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ŠĀH-NĀMA II. ILLUSTRATIONS

Among the many works of classical literature that form the extensive corpus of Persian manuscript illustration, Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma* occupies pride of place. Hundreds of illustrated volumes survive today, doubtless only a fraction of the actual artistic production that began in the Il-khanid (Mongol) period, if not earlier, and continued into the modern era in both painted and printed form (Robinson, 1983). Yet even before the regular practice of illustrating the *Šāh-nāma* as a written text, epic stories and personages—including those celebrated in pre-Ferdowsian narratives and oral tradition—figured within the decorative repertoire of Persia's visual arts. Long of scholarly interest, research on *Šāh-nāma* images and illustrations surged during the last decades of the 20th and the first years of the 21st century, including the development of an electronic database (for the *Shahnama Project*, see below; Robinson, 1983; Shukurov; Soucek, 1996, pp. 302a-303b; Hillenbrand, 2004; Melville, 2006; Simpson, 2004, pp. 9-23; Melikian-Chirvani, 2007, pp. 34-45; Hillenbrand, 2007, pp. 95-119; Tanındı, 2008, pp. 267-96; Metghalchi and Richard, pp. 49-76). The epic's 2010 millennial year occasioned in particular a spate of art exhibitions and conferences, as well as a fresh and continuing outpouring of publications (Abdullaeva and Melville, 2010, pp. 1-11; Grabar, 2010, pp. 91-96; Brend, 2010; Brend and Melville; Uluç, 2010, pp. 256-69; Melville and van den Berg; Davidson and Simpson), and even inspired contemporary artistic production (Milz; Komaroff, 2013; Sadri); see also the exhibitions and conferences listing following the Bibliography). Many of the recent art historical studies are thematic and concern specific *Šāh-nāma* imagery, episodes and cultural concepts (Clinton and Simpson, 2005; Abdullaeva, 2006;

Melville, 2006, pp. 71-96; Shani; Simpson, 2010; Leoni; Qureshi, pp. 187-96; Blair, 2011; Abdullaeva, 2009-2010, pp. 1-8, 13, 20; Brend, 2012; Rizvi, 2012; Simpson, 2013b, 2013c). Others introduce new, often innovative, approaches based on codicological, technical and statistical analysis (Mehran, 1998, 2001, 2006, 2012; Mahdavi; Stanley, 2004; Wright, 2004; Melville, 2009-2010), while still others draw attention to specific *Šāh-nāma* holdings (Simpson, 2003; Abdullaeva, 2007; Gonnella and Rauch, and contributions therein by Sims, Haase and Rizvi; Simpson, 2013a) or present scientific findings and conservation treatment (Rose; Knipe).

Images in literary sources and monuments

Notwithstanding the absence of any extant illustrated copies (or any copy, for that matter) of Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma* datable to the time immediately following its compilation, compelling evidence exists for the pictorialization of epic characters and episodes during the late 11th through 13th centuries. As Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani has argued, based on two verses by Suzani of Samarqand (d. 1173-74), *Šāh-nāma* pages were illustrated for the princes of the Qarakhanid (Ilak-Khanid) dynasty of Samarqand. Melikian-Chirvani also cites several literary references to frescoes representing *Šāh-nāma* heroes and villains, including Rostam, Esfandiār, and Afrāsiāb, on the walls of royal palaces in Khorasan and Ṭabarestān (Melikian-Chirvani, 1984, p. 296; 1988, pp. 41-45; Sims, 2002, pp. 32-33). A fragmentary wall-painting, possibly dating from the early 13th century and depicting two superimposed zones with figures identifiable from *Šāh-nāma* tales—on the bottom, how the youthful leader Ferēdun overcame the tyrannical usurper Żaḥḥāk; and on the top, how Sindoḵt reproached her daughter Rudāba for loving Zāl—provides some idea of the likely form of such monumental representations (Adamova, 2004, p. 61; 2008, p. 2). It also may reprise a much older fresco tradition as evidenced by the well-known scenes of Rostam painted on the walls of the Sogdian palace (circa 740 CE) at Panjikant (Marshak, pp. 25-54). The fragmentary medieval fresco, as well as a fragmentary enamel-painted (*minā'i*) star tile (Simpson, 2013b, pp. 72-78), also relate directly, both in their composition and iconography, to *Šāh-nāma* images as rendered on small-scale, three-dimensional objects of the period.

Images on objects

It is within the medieval arts of the object, and particularly on portable ceramic and metalwork vessels made in Persia and neighboring regions

during the 12th and 13th centuries, that the early history and iconography of *Šāh-nāma* imagery can be most fully appreciated. One striking example is an intact ceramic beaker, measuring 12 cm high and with polychrome *minā'i* (enamel-painted) decoration in three superimposed registers, each in turn containing four panels with scenes from the tale of Bižan and Maniža (Freer Sackler Galleries, F1928.2; Simpson, 1981, pp. 15-24; Shukurov, pp. 12-37; Sims, 2002, pp. 223-24; Melville, 2006, pp. 71-96; Simpson, 2013b, pp. 78-79; Simpson, 2013c). Although celebrated, the beaker is not unique, and the fragmentary remains of another *minā'i* vessel, probably a bowl, with similarly arranged panels of epic images, are known (Schmitz, 1994, pp. 134-45; Grube, pp. 208-9; Brend and Melville, cat. no. 15). While the beaker's decorative format naturally suggests a connection to—and perhaps even a derivation from—wall painting (thus in turn providing further evidence, roughly contemporary with the literary sources analyzed by Melikian-Chirvani and the fragmentary fresco cited above, for the existence of large-scale paintings inspired by and/or directly related to Ferdowsi's epic and dated to the 12th and 13th centuries), its narrative technique reveals how medieval artisans approached the task of illustrated complex epic cycles on miniaturized scale. Although the Bižan and Maniža story can be followed, literally from beginning to end, through the beaker's 12 small frames, the painted ensemble does not, in fact, constitute a complete visualization of Ferdowsi's narrative. Instead, the painted registers juxtapose selected or excerpted moments to create an epitomized pictorial sequence that evokes the entire tale as the beaker is turned counterclockwise.

This same artistic technique is employed on a series of other medieval objects, including a rare textile, whose decor features singular epic heroes (Simpson, 1985, pp. 131-49; Shalem, pp. 117-27; Sims, 2002, pp. 33, figs. 39, 37-39, figs. 50-51, 93 no. 3). Most prominent among these are: Ferēdun equipped with a mace and mounted on the cow Barmāya that had served him as a wet-nurse in his infancy, leading Żaḥḥāk, represented as a prisoner (that is, bare-chested and with his hands behind his back) and with the telltale snakes writhing on his shoulders, sometimes accompanied by Kāva holding his leather protest banner; and Bahrām Gur, mounted on a horse or camel, at the hunt with his demanding slave-girl Āzāda (the latter actually has a much older representational history. Fontana, pp. 13-24; Sims, 2002, p. 305 no. 224). While these two particular sets of figural groupings may be easily recognizable and identifiable, neither actually depicts a specific narrative scene as recounted in Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma*. Instead, they represent conflations of separate or discrete, sometimes sequential, moments—or, more accurately, conflations of

those figures that played the most critical and dominant roles in their stories. The Ferēdun procession, for instance, ostensibly illustrates the moment when Ferēdun has captured and bound Żaḥḥāk and takes him to be imprisoned on Mount Damāvand. Yet neither Barmāya the cow nor Kāva the blacksmith are present in Ferdowsi's account of Ferēdun's final punishment of the evil tyrant. Furthermore, according to the *Šāh-nāma*, Żaḥḥāk did not walk to Damāvand but was borne there on the back of a camel. Thus the epic image as represented on objects seems to be composed of a series of independent portrait-like units, each of which may be identified by certain distinctive and specific attributes— Ferēdun by the cow and/or mace, Żaḥḥāk by the snakes and Kāva by the banner—sufficient to recall heroic action and that together symbolize the entire narrative sequence from Ferēdun's childhood to Żaḥḥāk's downfall. The result is a summary or epitomized image of the *Šāh-nāma* episode as narrated by Ferdowsi. (For a different view of such images as evidencing a close relationship between manuscript illustration and work in other media, see Stanley, 2004, pp. 85-87).

Seemingly developed, or at least frequently practiced, during the 12th and 13th centuries, the artistic strategy of using excerpted, conflated and recombined imagery to present a shorthand version of a longer and denser narrative was extended by the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th century to the epic text itself. The extensive wall decoration within the Il-khanid palace built in the 1270s at Taḵt-e Solaymān, for instance, included both luster-painted star tiles and lustered and molded frieze tiles featuring verses excerpted from at least ten different *Šāh-nāma* cycles (Melikian-Chirvani, 1991, pp. 82-122; 1996 for related works; Masuya, pp. 99-102; Komaroff and Carboni, cat. nos. 81-82; Sims, 2002, p. 32; O'Kane, 2009, pp. 48-50). On two other frieze tiles believed to have come from the same palace, *Šāh-nāma* verses, in one case from Ferdowsi's prologue to his epic poem and in the other from the beginning of the Bižan and Maniža narrative, frame Ferēdun holding a mace and mounted on Barmāya and escorted by two armed guards, who probably stand for the army that supported the youthful hero in his fight against Żaḥḥāk (Simpson, 1985, pp. 139-40; Masuya, p. 99; Komaroff and Carboni, cat. no. 95). Comparable, therefore, to the treatment of purely epigraphic tiles (see also O'Kane, 2009, pp. 36, 51, 61-63), these works are composed of juxtaposed excerpts—one visual and the other verbal—from two distinctive epic tales. It is possible, of course, that these narratives continued in the subsequent tiles that made up the complete wall frieze. It is just as likely, however, that the stories were so familiar and the images of Ferēdun so

recognizable, that even these brief allusions sufficed for a viewer to be able to reconstruct mentally the full version of two parallel narratives. That poetic and pictorial narratives also could be aligned or coordinated is suggested by a star tile decorated in the center with two wrestling figures and inscribed around the edge with verses from the start of the Rostam and Sohrāb story (Komaroff and Carboni, cat. no. 123). Although the several combats between the two protagonists do not feature wrestling matches (at least, not the way Ferdowsi tells the tale), the tile's text-and-image decoration does seem to be synchronized in a way that would become standard in illustrated *Šāh-nāma* manuscripts.

The significance of Ferēdun and Bahrām Gur as excerpted representations on medieval ceramic and metalwork objects was probably not limited to their status as *Šāh-nāma* heroes alone. Indeed, it has been argued that such epic personages have broad metaphorical associations and that they served as symbols of ideal kingship and models for proper royal conduct, with contemporary thematic significance in the case of the Taḵt-e Solaymān tiles (Auld, pp. 106-11; Masuya, pp. 102-103; Melikian-Chirvani, 1984, pp. 296-317; 1997, 158-68; Simpson, 1985, pp. 138-43; Abdullaeva, 2006, pp. 203-18). At the same time, their presence on functional, and presumably mass-produced, objects may be linked to the "commercialization" and diffusion of popular stories in the visual arts (Shalem, pp. 123-26). Furthermore, it is now recognized that oral recitations and public performances of epic stories might have been as critical as the written text of Ferdowsi's *Šah-nāma* as the source of inspiration for epic imagery on medieval objects (Grabar, 2000, pp. 99-101; Masuya, pp. 101-02; O'Kane, 2006b, pp. 348-49).

Whatever the impetus and meanings, the practice of decorating portable objects and interior decors with *Šāh-nāma* personages and scenes continued well beyond the medieval era. Fascinating examples of *Šāh-nāma* imagery in various media and dating from the 19th century, for instance, reveal the enduring attraction and power of the *Book of Kings* for artisans and audiences in modern times (Al-Khamis and Evans, pp. 129-41; Scarce, pp.143-54; Sims, 2002, p. 82, fig. 89).

Illustrations in manuscripts

The documented history of *Šāh-nāma* illustration in manuscript form begins in the Il-khanid period (1256-1353), coinciding with the start of the canonical history of Persian painting, and more specifically around the year 1300

(Hillenbrand, 2002, pp. 150-67). That Ferdowsi's epic had a particular appeal in this period is attested by the fact that a third of the illustrated manuscripts surviving from the first half of the 14th century happen to be copies of the *Šāh-nāma*, far more than any other literary text. Although only a few of these codices are intact today, the dispersed folios of a number of others have been collated and reconstructed in virtual form, making it possible to assess the manuscripts' original pictorial programs and styles and to develop hypotheses about their function and meaning, as well as theories about why the epic text was so frequently illustrated in this period (Hillenbrand, 2007, pp. 95-103; Grabar, 2010, pp. 91-96).

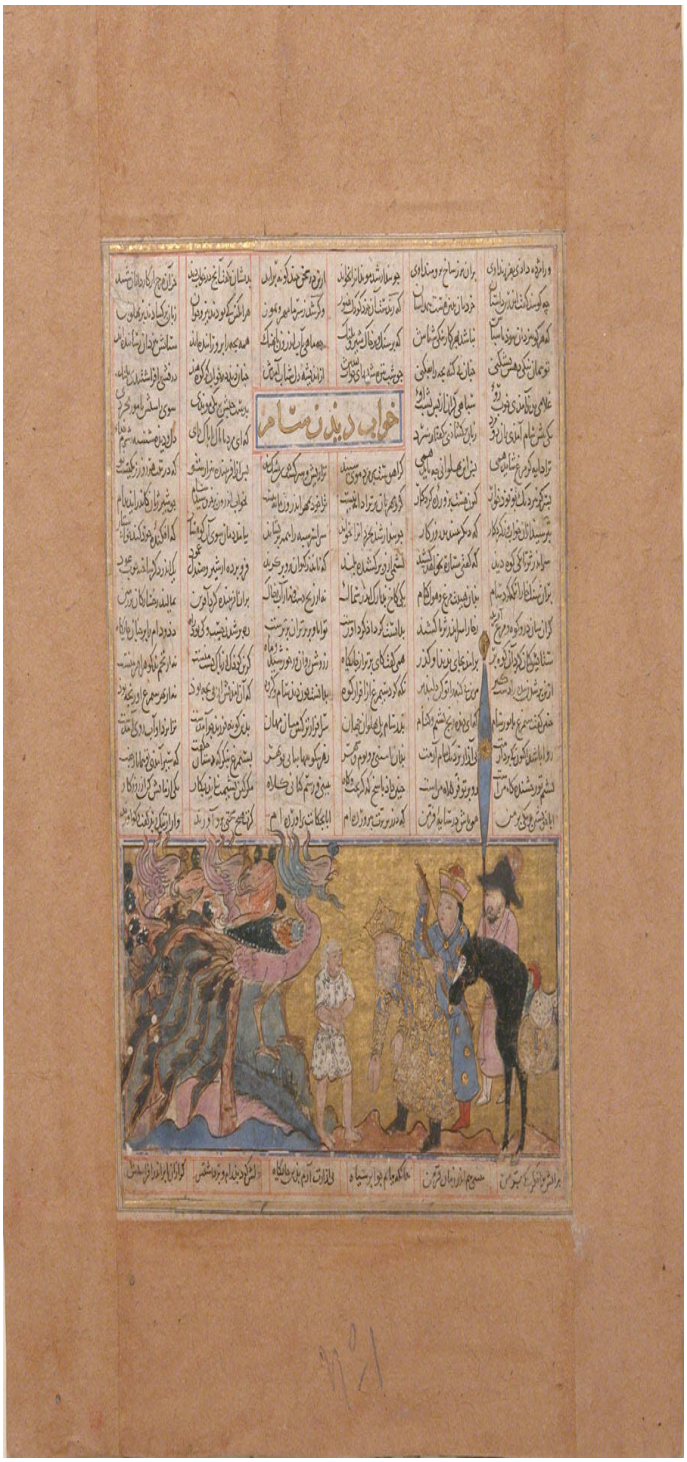

Figure 1.*Zal Is Restored to His Father Sām by the Sīmurgh.* Folio from a *Shāhnāma* (Book of Kings) of Abū'l-Qāsim Firdawsī (ca. 940/41–1020). Attributed to northwestern Iran or Baghdad, ca. 1300–1330. Ink, opaque watercolor, silver, and

gold on paper. Overall: 16 × 12.5 cm; miniature: 5.2 × 12.1 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art (1969.69.74.1).

The extant volumes seem to have been illustrated in the major centers of manuscript production in the 14th century, including Tabriz, Shiraz, and possibly Baghdad and Isfahan. Most seem to have been quite heavily illustrated. Three stylistically related works, attributed to circa 1300 and known collectively as "the Small *Šāh-nāmas*" because of their physical size, originally contained a minimum of 106-110 illustrations each. These pictures (for an example, see Figure 1) appear at regular intervals, approximately on every second or third folio, suggesting that they were to provide a steady visual progression throughout the epic text and perhaps to guide and maintain the interest of first-time *Šāh-nāma* "readers" (who may actually have been listening to readings or recitations of Ferdowsi's verses), such as members of the Mongol elite newly introduced to Persian literature (Simpson, 1979; for another opinion on the date and origins of these manuscripts, see Adamova, 2008, pp. 28-29; see also INDIA xx. PERSIAN INFLUENCES ON INDIAN PAINTING). Other 14th century manuscripts, and specifically four volumes made between 1330 and 1352 in Shiraz, then capital of the Inju dynasty that ruled the Fārs province on behalf of the Il-khanids (Adamova, 2004, pp. 51-64; 2008, pp. 26-28; Simpson, 2000, pp. 215-47; Sims, 2006a, pp. 269-86; Wright, 2006, pp. 248-68; Sims, 2013), have a comparable number of illustrations, although the pattern of their distribution is much less predictable: some epic cycles are illustrated with successive illustrations, while others have none whatsoever. Such variability in illustrative program suggests a deliberate selection of specific scenes—a distinctive artistic approach from the one, apparent in the Small *Small Šāh-nāmas*, for instance, in which paintings come at seemingly fixed points (Simpson, 1982, pp. 43-53).

What motivated the choice of epic passages to be illustrated in any one manuscript remains an issue. The popularity of a given episode and/or the availability of a visual model may have been a factor. Thus, for instance, three of the four Injuid manuscripts include Bahrām Gur at the hunt with Āzāda, depicted in precisely the same compressed iconography (that is, with successive narrative moments conflated into a single, epitomized composition) found, as already cited, on numerous pre-Mongol objects (Shukurov, pl. 1; Simpson, 1985, pp. 132-38, 144-46; Adamova, 2004, p. 54; Fontana, pp. 24-50; Shalem, pp. 117-27). The same scene, treated in much the same fashion, also

appears in the celebrated Great Mongol *Šāh-nāma* (see DEMOTTE ŠĀH-NĀMA), datable to the 1330s, and from which 58 illustrations survive today (Komaroff and Carboni, cat. no. 55). The overall illustrative program in this manuscript, now believed originally to have comprised some 180 to 200 pictures (Blair, 1989, p. 127; 2004, p. 37) indicates, however, that far more consideration was given to its formulation rather than simply relying on established models or prototypes for specific scenes (Adamova, 2008, pp. 15-25). Indeed, the subjects of the volume's masterful compositions were clearly designed to reflect the main themes of Ferdowsi's epic, particularly the legitimacy of Iranian monarchs (Grabar and Blair, pp. 46-55), and may even have been chosen to reflect specific contemporary events at the Il-khanid court at the time of the ruler Abu-Saʿid (r. 1316-35; Soudavar, pp. 97-158). Whether the program here was thematically or contextually-inspired, the Great Mongol *Šāh-nāma* seems to be the earliest, and certainly the most impressive, instance of a *Šāh-nāma* manuscript in which the illustrative program and individual paintings alike are iconographically-charged and possibly even ideologically-formulated (Hillenbrand, 2007, pp. 103-13), and which, furthermore, resonated well into modern times (Bloom).

The choice of the specific scenes to be illustrated in a given Il-khanid-period *Šāh-nāma* manuscript also seems to have depended on codicological considerations, and particularly the layout of the folios and the sequence of their transcription and illustration. In addition, artistic license was evidently a significant factor. As research on individual *Šāh-nāma* volumes has revealed (conveniently summarized by Hillenbrand, 2004, pp. 3-4), the first step in the production of such a book involved the transcription of the epic verses, usually in six columns (that is, three verses per line), and sometimes in two separate volumes. A scribe copying out a manuscript would leave spaces for illustrations (i.e., picture planes) in square, rectangular and stepped form. (The placement, size, and shape of these planes would have been planned in advance, doubtless by a project director or workshop supervisor.) In short, the blank spaces to be illustrated were integral to the folio format, and were framed or bracketed, depending on their format, by epic verses. The painting of the illustrations themselves would have occurred after the completion of the text transcription, and their subjects seem to have been determined in part by the verses located immediately above, below, or alongside the picture plane.

The verse in closest proximity to the picture plane—and the one that most

often determines the illustration's subject—has been recently dubbed the "break-line" and recognized as having several variants (Mehran, 2006, pp. 151-70). Often the surrounding text describes a sequence of narrative actions, any one of which could be suitable for illustration. Thus, for instance, in Ferdowsi's account of Rostam's seventh ordeal (see HAFT K̲ʷĀN) when the great hero fought White Dēv, the poet describes in a single verse how Rostam first stabbed the dēv with a knife, then severed his heart and finally tore out his liver (Clinton and Simpson, 2005, pp. 171-97). That there was flexibility in terms of the specific moment to be represented is suggested by two pairs of illustrations. Two of the small, undated, *Šāh-nāma* illustrations—one rectangular and the other square—show Rostam pulling out the Dēv's liver, while in two Injuid paintings—one in a manuscript dated 1330 and stepped, and the other in a manuscript dated 1333 and square—Rostam stabs the Dēv with his knife. In the first pair, the critical verse appears directly above the rectangular illustration, and directly below in the square one. In the 1330 Injuid manuscript the same verse starts four lines above the stepped illustration, while in the 1333 volume, it flanks the lower edge of the square scene. These examples suggest that while the text-image relations for a given scene could be close, they were no more standardized than the size or shape of the picture plane.

Comparisons of this kind focusing on singular *Šāh-nāma* episodes—along with an analysis of the overall picture cycles of the surviving Il-khanid and Injuid *Šāh-nāmas*—suggest two important and related conclusions about the nature of illustrated copies of Ferdowsi's poem in this formative period of Persian painting. One, there was no prescribed manner for depicting the same episode. Second, there was no fixed set of *Šāh-nāma* illustrations. Although some episodes, such as Rostam's seventh ordeal, were frequently illustrated, they were clearly not obligatory for an illustrated Il-khanid *Šāh-nāma,* and certainly not in a compositionally or iconographically uniform scene. Future research should clarify if these conclusions pertain as well to later traditions of *Šāh-nāma* illustration (Clinton and Simpson, 2006, pp. 219-37; Simpson, 2010, pp. 127-46).

Following the fall of both the Il-khanids and the Injuids, *Šāh-nāma* manuscripts continued to be illustrated under the auspices of their successor dynasties the Mozaffarids (r. 1353-93) and Jalayerids (r. 1336-1432). One such volume, dated 796/1393-94 and made in Shiraz, has now been identified as a probable royal Mozaffarid commission and with a possible contemporary

political significance behind its illustrative program of 67 pictures (O'Kane, 2006a, pp. 171-88). While no intact Jalayerid *Šāh-nāma* has survived, a series of large-scale compositions of recognizable epic scenes, attributed to either Tabriz or Baghdad circa 1370-75 and preserved today as album paintings, attest to the pictorial ambitions of Jalayerid painters, doubtless under the patronage of the ruler Sheikh Ovays (d. 1374; Atasoy, pp. 19-48; Rogers, Cağman, and Tanındı, nos. 50-53; Adamova, 2008, pp. 34-37).

By the late 14th century, other works of Persian literature, particularly lyrical and romantic poems such as the Ḵamsas of Neẓāmi and Ḵᵛāju of Kermān began to rival Ferdowsi's epic for artistic attention and patronage. That is not to say, however, that the illustrated *Šāh-nāma* ever fell totally out of favor; indeed, there is a substantial corpus of manuscripts dating from the 15th through the 17th centuries, although detailed research on these works has been in inverse proportion to their numbers. Certainly fairly early on in the Timurid period (1370-1506) it was considered de rigueur for members of the ruling family to own their own personal copies of the epic poem "as a sort of status symbol or advertisement of regal power" (Robinson, 1983, p. 285). Thus three of Timur's grandsons—Bāysonḡor, Ebrāhim Solṭān, and Moḥammad Juki—each commissioned such a volume in Jomādā I 833/January 1430 in Herat, circa 1430-35 in Shiraz, and circa 1444 in Herat, respectively (see BĀYSONḠORI ŠĀH-NĀMA ii. The Paintings; Robinson, 1979, pp. 83-102; Sims, 1992, pp. 43-68; 2000, pp. 120-24; Adomova, 2008, pp. 45, 48-51; Abdullaeva and Melville, 2008; Hillenbrand, 2010, pp. 97-126; Brend, 2010). As with the ideological "reading" of the Great Mongol *Šāh-nāma*, it can be argued that these works expressed, through their choice and treatment of certain epic episodes, their princely patrons' individual concerns with particular epic themes (in Bāysonḡor's volume, issues of royal responsibilities and legitimate government; in Ebrāhim Solṭān's, traditions of hunting, feasting, and battle), as well as a specific dynastic conception or vision of kingship as expounded by Ferdowsi (Lentz and Lowry, pp. 126-32; Sims, 1992, pp. 45-46, 55-57; 2000, pp. 121-22). Compared with Il-khanid and Mozaffarid manuscripts however, the Timurid *Šāh-nāma*s project their "charge" through a relatively restricted selection of scenes: as a group the Bāysonḡor, Ebrāhim Solṭān and Moḥammad Juki *Šāh-nāma*s total only 99 text illustrations (Sims, 1992, p. 44).

The reduction in the pictorial programs of these princely and other manuscripts dating from the 1430s and 1440s (see, for instance, Sims, 1996) may be seen as a portent for the total absence of any *Šāh-nāma* volumes

illustrated during the reign of the last Timurid ruler Solṭān Ḥosayn Bāyqarā (1470-1506), at whose court lyrical poetry, and the classical Persian painting such literature inspired, reached its apex. The production of illustrated *Šāh-nāma* manuscripts in the 15th century remained vigorous, however, among the Qarā-Qoyunlu (1380-1468) and Āq Qoyunlu (1378-1508) Turkman dynasties, judging from the number of extant illustrated copies, many with seventy or more paintings, attributable to Tabriz, Shiraz, and Baghdad beginning in about the 1450s-60s and continuing to the end of the century (Robinson, 1991, pp. 21-43; Sims, 1992, pp. 67-68; Titley, pp. 62-66). These volumes range widely in style and even mix different styles, from the courtly (derived from refined Jalayerid and Timurid modes of painting), to the provincial (featuring simplified compositions and robust figures; see, for example, Simpson, 2003), with the former probably commissioned by individual patrons such as the Qarā-Qoyunlu prince Pir Budāq (d. 1465; Soucek, pp. 267-81) and the latter made for sale on the open market and often referred to as "commercial" (Robinson, 1983, pp. 287-88). Turkman taste and artistic ambitions vis-à-vis the *Book of Kings* is reflected in a two-volume manuscript, now partly dispersed, made in 1493-94 for Solṭān ʿAli-Mirzā Kārkiā of Gilān, which originally contained over 310 illustrations (again, in a mixture of styles), appearing at regular intervals throughout the text and with many depicting their epic characters with over-sized heads, hence its sobriquet the "Big-Head *Šāh-nāma*" (Canby, 1991, pp. 69-71).

Royal patronage of illustrated volumes of the *Šāh-nāma* re-emerged at the outset of the Safavid period (1501-1732), resulting in the production of several important volumes associated with ruling monarchs of the 16th and 17th centuries. Of these the most celebrated and best-studied is the *Šāh-nāma* initially commissioned by the first Safavid shah, Esmāʿil I, in Tabriz probably around 1522 and carried on to glorious completion in the mid-1530s (and perhaps even later) by his son and successor Ṭahmāsp I, whose name appears in an illuminated medallion (*šamsa*) in the book's opening folios, giving the work its now-accepted title of *Šāh-nāma-ye Šāhi*or *Šāh-nāma-ye Šāh Ṭahmāsbi* (Dickson and Welch; Soudavar, 1992, pp. 164-69; Hillenbrand, 1996, p. 53; Melikian-Chirvani, 2007, pp. 31, 39-44 and catalogue entries; Canby, 2011 ; Canby, 2013). In sponsoring an illustrated *Šāh-nāma*, Esmāʿil I employed the epic for potent propaganda purposes: as a gesture of Persian patriotism, as a celebration of renewed Persian rule, and as a reassertion of Persian royal authority (Robinson, 1983, pp. 288-89; Hillenbrand, 1996, pp. 58-60). Whatever the motivation, the volume's 258 full-page paintings comprise among the most

lavish and original programs of *Šāh-nāma* illustration known today. Likewise, several of its compositions, painted by leading court artists of early Safavid times such as Solṭān Moḥammad, Mir Moṣawwer, and Āqā Mirak, count among the recognized masterpieces of Persian painting. A number of these represent unique *Šāh-nāma* scenes—that is, not known to have been included in any other earlier copy of Ferdowsi's text. Other scenes come in very rapid succession so that an episode that previously had been represented by only one painting, if that, is here visually conveyed through a sequence of events. For instance, all three stages of the combat between Rostam and Sohrāb are depicted, plus Rostam's funeral lamentation (Canby 2011, pls. 121-124), whereas virtually all other illustrated volumes depict only the final fatal scene. As Hillenbrand has shown, in its overall selection and treatment of illustrations, the pictorial program of the *Šāh-nāma-ye šāhi* may be understood as possessing a dual iconographic or thematic focus—namely war, and specifically the war between Iran and Turān, and the divine right of kings—that parallels two leitmotifs of Ferdowsi's epic. At the same time this iconographic emphasis may be interpreted as a direct commentary on the troubled political times of Shah Tahmāsp I's early reign, featuring successive Safavid battles with both Ottomans and Uzbeks (Hillenbrand, 1996, pp. 61-78; al-Khamis, p. 207). That Ṭahmāsp I placed immense value on his *Šāh-nāma* is indicated by the fact that in 1568 he sent it as an accession present-cum-peace offering to the Ottoman Sultan Selim II (Soudavar, 1992, p. 164; but see Melikian-Chirvani, 2007, p. 39).

Several of Ṭahmāsp I's successors also commissioned illustrated *Šāh-nāma*s, including Esmāʿil II in Qazvin to mark the start of what turned out to be an extremely short reign (1576-78; Robinson, 1976, pp. 1-8; 2005, pp. 291-97; Wood) and Shah ʿAbbās I, also in Qazvin, at the outset of his very long one (1588-1629; Welch, pp. 106-25). Both manuscripts feature compositions by some of the same leading court artists, among them Ṣādeqi Beg, ʿAli-Aṣḡar and ʿAli Reżā ʿAbbāsi, and reveal the ways that the *Šāh-nāma* as an artistic genre can both continue accepted pictorial styles and foster the development of new ones (Canby, 1999, pp. 84-85 and 105). It has been persuasively argued that the illustrations in a volume from Isfahan dated 1014/1605 contain portraits of Shah ʿAbbās (Rizvi, 2011, 2012). On the other hand, another well-known illustrated *Šāh-nāma*, copied in 1023/1614 and long associated with the shah, has now been proven conclusively to have been made for another, probably provincial, patron, and illustrated only in the early 19th century (Schmitz, 1992, cat. no. II.12). The production of illustrated *Šāh-nāma*s continued in

Isfahan during the reign of ʿAbbās II (1642-66), and much of it presumably under the shah's patronage. At least six copies from this period, including one completed in 1059/1649, another in 1060/1650, and yet another in 1064/1654, contain paintings signed by Moʿin Moṣawwer (ca. 1617-ca. 1708), a gifted student of ʿAli Reżā ʿAbbāsi, who illustrated several more epic volumes during his long and prolific career (Canby, 1999, p. 134; 2010, pp. 54-113). Other followers of ʿAli Reżā ʿAbbāsi also undertook *Šāh-nāma* commissions during the mid-17th century: in 1052-61/1642-51 Afżal al-Ḥosayni illustrated a volume with 192 paintings for presentation to the shah, and in 1058/1648 a team of Safavid artists, including Moḥammad Qāsem, Malek Ḥosayn Eṣfahāni, Moḥammad ʿAli and Moḥammad Yusof created 148 compositions for a manuscript ordered by Qarajaghāy Khan, governor of the Khorasan province and superintendent of the shrine of Imam Reżā in Mashhad (Canby, 1999, p. 138; Sims, 2002, nos. 10, 18, 87, 134; Robinson, Sims and Bayani; see also ISFAHAN xi. SCHOOL OF PAINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY). At the end of the 17th century, Moʿin Moṣawwer joined forces with several other artists, including two working in Westernized style (*farangi-sāzi*), to produce a volume with 42 illustrations possibly intended to mark the accession of Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn (1694-1722) to the Safavid throne. Thus, Ferdowsi's epic continued to serve as the literary and artistic vehicle through which a Persian monarch signaled his political power and cultural pride.

Non-royal patronage and commercial production also flourished during the Safavid period, with the city of Shiraz remaining a primary locus for this activity. Indeed, there are probably more 16th and 17th century Shiraz *Šāh-nāma*s surviving today than from any other artistic center in Persia (Uluç, 2000, p. 73; 2006, p. 23; Simpson, 2013a). Safavid Shiraz thus continued a virtually unbroken artistic tradition first documented in the Injuid period in the 1330s. As Robinson has commented about Shiraz's role in epic illustrations during the first half of the 15th century, "Shirazi painters seem to capture completely the timeless heroic spirit of the *Šāh-nāma* and transfer it to the page whole and untrammeled by extraneous detail or distracting elaboration" (Robinson, 1983, p. 286). By the middle to end of the 16th century, Shiraz *Šāh-nāma*s had become quite lavish, often comparable in the scale and quality to court manuscripts and sometimes even owned by members of the Safavid family, as witness one impressive manuscript dated 998/1589-90 (see for example Bahrām Gur wrestles before Šangol, fol. 352b; Clinton and Simpson, 2006, pp. 219-37; Uluç, 2000, pp. 85, 91; 2006, pp. 429-30, 448-49). Significant numbers also were made for export and acquired by bibliophiles beyond

Iran's borders (Stanley, pp. 85-98; Uluç, 1994, pp. 68-69; 2006, pp. 469-78; 500-505). Other regions of greater Iran known to have produced illustrated *Šāh-nāma*s during the 16th and 17th centuries include: Transoxiana (Mā Warāʾ al-Nahr), and specifically Samarqand and Bukhara during the reign of the Shaybanids (r. 1500-99) and their successors the Janids (r. 1598-1747); ; Khorasan, specifically in Herat around 1600-10, under the Šāmlu governors of Herat; and Astarābād circa 1560-1630 (Robinson, 1983, pp. 291-92; Rührdanz, 2012).

Several noteworthy developments in *Šāh-nāma* manuscript illustration, already apparent early on in its history, deserve mention here. At the end of a long and brutal war between Iran and Turān, the victorious king Kay Ḵosrow abdicates his throne in favor of Lohrāsp, whose accession marks what is generally considered the beginning of the second half of the *Šāh-nāma* and often the start of a new volume in both traditional manuscript copies and modern printed editions. In the so-called First Small *Šāh-nāma* of ca. 1300, this mid-point in the text is punctuated by an illustration of Lohrāsp enthroned, framed at the top and bottom of the folio by a large illuminated inscription (Simpson, 1979, fig. 113). Various 15th-century manuscripts treat the scene similarly, with an even more prominent illumination at the top. By the 1540s (and perhaps earlier), the scene had expanded to form a double-page composition, depicting a festive reception with Lohrāsp enthroned and surrounded by courtiers on one side and additional courtiers and attendants celebrating in a garden setting on the other. Very often this double illustration, which may appear either in the middle of a volume or at the start of a new one (thus functioning as a frontispiece), is framed with richly-illuminated borders, drawing further attention to the import of this moment in the epic narrative (Stanley, p. 88, fig. 7.3; Clinton and Simpson, 2006, pp. 225-28 and fig. 2).

During the Il-khanid period, the *Šāh-nāma* had been transcribed and illustrated as a separate and distinct literary work. By the end of the 14th century, however, Ferdowsi's epic began to be joined by other, shorter epics, often composed as sequels to, or in imitation of, the *Šāh-nāma.*Frequently described as "secondary" or "later" epics, these include the Garšāsp-nāma, Borzu-nāma, Bahman-nāma and *Sām-nāma*. The earliest known instance of this combination of epic texts into an anthology appears in a manuscript, today divided in two parts, with multiple colophons dated 1397 but with illustrations that apparently were added about a decade later, possibly under the patronage of the Timurid prince Eskandar Solṭān while he was governor of

Shiraz (1409-14; Wright, 2004, pp. 65-84). The practice of combining the *Šāh-nāma* and post-*Šāh-nāma* epics in a single illustrated manuscript seems to have been particularly popular during the second half of the 16th century, and especially in the commercial workshops of Shiraz, as well as other centers such as Qazvin. Interestingly, this did not result in enlarged or inflated manuscripts, largely because the text of Ferdowsi's epic was usually cut short after the reign of Queen Homāy Čehrzād or with the story of Eskandar. Furthermore, the "secondary" poems were not simply added on to the "truncated" *Šāh-nāma*s, as such works also have come to be called, but rather inserted or interpolated into it. Consequently the illustrative programs of these hybrid manuscripts juxtapose *Šāh-nāma* paintings with those to other post-Ferdowsian epics, leading to the creation of iconographically original (albeit not always very artistically distinguished) works of art (Rührdanz, 1997, pp. 118-34; Sims, 2006b, pp. 195-98; Čağman and Tanındı, pp. 143-67; for the continuation of this practice in later centuries, see Goldenweiser, pp. 217-24)

The 15th century also marked the appearance of illustrated *Šāh-nāma* manuscripts outside of Iran, specifically in the Delhi Sultanate. Robinson has argued for an even earlier history of the illustrated *Šāh-nāma* in India beginning in the first half of the 14th century (see INDIA xx. PERSIAN INFLUENCES ON INDIAN PAINTING; Robinson, 1983, pp. 279-80). One such volume widely (although not universally) accepted as Sultanate is dated 841/1438 and contains 93 small and simple miniatures that relate stylistically to works produced in Shiraz during the Mozaffarid period and into the first decades of the 15th century (Brend, pp. 87-93; Titley, pp. 164-67). Another indisputably Sultanate example in Jainesque style dates to circa 1450 (Goswamy). Indian admiration for the *Šāh-nāma* remained strong during the Mughal period (Sharma), particularly among the dynasty's early rulers, as evidenced by the manuscript, previously mentioned, made for the Timurid prince Moḥammad Juki, ca. 1444, that bears the ownership seals of five Mughal emperors from Ẓahir al-Din Moḥammad Bābor (r. 1526-30), who originally took it from Herat to India, to Shah Jahān (r. 1628-57), who added a hand-written note that the manuscript entered his library on the day of his accession to the throne, through his son and successor Awrangzēb (r. 1658-1707; Brand and Lentz, pp. 88 and fig. 9). Although it lacks any mark of the third Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605), this Timurid treasure may have inspired him to commission his own copy of the *Šāh-nāma*, now lost, in 1582, as a connection with past royal glory and a symbol of current authority and rule (Brand and Lentz, p. 88; Lentz and Lowry, p. 321; Qureshi, pp. 183-87).

Subsequent members of the Mughal elite also owned illustrated *Šāh-nāma*s, documented, as with the Moḥammad Juki volume, by seals and inscriptions (Stanley, pp. 85-87). Interest in Ferdowsi's poem continued in India in later centuries, as evidenced by a volume dated 1131/1719 and illustrated, possibly for a Hindu bibliophile, in the provincial style of Kashmir (Titley, pp. 210-11).

The Book of Kings had perhaps even greater currency during the Ottoman period in Turkey, and illustrated copies, many from Shiraz, were avidly collected, along with other Persian manuscripts, by the Ottoman sultans in Istanbul and other high-level court officials during the 16th and 17th centuries (Uluç, 2006, pp. 469-78, 500-505; Schmidt, pp. 121-27; Tanındı, 2012; Uluç, 2012). *Šāh-nāma* volumes also entered the Ottoman collections as war booty and royal gifts, such as the Safavid *Šāh-nāma-ye šāhi* sent to Selim II, as previously mentioned (see Rüstem for a detailed account of the manuscript's afterlife in the later Ottoman period) and several others presented to Morād III (1574-95; Titley, p. 135; Uluç, 1994, pp. 57-69; 2000, pp. 85-86; 2006, pp. 481-500). Although no full copies of Ferdowsi's epic in its original Persian may have been illustrated for a sultan by Ottoman court artists, some of whom were Persian (Uluç, 1994, p. 66), it has been proposed that the "truncated" *Šāh-nāma*s, discussed above and generally presumed to be Persian because of their distinctive Qazvin painting style, may have actually originated in Istanbul (Rührdanz, 1997, p. 130). One such volume, the so-called Eckstein or Kevorkian *Šāh-nāma*, dated 1584, contains 32 illustrations through the reign of Eskandar interpolated with four later epics (Kwiatkowski). More significantly, the *Šāh-nāma* was translated into Ottoman Turkish, in prose as well as verse, beginning in the mid-15th century; and copies of these translations, particularly the *Şehnâme-i Türkî* by Şerif Amedi were illustrated a number of times during the 16th and 17th centuries (Bağci, 2000; Schmidt, pp. 132-35; Tanındı, 2012, pp. 146-50; Yıldız, pp. 456-80). These Ottoman illustrated volumes reveal the extent to which Ferdowsi's poem, as the quintessential monument of Persian culture, could be both embraced and adopted for new artistic and ideological purposes in another cultural context (Kwiatkowski; Melikian-Chirvani, 2007, pp. 37-38; Uluç, 2012).

Finally, in both India and Turkey, Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma* helped inspire, or at least lead to, the composition of lengthy poems narrating the histories of Mughal (e.g., Ẓahir al-Din Moḥammad Bābor and Shah Jahān) and Ottoman (e.g., Suleiman the Magnificent and Murad III) rulers and emphasizing similar concepts of kingship and legitimacy. These works, in turn, generated original

pictorial traditions and further enriched the genre of epic illustration in the Islamic world (Sims, 1978, pp. 747-56; Woodhead, p. 169; Bağci, 2009, pp. 118-19; Fetvaci, pp. 263-315; Payeur).

The illustration of *Šāh-nāma* manuscripts in Persia seems to have greatly slowed with the fall of the Safavid dynasty. As in India and Turkey, however, dynastic and regnal histories in emulation of Ferdowsi's epic had great appeal for Persian rulers. Thus the second Qajar monarch Fatḥ-ʿAli Shah (r. 1798-1834) ordered an account of the first ten years of his reign, essentially as dynastic propaganda (Diba, pp. 239-57). Entitled the *Šāhanšāh-nāma*, this lengthy poem in 40,000 verses was written by Fatḥ-ʿAli Khan Ṣabā, the poet laureate at the time, and completed between 1806 and 1810. Preparation of richly illustrated and illuminated copies began soon thereafter, possibly under the initial direction of the text's author, and continued throughout the reign of Fatḥ-ʿAli Shah and his successor Moḥammad Shah (r. 1834-48). The most sumptuous, dated Rajab 1222/August 1810 and commissioned by the shah himself, contains 38 full-page paintings. Although representing contemporary events (including battles relating to the Qajar tribe, Fatḥ-ʿAli Shah's accession, and episodes from the on-going Perso-Russian wars) and executed in the Europeanizing style favored by Persian painters and patrons in the early 19th century, the manuscript's overall iconography corresponds to well-established traditions of epic illustration. Likewise and in keeping with earlier *Šāh-nāma* and other manuscripts, as Layla Diba has shown, its illustrative program was carefully planned and had definite political, literary, and didactic goals. Its message, however, was not intended for the Qajar court alone; indeed, a few years after its illustration, the 1810 volume was presented as a diplomatic gift to the East India Company, doubtless "intended to persuade the English on behalf of the Qajar cause" (Diba, p. 250).

Notwithstanding the retrenchment in the demand for illustrated manuscripts of Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma*, individual volumes continued to be produced during the Qajar period. One notable example, the so-called *Šāh-nāma-ye Dāvari*, completed in 1271/1855 by Moḥammad Dāvari Širāzi (son of the eminent calligrapher Moḥammad Shafiʿ Wesāl), contains 68 vigorous illustrations. 55 of these are by the prolific flower painter Āqā Loṭf-ʿAli Ṣuratgar of Shiraz and variously dated 1278-80/1861-63 (FIGURE 1), 12 others by the scribe Dāvari, and one signed by his brother Farhang. While the manuscript's picture format (with its illustrations set within the text columns) and iconography adhere closely to traditional practices, the paintings themselves reflect an eclectic

mixture of both early and late Safavid styles, as well as the strong influence of European (or perhaps Indian) art, particularly in the treatment of landscapes, buildings, furniture, and costumes. Interestingly, this project apparently began as an independent artistic venture. Before its completion, however, it was purchased by Moḥammad-Qoli Khān Qašqāʾi, an influential tribal leader in the province of Fārs, who supported the painters in the final stages of their work (Šarifzāda; Ḡazbānpur and Āḡdāšlu; Ekhtiar, pp. 260-61).

Illustration in printed editions. If the 19th century marked the decline of painted manuscripts of Ferdowsi's epic, it also heralded the initiation of printed—and more specifically lithographed— editions (Marzolph, 2003, pp. 177-98; Zutphen, pp. 68-77; Marzolph, 2011). The first such lithography volumes with pictures were printed in Bombay in 1262/1846 and 1266/1849, in Tehran in 1265-67/1851-53, and in Tabriz in 1275/1858, each with 57 illustrations integrated with relevant text passages, as in the long-standing manuscript tradition. Following a hiatus of several decades, two more editions were printed in Tehran in 1307/1889 with 62 scenes and in 1316/1898 with 63, respectively (Marzolph and Mohammadi). Although these volumes share a comparable number of pictures and often select the same scene for illustration, their treatment of these compositions is distinctive, and Ulrich Marzolph has identified two different iconographic traditions (Marzolph, 2003, p. 183).

The last lithographed *Šāh-nāma* with illustrations was completed in Tehran in 1909 under the sponsorship of Ḥosayn-Pāšā Khan Amir Bahādor, an influential Qajar official during the late 19th and early 20th century (Marzolph, 2006, pp. 259-76). Although considerably larger in physical dimensions than its predecessors, this edition has a significantly reduced illustrative program of 40 narrative pictures, executed by a team of three artists (Ḥosayn-ʿAli, Moḥammad-Kāẓem, and ʿAli), which also differ significantly in format, style and content from previous editions. Of particular note, in terms of book-production, is that the illustrations were printed on separate sheets later collated with the text and often fill the entire printed page, with captions at the bottom right. Stylistically, they reflect a strong influence of western art. Finally, about half of the illustrated scenes, including several enthronements (FIGURE 2), are original compositions, that is, they do not appear in the other, previous lithographed editions. Although produced in a protracted process and at a tumultuous moment in Iran's modern history, the *Šāh-nāma-ye Bahādori* demonstrates yet again the extent to which

Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma*—and the legendary narratives of kings and heroes that his poem both derives from and celebrates—continued to inspire Persian artists to new visual expressions of Iran's epic past.

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