

Turk amongst Tajiks

The Turkic Shāhnāma Translation Located in Tajikistan and Manuscript Production during the Abu'l-Khayrid Annexation of Khurasan (1588–1598)

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The *Shāhnāma*, or Book of Kings, chronicles the pre-Islamic history of Iran and Turan with the Oxus River as the dividing line. Broadly speaking, the *Shāhnāma* records historical tensions between Persian and Turkic groups, and in it these two sides are at odds with each other despite having common origins. A lengthy literary version of the *Shāhnāma* is attributed to the poet Firdawsī in the eleventh century, although its tales come from oral traditions that predate him. Firdawsī just happened to put the stories into Persian verse, and thus a legacy of illuminated manuscripts was generated in the Iranian heartland, with the highest number of productions being created during the Safavid dynasty (1501–1736). Less examined are the translations of Firdawsī's text into Turki and copies produced outside the borders of Iran, namely sixteenth-century versions of the Ottomans made in Istanbul and likely Baghdad, and those of the Abu'l-Khayrid Uzbeks in Bukhara, Samarqand, and centres in Khurasan. Some of these manuscripts evidence heretofore unsubstantiated Uzbek—Ottoman exchanges in arts of the book and in politics. This paper examines these very relations in one such *Shāhnāma* held by the Centre of Written Heritage at the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan (CWH ms. 1032).¹ In comparing its text and illustrations to other manuscripts, the study posits the object transited from the Sublime Porte in Istanbul to Khurasan.

The few scholars who have catalogued or cursorily analysed what I am referring to as the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* have classified it as written in a Qipchaq branch of Turkic languages, and attributed its few unfinished paintings to Khurasan in the 1570s.² This article amends both this characterisation of the text

- 1 Catalogue entry 831 in Abdulgani Mirzoev and Aleksandr Boldyrev, *Katalog Vostochnykh Rukopisei Akademii Nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR III* (Dushanbe, Academy of Sciences, 1960), 52–53.
- 2 M.Kh. Abuseitova and L.N. Dodkhudoeva, *History of Kazakhstan in Eastern miniatures* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2010), 130, 206; Larisa Dodkhudoeva, *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia and India: XVI–XIX Centuries* (Dushanbe: Collection of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2000), 79–80.

and also the decade of its added illustrations. As a manuscript of mixed pedigree, the components of its production span centres administered by Ottomans and Abu'l-Khayrids. I propose that its Turkic verse could have been copied in circa 1540 through 1560 in Istanbul, and its visual elements were begun—but never finished—sometime during the mid-1580s through the 1590s in the environs of Herat.

With text and imagery at the interface of eastern and western Turco-Persianate zones, the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* is not easily assigned a provenance. I will first compare it to other Turkic *Shāhnāma* versions produced in the Ottoman Empire (1299–1922), then connect the manuscript to other written and oral Turkic translations of Firdawsī's work that were initiated during the first few decades of the Abu'l-Khayrid dynasty (1500–1598). The discussion continues with an overview of the workshops in Khurasan in which staff, intended buyers, and manuscript productions crossed dynastic lines. The study references contemporary arts of the book produced in Khurasan with related visual programmes as the Tajikistan manuscript so as to better understand the object's assemblage and possible site of pictorial inclusions. It closes with a detailed page-by-page analysis of the illuminations and illustrations in the Tajikistan manuscript, and connects these to works presumed to be their contemporaries. This study adds to existing research on manuscript production in the second half of sixteenth-century Khurasan when it was impacted by the territorial skirmishes of the Safavids and Abu'l-Khayrids. It brings to light the contributions of artists and scribes immigrating to Khurasan from Bukhara after the longest-ruling Abu'l-Khayrid leader 'Abdullāh bin Iskandar Khan (r. 1557–1598) lost interest in manuscripts and his patronage ended. The Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* truly encapsulates the mobility of the era in miniature.

1 Turkic Translations of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* in the Ottoman Empire

In the sixteenth century, language was not a clear marker of group affiliation and identity since the heads of Ottoman, Safavid, and Abu'l-Khayrid powers would have been comfortably bilingual in Persian and Turkic varieties. However, linguistic shifts took place in the final quarter of the century, marked by a new rigidity in the Ottoman and Safavid spheres to favour Ottoman Turkish and Persian respectively.³ Ottoman interest in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, both

3 Under the command of Murad III (r. 1574–1595), the 'ulamā' forbade teaching Persian in

Persian and Turkic versions, exceeded the Safavids' involvement in terms of timespan due to their comparative dynastic longevity. Lâle Uluç has examined the role that the *Shāhnāma* played in Ottoman society and asserts that Persian-language copies produced in Istanbul were very rare, or even nonexistent.⁴ Persian versions produced in the broader Empire are held to be truncated copies lacking the historical section to Firdawsī's text, and have been attributed to late sixteenth-century Baghdad when it was under Ottoman rule.⁵ In contrast, various Turkic translations were copied and illustrated within the royal *nakkaşhane* (workshop) for courtiers of the Sublime Porte.

The earliest Turkic translation of Firdawsī's work was in prose by an anonymous writer commissioned by Sultan Murad II (r. 1421–1444, 1446–1451) who was based in the Ottoman capital Edirne at this time.⁶ Firdawsī's epic spawned two later renditions translated into Turkic verse, both exclusively recopied in the Ottoman domain in the sixteenth century. The first had originally been commissioned by the Mamluk sultan Qanṣūh al-Ghūrī (r. 1501–1516) who selected the poet Ḥusayn b. Ḥasan (Şerif) Âmidî (d. 1514) to compose it. The second Turkic verse translation composed by Madhî (fl. late 16th c.–early 17th c.) had shorter-lived appeal.⁷ Şerif Âmidî's edition ultimately dominated Turkic

madrasas, and the Ottoman *nakkaşhane* produced more works in Turki. Rachel Milstein, et al., *Stories of the Prophets: Illustrated Manuscripts of Qisas al-Anbiya'* (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 1999), 101.

- 4 Lâle Uluç's publications examine this absence of Persian-language *Shāhnāma* copies, among them "A Persian Epic, Perhaps for the Ottoman Sultan," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 29 (1994): 66; idem, "The *Shahnama* in the Lands of Rum," in *Shahnama Studies II* eds. Charles Melville and Gabrielle van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 159–180. Some *Shāhnāma* fragments appear to be from Istanbul circa 1530–1550 and have passages in Persian (LACMA nos. M.73.5.428–430, M.73.5.586).
- 5 Karin Rührdanz earlier suggested Istanbul as the production site of these truncated copies in "About a Group of Truncated *Shahnamas*: A Case Study in the Commercial Production of Illustrated Manuscripts in the Second Part of the Sixteenth Century," *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 118–134. The dissociation of these truncated *Shāhnāma* copies from Istanbul productions and their attribution to Baghdad has since been accepted, if not fully proven.
- 6 Prose *Shāhnāma* versions (uncertain if they are of the same text) include: TSMK H.1116; TSMK H.1518; TSMK B.284; NYPL Binney 17; IUL T.6131–33.
- 7 Consult Tülün Değirmenci, "A Storyteller's *Shahnama*: Meddāh Medhî and His Şehnâme-i Türkî," in *Shahnama Studies III: The Reception of the Shahnama*, eds. Gabrielle van den Berg and Charles Melville (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 199–215; idem, "Legitimising' a Young Sultan: Illustrated Copies of Medhî's 'Shāhnāma-ı Türkî' in European Collections," in *Thirteenth International Congress of Turkish Art*, eds. Géza Fehér and Ibolya Gerelyes (Budapest: Hungarian National Museum, 2009), 157–172.

Shāhnāma productions and was popular in Ottoman circles; the text to the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* is his translation.⁸

Şerif Âmidî originally worked on his translation between 1501–1511 and presented his two-volume manuscript to the court in Cairo shortly after its completion.⁹ Within Mamluk territories at this time, elites had Persian and Arabic works of poetry translated into Turki.¹⁰ The original composition of Âmidî's work which states the circumstances of its translation, production, and patronage in its colophon, is held in the Topkapı collection (TSMK H.1519).¹¹ It was carried off by the Ottoman victor Selim I (r. 1512–1520) after he defeated the Mamluks and captured Cairo in 1517. Later Ottoman scribes and artists employed this very manuscript as a prototype, copying its vowelised text and the iconography and compositions of its illustrations in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

In order to identify the Turkic text of the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma*, I compared a sample passage from within it relaying Faraydūn's distribution of his empire to his sons with other known versions of Âmidî's *Shāhnāma* that are of Mamluk and Ottoman manufacture. These are held in the British Library (BL mss. Or. 1126, Or. 7204) and Topkapı (TSMK mss. H.1519, H.1520, H.1522). I found the text samples all to be verbatim and written out in similar *naskh* calligraphy. Only BL ms. Or. 7204 and the Tajikistan copy, both first volumes of the text, are unvowelled and slightly less refined than the other specimens. The Tajikistan manuscript is ruled in four columns with thirty-one lines per folio and rubricated in Persian-language section headings, and its opening pages have notations in rhymed Turki, Arabic, and Persian written in different hands. It closes with the accession of Luhrāsp which marks a common division of Firdawsī's

8 Known copies of Âmidî's translation, first and/or second volumes, are: BL Or. 1126; BL Or. 7204; HDA 580; HDA 422; HDA 40; CWH 1032; NYPL Spencer Turk. Ms. 1; RIOS B.3690; RIOS E.8; sK Damat Ibrahim Pasha 983; TSMK H.1519; TSMK H.1520; TSMK H.1522.

9 Biographical information on Şerif Âmidî in Barbara Flemming, "Literary Activities in Mamluk Halls and Barracks," in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem: Institute of Asian and African Studies, 1977), 249–260; idem, "Şerif, Sultan Ğavri and the 'Persians,'" in *Essays on Turkish Literature and History* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 47–59.

10 Ira M. Lapidus, "Mamluk Patronage and the Arts in Egypt: Concluding Remarks," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 176.

11 For a transcription of the complete text consult Ananiasz Zajaczkowski, *Turecka wersja Šāh-nāme z Egiptu Mameluckiego: la version en turc du Šāh-nāme de l'Égypte Mamelouk* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1965). For details on the illustrations to H.1519 consult Serpil Bağcı, "From Translated Word to Translated Image: The illustrated Şehnâme-i Türki copies." *Muqarnas* 17 (2000): 162–176; Nurhan Atasoy, "Un manuscrit Mamluk illustré du Şahnama," *Revue des études islamiques* (1969): 151–158, pls. I–XVI; Esin Atıl, "Mamluk Painting in the Late Fifteenth Century," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 159–171.

Shāhnāma into two parts. Lacking both a detailed colophon and finished illustrative programme, the full provenance of the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* is doomed to ambiguity but through a close examination of its text and imagery I can reconstruct how it might have come into being. Since all other copies of Âmidî's work are attributed to late-Mamluk and Ottoman workshops, it is probable the Tajikistan copy was transcribed in Istanbul if not another Ottoman centre. According to Serpil Bağcı, "A group of Ottoman illustrated manuscripts of Şerif's *Şehnâme-i Türki* was probably produced all at once," implying the texts to various manuscripts were written out at some point in the 1520s through 1540s with illustrations added alongside or in subsequent decades.¹² Âmidî's text appears to have been recopied only in Istanbul, which makes me believe the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* is one of these versions.

Although not impossible, it is not likely that this Turkic translation of Firdawsî's text would have been copied under the Abu'l-Khayrids, since all other poetic and prose works made during the century in which they held power over Transoxiana are written out in *nasta'liq*. What is more, although the Abu'l-Khayrid court in Samarqand between 1514–1530 was a site of Turkic literary translation, Persian-language works of literature dominated manuscript production across the century.¹³ As for the Safavids, *Shāhnāma* copies produced within Iran were always in Persian. The Abu'l-Khayrids in Transoxiana and their rivals the Yadigarids based in Khiva appreciated both Turkic and Persian literary works, but manuscript production in Khwarazm, and the local market there for books, was limited.¹⁴ For reasons and by means we do not—and may never—know, the codex left Anatolia to reach Khurasan where illustrations were added, then it continued transiting to present-day Tajikistan. Migrating from west to east, the object would have been well received in Transoxiana. Other problematic manuscripts with questionable provenances currently housed in archives today located in neighbouring Uzbekistan are thought to have been produced in the region, and there they remained. Although one cannot securely attribute an object's origins based on its present-day location, in referencing another manuscript Lisa Golombek has remarked that its ongoing and current presence in Central Asia is "a good indication that

12 Bağcı, "From translated word to translated image," 166.

13 Devin Deweese, "Chaghatay literature in the early sixteenth century: notes on Turkic translations from the Uzbek courts of Mawarannahr," in *Turkish Language, Literature, and History: Travelers' tales, sultans, and scholars since the eighth century*, eds. Bill Hickman and Gary Leiser (London: Routledge, 2017), 99–117.

14 M. Annanepesov, "The Khanate of Khiva," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia, Vol. 5: Development in contrast: from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century*, eds. Chahryar Adle & Irfan Habib (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1999–2008), 67.

it was illustrated in the eastern Islamic world.”¹⁵ If we acknowledge the force of this observation, then the Tajikistan manuscript did not venture far to end up in Dushanbe where it continues to sit on a shelf.

2 Turkic Translations of Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāma* in the Abu’l-Khayrid Realm

Turkic *Shāhnāma* translations undertaken in the early Abu’l-Khayrid appanages (governing centres) prove the *Shāhnāma* had appeal in the Abu’l-Khayrid realm. At the same time that Âmidî was translating his version in Cairo in the early years of the sixteenth century, the first ruling head of the Abu’l-Khayrids—Shībānī Khan—was asking his court poets to translate the *Shāhnāma* into Turki. He could not have heard or read any parts of Âmidî’s version while he was alive, for following his death at the hands of Shah Ismā’īl his severed and stuffed head may have been personally delivered by a Safavid emissary to the very court of Sultan Qanṣūh al-Ghūrī in June 1511, just three months after Âmidî’s manuscript was presented to this same ruler in Cairo.¹⁶ Shībānī’s translation project could have been completed after his death in 1510, to be read aloud at the Tashkent court of his uncle Suyunch Khwaja Khan (d. 1525).¹⁷ Suyunch’s successor—and Shībānī’s first cousin—the more renowned Kildi Muḥammad Sultan (r. 1525–1532) had interests in Turkic translations of classic Persian works, which included Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāma*.¹⁸ We do not know if this task was fully completed beyond a few lines which incidentally, when read aloud, were “indescribably awful” to the Persian chronicler Vāsiḥī who was in attendance.¹⁹

15 Lisa Golombek, “Early Illustrated Manuscripts of Kashifi’s *Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī*,” *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 4 (December 2003): 631.

16 TSMK H.1519 is dated March 2, 1511 (2 Dhu al-Hijja 916). Ibn Iyas reports the head “of a person of the Tartar kings” arrived at the court of Sulṭān Qanṣūh al-Ghūrī “in a nice box” in June 1511. This gift exchange is analysed by Hassanein Rabie, “Political Relations between the Safavids of Persia and the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 15 (1978): 75–81. A forthcoming article by the present author will also take on this topic.

17 Maria Subtelny reports on Suyunch Khwāja’s receptivity to Turkic translations of Persian literature in “Art and Politics in Early 16th Century Central Asia,” *Central Asia Journal* 27, nos. 1–2 (1983): 145.

18 Information in DeWeese, “Chaghatay literature in the early sixteenth century.”

19 Subtelny, “Art and Politics in Early 16th century Central Asia,” 145. Fuad Köprülü questions the existence of this Turkic translation in the Abu’l-Khayrid court in “Çağatay edebiyati,” *İslâm ansiklopedisi* 3, part 24 (Istanbul, 1945), 309. A forthcoming article by the present author will also take on this topic.

It is my argument that the Tajikistan manuscript, which is the only extant copy of Âmidî's version in Transoxiana so far discovered, was written out in the Ottoman realm with no intended recipient, and was later transported eastwards. Based on comparisons to similar features and forms in other manuscripts, it appears that sometime after its import a visual programme with illumination was started in Khurasan while the region was under Abu'l-Khayrid control between 1588–1598. The imagery was made in the context of military successes, territorial expansion, urban planning, and centralised administration in the Abu'l-Khayrid realm.

3 Khurasan between 1560–1600

Khurasan has long been renowned as a locale of artistic production, and despite protracted conflicts between Safavids and Abu'l-Khayrids to control the region across the sixteenth century, cultural and economic production continued. During the decade when it came under Abu'l-Khayrid control and was politically and artistically isolated from the Safavid capital Qazvin, it maintained a level of autonomy. The manuscripts produced there were technically better than contemporary specimens from Transoxiana. As Karin Rührdanz states, "Khorasan had always been synonymous with superior artistry, and if [its] painters did not come to Bukhara, the Bukharans had to go to the painters."²⁰

Prior to their takeover of Khurasan in the last decade of the 1500s, the Abu'l-Khayrids seized Herat for nine months in 1574 which caused chaos in the Safavid zone.²¹ Iran further suffered after the death of ʿTaḥmāsp in 1576 which resulted in a power struggle. This allowed the Abu'l-Khayrids to attack eastern Iran again in 1578, but they were repulsed by the governor of Mashhad. The Ottomans were quick to take advantage of general Safavid disarray and engaged Iran in battle between 1578 through 1590, enabling the powerful Abu'l-Khayrid ruler 'Abd Allāh Khan and his generals to wage an all-out war to capture Khurasan in 1587 that resulted in a great victory for the Abu'l-Khayrids. Herat fell in April 1588, Mashhad followed in November 1589, then Nishapur, Sabzivar, and Isfarain succumbed in quick succession and were held for the next decade.²²

20 Karin Rührdanz, "The Arts of The Book in Central Asia," in *Uzbekistan Heirs to the Silk Road*, eds. J. Kalter and M. Pavaglio (London & New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 108.

21 Audrey Burton, "The Fall of Herat to the Uzbegs in 1588," *Iran* 26 (1988): 119–123.

22 These military campaigns are discussed in R.D. McChesney's publications: "The Conquest of Herat 1587–1588: Sources for the Study of Safavid/qizilbāsh—Shībānid/Uzbek Rela-

3.1 *Incoming Artistic Talent from Safavid Qazvin*

These political upheavals in Khurasan might explain how stoic—but still in need of work—artists and scribes from different backgrounds came together in the region to produce manuscripts to sell elsewhere. In Iran, artistic migration had begun earlier and in earnest with Shah Ṭahmāsp disbanding his courtly workshop and signing his Edict of Sincere Repentance in 1556.²³ These artisans in Qazvin sought opportunities elsewhere, some journeying to Khurasan and onwards to India. Artists and calligraphers relocating to these other sites assisted in producing affordable commercial copies and could also cater to royal patronage. Some of those in Khurasan worked in Ibrāhīm Mīrzā's (d. 1577) Mashhad-based workshop which produced fine manuscripts in the 1550s and 1560s.²⁴

3.2 *Incoming Talent from Abu'l-Khayrid Bukhara*

While these Safavid artists ventured east, artisans formerly working for the Abu'l-Khayrids in the 1550s and 1560s also migrated south and west to convene in India and Khurasan as a result of the decline of manuscript arts in Transoxiana. More a man of brick than of books, by the 1570s 'Abd Allāh Khan had a heightened interest in consolidating the state and erecting architecture at the (literal) expense of book production.²⁵ He gave away copies of his own com-

tions," in *Etudes Safavides* 39, ed. Jean Calmard (Paris and Tehran: Bibliothèque Iranienne, 1993), 69–107; "Islamic culture and the Chinggisid restoration: Central Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam. Vol. 3: The Eastern Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, eds. David O. Morgan and Anthony Reid (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 296–297. For an overview of events taking place in the final decade of Abu'l-Khayrid rule in Khurasan, read Barbara Schmitz, "Miniature Painting in Harat, 1570–1640" (PhD diss., New York University, 1981), 13–19.

23 A first repentance was decreed earlier in the 1530s. For the more-known edict of 1556, read Marianna Shreve Simpson and Massumeh Farhad, *Sultan Ibrahim Mirza's "Haft Awrang": A Princely Manuscript from Sixteenth-Century Iran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 335. Painting in Qazvin halted with Khudabanda's accession in 1578, and its artists and scribes dispersed to Khurasan, Astarabad, Gilan, Herat. Information in Anthony Welch, *Artists for the Shah: Late Sixteenth Century Painting at the Imperial Court of Iran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 14.

24 Consult Simpson and Farhad, *Sultan Ibrahim Mirza's Haft Awrang*.

25 For 'Abdullāh's building patronage see Mustafa Tupev, "All the King's Men: Architectural Patronage in Bukharan Madrasa Buildings from the 1560s," in *Beiträge zur Islamischen Kunst und Archäologie* 5, ed. M. Ritter, et al. (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2015), 28–56; R.D. McChesney, "Economic and Social Aspects of the Public Architecture of Bukhara in the 1560's and 1570's," *Islamic Art* 11 (1987): 217–242; Yuri Bregel, "Abdallah Khan b. Eskandar," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abdallah-khan-b-eskandar-saybanid-ruler-of-transoxania-d-1598>.

missioned manuscripts that had been produced earlier, and also those of his predecessors that had come into his possession, to the heads of other dynasties. Faced with few commissions by religious and military elites in Bukhara, Abu'l-Khayrid artisans saw more opportunities in Khurasan. After the Uzbeks secured control of Herat and most of the region between 1586–1598, illustrated books made there were exported back into Bukhara as a means to fulfill the limited market. Others were dispatched to India, where some manuscripts were reassembled and assimilated into local productions to sell.

3.3 *Convergence in Khurasan*

B.W. Robinson first identified the Khurasan style of manuscript illustration practised between 1561–1606 which he described in collection catalogues and articles from 1958 through late in his career.²⁶ Barbara Schmitz further refined Robinson's analysis on the region's manuscript productions in her dissertation from 1981 and in subsequent publications.²⁷ She found evidence that it was a commercial industry radiating around Herat employing local scribes and other copyists from Mashhad and smaller towns in Sabzivar, Malan, Tun, Bakharz, and Raza.²⁸

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- 26 Consult B.W. Robinson's many works on the subject: "Muhammadi and the Khurasan Style," *Iran* 30 (1992): 17–30; "Provincial Style" section in *Persian Miniature Painting from Collections in the British Isles* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1967); "The Khurasan Style" in *Persian Paintings in the John Rylands Library: A Descriptive Catalogue* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1980); the Khurasan listing under the "Safavid Period" division in *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Paintings in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 151–152. Rührdanz attributes the start of the Khurasan school to a copy of Astarabadi's *Athar al-muzaffar* dated 1568 (TSMK H.1233) in "The illustrated manuscripts of Athar al-Muzaffar: a history of the Prophet," in *Persian Painting from the Mongols to the Qajars: Studies in Honour of Basil W. Robinson*, ed. Robert Hillenbrand (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 206.
- 27 Barbara Schmitz, "The Beginning of the Khurasani School of Painting at Herat," *Artibus Asiae* 67, no. 1 (2007): 75–93. Workshop practices in Bakharz and Sabzivar have been examined by Yves Porter, "Remarques sur la peinture à Boukhara au xvie siècle," *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* [online] 5/6 (1998).
- 28 Tun is the historic name of the modern city Taban in southern Khurasan. Bakharz is the present-day city of Taibad between Mashhad and Herat. Robert Skelton provides a case study of a manuscript associated with that site: "An Illustrated manuscript from Bakharz," in *The Memorial Volume of the 6th International Congress of Iranian Art & Archaeology 11–18 April 1968* (Teheran: Ministry of Culture and Arts, 1972), 198–204. Norah Titley explains the continuation of the Qazvin style in Khurasan, and that Bakharz "provided patrons in the 1560s and '70s while Herat itself became yet again a noted centre at the end of the 16th century," and also quotes the Safavid chronicler Qāzī Aḥmad's scorn of Khurasan scribes, in *Persian Miniature Painting and its Influence on the Arts of Turkey and India* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 109–110. Marianna Shreve Simpson has investigated Raza and

Robinson credits the artist Muḥammadī (fl. 1527–1584) with developing and training other painters in the Khurasan style of painting in Herat between about 1565 and 1590.²⁹ From its inception, the style featured elements associated with Qazvin and Mashhad as a result of the disbanding of the Safavid courtly workshops. Talent that had been situated in the former site dispersed to the latter. Robinson characterises Muḥammadī's style and the Khurasan school of painting as "smooth, competent, and uncomplicated ... [in which] background details of vegetation and architecture are as simple as possible, and the colour-scheme is often dominated by pale blue, mauve, or light olive green, which are the favourite colours for the ground."³⁰ Schmitz describes the Khurasan style's usage of a "spare technique" coalescing around 1570 with large-scale figures and elaborate details of dress. Women are infrequent in the illustrations, and typical painted subjects are battle scenes and male assemblies.³¹ This is observable in the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma*.

Schmitz classifies two major styles, delineated as Herat and Mashhad strains, present in Khurasan on the cusp of the Uzbek invasion in 1586. The first is "based on the traditional development of painting in Herat [which was] almost surely practiced only in this city by the 1580's."³² She typifies the second elusive "Late Mashhad Style" as resembling manuscripts illustrated between 1556–1565 when artists congregated in Mashhad under the patronage of the aforementioned Safavid governor Ibrāhīm Mirzā.³³ After the death of their Safavid patron in 1577, artists—including Muḥammadī—continued working in Khurasan even as the administration changed from Safavid to Abu'l-Khayrid control.

3.4 *Shāhnāma Production in Khurasan*

While collating manuscripts completed in Khurasan between 1560–1600, Robinson noted the preponderance of Jāmī titles and surprisingly few Firdawsī

found "Razeh," a village in the *dihistān* of Tabas in the *bakhsh* of Dar Miyan, a *shahristān* of Birjand. Earlier scholarship read the locale as "Zarrah," but there were no variations on "Zari" in the atlases, maps, or gazetteers she consulted. "Codicology in the Service of Chronology: The Case of Some Safavid Manuscripts," in *Les Manuscrits Du Moyen-Orient: Essais De Codicologie Et De Paleographie*, ed. François Déroche (Istanbul: Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes d'Istanbul et Bibliothèque Nationale, 1989), 135, fn. 10.

29 B.W. Robinson, "An Amir Khusraw Khamasa of 1581," *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 35 (1997): 40.

30 B.W. Robinson, "Persian Painting," *Persia: History and Heritage*, ed. John Boyle (London: 1978), 84.

31 Schmitz, "Miniature Painting in Harat," 113–114.

32 *Ibid.*, 125.

33 *Ibid.*, 124–126.

or Niẓāmī texts. He surmised that works by these last two authors would have been “too purely Persian [sic-Iranian?] in their subject matter and appeal” since the manuscripts’ intended destinations were in India and Transoxiana.³⁴ Among all the Persian-language poetic texts illustrated in Khurasan during the late sixteenth century there exists but one completed Firdawsīan *Shāhnāma* in the Chester Beatty Library attributed to Muḥammadi circa 1575–1580 (fig. 3.1). Robinson attributes another dispersed folio in the John Rylands Library illustrating Gushtāsp slaying a rhinoceros to Khurasan in the 1570s (JRL Indian Drawings 18, f. 32^a).³⁵ This could indicate an additional *Shāhnāma* version was produced but it has not fully survived.

Francis Richard has suggested a Khurasan provenance to another complete Firdawsīan *Shāhnāma* (BNF Supp. Pers. 1122), but the manuscript requires further investigation.³⁶ A *Shāhnāma* in fine condition formerly in the Kraus collection was auctioned at Sotheby’s and has a colophon dated 1572, and the lot description states the eclectic illustrations come from the traditions of Khurasan, Qazvin, Isfahan, and Bukhara.³⁷ Schmitz mentions other copies made during the Abu’l-Khayrid occupation of Herat, such as one belonging to Shah Beg b. Mīrzā Ataliq (a patron so far unidentified) that was illustrated in Khurasan at the end of the sixteenth century.³⁸ Ataliq’s *Shāhnāma* contains illustrations that parallel those in another auctioned Firdawsīan *Shāhnāma* that has since been dispersed. This latter specimen was written out in 1580 by Quṭb al-Dīn b. Ḥasan al-Tūnī whose *nisba* (adjectival suffix) bolsters a Khurasan origin for the manuscript.³⁹ Its visual elements associated with Mashhad, Herat, and Qazvin further support this attribution. Taken together, these book arts

34 Robinson, “Muhammadi and the Khurasan Style,” 27.

35 Entry no. 804 in Robinson, *Persian Paintings in the John Rylands Library*, 274, pl. XIII. The folio is stylistically similar to the *Athar al-muzaffar* (TSMK H.1233) that Rührdanz attributes to the start of the Khurasan School.

36 Francis Richard, “Un manuscrit malaisé à dater et à localiser, Supplément persan 1122 de la Bibliothèque nationale,” *Études orientales* 11–12 (1991): 90–103.

37 Sotheby’s, 28 April 2004, lot 25 <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2004/arts-of-the-islamic-world-104220/lot.25.html>

38 The manuscript sold at Christie’s, 16 October 2001, lot 76 https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-3052252?ldp_breadcrumb=back&intObjectID=3052252&from=salessummary&lid=1. Schmitz attributes it to Herat circa 1590 on the basis of the rendered turbans (“Miniature Painting in Harat,” 131–132). Karin Rührdanz places its manufacture closer to 1600 in “The Samarqand Shahnamas in the Context of Dynastic Change,” in *Shahnama Studies II*, eds. Charles Melville and Gabrielle van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 227.

39 Loose folios sold at Christie’s, 28 October 2020, lots 30 and 31 https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-6282103?ldp_breadcrumb=back&intObjectID=6282103&from=salessummary&lid=1. Provenance information is in Schmitz, “Miniature Painting in Harat,” 123.



FIGURE 3.1 Rüdbā and Zāl seated in a pavilion. Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, undated
 CBL MS. PERS. 295, F. 76^v. IMAGE CREDIT: CHESTER BEATTY LIB-
 RARY, DUBLIN. CC BY-NC 4.0

made in the final three decades of the century suggest that Persian-language *Shāhnāma* productions in Khurasan were greater than what Robinson calculated.

Several differences distinguish these enumerated Persian-language *Shāhnāma* materials fully produced in Khurasan from our Tajikistan *Shāhnāma*. Most obvious is the language, as our case study is a Turkic translation of Şerif Āmidi's. The text-image relationship is also unique in the Tajikistan manuscript through the presence of smaller boxes intended for illustrations that are enveloped by text. In contrast, manuscripts completely designed in Khurasan often feature full-page illustrations segmenting the narrative. These inset depictions in the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* support the claim that the manuscript was written and arranged outside of Khurasan. Despite its unfinished state with sketched red outlines, the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* has figural and compositional comparisons to illustrations in other manuscripts from Khurasan on the cusp of Abu'l-Khayrid conquest that inform my analysis.

3.5 *Abu'l-Khayrid Patronage in Khurasan*

With the Abu'l-Khayrid conquest of Khurasan in 1588 by 'Abd Allāh and his generals, many of the artisans there chose to remain and serve the new Abu'l-Khayrid governors who now oversaw the larger cities. The political situation was also favourable for Bukhara-trained artisans to join the local workshops in and around Herat to illustrate manuscripts destined for the Indian market and specifically, later in the decade, the new Uzbek overlords. The most powerful and respected Abu'l-Khayrid representative after 'Abd Allāh Khan was Qul Bābā Kūkal-tāsh, the leading administrator of 'Abd Allāh's regime and his right-hand man.⁴⁰ McChesney affirms that "Qul Baba [like his father] was a man who loved literature and compiled a large library which he donated to his madrasa in Bukhara [erected in 1568]."⁴¹ Although he is known to have endowed 650 books to his eponymous madrasa on the north side of Lab-i Hawz, these may have only been written works since Schmitz states Qul Baba may not have patronised illustrated subject matter at all.⁴² It is however unlikely that all

40 Biography in McChesney, "Ch. 10: Historiography in Central Asia since the 16th Century," in *A History of Persian Literature (Book 10): Persian Historiography*, ed. Charles Melville (London: Tauris, 2012), 521; idem, "The Conquest of Herat," 85.

41 McChesney, "Islamic culture and the Chinggisid restoration," 255.

42 This numeric figure is quoted in Stacy Liechti, "Books, Book Endowments, and Communities of Knowledge in the Bukharan Khanate" (PhD diss., New York University, 2008), 44. Schmitz's claim about Qul Baba's lack of patronage is in "Miniature Painting in Harat," 20–21.

these materials would have been unillustrated, and Abolala Soudavar claims a copy of the *Gulistān* of Sa'dī in the Bruschetti collection from circa 1590 is of his commission.⁴³ One of its illustrations depicts a colourful gathering with figures seated on a light blue ground that is composed of hexagonal forms radiating from six-pointed stars. A circular fountain with swimming birds is on the lower left. Attendants bring platters and offer a napkin, and an individual in green offers a wine cup.

Other illustrations from different manuscripts have similar layouts and compositions as the folio from the Bruschetti *Gulistān*, and reflect the quality of book arts in Herat during the period of Qul Baba's governance. A *Dīvān* of Hāfiz (TSMK H.986) copied between 1581–1586 for the Safavid governor of Tun was produced right before the Abu'l-Khayrid siege. One of its folios depicts a musical gathering of dervishes on a geometrically-patterned ground with rows of quatrefoil tiling.⁴⁴ A loose folio that visually comports to the two mentioned so far is from a *Haft awrang* of Jāmī in the LACMA collection (fig. 3.2). It renders a slim-waisted king seated on a hexagonal throne in a garden pavilion conversing with courtiers. The lowest part of the LACMA scene renders a *chāvush* (footman) in an orange tunic leading a white horse offered a red flower by a figure in a slouched hat with a feather.⁴⁵ The folio is undated but the museum's mistaken attribution of "Qazvin–1560" belies Khurasan's indebtedness to incoming talent from the Safavid capital later in the century, and might be given a better provenance as Herat, 1580–1600.

Named Abu'l-Khayrid generals commissioned illustrated manuscripts elsewhere in Khurasan while Qul Bābā governed Herat between 1588–1598. A *Masnāvī* of Rūmī dated 1594–1597 was prepared for 'Abd Allāh Khan's son 'Abd

43 Abolala Soudavar, "The Age of Muhammadi," *Muqarnas* 17 (2000): 67; idem, *Reassessing Early Safavid Art and History: Thirty-Five Years after Dickson & Welch 1981* (Houston: Abolala Soudavar, 2016), 77. Soudavar titles the illustration "Qul Baba sending a gift to 'Abd al-Mu'min" and confidently attributes it to Muhammadi during the Uzbek occupation of Herat in the late sixteenth century. Schmitz is less presumptuous and titles the work: "Feasting and Divertisements [sic]" and dates it circa 1590 ("Miniature Painting in Harat," pl. 285, LVIII).

44 Reproduced in Soudavar, "The Age of Muhammadi," fig. 18; and idem, *Reassessing Early Safavid Art and History*, 77.

45 "Chavush" examples are mentioned in Robinson, "An Amir Khusraw Khamisa of 1581," 38, 39. Another term is *shatir*, whose role and attire have been discussed by Zukhra Ibrahimova Rakhimova, *K istorii kostūma narodov Uzbekistana: kostūm Bukhary i Samarkanda XVI–XVII vekov; po dannym srednevekovoi miniatūrnai zhihopisi* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo zhurnala "San'at", 2005), 37. The figure is called *peyk* in Ottoman sources and is described by Zeynep Tarım Ertuğ, "The Depiction of Ceremonies in Ottoman Miniatures: Historical Record of a Matter of Protocol?" *Muqarnas* 27 (2010): 262.



FIGURE 3.2 Loose folio. Jāmi, *Haft awrang*, undated

LACMA NO. M.73.5.577. IMAGE CREDIT: MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/ LACMA

al-Mu'min in Balkh.⁴⁶ 'Abd Allāh's nephew Dīn Muḥammad Sultan (d. 1598), who was awarded governorship of Khargird and Bakharz for his participation in the conquest of Herat, patronised a Jāmī *Haft awrang* copy with three illustrated colophons dated between 1592–1593.⁴⁷ No patron is mentioned in a *Dīvān* of Ḥāfiẓ manuscript copied in 1593 by the same Quṭb al-Dīn b. Ḥasan al-Tūnī scribe as Ataliq's *Shāhnāma* above, but it could have been made for an Abu'l-Khayrid elite in Khurasan (fig. 3.3). The parallels in this 1593 *Dīvān* to the loose LACMA illustration can further secure the latter's date of creation.

4 Illustrative Programme to the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma*

The Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* includes figures and compositions that comport with these mentioned materials that originate predominantly in Herat between 1580 through 1600. The manuscript also contains elements from courtly Ottoman book arts and those from the Abu'l-Khayrid appanages produced earlier. In lieu of harder evidence I rely on my eyes, and illustrated comparanda cause me to believe artists with different backgrounds converged in Khurasan and there contributed their skills. The stylistic uniformity of the Tajikistan manuscript's outlined figures makes it likely that designs and patterns from far-flung workshops were also brought to Khurasan for a single artist there to consult.

Farhad Mehran's analysis of break-lines (the verses closest to the image that dictate the scene to depict) in *Shāhnāma* illustrations demonstrates how a visual programme is always predetermined and situated within specific moments of the narrative.⁴⁸ In the case of the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* though, there is no indication of coordination between calligrapher and painter. The artist

46 AMA, ms. no. unknown. Francis Richard has inspected the manuscript and I am grateful that he brought it to my attention. Mentioned by Schmitz, "The Beginning of the Khurasani School," 80, fn. 27.

47 The earliest is dated September 1592 (AHT entry 83, mistakenly dated 1591), and is reproduced in Abolala Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts: Selections from the Art and History Trust Collection* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 217–219. The next is dated winter 1592–1593 and was formerly in the Rothschild collection [reproduced in Yael Rice, "The Emperor's Eye and the Painter's Brush: the Rise of the Mughal Court Artist, c. 1546–1627," (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2011), fig. 1.48]. The third colophon is dated April 1593 (Rice, "The Emperor's Eye," fig. 1.49). Soudavar attributes them to Qul Baba's patronage and names Muhammadi as the painter of the last two colophons. However, by the 1590s the artist would have probably been deceased.

48 Farhad Mehran, "Break-line Verse: Link between Text and Image in the 'First Small Shāhnāma,'" in *Shāhnāma Studies I*, ed. Charles Melville (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2006), 151–170.



FIGURE 3.3 Gathering in a pavilion. Ḥāfiẓ, *Dīvān*, dated 1593

BLO MS. ELLIOTT 163, F. 55^B

who sketched the images was fulfilling a programme plotted out earlier and far away. In comparing break-lines across surviving Şerif Âmidî copies, I have detected a standard format in three that repeat the same image cycles and captions: BL Or. 7204, the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma*, and TSMK H.1522. These support my claim that multiple copies of the text were transcribed and most were painted in the Ottoman domain, but the Tajikistan manuscript was taken elsewhere to be illustrated. Let us review the frontispiece and seven unfinished illustrations in the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* in sequential order as they appear in the manuscript, and conclude with some musings on the intentionality and purpose of creating it.

4.1 *Illuminated Frontispiece*

A beautiful frontispiece, incongruous to the rest of the codex in its relative completeness, opens the manuscript. Badly abraded in the lower sections and with the right side containing empty spaces intended to contain images, the illumination is in dazzling lapis with gold thumb-spaces in the right and left margins. Alternating gold, black, and turquoise palmettes with coral-coloured accents and minute white filigreed lines are evocative of a tradition associated with Timurid Herat that was maintained in Abu'l-Khayrid workshops.

4.2 *The Court of Kayūmars*

Kayūmars, the first king credited with asserting order over all of creation, is represented in the first illustration to the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* (fig. 3.4). His name, inscribed above in a sloppy hand, labels his epithet: “the first king.” The scene is one of the most commonly encountered, but here the iconography departs from typical depictions that render Kayūmars and his retinue wearing animal skins, for the figures in the Tajikistan version wear tunics and sixteenth-century headwear. An indecipherable phrase below the seated ruler could read *palang p[ā]dishāh* (leopard ruler), perhaps to instruct an artist how to fill in the outlined clothing. The attendant on the right side wears an unusual brown vest over his purple robes. A slimmer version of this figure wearing sage green and a short yellow jacket carries a gold platter in the Ḥāfiẓ *Dīvān* folio (fig. 3.3).

This partly-completed illustration in the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* is the only folio that permits an examination of the busy patterning of pastel-coloured surfaces in the manuscript. One can compare it to other illustrations from Khurasan, Qazvin, Shiraz, and Bukhara from the second half of the sixteenth century that also brim with colourful details and ornamented surfaces. Star, cross, square-shaped, and hexagonal geometric designs form the panels and floors in the illustrations we examined above from 1580s–1590s Khurasan (figs. 3.2–3). Cruciform and eight-pointed star panels with central dots in the lavender



FIGURE 3.4 The court of Kayūmars. Şerif Âmidî, Turkic Shāhnāma translation, undated CWH MS. 1032, F. 7^a

section on the Tajikistan folio appear in other Turkic *Shāhnāma* copies, for example the Āmidī version TSMK H.1522 circa 1544–1560.⁴⁹ Rows of teal squares in the Tajikistan illustration also recall wall ornamentation in the royal Ottoman manuscript *Siyar al-nabi* completed for sultan Murad III in 1594.⁵⁰ A close study of regional patterns and forms and colours that were in vogue in specific centres has yet to be written, but those present in the Tajikistan illustration suggest a transference of designs across workshops via sketches and materials moving through porous Ottoman, Safavid, and Abu'l-Khayrid borders.

4.3 *Ẓaḥḥāk's Vizier Announces Faraydūn's Arrival*

This illustration (fig. 3.5) also departs from traditional *Shāhnāma* iconography by presenting a regal Ẓaḥḥāk holding court who typically listens to a *maubad* (priest) interpreting his dreams. Here the *maubad* sits on a diagonal carpet below the ruler. The Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* illustration displays a macabre—and rarely depicted—element of the story: servants prepare the brains of two human victims to feed to two evil snakes that sprout from the demon king's shoulders. These reluctant chefs resemble the thin figure garbed in poppy-red with a gray slouched hat holding an unidentifiable item in the 1593 *Dīvān* illustration.

4.4 *Faraydūn Enthroned*

In the third illustration (fig. 3.6), Faraydūn sits on a platform with a *mandīl* (kerchief of sovereignty) in his right hand and left leg bent. Washes of gold are applied to the sky as well as to certain details of dress and props. Similar figure types are found in other folios produced in the workshops of Khurasan circa 1570–1581.⁵¹ To the left of Faraydūn in the Tajikistan manuscript a figure kneels performing the *kāsa-gīrī*, or ritual offering of a cup to the ruler that is derived from Mongol custom. This same attendant dressed in green offers a small cup in the Bruschetti *Gulistān* illustration. The figure standing on the far left in the Tajikistan composition clenches his hands at his waist in a mirror image of a similar figure wearing a long cornflower-blue robe in the LACMA composition (fig. 3.2).

49 Reproduced in Değirmenci, “‘Legitimising’ a Young Sultan,” 169, fig. 2.

50 Compare the illustration “Dream of the Byzantine Emperor” (TSMK H.1221, f. 86^b) reproduced in Carol Garrett Fisher, “A Reconstruction of the Pictorial Cycle of the ‘Siyar-i Nabī’ of Murad III,” *Ars Orientalis* 14 (1984): 75–94, fig. 5.

51 Consult BL ms. 10L P&A 48, f. 71^a. Reproduced in B.W. Robinson, *Persian Paintings in the India Office Library: A Descriptive Catalogue* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1976), fig. 217.



FIGURE 3.5 Žahhāk's vizier announces Faraydūn's arrival. Şerif Âmidî, Turkic *Shāhnāma* translation, undated
CWH MS. 1032, F. 14^R



FIGURE 3.6 Faraydūn enthroned. Şerif Âmidî, Turkic *Shāhnāma* translation, undated
CWH MS. 1032, F. 21^v

The two studious boys seated to Faraydūn's right in the Tajikistan manuscript are stock types that circulated as single-page album compositions. One version is attributed to Shaykh Muḥammad who was active in the Mashhad atelier of Ibrāhīm Mirzā and broader Khurasan between 1540 and 1580.⁵² In the Tajikistan composition, they are garbed in collared tunics and squat turbans; perhaps they are Faraydūn's older sons who gossip and plot as they jealously look upon their younger brother sycophantically serving their father. Two similarly-posed boys wearing red and green tunics sit to the right in the LACMA painting (fig. 3.2) and were probably rendered close in time and place to the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma*.

4.5 *The Death of Īraj*

The fourth illustration (fig. 3.7) portrays the violent struggle of Faraydūn's sons and bears overt connections to contemporary illustrations produced in Khur-

52 Reproduced in Arménag Sakisian, *La Miniature Persane du XI^e au XVII^e Siècle* (Paris: Les Éditions G. Van Oest, 1929), fig. 122.



FIGURE 3.7 The death of Īraj. Šerif Āmidī, Turkic *Shāhnāma* translation, undated
CWH MS. 1032, F. 29^R

asan.⁵³ Names in faded letters designate each figure, and a crown sketched at Īraj’s feet, now faded, is even labelled. The scene is common in *Shāhnāma* iconography. Usually, Īraj’s throat is slit or his head is bashed with a stool within a tent as overturned platters of fruits and spilled ewers add to the chaotic atmosphere. Instead, the victim here grips a dagger and grabs Salm’s throat; he’s not surrendering easily. The sparse use of gold emphasises the hilts and handles of the weaponry.

The sketch of the brothers killing Īraj in the Tajikistan manuscript most closely parallels a scene depicting a pious man attacked by a drunkard within a bound volume of selections from Sa’di’s *Būstān* copied earlier in Herat in 1527 (fig. 3.8). In the *Būstān* illustration as in the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma*’s “Death of Īraj,” a man is roughly held by two opponents while a pair of distraught onlookers on the right side of each illustration hold fingers to their lips in dismay. (Why they do not intervene is a question that must remain unanswered.) Soudavar

53 Reproduced in Abuseitova and Dodkhudoeva, *History of Kazakhstan in Eastern miniatures*, 206.



FIGURE 3.8 Pious man attacked by a drunkard. Sa'di, *Muntakhab-i Būstān*, dated 1527 AHT NO. 66, F. 11^v. REPRODUCED IN ABOLALA SOUDAVAR, *ART OF THE PERSIAN COURTS: SELECTIONS FROM THE ART AND HISTORY TRUST COLLECTION* (NEW YORK: RIZZOLI, 1992), FIG. 66B

attributes the illustrations to this *Būstān* to Mīrẓā ‘Alī working in Mashhad or Sabzivar circa 1565, and ventures they were commissioned by Ibrāhīm Mīrẓā.⁵⁴ Robinson, however, suggests the illustrations date even later, and I would attribute them closer to 1580 as well.⁵⁵ Larisa Dodkhudoeva too has observed that the Tajikistan manuscript’s illustrations display features of royal paintings associated with the *kitābkhāna* (scriptorium) of Ibrāhīm Mīrẓā, as well as compositions done by Muḥammadi.⁵⁶ We thus witness in the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* the modification of figures and compositions that had been used in courtly Safavid manuscripts from Mashhad.

4.6 *Tūr’s Attempt to Ambush Manūchihr*

The fifth illustration (fig. 3.9) is a powerful depiction of combat on the right side while Tūr sits on a platform in front of his tent on the other, his evil grimace delineated as a childish scrawl. A soldier casts a mistrustful glance at his cruel commander as he sets out amidst the carnage of dismembered limbs cleaved by sword blows to wage war against Manūchihr’s army. With severed heads piled at his feet, Tūr’s pose is the same as the ruler in the LACMA *Haft awrang* illustration. The same seated ruler and frenzy of clustered fighters are similar to illustrations from a *Timūrnāma* of Hātifi dated 1581 that Schmitz attributes to Muḥammadi while he worked in Herat.⁵⁷ In both the *Timūrnāma* as in the folio from the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* here discussed, rulers with daggers in their belts sit in front of yurts with fabric draped over the smokestack openings. Elsewhere in a siege scene to the *Timūrnāma*, a jumbled unit of soldiers raise their swords and shields as in the Tajikistan illustration. Troops in both manuscripts wear spiked *zānū band* (poleyns; knee guards), flat-footed ankle boots with flaps at the heel, and pronged arm coverings that would make a simple elbowing quite a lethal jab.⁵⁸

54 Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, 173.

55 Robinson, “An Amir Khusraw Khamsa of 1581,” 41, fn. 22.

56 Dodkhudoeva, *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia and India*, 80.

57 Description of the manuscript is in Schmitz, “Miniature Painting in Harat,” 127–128, 396–397. Illustrations are reproduced in her dissertation (note in particular plates 228 and 229). Sold at Christie’s in London, 31 March 2022, lot 4. Illustrations to it are reproduced in colour for the auction entry <<https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6361807>> (accessed 26 January 2023).

58 This same armour and footwear also appear in the Ottoman *Shaja’at-nama* (IUL T.6043) worn by two battling warriors in the lower right section of f. 124. Reproduced in Āsafī Dal Mehmed Çelebi and Abdülkadir Özcan, *Şecâ’atnâme: Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa’nın Şark Seferleri (1578–1585)* (Istanbul: Çamlıca Basım Yayın, 2007).



FIGURE 3.9 Tūr’s attempt to ambush Manūčihir. Şerif Âmidî, Turcic *Shāhnāma* translation, undated
CWH MS. 1032, F. 35^a

4.7 *Manūchīhr Slays Salm*

In the penultimate illustration to the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma*, Īraj's grandson Manūchīhr avenges the murder of his grandfather by slaying Salm. The impact of the blow topples Salm's crown and splits him lengthwise like a cucumber and his shield in two. This version of the scene repeats a common pictorial trope that presents the ferocity of battles by showing a victor cleaving a rival in half from head to waist. Although this gruesome act is very common in Persianate manuscripts, the humourous pouncing horse nipping at the haunches of the opponent's mount is not. However, two illustrations with this detail appear in manuscripts attributed to Ottoman Baghdad carried out in a style associated with *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* productions. In one of these, a similarly cleft victim atop a horse bitten by the steed of another rider appears in a battle scene from Nizāmī's *Iskandarnāma* in a *Khamsa* dated 1579–1580 (National Library of Russia ms. PNS 272, f. 234^b).⁵⁹ An equivalent composition is found in a truncated *Shāhnāma* written out in Bukhara in 1535 but perhaps illustrated half a century later in Baghdad (TSMK H.1514, f. 172^r). In it, Rustam skewers an opponent and lifts him from the saddle with the pink-speckled Rakhsh chomping at the rump of the riderless horse in front of him.

4.8 *Zāl and Rūdāba*

Although uncoloured and lacking the gold accents of the previous six unfinished illustrations, the final illustration in the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* (fig. 3.10) is the only one that bears overt parallels to Turkic-language *Shāhnāma* copies produced in the court *nakkaṣhane* in Istanbul. In the painting, Zāl ascends Rūdāba's hair in a Rapunzel-like love story. A *chāvush* appears in a pointed cap and sporran-like pouch tending to his lord's horse, and he is similar to the figure in the lower section of the LACMA *Haft awrang* folio. This Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* composition is remarkably similar to an Āmidī *Shāhnāma* translation in the British Library attributed to 1560–1580 Istanbul (Or. 7204 fig. 3.11). Although both of these Āmidī versions have nearly identical layouts, the heavily-outlined eyes and sartorial elements of the figures in the BL *Shāhnāma* are obviously of Ottoman creation. Rūdāba is attired as an Ottoman noblewoman reaching down from her balcony wearing a golden crown. Zāl is garbed in the animal skins and helmet associated with Rustam, and the phallic feathers of his helmet recall other headwear produced in the courtly Istanbul workshops during the late sixteenth century.

59 Reproduced in N.V. Diakonova and L.G. Giuzal'ian, *Sredneaziatskie Miniatiury XVI–XVII vv.* Series: *Vostochnaya Miniatiura i Kalligrafiya v Lenindradskikh Sobraniakh* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), pl. 29.



FIGURE 3.10 Zāl climbs Rūdāba's hair. Şerif Âmidî, Turkic *Shāhnāma* translation, undated CWH MS.1032, F. 49^R



FIGURE 3.11 Zāl climbs Rūdāba's hair. Šerif Āmidī, Turkic *Shāhnāma* translation, undated BL MS. OR.7204, F. 55^b. PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY MICHAEL ERDMAN

A differently-arranged portrayal of Zāl climbing Rūdāba's hair appears in another earlier Âmidî *Shāhnāma* from the Ottoman workshops circa 1545 (TSMK H.1520, f. 48^a). As noted by Zeren Tanındı, this folio has marked parallels to a scene in the fourth volume (*Osmanname*) of the Ottoman dynastic chronicle, the *Shahnama-yi al-i Osman* by Arifi (d. 1562) dated 1558.⁶⁰ The illustration renders a Byzantine princess helping an Ottoman soldier climb up the walls and open the castle door to let in the other troops who would conquer Constantinople. In Tanındı's analysis, the Âmidî *Shahnama* copy H.1520 done on inferior paper could have been an iconographic experiment. Its Turkic text was filled in by illustrators who would later prepare the *Osmanname* manuscript. This indicates that the head of the Ottoman court workshop may have stipulated that illustrators of dynastic chronicles must have previously illustrated a *Shāhnāma* either with the text of Firdawsī's original Persian or Âmidî's Turkic version. Tanındı states outright that the illustrations in the BL Âmidî *Shahnama* (BL Or. 7204) also support this claim.⁶¹

Applying her analysis, the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* executed on rough unburnished paper could have been intended as an incomplete mock-up that somehow escaped the Ottoman *nakkaṣhane*. Meruert Khuatovna Abuseitova and Larisa Dodkhudoeva have also suggested as much for the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma*. They write: "it did not matter for the copyist and artist in which language manuscripts were copied. They quite often used ready samples for illustrations for one text, more often from Persian painting, only slightly amending graphical models. ... The plots chosen for illustrating [the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma*] belong to the most conventional Persian book painting."⁶² Although all the illustrations in the Tajikistan manuscript are the product of a *kitābkhāna* in Khurasan at the crossroads of Safavid and Abu'l-Khayrid skirmishes late in the sixteenth century, details of patterning and compositional layout indicate an Ottoman presence in the illustrative programme as well. It cannot be proven that an artist trained in Ottoman workshops travelled eastward carrying the manuscript or clutched preparatory images destined for Tajikistan, but the presence of shared compositional and decorative elements across Istanbul and Khurasan confirms a visual linkage spanning these sites.

60 Zeren Tanındı, "The Illustration of the *Shahnama* and the Art of the Book in Ottoman Turkey," in *Shahnama Studies 11: The Reception of Firdausi's Shāhnāma*, eds. Charles Melville and Gabrielle van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 148. Reproduced in Esin Atıl, *The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1987), 61, fig. 31.

61 Tanındı, "The Illustration of the *Shāhnāma* and the Art of the Book in Ottoman Turkey," 149.

62 Abuseitova and Dodkhudoeva, *History of Kazakhstan in Eastern miniatures*, 130.

5 Conclusion

Despite its coarse and unfinished state, thorough textual and visual analysis of the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* brings to light the journey of its manufacture spanning the Ottoman Empire, and Khurasan at the nexus of Abu'l-Khayrid and Safavid control. A majority of images in the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* accompany the Faraydūn story, dwelling on the lead-up to the murder of Īraj. But it would be irresponsible to overemphasise the significance of these illustrations found early in the manuscript. One cannot claim that this part of the text, detailing the origin of tensions between Iran and Turan, was more important than all the other stories to whoever was the artist. In manuscripts where the text either predates the illustrations or was transcribed elsewhere, the scene selection does not necessarily reflect the artist's decision-making. Evidence and theory support my claim that the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* illustrations were sketched out and added later onto a manuscript from the Ottoman realm whose calligraphy was finished decades earlier. In the presented case study, the individual responsible for the visual material proceeded systematically through the finished text, but then inexplicably stopped and left the manuscript incomplete.

Although it might have originally been intended as a model for Ottoman scribes and artists to consult for a grander project, such as a biography of the sultan and his ancestors, the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* was deemed worthy of retention. The language of this sample text was unimportant; only the placement of images in relation to text concerned the draftsmen. Copying this first volume obviously took time, effort, and resources which endowed it with value. But who then transported it over a geographic expanse and why will never be fully ascertained. Perhaps it was an impecunious artisan affected by the turbulent politics later that century. Maybe he lacked royal commissions so was forced to itinerantly sojourn through the Persianate ecumene in search of work. He may have ultimately settled in Khurasan contested by the Safavids and Abu'l-Khayrids, creating manuscripts on demand or for export. There, he could have shared patterning and compositional ideas with local artists and others converging in Herat.

The Tajikistan manuscript was originally thought to have been illustrated in Khurasan during the 1570s. However, manuscripts associated with this region are too often attributed to this decade, and my more refined provenance of the 1580s through the 1590s is based on comparisons to contemporaneous samples. The imagery in the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* was added in a fascinating period when the Abu'l-Khayrids had annexed a large area of eastern Iranian territory, was worked on when alliances shifted, borders were contested,

and distinct regional identities were established. The intended owner of the Tajikistan manuscript—if it would have been finished—could have been a wealthy member of the Abu'l-Khayrid military elite judging from the gratuitous violence depicted in the illustrations, although one wonders who could have actually read the text. Regarding this issue of literacy, Abuseitova and Dodkhudoeva confirm that the heroes in the Persian and Turkic copies of the *Shāhnāma* epic “had enough popularity among writers and readers of ruling classes and broad masses of Turkic states in Northern Khorasm [Khwarazm], Kipchak steppes of Central Asia, [and the] Golden Horde for many centuries. Demand for manuscripts was rather high in these regions, and representatives of various clans could be their customers.”⁶³

In the fractured yet fusing domains of eastern Iran and Transoxiana in the late sixteenth century, artisans gathered in villages around Herat and in broader Khurasan where they offered their talents derived from elsewhere. Scribes were hired to execute oft-repeated works of poetry, or they brought previously-copied texts with them if they journeyed from afar. Painters contributed figures and compositions that had been learned and practised in different centres such as Qazvin, Mashhad, Istanbul, Baghdad, and Bukhara. Artists illustrated both Persian and Turkic texts in order to suit the aesthetic and linguistic whims of prospective buyers. Although fragmentary and lacking firm data elucidating its creation and transfer, the Tajikistan *Shāhnāma* exemplifies this paradigm through similarities to other illustrated manuscripts.

The manuscript was most likely a test project to appeal to Abu'l-Khayrid administrators in Khurasan. It is of particular significance that the object circulated across political and cultural boundaries. With similar fluidity, artisans in Khurasan came under, and were released from, different dynastic oversight. The artist of the Tajikistan manuscript could have previously produced manuscripts for Safavid authorities prior to 1588, then catered to Abu'l-Khayrid patronage for a decade, before again securing employment working on Safavid commissions at the start of the seventeenth century all the while remaining in Herat.

63 Abuseitova and Dodkhudoeva, *History of Kazakhstan in Eastern miniatures*, 133. Dodkhudoeva states the same concept in the Russian text to *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia and India*, 79.

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Collections

- AHT Art & History Trust, Houston.
- AMA Afghanistan National Archives, Kabul.
- BL British Library, London.
- BNF Bibliothèque Nationale de France.
- CWH Centre of Written Heritage at the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, Dushanbe.

HDA	Croatian State Archives, Zagreb.
IUL	Istanbul University Library, Istanbul.
JRL	John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, Manchester.
LACMA	Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
NYPL	New York Public Library, New York.
RIOS	Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Studies, Saint Petersburg.
SK	Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul.
TSMK	Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Istanbul.