

Representation of Besilā Land in *Kush-Nāme*

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Kush-Nāme, authored by Hakim Iranshan Ibn Abi al-Khair, offers information on Iran, its features, and even its neighbors, as other classical Persian literary works do. Although some of this historical information may need to be more accurate due to the legendary nature of the work, it is important and worth studying. Aside from China, lands such as Makrān, Saqlab, Māchin, Besilā, and others are mentioned in *Kush-Nāme*. Besilā is the same as Korea based on the dynasty's name, other details, and other references. The translation of *Kush-Nāme* into Korean has piqued the interest of many South Koreans. This study seeks to extract and, to some extent, examine Besilā's many political, economic, geographical, and cultural representations in *Kush-Nāme*, not just to gain a better understanding of this country but this study serves as a foundation for future studies. According to the research, Besilā was a remote and prosperous land with a monotheistic people and kingdom, a profitable and prosperous business, a huge army, and beautiful people who sheltered Abtin from the Chinese army and later married Abtin and Farārang, the daughter of Besilā King and mother of Fereidun, and were somehow involved in Fereidun's killing of Zakhāk.

Keywords: *Kush-Nāme*, Besilā, Korea, Fereidun, Teihur, Abtin

Introduction

Literary works are renowned for holding much historical, political, social, economic, and cultural information. Similarly, because its story takes place outside of Iran's borders, *Kush-Nāme* contains a wealth of information about Iran, Iranians, China, Māchin, and Besilā.

Kush-Nāme is a Persian epic-mythological by Iranshan Ibn Abi al-Khair (500-504 Hijri). This book, composed in the first years of the sixth century of Hijri in the style of the *Shāh-Nāme*, is a collection of national-legendary chronicles and Persian poems that tells a different narrative of ancient Iran's recorded history than Ferdowsi's *Shāh-Nāme* and other *Shāh-Nāmes* before it. Despite being based on narrations other than the source of Ferdowsi's work, this work has a wonderful and more or less consistent order. *Kush-Nāme* is the only Persian work with numerous references to China, Māchin, and Besilā.

Kush-Nāme contains many Roman provenance legends and myths in each document. The only known manuscript of the *Kush-Nāme* is housed at the British Museum Library. Jalal Matini, a professor and former Ferdowsi University's College of Literature dean, studied the original manuscript and provided a lengthy introduction.

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Why Is the Name Besilā and Not Basila?

As Korea is mentioned in many written books in several shapes like “Silla”, the question is why the author of *Kush-Nāme* wrote it like “Besila”. In this matter, there are some assumptions: “B” in Besilā is the Persian preposition with the meaning of “to” which in Persian is “به”. It means the poet wanted to write “to Besilā”. The other is in the Persian language; there are words with the beginning syllabus “beh” of which the short form is “be” which means good, nice, and better:

In the second form of Basila, linguistically and phonologically, it seems that beh (adjective) is added to the proper name, Sila. Beh means “good” and “better” and comes from the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) word “weh.” Many examples illustrate such a composition technique in Middle and New Persian. Such names are generally considered vestiges of the new Persian language adopted in the late Sassanian dynasty. 10 Beh-dan (a village near Birjand), Beh-deh (Fars), Bebe-shahr (Mazandaran), web-ardashir, web-andiyok, web-shapuhr, web-az-amad-Kawad (toponyms), web-dad, web gushnasp (proper names of humans) and web-den and wahman (religious terms) are examples of such names. (Lee, 2018, p. 253)

Brief Story

Kush-Nāme’s story is tied to Kush-pil-dandān, Zakhāk’s nephew, who oppressed Asia, Africa, and the West for many years. He has always been antagonistic toward Jamshid’s family, pursuing and punishing them. He uses a falsified genealogy from Darnoosh to force the Roman emperor Manosh to pay tribute. Kush-pil-dandān was born to a Chinese woman when his father, Kush—Zakhāk’s brother—traveled to China, and his father abandoned him because he was ugly; hence, Abtin reared him. Following a battle between Abtin and Kush, he recognizes his son, Kush-pil-dandān, and commands him to stand before Abtin’s men.

Kush crowns his son, Kush-pil-dandān, as King of China, while Abtin seeks refuge in Besilā. Fereidun, son of Abtin and Farārang (daughter of Teihur, King of Besilā), seized power and re-entered the fray. Zakhāk and Kush-pil-dandān were caught and imprisoned in Damavand after Kush was killed. Fereidun freed Kush-pil-dandān from Damavand 40 years later to make him participate in the resistance to Nubian black anarchy. Kush-pil-dandān abruptly reverses course and arrests the Iranians in his army, notwithstanding his gains in Andalusia for Iran. He assassinates Iraj with the assistance of Tour and Salm. Manouchehr (Fereidun’s grandson and Iraj’s son) eventually joins him in the fight to avenge Iraj’s death.

Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted on *Kush-Nāme*. For instance, Yingjun Liu, in the paper “*Kush-Nāme*h and the Role of the Foreign Hero ‘Targeted Character’ in the Reconstruction of the National Identity of Iranians”, investigated Kush-pil-dandān as “a targeted character” which is a Chinese concept (Liu, 2023). Haji-rahimi et al. investigated the effectiveness of the prologue of *Kush-Nāme* from the preface of *Shāh-Nāme*, and they have only focused on Tahmidīyeh in “Effectiveness of the Preface of the *Kush-Nāme* From the Preface of the *Shāh-Nāme* With an Emphasis on ‘Tahmidīyeh’” (Haji-rahimi, Fatehi, & Mehravaran, 2022). Hashemi et al. investigated this story according to the theory of American mythologist and theorist Joseph Campbell in the paper “Study of the Self-Knowledge Effects of the Social Phenomenon ‘Journey’ in the *Kush-Nāme* System Based on Joseph Campbell’s Model” (Hashemi, Firuzi Moqadam, & Alavi moqadam, 2022). Akbarzade is a scholar who has had the deepest and most research about *Kush-Nāme*; in the article “Portrait of the People of Silla According to the Persian Texts”, he focuses on the significant difference between Silla and the others, based on some paintings (Akbarzadeh, 2022). In his paper entitled “A Note on the Compound Kabul/Zirang-China/Chinestan Based on *Kush-Nāme*”, he also focused on China/Chinestan in *Kush-Nāme* (Akbarzadeh, 2021). Mehrad in “Representation

of the Body and Analysis of the Body Actions of the Anti-hero in the Epic Poem *Kush-Nāme*” investigated and analyzed bodily activities in *Kush-Nāme* (Mehrad, 2020). In the book *Kush-Nāme*, Atuni studied the fascinating subject of de-mythology can be found in the article “De-mythology in *Kush Nameh*” (Atooni & Atooni, 2020). Rahman-zade et al. explored the epic language of *Kush-Nāme* in the paper “The Structure of Epic Language in *Kush-Nāme*” (Rahman-zade, Modarresi, & Nozhat, 2020). Ardestani Rostami wrote “Looking at the Story of Plato (Taking of Jesus Christ) in the *Kush-Nāme* and Comparing It With Other Texts” (Ardestani Rostami, 2020). Bashiri has two articles about *Kush-Nāme*: “Examining and Introducing Some Mythological Heroes of the *Kush-Nāme* System and the Relationship of the *Kush-Nāme* System With the Kings of Kush in the Millennium BC in Africa” (Bashiri, 2020) and “Examining and Comparing the Story of Kush-Pil-dandān in *Kush-Nāme* and Naqqālli Narrations” joint with the other author Sadeghi Naghd Ali Olya (Sadeghi Naghd Ali Olya & Bashiri, 2019). Yingjun Liu in “Fabulous Horses out of Water in B. Sīlā as Depicted in the Kushnāma” focused on the creature which could be seen in *Kush-Nāme* (Liu, 2019).

Naderi employed a literary criticism approach to *Kush-Nāme* in the article “The Function of Genet’s ‘Trans-textuality’ Theory in Discovering and Analyzing the Impact of *Kush-Nāme* on *Shāh-Nāme*” (F. Naderi & S. Naderi, 2018). Kaykha used a descriptive-analytical method to specify the origin of the concept of “Āz” (greed) in *Kush-Nāme* in the paper “Conceptualization of ‘Āz’ in Epics After the *Shāh-Nāme* With an Emphasis on *Kush-Nāme* and Farāmarz-Nāma” (Kaykha, Zahra, & Qhavam, 2018). Lee Hee Soo in “Evaluation of Kushnāma as a Historical Source in Regard to Descriptions of Basilā” made this book a historical source (Lee, 2018). Naddafi investigated Zarvan’s similar concepts (“time” and “sky”) using many passages from the *Kush-Nāme* in “Zarvan’s Face in ‘*Kush-Nāme*’” (Naddafi & Motevaseli, 2016). Akbarzade, in “Silla the Founder or Silla the Kingdom: According to *Kush-Nāme* and Elected Arabo-Persian Texts”, studied the issue of the founder and the country with the same name (Akbarzade, 2016). Haddadi et al. examined the secret of *Kush-Nāme* narration using David Herman’s theory of narrative world-making, Grieg’s theory of narration travel, and Genette’s theory of narrative time in “Journey to the World of Kush’s Ugliness by Changing the Tone of the Narrative Discourse of *Kush-Nāme* from the Epic Genre to the Mystical Genre” (Haddadi, Najafdari, & Dadfar, 2014). Sarfi, in “Man-Animal Myth in *Kush-Nāme* and Garshasp-Nama”, investigated and compared this myth in two books (Sarfi et al., 2010).

The Need for Research

After the *Kush-Nāme* was translated into Korean, this subject received much attention in South Korea. Some researchers considered the references in this book to the land of Silla, i.e., Korea, correct from a historical point of view, while others did not. According to the researcher’s findings, the story occurs outside Iran in China, Māchin, and Besilā (Korea). However, as Akbarzadeh pointed out, in our literature, the narrative of the arrival of the Iranians to Besial, Abtin’s marriage to Besilā king’s daughter, Farārang, the birth of Fereidun, and the rest of the narratives, China and Māchin, are confused with Turān and Sistān. It currently needs historical authenticity.

Based on the “Literature Review”, *Kush-Nāme* has been explored from different perspectives; nonetheless, many aspects must be addressed. The articles written in Persian have more narrative, literary, and linguistic aspects, while the English articles are mostly about this book’s historical reality and aspects. The English papers did not mention how Besilā was represented in *Kush-Nāme* in detail. Moreover, considering the great monarch, Fereidun, with his remarkable role in murdering Zahhāk, had an Iranian-Korean race (which this book mentions), which motivated the authors to conduct further research.

Methodology

First, the text of *Kush-Nāme* was read, and all verses on Besilā and its contents were taken. The verses are then separated into sections based on their substance and topics, such as geography, the Besilā court, and the features of the people that live there. Then, at the end of this investigation, various articles and books concerning *Kush-Nāme*, *Shāh-Nāme* (since *Kush-Nāme* was written in imitation of *Shāh-Nāme* and more or less focused on the same issues), Besilā, and other related cases were analyzed. Finally, at least historically, the study of Korean literature demonstrates no clear relation, especially the Abtin's marriage and the Fereidun's birth from a Koran princess, between Iran and Iranians during Silla's rule, as claimed in the *Kush-Nāme*. Iran's introduction to Sheila was the work that came to Sheila via the Silk Road trading route.

Persian Literature's Fusion of Turan and Sistan With China and Māchin

The Arabs defeated the Sassanids, and Yazdgerd III, the last Sassanid king, marched to Sistan and Merv (Middle Asia, maybe China, and the Far East), followed by his son Pirouz (Firouz or Pirouz in *Kush-Nāme*), who marched to the southeast of Iran. While requesting assistance from Faghfur of China to cope with the Tazians and destroy the Arabs, "Yazdgerd went to Sistan at that time, and from there he went to Merv with thousands of agile riders" (Tabari, 1983, p. 2148). "Yazdgerd followed the road of Sistan till he arrived at Marv Shahjan", says another: "He planned to travel to China and had his treasures and reserves sent there" (Moqadasi, 2007, p. 866).

Also, "the advisors provided Yazdgerd with some advice. He traveled to Sistan, Kerman, Makran, and Tabaristan" (Tha'alabi, 2007, p. 474).

The dream of the return of one of the Sassanid princes to save Iran from the Thazis is the least reason that has raised the Far East with the liberators of Zoroastrianism, which has raised it to the most sacred borders of Iranian mythology; where China and Silla have dominated parts of Persian literature due to the stability of Sassanid princes and political-military support. (Akbarzadeh, 2021, pp. 14-15)

In Zoroastrianism, it is written:

یکی شاه باشد به هند و به چین به تخم کیان اندر آن وقت کین
مر او را یکی پور شایسته کام نهاده بر آن پور، بهرام نام
بسی لشکر آرد ز هند و ز چین شه نامور سوی ایران زمین
به نیروی دادار پیروزگار برآرد از آن بدفعالان دمار

There is a monarch in India and China who is of the same race as the Iranian kings and was born there during the conflict and when the Iranian kings migrated there. He has a deserving son named Bahram. This well-known and powerful king will lead a massive military from India and China to Iran. With God's assistance, he will destroy his adversaries. (Zartosht-pazhdu, 1959, pp. 1477-1498)

In *Kush-Nāme*, King Besilā, Abtin's father-in-law, requests Abtin's return to Iran (to battle the Tazians) and states:

در اندر ز نامه چنین یافتم چو بر دیدنش تیز بشتافتم
که فرمان ضحاک سالی هزار بماند، نماند به از روزگار
بسی لشکر آرد ز هند و ز چین شه نامور سوی ایران زمین
وز آن پس به ما بازگردد جهان ز دیوان تهی گردد و گمراهان
یکی شهریار آید از ما پدید که تخمش زمین کم تواند کشید

I heard in an old book that after a thousand years, the kingdom of Zahhāk, a powerful and influential kingdom, will send an enormous armed force from India and China to Iran. Following this campaign, the planet will be cleaned of adversaries and undesirable creatures, which will help us (Iranians). This magnificent and mighty monarch will be of Iranian descent. (Ibn Abi al-Khair, 1997, pp. 3946-3949)

Fereidun highlights his blood relationship with Besilā king after receiving his letter:

به کارم یکی نامه فرمود شا به نام خداوند خورشید و ماه
تو امروز فرخ نیای منی به چین و به خاور بجای منی

Fereidun wrote to Karram (Teihur, King Besilā's son): "You are my glorious ancestor and successor in China and the Orient." (Ibn Abi al-Khair, 1997, pp. 5763-5768)

It seems that the two political-military events of Yazgerd leaving Sistan for Central Asia (and presumably China), as well as the return of Piruz from China to Sistan and standing against the Arabs, coincide with the dream of the return of Zoroastrian liberators from the Far East in the revival. It has resulted in the inclusion of China-Sila in legendary Persian literature. It is as if the people's dream of liberating a part of the country from the Arabs has failed, and writers are attempting to make it into a win with the help of myths and epics to remain hopeful.

In this way, even though there is no historical evidence that Fereydoun is Iranian-Korean, the features indicated in *Kush-Nāme* concerning Besilā are still significant because there may have been some excursions to that place its portrayal is perceived as such.

Representation of Besilā Land in *Kush-Nāme*

The materials collected from reading and reviewing *Kush-Nāme* are categorized and presented in unique groupings in this section:

Geography

After traveling through China in *Kush-Nāme*, we arrive where we meet Māchin I, whose ruler is Behak, and subsequently Māchin II, the land of Besilā. In this study, Māchin I is called Māchin with the Behak kingdom. Besilā is one month by ship from Māchin I (2109); after a month of nonstop traveling, the ship arrives at the island that was Besilā (2181). It has a tall, wide mountain with its head elevated to the moon (2111), and there is only one way to cross it. Behak informs Abtin that if he goes to this land, he will be safe from Zahhāk and Kush-pil-dandān (the emperor of China) since that peak is inaccessible, and even if Kush becomes an angel, he will not be able to get even a mile near to it (2127).

They had traveled five days from the city entrance to the city proper when they arrived at the Besilā gate (2141). This mountain was two miles long and two miles broad, covered in jasmine gardens, like a paradise filled with nymphs and flowing rivers (in my opinion, the Muslim poet here describes the heaven mentioned in *Qoran*). According to Ajayeb al-Makhlughat wa Gharayeb al-Mowjudat, besides a very nice picture shows Silla: "Silla includes numerous islands; if the Muslims arrived there, they would not like to return (to their homelands); Silla is the land of goodness, the center of the gold and silver and white falcons" (Makmuni, 1961, pp. 102-103).

In one scene, Abtin believes he hears Kush's voice while partying and becomes disturbed. Teihur promises that his ancestors left him an autonomous and proud kingdom and that he will never bow to Kush. At this point, he recaps his country's traits and boasts.

Teihur, the king of Besilā, claims that our forefathers were haughty and did not regard anyone higher than themselves, but they refused to submit to Māchin and China (2345). It is an island, and I have not taken my kingdom from them, and I do not need to obey them. In Teihur's opinion, the sea surrounds the entire world (maybe he means the island of Besilā itself), and their mountain is wider than the sea, and because there is a sea on both sides of this mountain, ships cannot pass. You arrive on land after sailing from this island for a year and a half. Then you will go to Qāf Mountain, and you will have to cross it to get to Soqlāb and Rum (2347-2357). Teihur claims that this is a thousand-year-old city (2362) and that the city's name was derived from the name of his ancestor (2364).

A wise man tells Abtin the following about Besilā: According to the knowledgeable and worldly man, there are only two sites in the world that are so beautiful and have such exquisite gardens; one is Besilā, and the other is where you have to cruise in the sea for seven months before arriving at a curve in the sea. You will arrive at a point where the waves are knotted like armor, where Siāvash passed, and then at a very high mountain where the wild animals cannot go there. It includes lovely gardens full of tulips, lilies, and lovely women and men. Still, it is not possible to live there, or the population is small, and this cannot be stated to ordinary people who have built up there since they both do not believe and keep asking the speaker. They do not believe and keep asking because someone came down from the sky and settled these two locations. Here, the poet alludes to divine and godly influences in the construction and establishment of Besilā (2399-2409).

Besilā's geographical features made it unbeatable: When Kush chose to assault Besilā, the king of China's statements showed that even fighting with Besilā was difficult for the King of Chin since Besilā's height was higher than the sky. He possessed an army the size of a mountain and the sea. As a result, the king of China informs his son, Kush-pil-dandān, that even Zahhāk, who possessed Divine Farrah, could not defeat the Teihurians because divine fate and destiny assisted them. It alludes to heavenly and divine forces defending Besilā (2455-2466).

When the Besilāites were transferring Kush's envoys to Besilā, the emissaries believed that Kush must be insane and not wise if he wanted to fight Besilā. Because even if he became a star, he could not escape fate and could not battle the Besilāites due to the impassable route to Besilā (2526). There was no alternative route to traverse the mountain from the left or right (2557).

The emissaries warn Kush against assaulting Besilā, saying that if you become the wind and your army becomes a cloud, a lion, or a tiger, you will be unable to take it and will return cowardly (2565).

The Features of Besilā and Other Cities for Battle and Their Impenetrability

Besilā, the location of Teihour and another big city, is surrounded by water and a moat, and you must cross the moat by boat (5348). Besilā was tall; neither the bow nor the arrow could get there. It appears to be formed of a single block of stone. The eagle and the cloud did not make it there either. The sea surrounded it. Its wall was guarded by more guards than the population of Gog (5367).

Like heaven, the other two cities are likewise enormous and are ruled by Teihur's son. The remaining cities are easily accessible. On top of the mountain are 12 fences full of fruits, gardens, and running water, and they are so lovely that an older adult feels youthful when they see them. Teihur's son is also their ruler. They are all filled with treasures, and the houses are brimming with jewels and assets (5357-5352). Even later in the story, Kush besieged Besilā for two years, yet due to the city's wealth, Besilā suffered no shortages (5413).

Religion

The rulers of *Kush-Nāme* are depicted as God-worshippers and monotheists. We think this is because the book's poet wrote it in the style of *Shāh-Nāme*. Furthermore, this book was written when Islam was fully established, and according to Islamic law, a Muslim must marry someone who believes in one God.

Furthermore, Abtin has pursued refuge from the king and monarch, and in the future, this country and race will present the Iranian-Korean hybrid Fereidun to the world to fight the devil of the time, Zahhāk. That is why his race and family background are so essential. Teihur king is a God-fearing man, according to his traits. Abtin describes Teihur as truthful and God-fearing, as though he has never sinned (2117). Abtin also describes Teihur as trustworthy. As a result, he is the finest shelter option for Abtin, the father of Iran's famed Fereidun (2369).

Teihur emphasizes Besilā godliness and monotheism by telling Abtin the following story: Our forefathers, who created this mountain and city, had a child like a moon and a sun who died before he was two years old, and everyone was unhappy and mourned (3504). The forefathers and past kings had previously referred to themselves as the creator, but after that incident, the king recognized that the creator is someone else whose wisdom we do not know (3513).

They understood that if they were the creator, there would be no death, disease, or anything else, and everything would be according to their will; therefore, it is apparent that kings are not the creator, and he told and taught his people to glorify God. So, for four thousand years, they have worshiped God. Teihur claims that we regard the sun, moon, water, wind, earth, and other natural phenomena as signs of God. Abtin asks questions about Teihur's religion, heaven, hell, and other beliefs because he knows, thanks to his advisor, that Teihur enjoys discussing these topics (3504-3550). It seems the narrator of *Kush-Nāme* might also allude to Teihur's wisdom and knowledge in this context.

After defeating Kush, Teihur goes into solitude for seven days, worships God, and on the eighth day, he holds a public feast and distributes dinars and money to all the people (5490-5494). Teihur prays to God and gathers his followers, declaring that these triumphs are from God (5565-5570).

Commerce

Because Besilā is an island, a rock with inaccessible mountains, the only route to trade is by sea. It does business with Māchin (2014) and sells food products to Māchin (Behak's country), and they used to buy garments, fabrics, and living necessities from China and profited twice as much as the initial investment (2021-2023). Every 20 years, many merchants traveled from far away to trade with Besilā, bringing commodities to sell (2358). Furthermore, to put pressure on Besilā throughout the battle, Kush stopped the sea trade route for them for several years, even though the towns of Besilā were so rich and blessed that they were unharmed.

The trade between Iran (Persia) and Korea (Silla) has a long story:

Before the rise of Islam, Korea, and the Middle East had a history of trade through sea and overland routes like the Silk Road. Although there are limited documented references, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate substantial commerce between Korea and the Middle East. For instance, excavations in Kyong-ju, the capital of the Silla Kingdom, uncovered twenty-five types of glass cups in ancient tombs. Most of these cups originated from Roman territories in the Middle East or Sassanid Persia during the fifth and sixth centuries. Among them, a glass bottle from tomb No. 98 displayed the same manufacturing technique as the Sassanian dynasty.

Another notable artifact linking Korea and the Sassanian dynasty is a small silver cup resembling a bowl, commonly found in the early fifth century and bearing a resemblance to an Anahita statue, the traditional goddess of Ancient Persia.

Korean burial figurines depict Persians with distinctive features like deeply socketed eyes and high noses, suggesting that Persian earthen figurines may have influenced them. Stone statues at the Kwaerung tomb intricately depict headbands

unique to Persian or Muslim culture. Another stone statue in front of the Kujongdong tomb from the Silla period vividly portrays a warrior playing polo, indicating that the upper class of Silla engaged in this sport, supporting records in the *Samguk Sagi*. Additionally, carpets, wool fabrics, alfalfa plants, and other goods arrived in Korea during the Silla dynasty. (Lee, 2018, pp. 19-21)

The Besilā Residence's Appearance

Abtin thought Besilā's women and men were all attractive. Their faces were red and white, like blood on the snow. They had nice voices and were healthy, tall, and fit, so everyone wanted to marry them (2396).

Besilā's women were tall and pale as the moon. Abtin, drunken, also portrays Besilā's ladies as the world's most attractive women, describing them as white, perfect, fragrant like rose essence, and refreshing like a garden (3369-3373).

The attractiveness of Farārang and the other 29 Teihur's daughters is described as follows: Farārang, Teihur's favorite daughter, has long hair, wide eyes, and a white face. The stars adore her since her white teeth gleam when she laughs. She is also intelligent, shameful, and modest (3378-3390). Farārang in Abtin's eyes: nymphs of paradise, excellent and pure, like a peacock and soul; two corals presumably refer to her two chicks or two lips; she is as tall as a palace, with the body of a tablet and the sturdiness of a regal throne. Her chin is shaped like an apple, and her mouth is small. Her face makes the house feel like a paradise, her hair is amber, and her shirt is a treasure because of this hair (3811-3814).

The comparison between the two portraits Akbarzade compares shows that Silla people have been described with nice appearance and cloth compared the other places in Asia, and this can confirm the description of *Kush-Nāme* about Besilā's residence:

The main Arabic version of the National Library does not include any paintings. However, this article focuses on paintings from the Southeast Asian islands, specifically based on Khan-sari's version. There is a notable distinction between Silla's painting style and others. Whether Tafreshi, the graphic designer responsible for the lithographical version, drew this distinction between Silla and other places or Khansari instructed it is uncertain.

The above paintings present two styles within the Iranian painting tradition when depicting Silla. Both aim to create a beautiful and heavenly depiction of Silla and its people. In Khansari's painting, the perspective and portrayal of a male figure (not female) can be seen as reflective of an aristocrat. The scene includes a positive and charming representation of a Sillian male, a tree, and birds. The accompanying texts mention that "if the 'Muslims' arrived in Silla, they would prefer to stay there and not return to their homelands." (Akbarzade, 2022, pp. 164-166)

Rare Sea-Horses

Bassila people do not need dogs, lynxes, or other hunting animals because they have "Sea-horses" (2293). Teihur describes the process of mating and obtaining sea-horses for Abtin and their features: In the spring, Basilians took the fast Arabiab horses near the sea; their bodies are powerful and tenacious like rhinoceroses, and they move as quickly as the wind. They had a guard assigned to them. Sea-horses emerge from the water at night, detect the body scent of these Arabian mares, and mate with them. Foals are born a year later. They saddle them when they are 10 years old. These horses are like marine creatures and mountain leopards. They are invincible against rhinos, lions, and people (2298-2309).

According to Yingjun Liu:

This paper attempts to elucidate that the story in *Kush-Nāme* is a result of flourishing land and maritime exchanges between East Asia and West Asia during ancient and medieval times rather than purely literary fiction. It was not only influenced by the horse culture that thrived over the Eurasian Steppe, but the story is also coincidentally by the fact that the nomadic zone within the central Eurasian continent extends as far as the Korean Peninsula in northeast Asia. (Liu, 2019, p. 87)

The Court

Receiving visitors and welcoming valuable companions. This issue divides into two parts; one is the positive attitude toward kings, other important people, and their representatives. If the courier brings good news, he will be welcomed, given gifts, and relaxed. They do not immediately chat with the messenger for a long time but merely ask him briefly and comprehend his intentions, and then they allow him to rest for three days or more before speaking to him further (5064).

Teihur enthusiastically welcomed Behak's (King of Māchin's) delegations and sends a high-ranking official to accompany him (2196) along with a hundred riders. Teihur cried after reading Abtin's letter and realizing his pain and difficulty. He bestowed the title of Shah-e Jahan (King of the world) on Abtin (2201-2202).

He called the Abtin's representative and inquired about his health and the king's (2207). Teihur wrote to Abtin, "I will give you my treasure, my life, and command of my army. Stay as long as you wish and enjoy your time here" (2211-2218). He sent Abtin's representatives gold, horses, cloaks, and hats (2219). Teihur dispatched his two sons to Abtin with two armies the size of sea waves (2222). Abtin also offered the gatekeeper dirhams, dinars (money), and fine silk (2230). Teihur informed Abtin, "Consider this your home" (2235, 2360). Teihur entertained Abtin and his companies in several locations along the road with food, clothing, alcohol, instruments, and musicians (2240).

Teihur also gave the messengers gold, clothes, and horses and wishes Behak's couriers well on their return (2220). Teihur lavished presents on the messenger who delivered his daughter's letter from Iran. Likewise, because it was good news, he presented gifts to Besilā's people, those who had suffered and been hurt (such as offerings and giving charity) (5517), and everyone cheered.

After Farārang accepts Abtin's proposal, Teihur not only delivers a positive response, which Kāmdād relays to Abtin, but Abtin also rewards Fara' and Kāmdād in exchange for this good news (3633).

When Teihur and Kush made a contract, they rewarded this emissary who brought good news (5055). Teihur's envoy stays with Kush for a week and visits the king on the eighth. After a brief meeting (5086), Kush held the envoy for a month to relax and gave him a turquoise throne, gold, Chinese woven clothing, a thousand stoats, a thousand Fennec fox, musk, etc. (5090).

Negative treatment: If the messenger, a representative, or a person has terrible news, there are punished; like an Iranian who notifies Kush of Abtin and Teihur's daughter's departure, Kush cuts him in half.

The style of celebration. Teihur Palace was heavenly. The palace was constructed out of gold and lapis lazuli, and the thrones were constructed out of gold and yellow rubies (2259). They spent 10 days having fun and enjoying themselves (2269). Teihur invited Abtin to hunt (2273), and the hunts were dispersed among everyone (2314). Teihur hosted a celebration for Abtin and lavished him with wonderful cuisine, foods that Abtin had yet to see or hear from Iran's rulers. There are over a hundred different varieties of food. They sing and play music after dinner. The celebration venue was composed of gold and jewelry, with beautiful images carved into the walls and ceilings. They had nice aromas like amber and musk, and when they burnt, they made everyone asleep (2321-2330).

Courtship and marriage. What we read about courtship and marriage in these literary works takes place in the court, so there may be some differences for ordinary people. Still, we understand that there is a custom of giving trousseau among ordinary people because of the need for a bridegroom for the marriage of the daughters of an old sailor. That was also one of the terms of the marriage.

1. Indirect courtship and getting close to the bride's father to solicit his viewpoint: In *Kush-Nāme*, as in other Persian myths, Abtin (the monarch) has a counselor who makes the king fall in love by complimenting a girl/boy from another country. Fara' describes Teihur's daughter, particularly Farārang, in this story. Abtin urges him to help him, and Farārang forms a bond. Fara' guides Abtin to see Teihur daily and discuss information, ways of life, and religion because Teihur is interested in these topics. As a result, Teihur likes Abtin, which is when Abtin can propose (3378-3404). Abtin invites Teihur to play polo with him, and at this point, Abtin introduces polo to Besilā's territory (3427). Abtin does not directly propose to Teihur's daughter and sends his minister, and Kāmdād, Teihur's counsel to the proposal ceremony, as was customary (3565). Abtin begins his statement for proposal by thanking Teihur for his kindness and for sheltering him (3575).

2. It is essential to have a trousseau, family properties, and assets for the marriage of girls. The older man, an accomplished sailor, requests that Teihur provide trousseau for his four daughters because they have been unable to marry owing to a lack of trousseau: "Please give them trousseau to make marriage possible for them" (4025). Not only in this case but in all thirty Teihur's daughters, Abtin meets to see and select Farārang; they all have trousseau.

3. Using astrology to determine the best time for various events, such as marriage: Abtin is knowledgeable about astronomy, and every New Year's Eve, he creates horoscopes for the coming year by examining the seven planets and 12 constellations and performs fortune-telling. He sees greatness in Teihur, so his confidence in marrying Teihur's daughter grows (3558). Abtin knew so much about astronomy that he witnessed the birth of his son, the destroyer of Zakhāk. He told Kāmdād that astrology foretold that a child would be born from the union of his daughter and Teihur to slay Zakhāk (3583).

4. Marriage with royal families is essential. It is a major matter for Kāmdād, who considers Abtin and his forefathers' kings and emphasizes that it is important (3593).

5. Besilā people did not marry a stranger person (since that time, if we accept the Besilā as Korean, they have had this culture from the past) (3599). Teihur is concerned that Abtin will be unfaithful after marriage, join the war, and harm his daughter. Also, Teihur is outraged by the possibility of his beloved daughter's distress and opposes the marriage (3619). On the proposal day, Teihur planned to make Farārang not to make up and sit in the poor room without any decoration, but Abtin, who knows which of the girls is Farārang with the help of his counsel, chose the girl appropriately. It enrages Teihur to the point where he insults Abtin while he is away (3732-3733), and then he cannot sleep or eat for some time and does not speak to anyone. Teihur claimed it would be better for me if all of my children died today than if this cruel and deprived person (Abtin) chose my daughter for marriage and began moaning and crying (because he loved his daughter very much and did not want to be separated from her). Fara' advises Teihur that what you are doing now is the act of foolish people, and you are unaware of the wisdom of this event (3741).

6. Marrying loyal families was not only for love but also for political reasons. Kāmdād informs Teihur that if he declines the proposal, he will be displeased with Abtin, leave this land, and this dishonor will remain forever for the people of our land. (3611).

7. The girl must be fond of the suitor herself. Kāmdād advises Teihur to let Abtin choose the girl since Abtin will always love her no matter what (3624). Abtin asks about the manner of courtship, and Kāmdād and Fara' explain to him in detail (3651): The girls settle someplace, and a nanny brings a man to them. The man hands the nanny a green asparagus branch with gold bergamot and does not address the girl directly. If the girl likes the man, she kisses the branch and places it next to her; if she does not, she gives it back to the nanny to return to the

man. Again, Abtin uses astrology to identify an auspicious day for courtship, Hormozd Rooz (3667). In the modern culture of Iran, devout people also choose the right day for courting, marriage, and other issues with Quranic Istikhara.

8. The groom dresses and prepares for the proposal: Abtin perfumes himself, his clothes, and his hair, and he wears a valuable crown (3672). However, Abtin and Teihur exchange gifts since Farārang responds well to Abtin. Abtin's presents have been astounding. He also sends gifts to the city's nobels and the Farārang's sisters and offers so many gifts to everyone in the city. Abtin waited until the second month of spring, but he missed Farārang, so he set aside his shame and modesty and went to Teihur's palace, where Teihur placed Abtin's hand in his daughter's hand (3790).

9. The marriage ceremony: Everyone adorned the city, and the celebration was very large and wonderful (3796), and they celebrated for a month, causing the children to be unable to sleep due to the noise (3806). There is a lot of food and drink during this period and the city celebration. After a month, there was a food shortage in the city.

10. Expectations from the young couple in the court: Abtin and Farārang spent the entire 40-day period together. As a result, neither of them went to Teihur, which irritated him (3825). Farārang and Abtin discussed it and decided to spend less time together and more time with Teihur, especially Abtin (3839). Farārang is intelligent and tells Abtin that it is better not to let others talk behind their backs (preserve appearances) and that if they do not go to her father, everyone will condemn her.

Politics

Relations with other countries. Teihur's state administration and politics: The king did not force anyone to do anything but met the person's needs so the individual could satisfactorily accept the king's order. When deciding who should lead Abtin and his army to Iran and across the seas, the old sailor states he is three hundred years old and has no strength. However, when Teihur meets his family's financial requirements, he gladly joins Abtin and his army (4020).

Kush prolonged the naval siege of Besilā 10 years after Abtein left since he did not realize Abtein was not there. Teihur sent a message to the Chinese army, telling them not to besiege here in vain and not to wait because the Iranians have left and that it does not matter to us whether Kush's army continued the siege, but they have suffered immensely (4687).

Teihur knew war strategies; when his soldiers wanted to assault Kush's forces when they besieged Besilā, Teihur warned them that Kush's troops were stronger; therefore, it was wiser to wait for their attack and defeat them with arrows, harpoons, and stones (5378).

Teihur made a very effective process to protect the Besilā; when merchants arrived in Darband, someone would notify their arrival, and 10 guards would accompany them, inspect their luggage, seize their weapons, and send them to the mountain and the Besilā route with some bodyguards (5128-5122).

Teihur's wrong policy. However, Teihur only occasionally deals wisely; following Abtin's death, he is deceived by Kush. Kush wrote to Teihur after hearing of Abtin's death, lying that he was tired of the fighting and wished to make peace with Teihur (4961). "You are like my father", Kush says. "I know that your predecessors were good-hearted and did not seek conflict or harm anyone, and the nobles of Iran and China did not seek war with Besilā", Kush explains (4966). "If I send the troops to block the sea passage, you will suffer as before; let us reach an agreement", Kush claims that if Teihur delivers him one of his daughters, he will be like a son to

Teihur (4980) and provide Teihur with China (4984). He sends Teihur his ring to reassure him (4986). Teihur accepts Kush's offer about war but does not give him his daughter. Teihur believes Kush is terrified of him and signs a contract, giving it to an envoy to take so that Kush can also sign it (5051). Teihur and Kush exchange valuable gifts (5072), an emerald throne, 10 pricey, thoroughbred hippos, diamonds, and mountain fruits (5079). Continuing his deceptions, Kush sends a particular perfume to Teihur (5103) and offers him Chin and Māchin. China and Besilā traded again, filling Besilā with Chinese goods (5119).

As we mentioned before, it was the security process; as merchants arrived in Darband, someone would announce their presence, and 10 guards would check their shipment and take their weapons before sending them to the mountain and Besilā route with bodyguards (5122-5128). Moreover, Kush used this way to enter Besilā.

Kush had the most trustworthy businessman. He urged him to prepare a cargo, carry precious gifts for Teihur, acquire his trust, and get the news from him (5134); the businessman did. Teihur tested the businessman and believed that he was trustworthy (5145). Kush instructed the trader to inform Teihur that China has fine razors and welders for sale, and he can purchase them (5153). Teihur warned him that if Kush found out, he might be disappointed; purchasing weapons can imply preparing for and contemplating conflict. The merchant informs Teihur that Kush does not understand and that he will bring it hidden from Teihur. In this way, the merchant sent by Kush gained Teihur's trust before duping him. So they falsely circulated the rumor in China that the monarch of Makrān (here the poet Makrān as Besilā) had rebelled, and as a result, an army was organized and dispatched to Besilā. It was agreed with the stated merchant to kill the guards of Darband at night and then light a fire so that Kush could come to land from the sea (5179-5200).

Teihur told his minister, "You were to fault that this was your idea and that you were duped initially" (5245). Teihur wrote to Kush, accusing him of being nasty and asking why he did what he did. Kush also said that you did not have a friendly relationship with me, made friends with Iranians (5270), and did not marry me off your daughter (5279). Kush's army surrounded Besilā, and Besilā's tents and army were outside the city, yet it went on for three months without a confrontation. Teihur also stocked Besilā with weapons, expelled women, children, and those who did not fight from the city, dispatched many troops to neighbor cities for security, and returned to Besilā (5314). Kush proceeded to Teihur's army place, but he was gone, with few remaining (5323).

Kush struck Besilā a month after the siege of it, and 12 thousand Chinese soldiers were killed with one stone from Besilā (5393).

Teihur's other wrong military policies included the following: When the siege became too protracted, he prayed and chose to submit and pay the ransom. Kush had besieged Besilā for 22 years, and food was restricted in the city (5426). Teihur was despondent and took refuge in God because he believed whoever prayed and became disappointed God would aid him, so he wanted to sacrifice all his possessions and daughters to Kush to free Besilā (5438).

When Kush found that Fereidun captured Zakhāk and imprisoned him in Damavand, he was scared and immediately left the Besilā. Following Kush's escape, Teihur attacked and murdered all of Kush's remaining forces through the cities of Darband and near the sea, destroyed what remained of Kush, and carried it to Besilā to rebuild the island (5484).

Teihur requested his people to get together, create an army, and travel to China to bring back those whom Kush had abducted, taken from their land, persecuted, and appeased (5595). Thousands organized an army and marched toward China and Māchin (5605). Teihur went to Māchin, stayed for three years, battled, and bestowed

wealth and position on Behak's survivors. He sent many treasures to the island, making it extremely constructed. Māchin's nobels, seeing his fairness, joined him and became his supporters (5606).

Teihur's son's governance. Kārem was a fair king like his father. He lavished money on the army before sailing to Māchin to rule the entire kingdom and appease her subordinates (5628). Kārem had good relationships in his foreign policy and was very close to Fereidun. He has somehow Fereidun's uncle. Fereidun wrote a letter to Teihur after defeating Zahhāk and sitting on the throne, but he did not respond. However, after a while, Kārem answered that Teihur, his father, had passed away. Kārem lavished cash on Fereidun's emissary, and the troops and people of Besilā were overjoyed at Fereidun's letter (5647). Through astrology, Kārem chose an auspicious day and time to wear the clothes and crown Fereidun sent him and ride on the elephant that Fereidun gave him (5801). Kārem also unlocked the doors to his father's possessions and handed money and other items to the public to express his joy.

Kārem prepared miraculous gifts such as a turquoise throne, an amethyst throne, and a gold throne; he placed a crown on each throne; the thrones were inlaid, and 10 ivory thrones. A thousand Chinese silks, Tibetan musk deer, famed Besilā hippos, servants, and other gifts (5682-5652). The items were then delivered to Fereidun accompanied by a letter. Fereidun was overjoyed as he sat on the turquoise throne that Kārem had sent. He regarded it as auspicious and a sign of success and good fortune (Kush-pil-dandān tricked Teihur by giving him that throne). Fereidun welcomed Kārem's emissary for two months (5723).

Fereidun took off his clothes and crown and handed them to Kārem. In addition, he sent him a gilded throne and an elephant. Fereidun also gave Kārem an official letter and the Māchin (5728). Fereidun informed Kārem that Kārem was his ancestor and successor in Māchin and East. "I have sent Nastuh to China to destroy Kush, so you can also assist him" (5768). Nastuh also wrote to Kārem that when Fereidun's envoy arrived and accepted the gifts, Kārem should send his army to assist him (5786). Kārem also welcomed Fereidun's envoy warmly (5794).

Kārem using astrology found an auspicious day and time to don the garments Fereidun sent him, put on his crown, and ride on that elephant Fereidun had sent (5801).

Nastoh and Kārem met and spent three days having fun, hunting, and talking about Kush (5812). Kārem and Nastuh fought with Kush, and the Iranian army was beaten after much fighting, while Kārem and his army retreated to Besilā quickly.

Conclusions

The study of *Kush-Nāme* reveals that the poet provided thorough descriptions of the geographical location, the characteristics of the Besilā's people and court, the political and trade relations of this government, and, most importantly, many details about Besilā's king, Teihur. It also depicts the transmission of military knowledge from Abtin to Besilā, the teaching of polo to them, and the introduction of exquisite sea-horses to Persians. According to his poems, the legendary Fereidun, who imprisons Zahhāk, is an Iranian-Besilian.

However, the study of *Kush-Nāme*, as the main source, and other secondary sources demonstrate that the features reported in *Kush-Nāme* regarding the realm of Silla/Besilā or Māchin, which here refers to Korea, are not historically genuine and occurred due to Yazdgerd's III escape to Sistān and the confusion of the geographical words Sistān and Turān (in eastern Iran) with China and Māchin. As a result, what is said in *Kush-Nāme* is a literary fact that can be considered and researched rather than a historical fact.

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