The Persian Nights Vs. *The Arabian Nights*

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Abstract

This paper explores the possible origins of some names in *1001 Nights*. The names of the major characters of the *Night* stories, and their borrowed reflexes in Arabic, have been traced back to their ancient Persian roots. Examples from classical works are brought to argue that Shahrāzād, Shahriyār, and Dīnāzād are not only the correct forms but more suitable to the deep structure of the frame-story of *1001 Nights* than other variations or alternative forms of these names.

Keywords: Persian Nights, *The Arabian Nights*, *1001 Nights*, Shahrazad, Shahryar, Dinazad, Shah Zaman

Introduction

The main aim of this paper is not to prove or manifest something which is already known to some degree, i.e. the Persian roots/connections and developments of *1001 Nights* (or so called *The Arabian Nights*), but to venture via some obvious or hidden relics of the original Persian text into some forgotten hermeneutic locus: a literary horizon whose twilight might throw some light on certain darker parts of the *Nights.* Thus we may not only discover some ancient lost links in the evolutionary chain of *1001 Nights*, but also some structural clues leading to the deeper layers of the *Nights* as a whole.

It is of course obvious that such a desired feat is limited in its early incubational stages and can hardly address every issue in this regard. One should be selective, and such an inevitable selectivity may be liable to irrelevance: a miscellany or a short collection of highly divergent subject matters juxtaposed together. Yet, as strange as it may sound, such a disintegrated form might be a felicitous reflection of the very structure of *1001 Nights*. So, by imitating Shahrazad's ironic style of telling diverse stories, one may hope to eventually unify a myriad of themes within the frame story open to further additions and development. The risky *frame* chosen here is the aforementioned Persian connections of *1001 Nights* which generally speaking seem impossible to exhume from underneath of centuries of thick historical dust.

Discussion: Frame Story: Names and Characters

The frame story of the *1001 Nights* begins with two Persian names: "…long ago, during the time of Sassanid dynasty, …, there lived two kings who were brothers. The older brother was named **Shahrayar**, the younger **Shahzaman**" (Haddawy 6); and finally, near the end of the frame story, we have **Shahrazad** and **Dinazad**. These very names, I think, could be expressive enough and crystallize a very condensed symbolism which reflects some important elements of the plot.

In Modern Persian, شهریار *Šahriyār* which simply means 'monarch' is a common name, but etymologically there is more to it. We encounter the word in Middle Persian (Pahlavi) which was current in Iran, under Sassanid dynasty (A.D. 224-651) before the conquest of the country by Moslem Arabs. Yet, the very form of the name indicates that its transformation into Arabic has occurred in the later stages of the Middle Persian. Pahlavic later form of the name is *šahryār*, which is the same as Modern Persian *šahriyār*, but the earliest Pahlavic form *šatrdār* shows its link to an even older form which reveals the real meaning of the word as 'one who possesses power'—a meaning that strikingly fits a modern hermeneutic reading of the *1001 Nights*' frame story. The root of the word, in fact, plays a major role in the socio-historical structure of the Persian Empire. The Parthian dynasty of eastern Iranians, which ruled over the Persian Empire before the Sassanids, had apparently obtained the word

from Old [ancient] Persian and recorded it in Haji-ābād inscription as *xšatrdār* (Faravashi 629). In Old Persian, which was the official language of Achaemenid dynasty (500-330 BC), the name can be reconstructed as a compound noun *xšaθra-dāra,* comparable to to *χšaθrita* "name assumed by the Median rebel Phraortes" (Kent 180-181). The first part of this compound noun is all we need to understand the social significance of 'power': the word, *xšaθra-,* conquered different semantic domains and reached the summit of a social hierarchy which represented both *king* and the *civilization* or *kingdom* as the highest form of crystallization of *power.* To see the point, we can trace back Old Persian *xšaθra-* to its Avestan cognate. The meaning of the Avestan form is clear enough, *xšaθra* "dominion, reign, kingdom; … supreme authority, sovereign power …" (Reichelt 228). It is obvious that the original meaning of the word, 'power', was soon expanded to denote 'social power', 'sovereign power', and finally 'king'. On the other hand, it was the materialization of power seen in the 'city' as the 'place of the exertion of power' or 'kingdom'; hence comes the Middle Persian *šatr* 'city, country' and its Modern Persian *šahr* 'city' which appears in the name of both **Shahr-***iyār* [šahriyār] and **Shahr-***azad* [šahrāzād]. Hāfez, the famous Persian poet of 14th century, plays with both meanings of *šahr* in the following verse:

<div dir="rtl">

شهرِ یاران بود و جایِ مِهربانان این دیار

مهربانی کی سر آمد؟ شهریاران را چه شد؟

</div>

"A <u>city</u> of lovers and a place of cordial people was this realm!
When then cordiality expired? What then came upon the <u>kings</u>?

The development of 'power', 'regnant'/ 'reign', obviously goes far back to the social order of early Indo-Iranians (or perhaps Indo-Europeans) as we can see in the oldest hymns of Rig Veda, reflected in the Sanskrit cognate of Avestan **xšaθra**: Skt. "**kṣatrá-**-power, might (whether human or supernatural); dominion, supremacy (Rig Veda); government, governing body (Rig Veda, Avesta); the military or reigning order (Avesta)" (Monier-Williams 325).

Perhaps we need not to go so deep in the linguistic roots of *shahr-* to understand that King Shariyar in the *1001 Nights* represents *authority* and *power.* The structure of frame story is self-evident. But it is very essential in understanding the meaning of the name *šahrāzād.* The name has a striking meaning 'free from power' or 'someone whose power is freed': **šahr-āzād**, (lit.

'power-free'). Shahrazad is in fact a protagonist *free from the bounds of power* or a character *of free will power* that can stand to tyrannical authority and teach it the real power of love— Shahriyar is, after all, a *weak* antagonist who hides his weakness in a series of passionate and tyrannical crimes.

The original meanings of the name are then in harmony with all modern readings of the frame story. Even if we interpret the first part of the compound, *šahr,* as 'reign, city', according to the common knowledge of an ordinary Sassanid story teller, the name *šahrāzād* can still convey a germane meaning: 'a free citizen', someone from a 'free city' or 'free kingdom'.

Strangely enough such a straightforward reading is absent from many rendering of the name in Western literature. The first reason is perhaps due to the misleading form of the name in Modern Persian: شهرزاد *šahr-zād* which can only means 'born in city', a 'citizen' and etymologically speaking 'born of power' and so on (lit. ***šahr-zād*** = **'**power-born'). To check the correct spelling (*šahr-zād* زاد ‑شهر vs. *šahr-āzād* آزاد‑شهر) we may look at the earliest Arabic manuscript of the *1001 Nights,* namely the Syrian manuscript (c. A.D. 1300).

In the above picture from a page of the Syrian version (kept in Bibliothèque Nationale) we can clearly see that the name of the protagonist is written as شهرازاد (*šahr-āzād*) and not as شهرزاد (*šahr-zād*). This form then confirms our reading.

We can also use the phonetic forms of these names to estimate the time of creation of *Hezār-Afsān*, 'Thousand Legends', which gave rise to Arabic *Alf Layla,* 'Thousand Nights', which eventually evolved to *1001 Nights.* In this regard, suffice it to reconstruct the name *Shahrazad* in its Pahlavic (Middle Persian) spelling to get **šahr-āzāt*, with a final [t]. The very fact that Arabic, like Modern Persian, has *āzād* (with final [d]) instead of its Pahlavic form *āzāt* 'free') indicates once again that the borrowing into Arabic has occurred at the later stages of Middle Persian or on the onset of Modern Persian (On the contrary, cf. Pahlavic *āfrētak > *āfrīta* 'creature' which was borrowed into Arabic, perhaps before Islam, as *'ifrīt* عفريت 'monster'— preserving the final [t]— while, Modern Persian has *āfarīde* 'created, creature' with change of [t] to [d]).

But there is still some hypothetical obstacle in reading and rendering the name as it is, viz. *šahr-āzād*. In search for the historical counterpart of Shahrazad, her name has been occasionally related to a Pahlavic name: *Čihr-āzāt* 'free nature; free character; free bred [or noble]' as well 'of noble face'. This name is recorded in Modern Persian as *Chehrazad* چهرازاد [*čehrāzād*] or *Chehrzad* چهرزاد [*čehrzād*]. It would be of course quite an exception that Persian /č/ (voiced palatal affricate) would change to voiceless palatal fricative /š/. There is no linguistic evidence for such a sound change[*]. Nevertheless, the putative opinion of certain scholars has taken this unjustified stance of coincidental resemblance very seriously: "The name Shahrazâd [sic. Šahrāzād] is derived from Persian *cehrâzâd* [Čehrāzād] meaning 'of noble appearance or origin'. In European languages the name is usually spelled Sheherazade or Scheherazade" (Marzolf & van Leeuwen 702).

What makes the situation even more complex is the fact that the name has been associated with some historical figure whose historicity is quite uncertain: It is known that in the lost Middle Persian text of *xwtāy-nāmak* (the *Chronicle of Lords* from Sassanid period) *Čehrāzād* is mentioned as the mother of Darius III (the last king of Achaemenid dynasty who was defeated by Alexander). The very transliteration of her name in the earliest Arabic texts as جهرازاد *Jehrāzād*

confirms the original Persian form چهرازاد *Čehrāzād* (but not *Šahrāzād*). On the other hand, her relation to Homāy, the sister of Darius III is quite ambiguous in the historical texts. The name as recorded in Pahlavi, namely *humāy i čihrāzātān* (Faravashi 286)—viz. Humāy of Čihrāzātān—might suggest that Homā was the daughter of Čehrāzād, or more probably *Čehrāzād* was the royal epithet of Homāy. It might of course sound very exciting for an admirer of Shahrazad to discover that she has been originally an ancient Persian princess during a turbulent time, at the very verge of the demise of the first world empire:

> Aside from the late-ninth-century historian al-Yaʿqūbī [who] mentions 'khumânī [Homāy], daughter of Jihrâzâd [Čehrāzād]', the name Shahrazâd is first mentioned in Arabic literature … [by the bookseller Ibn al-Nadīm] and the historian al-Masʿūdī. According to the latter, a certain Humâya [Homāy] was the daughter of the Persian emperor Bahman ibn Isfandiyâr and Shahrazâd, whom Masʿūdī regards as the sister of the Achaemenid emperor Darius. (Marzolf & van Leeuwen 702)

The point which should be kept in mind is that by the Sassanid period, even the memory of *kūroš* (Cyrus the Great) the founder of the Persian Empire, and the name of the most prominent emperors of Achaemenid dynasty were totally lost and any reminiscence of these kings was mixed up with mythology and prehistoric Zoroastrian figures such as Esfandiyār or Bahman. The only Achaemenid emperor that was mentioned by his historical name was Dārāy— i.e. dāriyūš= Darius III (336-330 BC)— along with the story of his defeat by *Gojastak Alaksandar* [The Cursed Alexander] who burned the royal archive of Achaemenids including the holy book of Zoroastrians, *Avesta*. It is in this perspective that the Sassanid chronicles apparently claimed that Dārāy [Darius III] was the brother of princess Čehrāzād, both being the grandchildren of the legendary Zoroastrian hero *Esfandiyār*. And this is exactly what we learn from Ferdowsi [A.D. 940?-1020?] whose grand epic *Šah-nāmé* [the *Book of Kings*] is largely based on the lost Sassanid text of *xwtāy-nāmak* [the Chronicles of Lords]. It is of course, natural to infer—from what historian learned from the Sassanid chronicles—that Homāy, the wife of king Bahman, was mother of

both Darius III and princess Čehrāzād. Yet there is a crucial catch here: According to Ferdowsi, *Homāy* and *Čehrāzād* were but two names for the same person: King Bahman marries his own daughter Čehrāzād (not as a sinful act of incest, but observing an ordinary royal decree that perhaps Persian monarchs had learned from Ancient Egyptians, to preserve the "pure blood" of the royal lineage). If so, and if we really accept—as some insist— that this very Čehrāzād was nobody but the prototype of our legendry Šahrāzād, then the whole frame story of the *1001 Nights* goes through a very drastic change: Shahrazad is not the daughter of some passive vizier anymore; she is a princess, and furthermore, she is Shariyār's own daughter. It is perhaps due to lack of proper knowledge of Sassanid Chronicles that the very critics who equated Šahrāzād with Čehrāzād never noticed such a great turning point in the core of the frame story. Nevertheless, if we accept such an equation, then perhaps the introduction of vizier in the frame story of the *1001 Nights* was a deliberate action by the translators of *Hezār Afsān* to Islamize the story, while the historians Ya'qūbī and Mas'ūdī were either confused or had to cover up a sinful act in their vague report of the event. The poetry of Ferdowsi, on the other hand, is explicit enough in this regard (Ferdowsi 320):

yeki doxtar-aš būd, nām-aš Homāy
one daughter-his was, name-her Homāy,
honar-mand o bā dān-eš o pāk rāy
art-PSS and with knowledge and clean opinion
hami xānd-andi ve-rā **Čehrzād**
PRG call -3rd PL she-ACC Čehrzād
ze gītī be dīdār e ū būd šād
from world in visit of her was happy

He [the king, Bahman] had a daughter called **Homāy**
Artful, savant and of pure sentiment
They used to call her **Čehrzād** [the noble born]
It was only her visit that made him happy in the world

pedar dar pazīroft-aš az nīku'ī
father in accepted 2nd SG-her from virtue

bedān dīn ke xānī ve-rā Pahlavī
upon religion that call-2nd SG it-ACC Pahlavī
Homāy e del-afrūz e tāb-ande māh
Homāy of heart-blazing of shining moon
čonān bod ke ābestan āmad ze šāh
thus was that pregnant came-2nd SG from king

The father accepted her in, upon virtue
According to a Pahlavic custom
Homāy, the light of heart and the moon ablaze
So happened to become pregnant by the king

یکی دخترش بود نامش همای/   هنرمند و با دانش و پاکرای

همی خواندندی ورا چهره زاد /   ز گیتی به دیدار او بود شاد

پدر بر پذیرفتنش از نیکویی /   بدان دین که خوانی همی پهلویی

همای دل افروز تابنده ماه /   چنان بُد که آبستن آمد زشاه

What may strike us in Ferdowsi's version of the story, related in a very terse poetic style, is an insinuation that Čehrzād does not approve such a royal custom: She becomes ill and King Bahman is so depressed that he falls into agony and on his deathbed makes her the crown princess: "Thus he said: 'This **Čehrzād** of pure body// has not been happy in this world! // I bestow upon her this high crown and throne// as well as the army, the treasury and a high opportunity':

čonīn goft k-"īn pāk tan **Čehrzād**
ze gītī farāvān na-būd(e) ast šād
sepord-am bed-ū tāj o taxt e boland
hamān laškar o ganj o baxt e boland."

چنین گفت کاین پاک-تن چهرزاد

ز گیتی فراوان نبوده-ست شاد

سپردم بدو تاج و تخت بلند

همان لشکر و گنج و بخت بلند

On the other hand, she will be the regent of her own baby: "Whether she bears a daughter or a boy" (*"agar doxtar āyad az ū yā pesar"*). Thus, her baby is to be the future ruler of Iran. Yet Homāy's reaction speaks for itself: not only she was not mournful over the death of her father "she did not lament over Bahman" (*"sūg e Bahman na-dāšt"*) but she got rid of the baby: Her son [Darius III] who was born in total secret was abandoned by her and was eventually put in a well-made box to be thrown onto the river Euphrates in the thick darkness of midnight—a story which obviously reflects that of Sargon the Great. Whether we accept all these events as historical or imaginative, we may wonder if it would find any parallel in the story of Shahrazad in *1001 Nights*.

Homāy-*Čehrzā*d, as described by Ferdowsi, was considered as one of the most just rulers of Iran, and Ferdowsi's description of her character "*Artful, savant and of pure sentiment*" might recall the description of Shahrazad in the *1001 Nights*: "*She was intelligent, knowledgeable, wise, and refined.*" (Haddawy 15). Furthermore, the harsh treatment of Iranian heroes by king Bahman and the fact that Chehrzād's visit was the only thing in the world that made him happy (Ferdowsi) might have had some other folkloric extensions that gave the story-writers a good basis for *creating* character of Shahrazad, as the only one who can calm down a tyrant king. In other words, although I believe that the two figures are not related *historically* nor their names can be linguistically connected, yet it could be that the name and some characteristics of Chehrāzād have some inspiring influence on the creation of the name and character of Shahrāzād, in the same way that Indian *Śūka-saptati* (*Seventy tale of the Parrots*) could contribute to the frame story of Shahrazad and Shariyār. Otherwise, we would be entrapped within a hypothesis which is as apocryphal as an old effort to relate Shahrazad to some other legendary figure such as Esther. In fact, all such claims are baseless, since "[there] is no evidence that the figure of Shahrazâd is derived from [any] historical person. The suggestion that Shahrazâd might be identical with the biblical Esther (Goeje) has already been thoroughly refuted (Cosquin 1909 [1922])" (Marzolph & van Leeuwen 702).

As we have already seen, Ferdowsi whose mother tongue is Persian does not confuse the name *šahrāzād* with *čehrāzād*. The phonemes [š] and [č] are contrastive in Persian (as, for example, in words *šāh* 'king' and *čāh* 'pit') and

cannot merge or replace each other. This linguistic fact and the distinction of the two names has been also reflected in the appearance of the name Šahrāzād شهرازاد in the oldest Arabic text of the *1001 Nights* versus pseudo-historical figure Jihrāzād جهرازاد (depicting Čehrāzād چهرازد) in the early history books written in Arabic.

As a final test we may look at the form of the name *Šahrāzād* as it appears in *Murūj al- Dhahab*, by the historian Mass'ūdī, and in *al-Fihrist*, by the book-seller Ibn al-Nadīm, "written … late in first and second half of the tenth century" respectively (Abbot). We may further ponder upon the authors' opinion about the apocryphal histories, and the role of Aškānians (Parthians) and Sasanians (Sassanids) in creation of stories which led to the *1001 Nights.* The texts which follow are given by Abbott (1949 [2006: 55- 56]), "with variant reading" in braces (square brackets and emphases in italic bold are mine). According to Mass'ūdī's *Murūj al-Dhahab* :

> Many of those well acquainted with *akhbār* (***pseudo-historical tales*** *…*) state that these *akhbār* are **apocryphal**, embellished, and fabricated, strung together by those who drew nigh to the kings by relating them and who duped their contemporaries with memorizing and reciting them (as authentic. They state furthermore), that they are of the same type as the books that have been transmitted to us from ***Persian*** **[Pahlavi]**, Indian, and Greek—books composed in the manner as the above mentioned book of ***Hazār Afsāna*** **[*One Thousand fables*]**, or ***translated from Persian to Arabic*** of a ***Thousand Khurāfāt*** (fantastic tales)
>
> …The people call this ***A Thousand Nights*** *[and a Night].* It is the story of the king and the wizir and his daughter and her nurse (or maid, or sister, or wizir and his two daughters) named ***Shīrāzād*** [Šīr-zād] and ***Dīnārzād*** [Dīnār-zād].

On the other hand, Nadīm's *al-Fihrist* reads as follows:

> … The first who made separate compilations of *khurāfāt* [fantastic tales] into books and placed these latters into libraries and in some gave speaking parts to beasts were early ***Persians***. Thereafter the ***Ashganian*** [Parthian] ***kings*** who were the third dynasty of kings of

Persia, became deeply absorbed in these. Thereafter (that kind of books) increased and spread in the days of *Sassanian* kings. The Arabs translated these … The first book that was made along this (*khurāfāt*) idea was the book of ***Hazar Afsāna***.

 … The reason for its composition was that one of their kings whenever he had married a woman … killed her on the morning. Presently he married a maiden of royal decent, possessed of understanding and knowledge, who was called ***Shahrāzād***. And when she was first with him, she began telling him *khurāfāt* … And the king had a stewardess [قهرمانه] who was called ***Dīnāzād*** and she assisted her in that.

As we can see again, the form of name **Shahrāzād** شهرازاد [šahrāzād] is confirmed in Nadīm's *Fihrist*. It is only in Mass'ūdī's history that the name is distorted (by a scribe?) as **Shīrāzād** شيرازاد [šīrāzād] or **Shīrzād** شيرزاد [šīrzād], of these two the meaning of the second form is obvious enough and it is a common name in Persian meaning 'born of lion'—a *masculine* name of course—while the first one **Shīrāzād** شيرازاد does not make much sense: 'free from lion' sounds nonsensical; 'someone who has free lion(s)? / released milk?' needs a verbose clarification, and we have to add a grammatical *ezāfe* between the two words: *šīr-e-āzād* (literary 'lion of free') to mean 'free lion'. Abbott of course, has his own opinion and preferences here:

> ***Dunyāzād*** … in combination with ***Shīrāzād*** … led de Sacy to accept these as the original forms. Thus in eliminating ***Dunyāzād*** **'World Freer',** doubt is thrown on the form nearly coupled with it, namely, ***Shahrāzād, 'City Freer'***. The two such names could well belong to two sisters, … But they would hardly be bestowed … on the daughter of the house and on her nurse or maid … It is to be further noticed that in the known manuscripts of Mas'ūdī's text, the name ***Dīnāzād*** and ***Shīrāzād*** are met with more frequently in combination with *dāyeh* [دايه], 'foster-mother' or 'wet-nurse' … than with *ukht* [اخـة]'sister'. These names sharing the word *āzād*, 'free, pure, noble', between them are distinguished by *dīn*, 'religion, faith' and by *Shīr,* 'lion'. One may freely translate ***Dīnāzād*** as ***'of noble religion'*** … and ***Shīrāzād*** as ***'Lionhearted'***.

The lion itself being the symbol of Persian royalty and courage, this latter name is aptly descriptive of both the royal birth and outstanding personal courage of the heroine of the *Nights*. (Abbott 57-58)

We should note that, never in Modern/Middle Persian the word *āzāt /āzād* has been or could have been used to mean '-freer', due to the simple fact the there is no such a verb as **āzātan /*āzātan* '*to free'. On the other hand, as an adjective, the meaning 'pure' has never been attested for *azād*. Finally, Shīrāzād can never be equated with 'lionhearted'; the best reason is the Iranian (Persian, Kurdish …) common name *šīr-del,* the 'lion-heart' or 'Coeur de Lion', an epithet that perhaps Kurdish born Saladin once gave to his rival Richard I.

All these arguments points to only one simple fact: the proper name of our heroine is as it is recorded in Nadīm or the Syrian manuscript: Shahrāzād شهرازاد [šahrāzād], 'someone free from kingdom/ free from power; someone with free power / free kingdom / free city; ..' and so on. Parallel with this is the name of Dīnāzād دینازاد 'someone free from religion; someone who has a free religion…' and as an audience (for Shahrazad stories): symbol of a good reader or listener, with *no prejudice*. We can of course, replace 'free' with 'noble' but only if we take into account that *āzāde* (<Pahlavic *āzātak*) in Persian literature means a 'free soul', someone who is not the servant or slave of anybody and thus his/her *nobility is defined by his/her degree of freedom*. Whence the Persian idiom *sarv e āzād* 'free cypress': a proud tree that never bows its head.

Yet the very name *Dīn-āzād* raises a very fundamental question: How can an ancient Persian name contain the Arabic word *dīn* دین 'religion'? The problem cannot be simply removed by taking the word as common between two unrelated languages. The point is that Arabic دین *dīn* which is cognate with Akkadian *dinu* or Hebrew דין *din* originally means 'judgment' (Mashkur 1978: 260); whence the Qur'ānic term یوم الدین *yaum ad-dīn* 'the day of judgment'. On the other hand, the Arabic gloss has been apparently "contaminated" by a word borrowed from Persian *dīn* (< Pahlavic *dēn*) which means 'religion' from Avestan *daēnā*. The etymology of the Iranian word might be debatable as it has been wrongly presumed by some to be cognate with δήνεα (Mashkur 1978:

261), a Greek word which is only used in plural form to mean 'plans, counsels, arts (whether good or bad)' (Liddell & Scott 388). Yet such an etymology is not attested by Indo-Europeanists. The more reliable sources (e.g. Pokorny 243) link Avestan *daēnā* / Persian *dīn* 'religion' to Proto-Indo-European root **dhī-* which is related to Persian verb *dīdan* 'to see' and Greek δήνεα 'mark, sign, token' (Liddell & Scott 1592) while the aforementioned Greek δήνεα is from quite a different Proto-Indo-European etymon **dens-* 'talent, mind-power' (> Sanskrit *dasmá* 'extraordinary'; Avestan *dahma* 'expert') (Pokorny 201-202). All in all we can be sure that *dīn-āzād* is a Persian compound noun, and simply means 'religion-free', or etymologically 'of free insight', even though the Arabic *dīn* 'judgment' + Persian *āzād* would also match the frame story: 'free from judgment' as an unbiased listener to that marvel story teller: Sharazad.

However, we should also evaluate the variant forms of Dīnāzād دينازاد : Apparently the other form of the name, viz. Dunyāzād دنيازاد [world-born] can be easily produced by just misplacing of the dot-marks: دينازاد → دنيازاد ، but the preference is still with Dīnāzād, since Dūnyāzād 'born of the world' (and not of course 'freer of the world') is a compound noun whose constituents are part Arabic (*dunyā* دنيا 'lower [world]') and part Persian (*zād* 'born'), a lexical phenomenon that hardly could occur in the Middle Persian form of *Hezār Afsān,* before being developed into *1001 Nights.* On the other hand, the other alternative of the name given in the old Syrian version as Dīnarzād 'born of dinār' might be another distortion that can be easily discarded even if we could not find an older text that confirms Dīnāzād. Linguistically speaking, of course, the name is like a juxtaposed Greco-Persian compound from Greek δηνάριον= Latin *denarius* 'an ancient unit of currency' in Greco-Roman world (still current in some Arabic countries) plus the Persian word *zād* 'born'. The Greek word, of course, occurs in Middle Persian (Pahlavi) texts as a loanword *dēnār*, but it does not justify such an odd name as 'money-born girl'. Most probably such an idiosyncratic name was the product of folk etymology or certain scribes who interpreted the social position of Dīnāzād as a maid or rather as a slave girl whose mother or perhaps she herself was bought with a few *dīnār*s, so she was a child of money!? But then it begs the Syrian text of *1001 Nights* a proper explanation as how a slave girl whose name means 'dinar-born' can be the younger sister of a noble Shahrazad? The point is that by 1300 AD, the text had moved away so far from the original Persian that the scribes who knew not

Persian could only rely on folk-etymology without noticing how odd the name sounded in Persian. In other words, such a distortion could not happen in the manuscript of a scholar or a Persian translator. Aside from the linguistic aspects, both Occam's razor and the aesthetic values converge here on the preference of the form Dīnāzād. But as further evidence we may look at the earliest fragment of *Alf Lailah* 'Thousand Nights', purchased, in 1947, by Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Written on two "joined folios of light-brown paper of fine texture," this early ninth-century document described by Abbott (1949 [2006 : 21, 23, 54]) confirms the name Dīnāzād .

All we can do, at this very stage, is to base our analysis on the names of the main characters in the frame story and see if these names interact with the deep-structure of the plot in any way. We see an inter-related triangle: in the upper corner has sat *Shahriyār* 'the authority, the sovereign' confronted by *Shahrāzād* 'free from power, one from land of free' and *Dīnāzād* 'free from religiosity; a free conscience'. But where is Shāhzamān, the king's brother? Why has he disappeared from the story altogether as Sharazad confronts Shariyar? The point is that he is always there in every night and day, in every story, in every movement … because his name just means '**Time** the king'. He is dissolved and crystallized in the very structure of the *1001 Nights*. So, our triangle turns to be 3+Time, to form an aesthetic triangle moving in time. If we suspect that such a pattern has some occultist tendencies, we might follow the tradition of classic Persian poets who encrypted some important numbers within their verses and used numbers to depict a forbidden or hidden word and vice versa. A simple try reveals that addition of 3 to the numerical value of *zamān* 'time' would result in 101. But before falling into the trap of numerologists, let's ponder over some final facts: The word *zamān* 'time' which is a common word in Semitic languages (for example in Akkadian, Hebrew, and of course in Arabic) is also attested in Middle Persian as *žamān* , and in Old Iranian *jamāna*. Perhaps it is a loanword from Semitic or vice versa. Whatever the etymology, the very concept of *time* is always there for a Sassanid story teller. Near the end of the empire, we have the revival of Zarvānism: Zarvān, god of Time, is the cause of everything, and even God, Ahūra Mazdā, is his son … There is some evidence that indicates the ancient story writers were aware of the aesthetic potential of *time*. The allegory of *time*

appears in the translation of Indian *Kalila and Damana* where two mice, one white and one black (representing day and night) keep chewing a rope onto which a desperate man, hanging in the middle of a deep well, has grasped in fear. At the bottom of the well a crocodile and at the edge of the well a wolf are looking forward to devour the man while the mice are still chewing at the rope. The allegory of black and white mice reminds us of the following in *1001 Nights*:

> Shahzaman … sighed in sorrow… [There] emerged strutting … his brother's wife, with twenty slave-girls, ten white, and ten black … Then they … took off their clothes, and suddenly … ten black slaves mounted ten girls, while … a black slave jumped from the tree to the ground, rushed to [the queen] …and made love to her. (Haddawy 7)

Altogether, these 11 black and 11 white lovers might represent 11 day-and-nights, acting against the realm of mankind: In fact the story reaches its turning point after 10 days-and-nights on the morning of 11th day, when Shariyār sees with his own eyes the orgy of his adulterous wife. Then the king and Shahzaman disappear for 3 days. We may wonder what all these numbers are trying to convey. It is already mentioned that the number 3 has a structural value in the plot of the story, first we have king, his brother and the queen; then the queen is replaced by a strange woman, and finally we have Shahriyar, Shahrazad and Dinazad. But, as it was proposed earlier, Shahzaman has also an invisible presence with this company of three. Well, if we are as playful as an old story writer who did not discern between magic and art, we might be tempted to check the numerical value of *zamān* 'time' and add it to number 3. As we saw, this would give us 101. So we may wonder what would the next palyful number be after 11, 101 as a formal pattern. Would it not be 1001? And how coincidental it would be when we understand that the numerical value of *Šāhzamān* 'the king Time' is 404 and that of the word *šahr* (which is common between Shariayar and Sharazad) is 505? This playful plot can goes on or in a leap of faith we may add the two numbers to get 909; the next number in this pattern is our familiar magical number: 1001. In a defensive reaction to such an inconceivable claim, we may scornfully return to our soothing rational logic and neglect any such haphazard coincidences, yet under the gaze of unknown

story tellers we are to wonder at a magical land profuse with irrational coincidences rather than wandering through a logical zone of rational incidents.

Conclusion

It sounds ironical that an objective analysis of the names is a key to the gate of magical realities of a wonder land. However, it is only after the reconstruction of the original key-words of the text that we may discover why the utterance of a simple noun such as *sesame* might open the door of a treasure cave, and why Aladdin is the only one who can hold of the magic lamp. And why a tyrant king dies at certain page of a book as he is thumbing through a venomous book. Again and again, in *1001 Nights* we encounter a magical matrix in which names and numbers have a very generative function. As an aesthetic creative device, a name or a number might act like an artistic wand which redefines any reality that it touches, hence it is able to create the most fabulous stories out of the most common material. The frame story is only a prelude to this musical wizardry.

An earlier version of this paper was written in 2009, per request of Professor Margaret Larkin of Berkeley University.

NOTE:

* Usually, /č/ in Persian words borrowed by Arabic, would change to **/s/** ص or /s/ س and sometimes written as <j> ج. For example Indo-Persian *čandal* >Arabic صندل *sandal*; while Middle Persian *handāčak* > Early Modern Persian *handāsa 'measurement' (>Modern Persian *andāze*) Arabic *hendesa* 'geometry'.

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