

duty to disseminate knowledge of and help translate into practical value. It has led Campanini to regard Hanafi as a kind of mediator between the late Husserl's attention for *Lebenswelt* and Muslim projects as diverse as the revolutionary philosophy of Ali Shariati and Abū Zayd's discourse critique.

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The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma as a Mirror for Princes. By NASRIN ASKARI. Studies in Persian Cultural History, vol. 9. Leiden: BRILL, 2016. Pp. xi + 398. \$189, €136.

In the book under review, Nasrin Askari explores readings of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* that highlight "its characteristics as a book of ethico-political wisdom and advice for kings and courtly élites" (p. 2). She proposes that Firdawsī intended the myths and legends of the *Shāhnāma* to be understood as vehicles for the conveyance, through metaphor and symbol, of important ethical principles and political concepts. Concentrating on the reception of Firdawsī's text among near-contemporary and later medieval Persian writers, Askari argues convincingly that in combining moral instruction with political advice, the *Shāhnāma* functioned in numerous cases as a "mirror for princes," a category that she treats in an appropriately broad sense.

To explore this proposition, Askari concentrates on the section of the *Shāhnāma* devoted to Ardashīr, the founding monarch of the Sasanian dynasty. Consisting of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and substantial appendices, the volume provides an analysis of the Ardashīrian materials in the *Shāhnāma*, and traces the appearance of similar materials in later Persian-language didactic writings. Askari's focus on the figure of Ardashīr is particularly pertinent, since, as she explains, the section devoted to this monarch is commonly taken to mark the movement in the *Shāhnāma* from the mythological and legendary eras to the fully historical period, yet Firdawsī's Ardashīrian corpus combines both legendary and "historical" narratives. The sequence accordingly provides Askari with excellent materials to illustrate her contention that Firdawsī had little interest in recording "history," at least as modern historians understand it, and that he intended instead to promote ethical political conduct. Acknowledging but avoiding extensive discussion of "interpolations" and textual "authenticity," Askari establishes criteria for her assessment of the verses that constituted Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*. Using the edition of J. Khāliqī-Muṭṭāq, she cites her texts in the original Persian and provides, for the most part, her own translations.

Chapter one assembles the information available on the sponsorship of the *Shāhnāma*, assesses the anecdotes concerning its immediate reception, and cites the responses of later medieval writers to Firdawsī and his opus. Doubting the reliability of reports of Sultan Maḥmūd's reputedly unenthusiastic response to Firdawsī's work, Askari finds that these sometimes quite different accounts reflect the purposes of individual authors. Noting the political aspirations likely to underlie the 'Abd al-Razzāq family's involvement in the production of other books of kings, Askari finds evidence in the preface (the sole surviving portion) of the prose Abū Maṣūri *Shāhnāma*—completed in 346/957, nearly a half century before that of Firdawsī—of the text's intended instructional value. Next, Askari surveys later Persian authors' references to, imitations of, borrowings from, and commentaries on Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*. Drawing on a wide range of writings—biographies, the comments of copyists, studies of rhetoric, later epics, anthologies, mirrors for princes, and historiographical works—she demonstrates the largely ethical appreciation of the *Shāhnāma* in the centuries following its appearance, and its continuing currency as a book of wisdom. Particularly persuasive in this regard is her discussion of the genre of *ikhtiyārāt-i Shāhnāma*, topically organized collections of "selections from the *Shāhnāma*," and of post-*Shāhnāma* epics, such as the *Zafarnāma* of Mustawfī (d. 750/1349).

In chapter two, Askari turns to the Ardashīr cycle in the *Shāhnāma*, which she divides into two parts. The first part, preceded by a prologue, deals with Ardashīr's birth and early life, his military campaigns and attainment of the *farr* (divine right to rule) that established his legitimacy, and his protection of the

Good Religion; the second part deals with his wisdom with respect to the maintenance of kingship. The chapter incorporates a useful discussion of the varying presentations of Ardashir in Middle Persian, as well as Arabic, sources. By comparing Firdawsī's treatment of Ardashir with portrayals of the monarch in other medieval accounts, Askari highlights Firdawsī's de-historicizing approach toward this "historical" figure, whose founding of a new dynasty the poet validates through the construction of a legitimizing image. Ardashir's reputation as the "author" of several widely cited literary articulations of political advice renders this monarch an especially appropriate choice for the demonstration of Askari's reading of Firdawsī's epic. Firdawsī includes three pieces of wisdom literature attributed to Ardashir: his *ā'in* (customs and practices), *andarz* (advice) to his high officials, also called his *khutba* (throne speech), and his *'ahd* (testament), addressed to his son and successor Shāpūr or to his heirs collectively.

Chapter three presents the customs and practices associated with Ardashir, and the previously mentioned texts ascribed to him. Whereas many medieval authors recorded Ardashir's promulgations and pronouncements as historical documents, Firdawsī presented them in an explicitly instructive manner, framed with exhortations to emulate the Sasanian monarch. Askari's analysis shows the distinctiveness of Firdawsī's uses of his sources, which he adapted to highlight specific themes, such as the requisites for the maintenance of power and the garnering of a fine, lasting reputation. Also of interest is Askari's discussion of the ways in which certain elements of the political-ethical corpus ascribed to Ardashir might have been understood in a Sasanian setting. She proposes, for example, that in its Sasanian (and Zoroastrian) context, the notion of the conjoining of religion and kingship—so thoroughly associated with Ardashir in Arabic and Persian literature—might have connoted the establishment of the two qualities in the person of a single (royal) individual, in this case Ardashir.

In chapter four, Askari compares nine medieval Persian mirrors for princes with Firdawsī's Ardashir cycle, and argues that these texts, for the most part without acknowledgement, in fact follow the principles for ideal kingship portrayed in the *Shāhnāma*. Askari makes a point of choosing a diverse group of mirrors, composed by authors from different social and professional backgrounds, in different cultural contexts and geographical locations—from northern Iran to India—and from the eleventh century to the thirteenth: the *Pandnāma* attributed to Sebūktigin, which Askari takes to have been composed during the reign of Maḥmūd of Ghazna; the anonymous *Ādāb-i salṭanat va vizārat*; the *Qābūs-nāma* of Kaykā'ūs b. Iskandar; *Siyar al-mulūk* of Niẓām al-Mulūk; *Naṣīhat al-mulūk* of or ascribed to al-Ghazālī; *Aghrāz al-siyāsa fī a'rāz al-riyāsa* of Zahirī Samarqandī; two chapters from *Jāmi' al-ʿulūm (Sittīnī)* of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī; the *Marzbānnāma* of Varāvīnī; and *Ādāb al-ḥarb va l-shujā'a* of Fakhr-i Mudabbir. Askari presents texts from these nine "mirrors" in conjunction with parallel texts from the *Shāhnāma*, and argues that while most of them, near-contemporary or later, referred neither to Firdawsī nor to Ardashir in the passages she cites, they appropriated the moral and pragmatic materials articulated in Firdawsī's Ardashirian cycle and addressed them to the audiences of their times. She evokes the broad dissemination and cultural force of the concepts (some of which, she contends, form continuities with Zoroastrian traditions) associated with Ardashir, the "sage-king," in the *Shāhnāma*, and suggests not only the extent to which later writers in Persian took up the *Shāhnāma*, but also the variety of ways in which they availed themselves of Firdawsī's epic. Complementing and strengthening Askari's readings of these materials are extensive appendices (covering nearly 150 pages), which indicate authors' choices of verses and facilitate comparisons among authors' uses of the *Shāhnāma*.

Askari has produced a highly valuable contribution to studies not only of the *Shāhnāma* but also of the long tradition of Persian *moralia*. Informed by earlier scholarship, including the publications of Julie Scott Meisami and Charles-Henri de Fouchécour, Askari's book constitutes at once a thoughtful treatment of the reception of the *Shāhnāma* and a study of the literary portrayals of the figure of Ardashir, especially in Persian-language writing of a didactic nature. Like any stimulating study, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma as a Mirror for Princes* raises several questions, some of which might profitably be taken up in future research. Askari is undoubtedly correct that *'Ahd Ardashir*, in particular, contributed to the shaping of many Arabic and Persian mirrors for princes, to a considerably greater degree than authors' explicit references might convey. At the same time, a significant portion of the political advice ascribed to Ardashir in the mirror literature is somewhat general in nature. Would a study of the advice ascribed to, for example, Anūshīrvān have produced very different results? This

question arises particularly in the case of materials associated with different figures in different sources, a phenomenon that Askari acknowledges. It would be interesting, moreover, to trace in the Arabic and Persian literary corpora the processes by which Ardashīr, as Askari observes, retains his status as an expositor of consummate political wisdom but is, in terms of his exemplary kingship, eclipsed in stature by Anūshīrvān. In this fine study, Askari furthers our awareness of the broad dissemination in the Persian mirror literature of Sasanian political wisdom, and the spectrum of uses to which it was put.

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Counsel for Kings: Wisdom and Politics in Tenth-Century Iran. By LOUISE MARLOW. 2 vols. Edinburgh Studies in Classical Arabic Literature. Edinburgh: EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016. Pp. xv + 344 (vol. 1), viii + 384 (vol. 2). \$220, £150.

Louise Marlow has written a fascinating and probing study of one of the earliest Arabic mirrors for princes. She greatly advances our understanding of not just the early tenth-century *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* or even of the genre, but of the general eastern Iranian, Samanid intellectual and political context in which the text was produced. There have been a number of important studies in recent years on this region and its intellectual, social, and political currents (e.g., by Bilal Orfali, Arezou Azad, Étienne de la Vaissière, and Deborah Tor, among others) but it still is badly in need of studies that meticulously document the possibilities and constraints created by the contexts in which authors worked. Its Arabic literary and intellectual heritage, in particular, requires much more study, and Marlow has now added enormously to our understanding.

The origins of the text and its attribution—surely incorrectly—to the great Shāfiʿī jurist al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) are the first problems that Marlow must tackle. This attribution has long come under fire, not least because none of the period’s authoritative biobibliographers refers to a *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* among the works of al-Māwardī (though, as Marlow points out, medieval titles pose a host of problems). Nor does careful reading of the lone manuscript witness to the text support this attribution (100 fols. within a late sixteenth-century three-part *majmūʿa* held in Paris, BnF, MS Arabe, No. 2447). Marlow notes that the title and author given in the manuscript are merely provided by a copyist (possibly from an exemplar, but still *hors de texte*), but the most convincing argument against attributing the text to al-Māwardī turns out to be the way in which the text makes the most sense if read as responding to the specific situation of eastern Iran, and especially Balkh, of the first part of the fourth/tenth century. For these reasons, then, Marlow refers to the author throughout her book as “Pseudo-Māwardī.” Though rather clunky, it seems the best option.

Marlow was afforded what few authors today receive: ample space—two volumes!—to roll out her arguments. This allows for unusually detailed comparisons that shed light on the specific context, choices, and meanings of Pseudo-Māwardī and his text. For example, part one of the first volume (*The Naṣīḥat al-mulūk of Pseudo-Māwardī: Contexts and Themes*) focuses on “Situating the Text,” and here Marlow shows the likelihood that the text was composed in Balkh during the tumultuous reign of the Samanid Naṣr II b. Aḥmad II (r. 301–31/914–43), when the sons of another Samanid, Ishāq b. Aḥmad, unsuccessfully asserted their own claims to rule. Whereas Pseudo-Māwardī, reflecting a possibly regional point of view, held Ishāq in high regard, his fellow historians relate stories about Ishāq that foretell the dissipation of his children’s authority or treat him as a plotter of rebellions (e.g., al-Balʿamī, writing in Buyid Iraq; al-Narshakhī, who presented his *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā* to the ruling son of Naṣr II, Nūḥ; or al-Gardīzī, who flourished in the fifth/eleventh century). Citation and discussion of passages from these other historians aid enormously. Similarly, when Marlow considers various settings for the composition of *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, her discussion of Balkh, at the edges of the Islamic world, is expansive. Most fascinatingly, she shows that Pseudo-Māwardī’s understanding of the person and significance of the Buddha differed in kind from that of his contemporaries. These insights involve a close reading of a number of other texts, and a worthwhile digression into the confusions of other