This lecture will explore aspects of the life of the Persian (Iranian) national hero, Rostam, and his creator, the poet Ferdowsi, as both larger than life characters come to us in the great literally masterpiece, Shahnameh (Book of Kings). In doing so, Ferdowsi revived and immortalized the Persian language and culture. For the Iranians, Shahnameh’s Epic Poem (comprised of about 60,000 couplets) is their source of national identity and pride of their resilient culture and civilization, and Rostam is the heart of their identity.

Shahnameh and Rostam are also the joy of every Persian speaking nation (Afghanistan, Tajikistan), as well as non-Persian speaking countries surrounding Iran (Central Asian Countries, India, Pakistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Iraq, UAE). Shahnameh it still read widely by these countries, and has been translated into many languages. Various manuscripts of Shahnameh are scattered all over the world, in museums of many countries, and those held by collectors. The largest collection belongs to Iran. The representation of Shahnameh stories and of Rostam has been pictorially preserved in various artifacts and architecture, such as the wall paintings of Panjikent, in Tajikistan, as well as a great number of illuminated manuscripts that exist, dating to different eras, from the Iranian world and beyond. Rostam is also represented in the contemporary arts and films in both EU and US, among others.

**Dates:**

Ferdowsi (940-1019 or 1025 AD)
Shahnameh Completion (1010 AD)
Shahnameh Epithet: “Palace of Poems”, “Poetic Edifice”, Monument of Poems”.

**House of Rostam, his forefathers, and his son:** Sistan, Dastan, Nariman, Saam, Zaal, Rostam, Sohrab, Shaghad.

**Rostam meaning:** "Having the Strength of a River".

**Rostam Epithets:** Rostam-e Dastan, Rostam-e Namdar, Gord-e Zoboli, Yal-e Sistan, Tahamtan, Piltan, Jahan Pahlavan, among many others.

Ferdowsi on Rostam: Ke Rostam yali bud dar Sistan ﻓﺮﺳﺘﻢ ﻲﻠﯽ ﺑﻮد از ﺳﯿﺴﺘﺎن
Manash kardami Rostam-e Daastan مﻨﺶ ﻲﺮﺳﺘﻢ ﺑﺮداﺳﺘﺎن
(So Rostam was a hero in Sistan, I made him the Rostam of Story)

**Oldest Shahnameh at the National Library of Florence, Italy**
https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2xvy1s

**ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS HISTORY** https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00210862.2015.1023063

Indeed, the impediment to a wider embrace of the Shahnameh in the canon of world literature was not due solely to the dismissive attitude of critics who found it wanting in comparison to Greek and Roman classics, or who found epic as a genre inferior to other kinds of Persian poetry. At least in English, the lack of an accessible, accurate and aesthetically compelling translation may have been the largest barrier to appreciation of the poem; after all, the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam in FitzGerald's translation, as well as the Arabian Nights (Alf Layla wa Layla) in various translations, had both become quite central to the English canon by the later nineteenth century. In English, a partial translation of the Shahnameh appeared already in the eighteenth century (Champion, 1785), with many others following in the first half of the nineteenth century (Atkinson, 1814; Weston, 1815; Robinson, 1819; Robertson, 1829; Costello, 1845), all before Matthew Arnold’s version of the Rostam and Sohráb episode brought Ferdowsi to
the general attention of the Anglophone poetry-reading public. These translations, as well as the later adaptation by Helen Zimmern, and the full verse translation by the brothers Arthur George and Edmond Warner, failed to a greater or lesser degree in bringing Ferdowsi to life in English, whether because they did not fully understand and appreciate Ferdowsi's aesthetics, or were not fully capable of vivifying the English, or because the negative comparisons to Homer had already poisoned the well. These translations, based on newer and more rigorous text critical editions of the original Persian text, have laid the groundwork for a new appreciation and critical engagement with Ferdowsi's epic, as it enters its second millennium. Meanwhile, though the tradition of comparison with Homer or other epics remains strong, Mahmoud Omidsalar has launched a salvo across its bow, arguing that the literary-scholarly tradition of presumptively measuring the Shahnameh by the aesthetics of Homer, or the assumptions of medieval European romances, smacks of Eurocentrism and Orientalism. Meanwhile, recent developments in theory grounded in a European perspective have tended to reconfigure world literature as global literature, or as translation studies, reworking some of its earlier premises.

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