

Reshaping Religious Traditions: The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and the Zoroastrian Golden-Eared Dog

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Some people do not get to sleep; others easily do it for several hours a night; and there have been special cases in which people have remained asleep for very long periods. The literary motif of long-sleepers who miraculously arise after many months, or even years, is widespread and especially famous through folktales like Sleeping Beauty (Uther's motif 410), and texts of religious inspiration, like the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus (Uther's motif 766).¹ Heir to this tradition is the story of the Golden-Eared dog guarding the sleeping body of Adam, which is

¹A. Aarne and S. Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography: Antti Aarne's Verzeichnis der Märchentypen (FF Communications No. 3)*, 2nd rev. (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1964), 137–38, 265. See also H. J. Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography: Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 2004).

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transmitted in the Zoroastrian New Persian *Revāyat of Šāpur Bharuci*, written in AY 938/AD 1569. As I will show in this contribution in honor of Professor Maria E. Subtelny, this Zoroastrian text incorporates older motifs from different religious traditions to create a reshaped Zoroastrian narrative in a cultural and religious hybridity characteristic of that period.

The literary motif of the long-sleeper begins in the standard Babylonian version of the *Epic of Gilgameš*, 11.209–41.² According to this text, in his search for life, the hero meets Ūta-napišti, who recommends that Gilgameš stay awake for six days and seven nights if he wants the gods to meet him. Gilgameš falls asleep instead and finally awakens on the seventh day. To make him aware of the long time he was sleeping, Ūta-napišti shows him the seven breads that were baked for him every day until he eventually awoke. The fact that the hero does not pass the sleep test that would enable him to meet the gods confronts him with the difficulty of achieving his goal.

This Babylonian textual material was unknown to Rohde and Koch,³ but also to modern scholars like van der Horst,⁴ who claim that the motif of the long-sleeper was first found in ancient Greek literature in Aristotle's (*Physics*, 4.11, 218b 23–26) brief reference to the heroes of Sardinia, who do not realize how much time has elapsed when they are awakened.

Other ancient Greek and Roman authors after Aristotle, particularly the Stoic philosophers, were very fond of similar paradoxographical accounts (Gr. παράδοξα, θαυμάσια; Lat. [*ad*]mirabilia), which they used as

²T. H. McAlpine, *Sleep, Divine and Human, in the Old Testament* (Sheffield, UK: Academic Press, 1987), 138; A. R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgameš Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*, vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 716–19.

³E. Rohde, "Sardinische Sage von den Neunschläfern," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie, Neue Folge* 35 (1880): 157–63, reference on p. 157; J. Koch, *Die Siebenschläferlegende, ihr Ursprung und ihre Verbreitung: Eine mythologisch-literaturgeschichtliche Studie* (Leipzig: Reissner, 1883), 24.

⁴P. W. van der Horst, "Pious Long-Sleepers in Greek, Jewish, and Christian Antiquity," in *Tradition, Transmission, and Transformation from Second Temple Literature through Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity: Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature*, ed. M. Kister, H. I. Newman, M. Segal, and R. A. Clements (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 93–111. Reference on p. 94.

exempla to wrap a truth or a moral teaching in contradictory and marvellous stories.⁵ Of such accounts, the one about Epimenides of Crete should be highlighted. He miraculously sleeps in a cave for forty years, according to Pausanias 1.14.4, or for fifty-seven years, according to the biographer of Greek philosopher Diogenes Laertius 1.109, who referred to a quotation by Theopompus (fourth century BC) and other writers.

As van der Horst has stressed, Epimenides was very much loved by the gods (Gr. θεοφιλέστατος), a topic repeated in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic stories about long-sleepers.⁶ In the Jewish tradition, God also loves Abimelech, Jeremiah's son, who sleeps for sixty-six years, according to 4 Baruch 13:19 (second century AD). Abimelech is sent away by his father to collect some figs and give them to the sick people he will meet on his way back. He falls asleep under a fig tree, and after awaking, he thinks he has lost his trail, because he does not recognize his city (Jerusalem) or his people. He then asks an old man for directions, who tells him that Jerusalem has been conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, and that the Jewish people were taken captive to Babylon sixty-six years ago. When Abimelech tells this man his own story and sees that the figs are still fresh, the man praises him because of his having been blessed and miraculously saved by God from the calamity.⁷

⁵See Cicero, "*Paradoxa Stoicorum ad M. Brutum Prooemium 4: quae quia sunt admirabilia contraque opinionem omnium ab ipsis (sc. Stoicis) etiam παράδοξα appellantur*" ("since these things are remarkable and contrary to everyone's opinion [they themselves even call them "paradoxes"]") in E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham, *Cicero, De Oratore, De Fato, Paradoxa Stoicorum, Partitiones Oratoriae* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), 256–57; M. O. Webb, "Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*: A New Translation with Philosophical Commentary" (PhD diss., Texas Tech University, 1985), 14. These paradoxographical accounts are called in NP. 'ajāyeb-nāme (wondergraphy), as noted by M. Ebrahimi, "Buḥaira, the Lake of Demons," *Iran and the Caucasus* 16 (2012): 91–147. Reference on p. 97.

⁶van der Horst, "Pious Long-Sleepers," 95–96.

⁷The story of Abimelech shares some elements with that of Gilgameš and contradicts some others. On the one hand, the sexagesimal numerical base of the duration of their sleep is common to both, but the former slept sixty-six years and the latter only six nights. On the other hand, the food as touchstone to prove the veracity of the long sleep is also a shared motif. Nevertheless, the figs brought by the former remain fresh while the bread baked for the latter is progressively rotten. Notwithstanding, the role of sleep is totally different in these two stories: it hampers Gilgameš's meeting the gods, but is revealed to be a sign of God's favor for Abimelech, like in the case of Epimenides.

Another famous long-sleeper of the Jewish tradition is Choni the Circle-Drawer (Heb. *choni ha-me'aggel*), or his grandson, who sleeps for seventy years and finds the world completely changed when he awakes, according to the earliest version in *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Ta'aniyot* 3.9.66d, and to later ones in *Midrash Tehilim* 126.1–2 and *Talmud Bavli*, *Ta'anit* 23a.⁸

Probably the most widespread story with this motif is contained in Christian sources under the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, which was deeply studied by Koch and Huber.⁹ According to its oldest version, preserved in two recensions of a metrical liturgical homily (*mêmrâ*) in Syriac which were attributed to the bishop Jacob of Sarūg (ca. 450–521) and were edited by Allgeier,¹⁰ some young Christians escaping from persecution by the emperor Decius (r. 249–51) hide inside a cave near Ephesus. They fall asleep therein and awake more than three hundred years later. When one of them, Iamblichus, comes back to the city to buy some food, he does not recognize it, because Christianity is no longer persecuted. Then, he tries to pay with coins from the time of Decius, and the astonished inhabitants inform the bishop (Stephanus or Māres) and the proconsul about it. They and the emperor Theodosius II (r. 408–50) meet the sleepers in the cave and recognize the miracle that, according to the sleepers, demonstrates the truth of the resurrection.¹¹ Thereafter, the sleepers die.

The story of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus was very famous in late antiquity, as its many retellings prove. Indeed, at least ten parallel Syriac versions in manuscripts dated between the fifth and the nineteenth century are known.¹² One of these Syriac texts was rendered into Greek

⁸van der Horst, “Pious Long-Sleepers,” 104–5.

⁹M. Huber, *Die Wanderlegende von den Siebenschläfern: Eine literarische Untersuchung* (Leipzig: Harassowitz, 1910).

¹⁰A. Allgeier, “Die älteste Gestalt der Siebenschläferlegende,” *Oriens Christianus*, no. 6 (1916): 1–43; nos. 7–8 (1918): 33–87. See also A. Allgeier, “Untersuchungen zur syrischen Überlieferung der Siebenschläferlegende,” *Oriens Christianus* 2.4 (1914): 279–97; 2.5 (1915): 10–59, 263–70.

¹¹The date of their awakening obviously does not match the reign of Theodosius II.

¹²S. Griffith, “Christian Lore and the Arabic Qur’ān: The ‘Companions of the Cave’ in *Sūrat al-Kahf* and in Syriac Christian tradition,” in *The Qur’an in Its Historical Context*, ed. G. S. Reynolds

by Simeon Metaphrastes, whose text was in turn rendered into Latin by Laurentius Surius (both texts are in *Patrologia Graeca*, 115.427–48). Gregory of Tours (538–94) referred to a Syriac original in his Latin version called *Passio septem dormientium* (in *Anal. Bolland.*, XII, 371–87). Another Latin version is Paul the Deacon’s (720–99) *History of the Lombards* 1.4, but the most famous one by far appears in Jacobus de Voragine’s (ca. 1230–98) *Legenda aurea*. An Anglo–Norman version by Chardry (thirteenth century) and an Old Icelandic one are also extant. A Sogdian translation of a Syriac version, edited by Nicholas Sims-Williams, is also preserved in the Christian Sogdian manuscript 2, found in a Nestorian monastery at Bulayiq, north of Turfan.¹³

The legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, called in Arabic *ashab al-kahf* (Companions of the cave) pervades Islamic sources and even gave the name *al-kahf* (the cave) to the eighteenth sura of the Qur’an.¹⁴ This legend is alluded to in verses 9–26, of which I will quote just 18 and 22:

18.18. You would have thought they were awake, though they lay asleep. We turn them over, to the right and the left, with their dog stretching out its forelegs at the entrance. If you had seen them, you would have turned and run away, filled with fear of them. [. . .]

(London: Routledge, 2007), 109–40, reference on p. 121; N. Afif, “Un nouveau témoin de l’Histoire des Sept Dormants d’Ephèse : le manuscrit Cambridge Syr. Add. 2020. Texte et traduction,” *Bulletin de l’Académie Belge pour l’Étude des Langues Anciennes et Orientales* 1 (2012): 25–76, reference on pp. 65–66. Apart from those Syriac texts, we find the story in the Syriac epitome of the Greek *Ecclesiastical History* of Zacharias of Mytilene (ca. 465–536), and in the *Ecclesiastical History* of John of Ephesus (ca. 507–86), which was preserved in the *Chronicle* of Dionysius of Tell Mahre (d. 845) through the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (1126–99).

¹³N. Sims-Williams, *The Christian Sogdian Manuscript C2: Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des Alten Orients, Berliner Turfantexte XII* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985). Reference on pp. 154–57.

¹⁴For details about the relation between the Syriac versions of the story and the eighteenth sura of the Qur’an, see Griffith, “Christian Lore,” 116–31. For the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus in Islamic traditions, see F. Jourdan, *Jardins secrets de la littérature arabe*, vol. 2, *La tradition des sept dormants : Une rencontre entre chrétiens et musulmans* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1983).

18.22. [Some] say, ‘The sleepers were three, and their dog made four,’ others say ‘They were five, and the dog made six,’ – guessing in the dark – and some say ‘They were seven, and their dog made eight.’ Say [Prophet] ‘My Lord knows best how many they were.’ Only a few have real knowledge about them, so do not argue, but stick to what is clear, and do not ask any of these people about them.¹⁵

The motif of the long-sleepers watched by a dog in the Qur’anic version of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus is also found in the story of the Golden-Eared dog guarding the sleeping body of Adam, which is found in the New Persian *Revāyat of Šāpur Bharuci* (MU 1.256.4–57.8; New Persian text in Unvala: 1.256–57; English translation in Dhabhar; critical edition and German translation in König and Nejati).¹⁶ According to this text, written in AY 938/AD 1569, Urmazd created the body of Adam (NP. *ādam*), also called *Gayumard*, on the Alborz Mountains, and appointed the seven Beneficent Immortals to protect him from Ahreman, the Evil Spirit, also called *Satan* (NP. *šeytān*) in this text. The latter found the means to overcome them with stupor, and threw something on the body of Adam to make him perish. That thing was growing on Adam’s navel, and at Urmazd’s command, it was removed by the Beneficent Immortals with a spoon. Urmazd addressed that thing with the words “Golden-Eared, get up!,” and suddenly, a dog came into existence, the bark of which scared Ahreman and the demons and made them flee from Adam’s body. Urmazd appointed the Golden-Eared dog as sole guardian of that body, and thereafter, as keeper of the path to the otherworld. Because of this, if a Zoroastrian does not treat dogs properly in life, the Golden-Eared dog will neither protect that person from the demons’ attack when the individual dies nor let them pass through the

¹⁵M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur’an*, Oxford World’s Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 184.

¹⁶E. M. R. Unvala, *Dārāb Hormazyār Rivāyat*, vol. 1 (Bombay: British India Press, 1922); E. B. N. Dhabhar, *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and Others: Their Version with Introduction and Notes* (Bombay: K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, 1932), reference on pp. 259–60; G. König and M. Nejati, “Die Keule des Mehr und der Hund ‘Goldohr’: Mythologische und literarische Umbildungen in der zoroastrischen Spätzeit,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 159 (2009): 299–331, reference on pp. 315–16.

path leading to heaven. The moral of this story is that dogs must be treated well.

It is important to underline that the story of the creation of Adam/Gayumard and the Golden-Eared dog is not mentioned as such in extant Avestan and Pahlavi sources. The only thing we know about Gayumard (Av. *gaiia- marətan-*, Phl. *gayōmard*) from the Avestan literature, more precisely from *Yašt* 13.87 and 145, is that he was the first man and the origin of the Arian stock:

Yašt 13.87:

gaiiehe. marəθnō. ašaonō. frauuašim. yazamaide. yō. paoiriio. ahurāi. mazdāi. manasca. gūšta. sāsnāasca. yahmat. haca. frāθβərəsaṭ. nāfō. airiianqm. daxiiunqm. ciθrəm. airiianqm. daxiiunqm. zaraθustrahe. spitāmahe. ida. ašaonō. ašīmca. frauuašimca. yazamaide. [...]

We worship the *frauuaši-* of the righteous Gaiia Marətan, the first who listened unto Ahura Mazdā's thought and teaching; of whom he created the stock of the Arian countries, the seed of the Arian countries. We worship the reward as well as the *frauuaši-* of the righteous Zaraθustra Spitāma here.¹⁷

Yašt 13.145:

vīspanqm. daxiiunqm. narqm. ašaonqm. frauuašaiio. yazamaide. vīspanqm. daxiiunqm. nāirinqm. ašaoninqm frauuašaiio. yazamaide. vīspā. ašāunqm. vaŋvhiš. sūrā. spəñtā. frauuašaiio. yazamaide. yā. haca. gaiiāt. marəθnaṭ. ā. saošiiantāt. vərəθraynaṭ. [...]

We worship the *frauuaši-* of the righteous men of all countries. We worship the *frauuaši-* of the righteous women of all countries. We worship all the good, powerful, beneficent *frauuaši-* of the righteous that (reach) from Gaiia Marətan (= the first man) to the victorious Saošiiant (= the last man and saviour).¹⁸

¹⁷W. M. Malandra, *Frawardīn Yašt: Introduction, Translation, Text, Commentary, Glossary*, Ancient Iran Series 8 (Irvine: UCI Jordan Center for Persian Studies, 2018). Quotation on pp. 102 and 152.

¹⁸Malandra, *Frawardīn Yašt*, 115 and 167. See also the parallels of *Yasna* 26.10 and 59.27. Gaiia

The Pahlavi literature gives more information about this first man, called *Gayōmard* in Pahlavi, and two elements connect his story with those of the long-sleepers: his designation as king of the mountain in the Pahlavi and Pazand translations of *Aogəmadēcā* 85, in *Ayādgar ī Jāmāspīg* 4.2, and in *Dēnkard* 3.35, on the one hand, and his association with sleep in *Greater Bundahišn* 1A.13 and 4.22–26 and in its parallel of *Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram* 2.10–11, on the other hand.

In the Pazand translation of *Aogəmadaēcā* 85 and in the Pazand text of *Ayādgar ī Jāmāspīg* 4.2, *Gayōmard* is called *gar-šāh/gal-šāh* (king of the mountain).¹⁹ The first element of this compound in the Pahlavi versions of these two texts is written <gl>, an ambiguous form that can be read as *gar* (mountain) or *gil* (clay). In *Dēnkard* 3.35, on the contrary, the first element of *Gayōmard*'s epithet is written with the heterogram <TYNA>,²⁰ which can be read only as *gil* (clay).²¹ This ambiguity was already known to Bal'ami (d. AD 974) and al-Biruni (AD 973–1048), who stated that the Persians called the first man, *Gayōmard*, either *gar-šāh* (king of the mountain) or *gil-šāh* (king of clay).²² On the one

Marətan is mentioned after the divinities and before *Zarəduštra* in the Avestan texts of *Yasna* 23.2, 26.5, and 67.2, and after the Ox and before *Zarəduštra* in *Yašt* 13.7. It is very likely, though not clearly stated, that he was understood as the first man in these passages as well.

¹⁹K. M. JamaspAsa, *Aogəmadaēcā: A Zoroastrian Liturgy* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982), reference on pp. 46–47 and 80–81; D. Agostini, *Ayādgar ī Jāmāspīg: Un texte eschatologique zoroastriene* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2013), reference on 45n112 and 198; R. Asha, *Jāmāspīg: The Pārsīg Version of the Memorial of Jāmāspa* (Mumbai: K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, 2014), reference on 48.

²⁰J. de Menasce, *Le troisième livre du Dēnkart* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1973). Reference on p. 50.

²¹See also A. Christensen, *Les types du premier homme et du premier roi*, vol. I (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1917), 45–46n3.

²²E. Sachau, *Chronologie orientalische Völker von Albērūnī* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1878), 99; E. Sachau, *The Chronologie of Ancient Nations* (London: William H. Allen, 1879), 107; G. Messina, *Libro apocalittico persiano Ayātkār ī Jāmāspīg* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1939), 39n3; S. Shaked, “First Man, First King: Notes on the Semitic-Iranian Syncretism and Iranian Mythological Transformations,” in *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions Dedicated to R.J. Zwi Werblowsky*, ed. S. Shaked, D. Shulman, and G. G. Stroumsa (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 238–56, reference on p. 247; T. Daryaei, “Gayōmard: King of Clay or Mountain? The Epithet of the First Man in the Zoroastrian Tradition,” in *Paitimāna: Essays in Iranian, Indo-European, and Indian Studies in Honor of Hans-Peter Schmidt*, ed. S. Adhami (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2003), 339–49; M. Shaki, “Gayōmart,” in

hand, that Gayōmard is linked to the mountain recalls the cave of the mountain in which the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus hid. On the other hand, that he is made of clay recalls the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions about the creation of Adam.

On Gayōmard's association with sleep, *Greater Bundahišn* 1A.13 narrates that Ohrmazd (NP. *Urmazd*) created Sleep as Gayōmard's helper:

*šašom gayōmard brēhēnīd rōšn cīyōn xwaršēd u-š cahār nāy
paymānīg bālā būd pahnā cīyōn bālā rāst pad bār ī rōd ī dāitī
[kū mayānag ī gēhān] ēstēd gayōmard pad hōy ālag ud gāw pad
dašn ālag u-šān dūrīh ēk az did dūrīh-iz ī az āb ī dāitī cand bālā ī
xwēš būd cašmōmand gōšōmand uzwānōmand daxšagōmand būd
[gayōmard daxšagōmandīh ēd kū mardōm az ōy tōhmag pad ān
hangōšīdag zād hēnd] u-š dād ō ayārīh xwāb ī āsānīh-dādār cē
ohrmazd ān xwāb frāz brēhēnīd pad mard kirb ī buland ī pānzdah
sālag ī rōšn²³*

Encyclopædia Iranica, 2012, iranicaonline.org/articles/gayomart-; M. E. Subtelny, "Between Persian Legend and Samanid Orthodoxy: Accounts about Gayumart in Bal'ami's Tarikhnama," in *Ferdowsi, the Mongols and the History of Iran: Art, Literature and Culture from Early Islam to Qajar Persia: Studies in Honour of Charles Melville*, ed. R. Hillenbrand, A. C. S. Peacock, and F. Abdullaeva (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 33–45, reference on p. 37; Agostini, *Āyādgar*, 45n112. The association of Gayōmard with the mountains was probably preserved in epic oral traditions, insofar as it is also transmitted in the *Shahnamah* 1.6, according to which Gayumart, as he is called in this work, ruled as a king "in the mountain" (NP. *be-kuh andarūn*). For this passage of the *Shahnamah*, see D. Khaleghi-Motlagh, *The Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings), vol. 1 (New York: Mazda, 1987), 21.

²³Pahlavi text in F. Pakzad, *Bundahišn: Zoroastrische Kosmogonie und Kosmologie: Band I: Kritische Edition* (Tehran: Centre for the Great Islamic Encyclopædia, 2005), 30, who numbered this passage as 1a.15–16. See also the Pahlavi text and English translation in B. T. Anklesaria, *Zand-Ākāsīh: Iranian or Greater Bundahišn* (Bombay: Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha, 1959), 24–25, who numbered this passage 1A.13; C. G. Cereti and D. N. MacKenzie, "Except by Battle: Zoroastrian Cosmogony in the 1st Chapter of the *Greater Bundahišn*," in *Religious Themes and Texts of Pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia: Studies in Honour of Professor Gherardo Gnoli on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday on 6th December 2002*, ed. C. G. Cereti, M. Maggi, and E. Provasi (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003), 31–59, reference on pp. 44–45; C. G. Cereti, "Gayōmard," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 2015, iranicaonline.org/articles/gayomard; and the English translation in D. Agostini and S. Thrope, *The Bundahišn: The Zoroastrian Book of Creation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 13.

Sixthly he fashioned Gayōmard, bright as the sun, and his height was four reeds of average length; his width was equal to his height; he was on the bank of the river Dāitī [that is, the middle of the world]. Gayōmard (was) on the left side and the Ox on the right side. Their distance from each other, and their distance too from the water of the Dāitī, was as much as their own heights. He was possessed of eyes, ears, tongue, and a mark [“Gayōmard’s possession of the mark” means that mankind were born of his seed, in his likeness].²⁴ And he created for his help Sleep, the giver of rest; for Ohrmazd fashioned forth the Sleep in human form, tall, fifteen years old, and bright.²⁵

Before the demons attack the Primordial Ox, Ohrmazd gives it henbane as a narcotic, so that it suffers less, according to *Greater Bundahišn* 4.20. Before they attack Gayōmard, Ohrmazd brings Sleep over him for the same reason, according to *Greater Bundahišn* 4.22–26:

- 4.22. *pēš az madan ī ō gayōmard ohrmazd xwāb abar gayōmard frāz burd and cand drahnā ī wacast-ē bē gōwēd čē-š brēhēnīd ohrmazd ān xwāb pad mard kirb ī pānzdah sālag ī rōšn ī buland*
 4.23. *ka gayōmard az xwāb frāz būd dīd gēhān tārik cīyōn šab zamīg cīyōn sōzēnīd az dwārišn ī xrafstarān nē pargūd ēstēd spihr ō gardišn xwaršēd ud māh ō rawišn ēstād ud pattānōmand gēhān az yarrānišn ī māzanīgān dēwān ud kōxšišn ī abāg axtarān*
 4.24. *u-š menīd gannāg mēnōy kū-m dāmān ī ohrmazd hamāg agārēnīd hēnd jud az gayōmard u-š astwihād abāg hazār dēw margīh-kardārān pad gayōmard frāz hišt u-šān zamān ī brīn rāy ōzadan cār nē ayāft*
 4.25. *cīyōn gōwēd kū pad bundahišn ka gannāg mēnōy ō petyāragīh mad zamān ān ī gayōmard zīndagīh ud xwādāyīh ō sīh sāl brēhēnīd [guft cīyōn pas az madan ī petyārag sīh sāl zīst]*
 4.26. *u-š guft gayōmard kū nūn ka ēbgad mad mardōm az tōhmag ī man bawēnd ciš-ē ēn weh ka kār ud kirbag kunēd*²⁶

²⁴This gloss recalls *Yašt* 13.87.

²⁵All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

²⁶Pahlavi text in Pakzad, *Bundahišn*, 62–64. See also the Pahlavi text and English translation

22. Before his (=Ahreman's) coming to Gayōmard, Ohrmazd brought Sleep over Gayōmard, for as much duration as one recites a strophe; for Ohrmazd fashioned the Sleep in human form, fifteen years old, bright, and tall.

23. When Gayōmard awoke from Sleep, he saw the world dark as night; the earth, like burned, did not remain free from the running of noxious creatures; the firmament was in revolution; the sun and the moon were in motion; the world was resonant owing to the roaring of the Māzanīg demons and their fight against the constellations.

24. And the Stinky Spirit thought: "I have rendered powerless all the creatures of Ohrmazd, except Gayōmard." He let loose Astwihād on Gayōmard with a thousand death-doer demons, but, as the time determined (had not come yet), they found no means to kill him.

25. As one says: "At the Primordial creation, when the Stinky Spirit came up for his counter-creation, the time of Gayōmard's life and rule was determined for thirty years" [in other words, after the coming of the counter-creation, he lived thirty years].

26. And Gayōmard said: "Now that the Adversary has come, mankind will be born of my seed; this is a good thing, as they will perform works and meritorious deeds."

The motif of the creation of Sleep by Ohrmazd to help Gayōmard, who finds the world completely changed when he awakes, according to the Pahlavi text of the *Greater Bundahišn*, has parallels in earlier Jewish, Christian, and Islamic stories about long-sleepers. They all agree on the fact that a divinity or supernatural being sends sleep to protect a person, who finds the world completely changed after awakening. However, unlike the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic stories, the Zoroastrian New Persian *Revāyat of Šāpur Bharuci* does not explicitly refer to sleep, but this is nevertheless implicit in the lethargic state of Gayumard; also unlike those stories, in the Zoroastrian version the main character

in Anklesaria, *Zand-Ākāsīh*, 50–53; and the English translation in Agostini and Thrope, *The Bundahišn*, 31. For the parallel of *Wizīdagīhā ī Zādspram* 2.10–11, which repeats the same story in similar words, see P. Gignoux and A. Tafazzoli, *Anthologie de Zādspram* (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des Études Iraniennes, 1993), 36–37.

is protected by the seven Beneficent Immortals, who are absent in the other monotheistic traditions for obvious religious reasons. The fact that the Beneficent Immortals guarding Adam/Gayumard in the Zoroastrian text are seven, like the Sleepers of Ephesus according to the most widespread version of the Christian and later Islamic renditions of the legend, may be a mere coincidence. Actually, the seven Immortals taking care of Adam/Gayumard while he is sleeping rather recall the seven sisters of the righteous Wīrāz, who, according to the *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmāg*, keep watch over him while he is sleeping and visiting the otherworld for seven days and nights.²⁷

Some motifs in the story of the Golden-Eared dog guarding Adam in the New Persian *Revāyat of Šāpur Bharuci* have apparently been modified from earlier Zoroastrian texts. Besides them, there are other motifs which are not mentioned in earlier Zoroastrian texts and might have been introduced into the story from other traditions. The first of them concerns the names of the main characters: while Gayumard is usually called Adam, Ahreman is named Satan (NP. *šeytān*) in this text. As Hartman and Shaked have already noticed, Gayumard, the first man in the Zoroastrian tradition, was often translated as his equivalent Adam in the Persian Islamic context, without it necessarily implying syncretism between Zoroastrianism and Islam.²⁸ Indeed, as both Hartman and Shaked have pointed out, this type of translation was frequent during the Hellenistic period and was also familiar to Mani. In any case, the use of the proper names Adam and Satan reveals that the story was terminologically filtered through a non-Zoroastrian, and more specifically Persian Islamic, context.²⁹ The second motif of possibly a

²⁷We must also remember the parallel in the poem of Gilgameš.

²⁸S. V. Hartman, *Gayōmart: Étude sur le syncrétisme dans l'ancien Iran* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1953), 268, 287–88; Shaked, “First Man,” 252–53. The equation of Gayumard with Adam appears in Tabari, Mas’udi, Ibn al-’Atir, Abu al-Fida, and Sahrastani, among others. For the concrete references, see Hartman, 288–99. For the identification of Gayumard with Adam among some Persians according to Bal’ami’s *Tarikh-nāme*, see Subtelny, “Persian Legend,” 37–38.

²⁹However, this identification is not an isolated instance in Zoroastrian New Persian literature, because it is also found in the New Persian version of the *Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg*, where Gayumard is called Adam. For the New Persian text of the passage, see E. M. R. Unvala, *Dārāb Hormazyār Rivāyat*, vol. 2 (Bombay: British India Press, 1922), 105; for its English translation, see Dhabhar, *Persian Rivayats*, 489.

non-Zoroastrian origin refers to the thing growing on Gayumard's navel as a result of Ahreman's attack. König and Nejati connect the mention of the navel in the New Persian *Revāyat* with the Av. *nāfah-* (family) in *Yast* 13.87.³⁰ If they are to be connected, this Avestan noun would have been reinterpreted as NP. *nāf(e)* (navel),³¹ perhaps through the mediation of a lost Pahlavi translation of this Avestan passage, where that Avestan word *nāfah-* was translated as Phl. *nāfag* (navel) instead of Phl. *nāf* (family).³² Nevertheless, as we will see, the creation of the dog from the navel of the first man is a motif in Islamic sources, a motif which dates back at least to a century earlier than the Zoroastrian New Persian *Revāyat of Šāpur Bharuci*, and is possibly linked to the motif of the dog watching over the Sleepers of Ephesus in the eighteenth sura of the Qur'an.

Scholars have differently interpreted the presence of this dog in the Qur'anic text. According to Koch, it might derive from Christian sources, and more concretely from the Latin text *De Situ Terrae Sanctae*, composed by Theodosius ca. 520–30, in which a certain *catulus Viricanus* is mentioned.³³ Nevertheless, Koch considered it more likely that *Catulus* was a proper name. According to Griffith, it originates in the Syriac version of Jacob of Sarūg, who, by means of a pastoral metaphor, alluded to a watcher sent by God to take care of the youths:³⁴

The Lord saw the faith of the beloved lambs,
and He came to give a good wage for their recompense.
He took their spirits and brought them up to heaven,
and He left a watcher / angel to be the guardian of their limbs.³⁵

³⁰König and Nejati, "Die Keule des Mehr," 314. See also C. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strasbourg: K. J. Trübner, 1904), 1062, *nāfah-*.

³¹F. J. Steingass et al., *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary; Including the Arabic Words and Phrases to Be Met with in Persian Literature* (London: Routledge, 1930), 1375, *nāf(e)*.

³²D. N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1986), 57, *nāf*, *nāfag*.

³³Koch, *Die Siebenschläferlegende*, 63–64. Latin text quoted by Koch, 64: "In provincia Asia civitas Ephesus, ubi sunt septem fratres durmientes et catulus Viricanus ad pedes eorum" ("In the province (of) Asia, the city (of) Ephesus, where there are the seven sleeping brothers and the puppy Viricanus at their feet").

³⁴Griffith, "Christian Lore," 127–28.

³⁵Griffith, "Christian Lore," 123. See also I. Guidi, *Testi orientali inediti sopra i Sette Dormienti*

Although this text does not explicitly refer to a dog, but to a watcher or even an angel, both Koch and Griffith insist on supposing a Christian origin of the dog's presence in the Qur'anic passage. Notwithstanding, as Waldner rightly points out, this statement is hard to reconcile with the fact that the dog is never mentioned in any other Christian version of a such a widespread story.³⁶ He also underlines that the fact that the dog is reckoned among the group of sleepers at the same level as a human in verse 22 of the eighteenth sura of the Qur'an is strange, so he proposes solving this problem by emending the Arabic *kalbuhum* (their dog) to *kāli'uhum* (their watcher) in this verse.³⁷ Gobillot proposes a different interpretation, according to which the mythological influence of the Egyptian god Anubis would explain the presence of this dog in the Qur'anic passage.³⁸

Apart from these explanations, I would like to highlight the fact that the formulation of verse 22 of the eighteenth sura ("some say . . . others say . . .") resembles the usual one in Sasanian commentaries on Pahlavi translations of Avestan texts ("there is [a commentator] who says," "X said," etc.). Moreover, that the dog is even reckoned in that verse as if it were a human is at odds with the general association of dogs with impurity in most Islamic sources, but it perfectly matches Zoroastrian doctrines, in which dogs have in many cases the same status as persons. Perhaps the traditions quoted in verse 22 had already been filtered by Sasanian Zoroastrian circles. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to prove this supposition.

Be that as it may, nonextant variants of the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, in which a dog watches over the sleepers, probably

di Efeso (Rome: Reale Accademia dei Lincei, 1885), 19–20 (Syriac text), 30 (Italian translation).

³⁶W. Waldner, "Wie kam der Hund in die Siebenschläferlegende?," in *Studien zur Semitistik und Arabistik: Festschrift für Hartmut Bobzin zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. O. Jastrow (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2008), 423–30. Reference on p. 425.

³⁷Waldner, "Wie kam der Hund," 427.

³⁸G. Gobillot, "Die 'Legenden der Alten' im Koran: Die Erzählung von den Schläfern in der Höhle und der Alexander-Roman anhand von Sure 18," in *Die Entstehung einer Weltreligion II: Von der koranischen Bewegung zum Frühislam*, Inārah 6, ed. M. Groß and K. H. Ohlig (Berlin: Hans Schiler, 2012), 661–708.

existed before the Qur'an was composed. In any case, later interpreters of the Qur'an and other Islamic authors never doubted that a dog was mentioned in the eighteenth sura, and they even discussed the name and color of such dog.³⁹ For instance, the historian al-Ya'qubi (d. AD 897)⁴⁰ and the Persian writer at-Ta'alibi (AD 961–1038) called it *qit̤m̤ir*, a name explained by Waldner as a metathesis of *qim̤t̤ir*, which would go back to Greek κοιμητήριον (sleeping-room).⁴¹ According to the account of the young 'Ali to the Jews who questioned him, as reported by at-Ta'alibi, the color of that dog was piebald with black, but there were different opinions about it:

The Master said that scholars have differed about the color of the dog of the People of the Cave. Ibn 'Abbās said that it was spotted; Muqātil said that it was yellow; Muhammad b. Ka'b that because of its deep redness and yellowness it shaded into red; al-Kalbī said that its color was like snow. Some said, the color of a cat; others, the color of heaven. They also differed about its name. It has been related from 'Alī that its name was Rayyān, but Ibn 'Abbās said it was Qit̤m̤ir, and that is one of the tales of 'Alī. Shu'ayb al-Jubā'ī said that its name was Ḥamrā, and al-Awzā'ī that it was Natwā. Ibn Faṭḥawayh has informed us, on the authority of Abū Ḥanīfa, that the name of their dog was Qit̤m̤ūr, others say Qit̤fīr. Abū 'Alī al-Zuhrī told me, transmitting it from Ibn 'Abbās regarding His word, "*It is few that know*," (18.22) saying, "I am one of those few. They were Makslamīnā, Tamlikhā, Martaliyūs, Baynūs, Sāwamūs, Dāwanūs, and Kashṭūs, who was the shepherd, while the dog's name was Qit̤m̤ir, a spotted dog, bigger than a Qalaṭī, and smaller than a Karakī." Muḥammad b. Ishāq said that a Qalaṭī is a little dog [. . .].⁴²

³⁹H. Kandler, *Die Bedeutung der Siebenschläfer (Aṣḥāb al-kaḥf) im Islam* (Bochum, Germany: Brockmeyer, 1994), 56–58.

⁴⁰M. T. Houtsma, *Ibn Wādih qui dicitur al-Ja'qubī Historiae*, 2 vols. 1883. (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1969), 1:173.

⁴¹Walder, "Wie kam der Hund," 428. See also H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon, Revised and Augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, with the Assistance of Roderick McKenzie and with the Cooperation of Many Scholars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 968, κοιμητήριον.

⁴²W. Brinner, 'Arā' is al-majālis fī qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā, or; *Lives of the Prophets as Recounted by Abū*



Figure 1. Detail from “The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus,” Folio from a *Falnama* (Book of Omens), 1550s, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/449026.

Despite the diverse opinions, most Islamic authors quoted by at-Ta‘alibi agree on the fact that the dog watching over the sleepers was yellowish or whitish and brightly colored, which recalls the Golden-Eared dog guarding the body of Adam, according to the Zoroastrian New Persian *Revāyat of Šāpur Bharuci*.

A golden-eared white dog (Av. *spānəm*. [. . .] *spaētəm. zairi.gaošəm*) was used since Avestan times to expel the corpse’s demon (Av. *nasu-*) from the dead body, as confirmed by the Avestan text of *Wīdēwdād* 8.16.⁴³ This early reference might lead us to assume that the story of the creation of the Golden-Eared dog out of Gayumard’s navel continues an old, possibly Avestan tradition. However, this hypothesis is very unlikely, because the story of the dog’s creation out of the first man’s navel is never mentioned as such in any Zoroastrian source earlier than

Ishāq Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tha‘labī (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 696.

⁴³M. Á. Andrés-Toledo, “The Dog(s) of the Zoroastrian Afterlife,” in *Le sort des Gāthās: Études iraniennes in memoriam Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin*, Acta Iranica 54, ed. É. Pirart (Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2013), 13–23. Reference on pp. 18–19.

the New Persian *Revāyat of Šāpur Bharuci*. However, it is found for the first time in the *Pious Gatherings and the Select Precious Matters* by the Meccan scholar ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Abd al-Salam al-Saffuri al-Saf’ii (d. AD 1489), as noticed by Minov.⁴⁴ Al-Saf’ii reports that the Hadith, according to which angels do not enter a house where there is a dog, is to be explained because the dog was created from the spittle of Iblis/Satan mixed with the clay from the navel of Adam: “It is important to mention the reason that the angels refrain from entering a house in which a dog is present: because it was created from Satan’s spittle. This is because Iblis, may God curse him, spat on Adam, when he was still a piece of clay; the angels scraped it off, and it became the place of the human navel. Then God created the dog from the clay struck by Iblis’s spittle. And angels and satans do not mix.”⁴⁵

A parallel of this story is also given in the apocryphal Muslim *Gospel of Barnabas* 39, composed in Spain around the sixteenth century: “Whereupon God gave spirit to that unclean portion of earth upon which lay the spittle of Satan, which Gabriel had taken up from the mass; and raised up the dog, who, barking, filled the horses with fear, and they fled.”⁴⁶

This is exactly the same story that we find in the New Persian *Revāyat of Šāpur Bharuci* almost a century later, and in a Slavonic version titled *Narration on How God Created Adam*, preserved in a manuscript dated to the middle of the seventeenth century, as Minov has already noticed.⁴⁷ Unlike this author, however, I do not think that this legend, mentioned for the first time in Islamic sources, has Zoroastrian roots. In the Islamic stories about the dog’s creation, the motif of Satan’s spittle has a clear function: to explain that the dog has contained something evil and impure since the very beginning. This view clearly contradicts

⁴⁴S. Minov, “Muslim Parallels to Slavonic Apocryphal Literature: The Case of the Narration of How God Created Adam,” in *The Bible in Slavic Tradition*, ed. A. Kulik, C. M. MacRobert, S. Nikolova, M. Taube, and C. M. Vakareliyska (Boston: Brill, 2016), 339–372. Reference on p. 353.

⁴⁵Minov, “Muslim Parallels,” 354–55. See also ‘Abd al-Rahman Al-Saffuri al-Saf’ii, *Nuzhat al-majālis wa-muntakhab al-naḥā’īs* (Cairo: al-Matba‘ah al-Kastaliyya, 1935), 287.

⁴⁶L. Raag and L. Raag, *The Gospel of Barnabas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 89.

⁴⁷Minov, “Muslim Parallels,” 353.

the high status of dogs in Zoroastrianism, and their use in purity rituals. In my opinion, that the story of the Golden-Eared dog and the sleeping Adam in the New Persian *Revāyat of Šāpur Bharuci* does not have a purely Zoroastrian origin can be supported by these arguments: the chronological precedence of the Islamic versions; that Gayumard is called Adam, and Ahreman Satan; the fact, strange for a Zoroastrian, that the dog is created from a mixture of the evil and impure Ahreman, and the good and pure earth, out of which Adam is molded; and finally, that this dog matches the physical description of the one protecting the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, according to the Islamic versions of the legend. Therefore, I think that we should understand this legend in the New Persian *Revāyat of Šāpur Bharuci* and other Zoroastrian New Persian texts in a broader context of mutual and therefore enriching contacts and influences. Such influences were quite usual in a period of cultural exchange and sometimes even religious hybridity, in which Zoroastrian elements were mixed with those of other religions both in India and Iran, thus reshaping religious tradition.