

The Dates of Composing the Praise of Mahmoud Ghaznavi and the Shahnameh's Stories

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Researching the events of Ferdowsi's life is difficult; because the information about him is not clear. The available details to scholars, apart from Shahnameh, which is a cited recourse, are contradictory contents found in the *Chahar Maqaleh* (Four Discourses), Hajwnameh (verse lampoon) attributed to Ferdowsi, Introductions of *Shahnameh* and other sources, which all can easily confuse the researchers. It is therefore advisable to start with the context of *Shahnameh* which needs to be carefully analyzed and the result of this analysis can be considered as the basis for further research about this great Iranian poet.

There are two dates that most scholars have now agreed on and both dates are based on the evidences presented in *Shahnameh*; one is Ferdowsi's birthday in 329 or 330 AH, and the other is the beginning of composing Shahnameh in 369 or 370 AH.

At the end of some manuscripts of *Shahnameh* and in the translation of "Bondari Isfahani", the finishing date of *Shahnameh* is stated to be 384 AH, which is in contrast with what is mentioned in most of other manuscripts (i.e., 400 AH). That year is related to the first compilation of *Shahnameh*, which was before Mahmoud Ghaznavi's throne in 389 AH. Hence, if we accept it, Ferdowsi has written a part of *Shahnameh* between 370 and 384 AH (14 years). Three years later, shortly after 387 AH, when he was 58 years old, he began the composition of the second part of *Shahnameh*, when Mahmoud Ghaznavi reached the power and Ferdowsi, who realized it, decided to present *Shahnameh* to Mahmoud Ghaznavi. In the second phase of composing *Shahnameh*, Ferdowsi covered the remainder of Abu-Mansouri's *Shahnameh*. Some scholars believe that the praise of Mahmoud in *Shahnameh* had been done in 393 AH which is presented to Mahmoud in

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400 AH. This is based on a date mentioned at the end of some manuscripts of *Shahnameh*, referring to the Ferdowsi's 25-year endeavor and his own age (i.e., 65), and praise of Mahmoud Ghaznavi at this age; therefore, some scholars have considered 394 or 395 AH as the year *Shahnameh* was presented to Mahmoud Ghaznavi.

2. Method

Ferdowsi started that the composition of *Shahnameh* and finished some parts in his first edition, and after Mahmoud Ghaznavi's throne, he added some verses to the praises (second edition). It is not acceptable to consider composing of these verses only in 394 or 395 AH or after the finishing of *Shahnameh* in 400 AH; These praises had been added during the composition of *Shahnameh* in the second edition in which Ferdowsi referred to his age; however, it is not acceptable to assert that Ferdowsi completed *Shahnameh*, and then included some verses to mention his own age. According to *Shahnameh's* content, it does not seem logical for Ferdowsi to mention his age as 58 years old in one verse, and 60, 61 or 65 in other verses, but on the contrary, during the process of composing *Shahnameh*, he mentioned his exact age. Therefore, the questions that arise are: at what year Ferdowsi composed each story, when was Mahmoud Ghaznavi praised, and what are the relationships between these two aspects? The following article, which is written in an analytical-documentary manner, attempts to determine the date of composing the second edited stories and the praise of Mahmoud Ghaznavi.

3. Discussion

The correction of Khaleghi Motlagh has 49533 verses, and based on the evidences extracted from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, it should be found that how many verses were composed from the time he was 58 years old or when he began the story of Siavash to the time he finished *Shahnameh*? It should be noted these verses are related to the second part of his work; once the number of verses of the second composition part have been determined, it can be concluded that the remaining verses had been done in the first part of his work.

According to *Shahnameh*, when he was between 58 and 60, Ferdowsi first composed *Siavash's Story* (2524 verses), and then *Siavash's Revenge* (490 verses). After that, *Kingdom of Khosrow I* (4517 verses) was composed at the ages of 61 and 62; After this part end, during the next two years (at the age of 62, until the end of his age of 64), he composed the Parthian kingdom part until the end of Kavad's reign (6566 verses). Afterwards, at the age of

65, he started the *Great War of Kay Khosrow* (3141 verses) and right after finishing this part, he has resumed the Sassanid kingdom and composed *Khosrow Parviz Kingdom* (4107 verses) when he was between 66 and 68. Ferdowsi probably during the time he was between 68 and 71 years old, had composed *The Story of Shirouyeh* and *Yazdegerd III Kingdom* (1657 verses), along with scattered sections such as *The Story of Hormizd IV* (1926 verses), with a total of 3583 verses. Therefore, it can be said that Ferdowsi composed a total of 24,928 verses in the second edition. If we reduce 24,928 verses of *Shahnameh* from a total of 49,533 verses, 24,605 verses will remain, and after reducing 1,028 verses of Daqiqi, 23,577 verses will remain that are probably the result of the first edition of *Shahnameh*. Ferdowsi composed the first edited part (23,577 verses) between 370 and 384 AH (14 years), and the second edited part of *Shahnameh* (24,928 verses) between 387 and 400 AH (13 years). Considering the dates, it can be concluded that Ferdowsi have not been disciplined in composing the stories of its source (*Shahnameh* of Abu-Mansouri). As a matter of fact, Daqiqi has begun composing *Shahnameh* from middle of stories (the story of the Goshtasp kingdom). In fact, it is normal that Ferdowsi composes a story according to the poetic nature, studies and conditions of his life and social and historical events of its time.

Based on the evidences, Ferdowsi praised Mahmoud Ghaznavi at the same time he composed the second edited stories and added some to the first edited section including praising Mahmoud in the *introduction*. *The word of Daqiqi and The word of Ferdowsi* were probably added in 390 AH during the composition of *Khosrow I Kingdom*. On the other hand, 394 AH is the year Ferdowsi decided to send *Shahnameh* to the court of Ghaznah at the age of 66 after composing *The Great War of Kay Khosrow*. Although *Shahnameh* had not been finished on that date, Ferdowsi first sent the incomplete book to the king, and after becoming aware of Mahmoud Ghaznavi's not paying attention, and because of misconduct and jealousy of some courtiers, he had mentioned this disappointment in some verses of *Khosrow Parviz* story.

When Ferdowsi was 61 years old in 391 AH, during composing *Parthian Kingdom*, he refers to the half tax pardon which the scholars mistakenly attribute to the famine of Khorasan 401 AH. But Ferdowsi, in the praise of Mahmoud Ghaznavi and his younger brother Abu al-Muzaffar Nasr ibn Nasr al-Din, did not mention the famine and problems of the people of Tus, Neyshabur and Khorasan at the beginning of this story, which contradicts with Ferdowsi's text in other *Shahnameh* stories. Therefore, with the evidences in historical texts, such as *The History of Beyhaqi*, it is better to

regard the tax pardon as one of Mahmoud Ghaznavi's political actions to satisfy the people of Khorasan, which happened before 400 AH.

4. Conclusion

Ferdowsi mentioned his age in *Shahnameh* which indicates he had not composed the stories in a specific order. In the first edition of *Shahnameh* (370 to 384 AH), he mostly composed myth and epic's stories, but also some historical stories can be found such as *The Kingdom of Alexander*. The praise of Mahmoud Ghaznavi also was not included in the first edition. The second edition (387 to 400 AH) contains historical stories of Parthians and Sassanians, except for three sections: *The Story of Siavash*, *The Story of Siavash's Revenge* and *The Great War of Kay Khosrow*. It is the part that Ferdowsi praised Mahmoud Ghaznavi and mentioned his own exact age in the verses, and also he has added some praises of Mahmoud Ghaznavi to the first edition. He composed *The Kingdom of Khosrow I* in 390 AH and at the same time, Mahmoud Ghaznavi's praise was added to the *Introduction*, *The word of Daqiqi* and *The word of Ferdowsi* and it seems Ferdowsi made the final decision to donate *Shahnameh* to Mahmoud Ghaznavi in that year. Ferdowsi in 391 AH, when he was 62, in the part of Mahmoud Ghaznavi's praise mentioned the half tax pardon in the 14 Shawals that probably Mahmoud Ghaznavi made this decision because of conquer of Neyshabur and dominating Khorasan and it should not be attributed to 400 or 401 AH. In 392 AH and at the age of 63, Ferdowsi composed Mahmoud Ghaznavi's praise at the same time he composed the stories of *Shapur Son of Ardashir I* and *Bahram IS on of Shapur*. In 394 and at the age of 65, Ferdowsi composed Mahmoud Ghaznavi's praise at the beginning of the story of *the Great War of Kay Khosrow* which seems that he decided to send *Shahnameh* to Ghazni after the story ended, and Ferdowsi's reference to jealousy of courtiers in the story of *Khosrow Parviz kingdom* indicates that *Shahnameh* has already been sent to Ghazna. In the same story, and at the end of *Shahnameh* in 400 AH, he praised Hayat Qatibah, who was the person in charge of the tax in Tus, and except of the few verses that appear in the end of the *Shahnameh*, there is no more praise about Mahmoud Ghaznavi. Therefore, there is not any date in *Shahnameh* after 400 AH and nothing should be attributed to it after 400 AH.

Keywords: *Shahnameh*, Ferdowsi's Age, Praise Mahmoud Ghaznavi, Tax Pardon

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