:

All nobles from all nations went before Chinese empire and said what your order the commander is?

It is also documented in history that Turks finally accepted the dominance of Chinese empire in 7th century A.D. They were made of some tribes partially united and dominated by Khan, which means ruler. They were scattered from Mongolia to Amodarya. Turks' empire was extended from China to Pars (World elaborated history from the beginning to 20th century, 2007).

Sassanids were in fight with three different groups from three different sides vigorously. They were Romans in west, Koushnian and Heptalian in east, and wild tribes in north. Hayatella, a Chinese tribe, made a government in 30 B.C. They started dealing with Romans. Through the time they were dethroned by Tia or Aftalit who were white Hoons and Iranian called them Hitaleh. They invaded Iran so many times and were defeated all through. Their name was mentioned in Shahnameh so often, particularly in the story of their fight with Chinese emperor like the following lines (Ten thousands year of Iran history, 2003):

Hitalian attacked Chinese and Turks for a week constantly

Finally they were all defeated and killed (Shahnameh Ferdosi, 2002).

Except Arabic civilizations, Chinese were the first civilization European came to know about. China is so vast and enjoys a great variety of climatic

conditions. Their mother land is as big as U.S.A and throughout the history they could rule over so many countries like Mongolia, Tibet, Cinkiang, Manchuria, and a vast part of Korea.

The country includes some sand deserts, roaring rivers, high mountains and fertile lands. North of China around Beijing enjoys a mild and dry climate but south of China is of tropical weather (Art through the time, 2007).

Chinese embarks their deals with Indus River, south east of Asia as well as Middle East through the roads and the sea. Chinese clergymen presented Indian with Buddhism. Their cultural development continued till collapsing of Han Empire (New Atlas of the countries, 2005).

While Mongols dominated China, they announced Chinese, Mongolian and Farsi as official languages there. In Sassanid reign a group of Tajiks immigrated to China through Sagad. They dwelled in Cinkiang, an autonomous area in south-west of china and next to Pamir. Cinkiang was under the reign of Moslems and its official language was Farsi: it was preferred to Arabic (Iranian essays, www.topiranian.com). Ms. Khatibi believes that Iranian miniature was affected by Chinese art. Traveling to Iran, Chinese businessmen and artists brought along miniature and it mingled with Iranian painting style (The color of ten thousand years of Civilization Iran Culture and Art before Islam, 2002).

Enjoying a great variety of languages, it was not possible for Chinese to communicate all their compatriots across the country, but their common handwriting was understandable to everybody across the country. This made the way for Chinese to create and maintain common literature, philosophy and religion all through the time (Art through the time, 2007).

In Dekhoda Dictionary, Machin was mentioned to be a city in south of China and in east of India. It means huge and in Sanskrit it was concerned as China main land. In Farsi literature, Machin is considered as China main land and China was meant as a place in east of Turkistan.

Machin was repeated so often in Shahnameh:

A troop will support him from China and Machin that will make the conditions difficult for us (Shahnameh Ferdosi, 2002).

China was considered with glamour and great power: The head of Chinese commanders whose throne was carried by some was as powerful as 100 roaring lions and could decapitate a very huge elephant.

From time to time Touran and China got together and invaded Iran:

A group of Chinese wrestlers gave a hand to Piran.

Sometimes there were close ties between two nations as Khosro, the Iranian king, stayed in China for three months, as mentioned in following line:

Accompanied by some of his commanders, Khosro stayed in China for three months.

Khaqan gifted them thousands of valuable presents.

As China is concerned as an isolated land, their close relationship with their neighbors poses a question on their origin. Concerning its vast territory and importance, there is no clear evidence on their real origin.

Discovered bones in a cave near Beijing called Joukoutain made the researchers think of them as real ancestors of Chinese, but further experiments proved they were of American Indian origin not Mongols or Asian. First real Mongolian bones were discovered in south of China in Govang Shee Province. Their origins as well as the broken skull of Sichuan which belonged to 5535B.C. are not quite clear.

Some believe that Mongols are real ancestors of Chinese and there exist a great number of tribes, but getting to know about the Chinese ancestors asks for more archeological excavations.

The bones were excavated in cemeteries of north of China and assumed to belong to some villagers when their Mongolian origin was proved (Chinese Mythology Birrel Ann, 2005).

In Vandadid of Avesta (Zoroastrian holy book) it is declared that 16th country was created by the lord besides Colorful River, where headless men lived.

Mr. Doostkha describes headless men as follows: the ones who have no rulers and are assumed to live in an eastern island near China (Avesta the oldest Iranian Songs, 2003).

In Chinese mythology in contrast to those of ancient India and Iran, there is no association of Gods. In official documents a group of 10 Gods and myths like God of fire or farmer do not make well-structured associations.

Another point worth to mention is that Chinese Gods are not fighting each other as with switching of the power Indian Gods start a competition (by ascending of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva to the throne, Verona, Agne and Souria disagree and start a combat) (Indian Myths Ivan's Veronica, 2002).

Here it is time to refer lands are concerned as eastern countries in Shahnameh geographical divisions as Iran was considered as the center of the world.

Barbarestan was geographically located in an area where sea was in its middle, Egypt on the left, Barbar on the right, and Hamavaran in front. Barbarestan and Hamavaran were attacked by Keykavous. He went to Egypt and Damascus to put down the riots:

He went among three cities to a place where The Egypt was on the left, Barbar on the right; he chose the milled way to get to Hamavaran with a

great number of troops (A survey in Shahnameh Kariman, 1995).

According to Ferdowsi, Barbar is the same as Shemr desert in north of Saudi Arabia and south of Iraq.

It is interesting to know that Egypt is in Shahnam; it is considered in the same geographical point as Barbarestan and Hamavaran.

At the end of Shahnameh, Arab names have also been mentioned.

He said I am Qeis-ibn-e Hareth one of Arab nobles (Shahnameh Ferdosi, 2002).

Names of Baghdad, Hejaz, Syria, Damascus, etc. have been also mentioned in Shahnameh. In this book, Minor Asia is also under the control of Romans who are symbol of the west.

Armenia was also concerned a place in the middle of east and west. All Arabs, Indians and Iranians decided to be at his service. He went toward Caspian Sea from Armenia to the east.

Russia, in north-west of Asia and east of Europe, is concerned in Shahnameh as a western country. The Roman emperor was named Filqous; the Russian king agreed with him.

He first provides the treasure of bride, Dowry, from China, Rome, and Russia.

Names of a lot of other cities have also been mentioned in Shahnameh, but it is not possible to name them all here. It is possible to conclude that the eastern nations from Shahnameh's point of view are different from the current eastern countries. In geography, east means Asian countries whereas in Shahnameh Iran is in the middle of the world and all countries in its east are called eastern and countries in its west are considered as western countries.

Eastern nations enjoy a great history and civilization as archeological findings have revealed.

It is possible to get to some valuable findings. For instance, Touranian are considered as Iranian enemies and they do not accept the peace. India is so vast, green and great and China is of great civilization.

These nations were in peace or fight, but these differences did not bar their communication. After so many years of close connection they naturally mixed together. They had business as well as fight as it is mentioned in Shahnameh.

As the mix of Iranians, Turks and Arabs, a new race came into existence. It was not further Turk or Arab; it was a new creature. Among all nations, some of them were of more popularity and their names have been repeated in Shahnameh frequently. This signifies their close relationships with Iran. This

close connection can be grasped through their common mythological symbols. Even in China enjoying a great variety and number of Gods and Goddesses you can find a lot of common points with other eastern national symbols.

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