

extending into the margin takes the form here of the tip of the dragon's tail attached, we are to assume, to the beast's hindquarters, which are hidden behind the right-hand marginal text. The figures along the horizon and Isfandiyar are consistent with comparable soldiers and heroes in other works by Mu'in. The *divs*, on the other hand, despite their red and purple pigmentation, have realistically soulful expressions.

30. *Kay Khusrau Kills Shida, Son of Afrasiyab*, fol. 157a. The David Collection (fig. 33)

The painting is out of place in the manuscript, suggesting that it may have been bound into this section when the painting of Isfandiyar and the simurgh was removed. The image shows Kay Khusrau administering the *coup de grace* with his dagger through the heart of Shida after he has picked him up and dashed him to the ground. The episode occurs during the last great battle between the Iranians and Turanians. The pictorial elements in this illustration are consistent with those in other scenes of combat in this manuscript, with the onlookers placed on the horizon and in the foreground, the grooms and horses of the combatants placed to either side of them, the distinctive sky, and the use of purple for the jutting crag in the background.

31. *The Fourth Stage of Isfandiyar: Isfandiyar and the Witch*, fol. 186b.

The David Collection (fig. 34)

In Isfandiyar's encounter with a witch, she first took the form of a beautiful woman. He sang and drank with her, but realized that she was a witch and slipped a metal chain around her. At this point she metamorphosed into a lion, but Isfandiyar threatened her with his sword. Finally she reverted to her original identity, a frightful hag. The scene depicted here appears to be the moment before Isfandiyar hit her on the head and she turned to dust. The composition conforms to the enthronement scenes in this manuscript, except that Isfandiyar is seated before a tent, part of an encampment. An illustration by Mu'in of the same episode from a *Shahnameh* of 1066 / 1655⁴⁶ presents the more traditional version of this scene in which Rustam cleaves the witch.

32. *The Fifth Stage of Isfandiyar: Isfandiyar Kills the Simurgh*. Private collection (not illustrated)⁴⁷

In this painting, Mu'in Musavvir has depicted the mythical simurgh swooping dramatically down on an armored casket with sword blades protruding from its sides in which Isfandiyar was hiding. The simurgh attacked it and met its end when it was impaled on the blades. At the upper left on the pinnacle of a rocky crag sits a nest containing two young simurghs. In the foreground, a gray demon converses with a warrior, suggesting that Mu'in thought it appropriate to add demons to the illustrations in this section of the manuscript. Additionally, he has replaced the chariot of the story with a casket, perhaps to keep the composition from becoming too crowded or busy.

33. *Rustam and Isfandiyar Hand-wrestle*.

Private collection (not illustrated)

In the build-up to the final battle between Rustam and Isfandiyar, each man boasted of his valor and strength. Gushtasp, the shah and father of Isfandiyar, had bid him to find Rustam and return with Rustam in chains to the court, knowing that the prince would fail. In their conversation, Isfandiyar grasped and squeezed Rustam's hand, but the warrior did not flinch. In turn, he squeezed Isfandiyar's hand until the prince's face turned red and blood oozed from his fingernails. In the painting, the two seated protagonists face each other and engage in their hand clinch. Characteristically, despite the teeth-gnashing and face-reddening described in the text, Mu'in's figures have remained impassive. The short yellow curtains and centrally placed pole identify the setting as the interior of a tent.

34. *Rustam Kills Shaghad and Dies*,

fol. 211a. The David Collection (fig. 35)

One of the most poignant stories in the *Shahnameh* concerns the death of the great hero Rustam and his horse, Rakhsh. Shaghad, Rustam's half-brother, married the daughter of the King of Kabul, a satrap of Rustam's father, Zal. When the King decided he would no longer pay his annual tribute, he and Shaghad began to plot the downfall of Rustam,

knowing that he would come to Kabul to collect the tax. They ordered a deep pit to be dug and had sharp spikes placed in it. Then these were concealed. When Rustam arrived, he and Rakhsh fell into the pit and were impaled. Rustam realized that Shaghad was watching his demise hiding behind a tree, so with his last gasp Rustam shot an arrow that pierced the tree and killed Shaghad.

Mu'in has made the most of the narrow format of this page, squeezing Shaghad between the barren tree and the right-hand margin. The artist may have intended to alter Shaghad's pose, since his left hand appears in an anomalous position, perhaps because of its proximity to the margin. Also, the passage between his leg and the tree is either unfinished or else part of the tree was stripped of its bark. Rustam and Rakhsh, set off against the black pit, fit neatly between stepped text blocks. Although blood pours from Rakhsh, Rustam's wounds are less obvious, perhaps to emphasize his heroism, even in death. In the 1066 / 1655 *Shahnameh* in the Chester Beatty Library,⁴⁸ Mu'in has reversed the placement of the figures, with Shaghad behind the tree on the left and Rustam on the right, shooting at a less acute angle. While the figure of Shaghad is depicted in a more assured manner, the composition is less dramatic than in the David Collection version.

35. *The Hanging of Faramarz*, fol. 214b.

The David Collection (fig. 36)

Bahman succeeded his grandfather, Gushtasp. To punish Zal, the father of Rustam and ruler of Zabul, Bahman had Zal chained and plundered his palace and lands. Learning of Zal's fate, his grandson Faramarz decided to go to war against Bahman. The armies fought for three days, but the tide turned against Faramarz and he was left battling, wounded and alone. When Faramarz was brought before Bahman, the shah showed him no mercy, ordering that he be hanged upside down while still alive.

Here Bahman in his jeweled crown and robe of gold observes on horseback as Faramarz is hoisted with a noose around his neck, suspended from a hook. Mu'in has not followed the text by showing him upside down. Rather the action centers on the

mounted archers firing at the torso of Faramarz. Instead of figures watching the execution from the horizon, as in most of Mu'in's illustrations, all of them except the king are engaged in killing their enemy. A simplified version of this composition appears in the John Rylands Library *Shahnameh* of 1650 (Pers. 909).

36. *Iskandar Comforts the Dying Dara*.

Whereabouts unknown⁴⁹ (not illustrated)

When the Iranian king Dara was defeated in battle by Iskandar, known in the West as Alexander the Great, he sued for peace. Two of his ministers, however, thought that they could gain land and favors from Iskandar if they murdered Dara. When news of their deed reached Iskandar's ears, he rushed to be with Dara. He was unable to save his foe, who was also his half-brother in the *Shahnameh*, but did try to comfort him. The scene portrays Iskandar holding Dara in his lap while soldiers, elderly sages, and two bareheaded youthful mourners observe with sad expressions. A groom similar to the one in several of the David Collection *Shahnameh* illustrations stands with two horses in the right background next to an imposing leafy tree.

37. *Iskandar's March into the Gloom and Khizr's Discovery of the Water of Life*.

Private collection (fig. 14)⁵⁰

In his quest for the source of eternal life, Iskandar took the advice of the sage, Khizr, who set out with him in the Land of Darkness. At one point, the two became separated and Iskandar eventually reached a mountaintop, where the angel Israfil warned him of his impending death. Khizr, meanwhile, found the Water of Life, which he bathed in and drank. As in the image of *Rustam and the Iranians in the Snow* (no. 25, fig. 11), Mu'in has combined the two parts of this story in one image. In the foreground, Khizr and another sage kneel beside the darkened pool that is the Water of Life while two horses wait behind them at the left. At the right, Iskandar's troops are ranked beside and behind the king, all looking up, not down at Khizr. The ground has been painted black to suggest the Land of Darkness, and in the