

me credit for many assertions, which on this occasion it is impossible to prove; for I should ill deserve your indulgent attention, if I were to abuse it by repeating a dry list of detached words, and presenting you with a vocabulary instead of a dissertation; but, since I have no system to maintain, and have not suffered imagination to delude my judgement; since I have habituated myself to form opinions of men and things from evidence, which is the only basis of civil, as experiment is of natural knowledge; and since I have maturely considered the questions which I mean to discuss, you will not, I am persuaded, suspect my testimony, or think that I go too far, when I assure you, that I will assert nothing positively, which I am not able satisfactorily to demonstrate. When MUHAMMED was born, and ANUSHIRAVAN, whom he calls *the just King*, sat on the throne of Persia, two languages appear to have been generally prevalent in the great empire of Iran; that of the Court, thence named *Deri*, which was only a refined dialect of the *Parsi*, so called from the province, of which Shiraz is now the capital, and that of the learned, in which most books were composed, and which had the name of *Pahlavi*, either from the heroes, who spoke it in former times, or from *Pahlu*, a tract of land, which included, we are told, some considerable cities of Irak: the ruder dialects of both were, and, I believe, still are, spoken by the rusticks in several provinces and in many of them, as *Herat*, *Zabul*, *Sistan* and others, distinct idioms were vernacular, as it happens in every kingdom of great extent. Besides the *Parsi* and *Pahlavi*, a very ancient and abstruse tongue was known to the priests and philosophers, called *the language of the Zend*, because a book on religious and moral duties, which they held sacred, and which bore that name, had been written in it; while the *Pazend*, or comment on that work, was composed in *Pahlavi*, as a more popular idiom; but a learned follower of ZERATUSHT, named BAHMAN, who lately died at Calcutta, where he had lived with me as a Persian reader about three years, assured me, that the letters of his prophet's book were properly called *Zend*, and the language, *Avesta*, as the words of the *Veda*'s are *San scrit*, and the characters, *Nagari*; or as the old *Saga*'s and poems of *Iseland* were expressed in *Runick* letters: let us however, in compliance with custom, give the name of *Zend* to the sacred language of Persia, until we can find, as we shall very soon, a fitter appellation for it. The *Zend* and the old *Pahlavi* are almost extinct in Iran; for among six or seven thousand *Gabrs*, who reside chiefly at *Yezd*, and in *Cirman*, there are very few, who can read *Pahlavi*, and scarce any, who even boast of knowing the *Zend*; while the *Parsi*, which remains almost pure in the *Shahnámah*, has now become by the intermixture of numberless *Arabick* words, and many imperceptible changes, a new language exquisitely polished by a series of fine writers in prose and verse, and analogous to the different idioms gradually formed in Europe after the subversion of the Roman empire: but with modern Persian we have no concern in our present inquiry, which I confine to the ages, that preceded the Mohammedan conquest. Having twice read the works of FIRDAUSI with great attention, since I applied myself to the study of old Indian literature, I can assure you with confidence, that hundreds of *Parsi* nouns are pure *San scrit*, with no other change than such as may be observed in the numerous *bhasha*'s or vernacular dialects, of India; that very many Persian imperatives are the roots of *San scrit* verbs; and that even the moods and tenses of the Persian