Hence 'Rustam kills the witch' may be conjectured as picture n.3.16

III. The third lacuna is between ff. 425 and 426, and is of 100 couplets or fewer in length.17 It begins when the ambassador of India has presented the game of chess to Ksirā Nushūrān, after:

وزو برتار اسپان جنگی پیای

and ends at Buzurjmir’s invention of backgammon and his triumphant return from presenting the game to the Ray of Hind:

ز شهر و ز لشکر پذیره شند

Robinson, who sees the lacuna as of seventy-five couplets, suggests that it would have allowed for a half-page illustration of the introduction of chess from India. The available space is rather limited. Nevertheless an illustration—actual or intended—seems likely, since Baysunghur’s Shāhnāmah has that subject at this point. 'Introduction of the game of chess' is thus hypothetical picture n4.

Folio sequence

For the most part the catchwords run true, but in a few cases a disjunction or adaptation points to a problem in the folio sequence. Robinson collated the RAS manuscript with Turner Macan’s lithographed edition (Bombay, 1849), and produced a schema to indicate the correct order of the pencilled pagination.18 This schema is here slightly revised:


It might be expected that mistakes in folio order should be attributed to a period when the manuscript was unbound—as may have been the case about the third quarter of the eighteenth century.19 This may be true of the confusion in the 260s and in the 450s; however the confusion in the 370s results from original scribal error, since folios begin at one point in the text and leap to end at another. This material occurs at approximately two-thirds of the way through the text in the anecdotes concerning Bahram Gur. As with the matter of replacement folios, it may be supposed that work was interrupted or hurried in consequence of Muhammad Juki’s loss of power and failing health.

The problems with the order of folios do not affect the sequence of illustrations, though they have a modest effect on the intervals between a few.

Replacement folios

Robinson has pointed to occasional folios (not in the neighbourhood of illustrations) in the latter half of the manuscript that make plentiful use on both sides of hemistichs written on the diagonal arc that are on slightly paler paper. The deliberate consumption of space by spread text lends him to suggest that these folios were inserted to replace others intended to carry an illustration on one side, and that this might have been done to hasten the completion of the manuscript when Muhammad Juki’s health was failing.20 In these examples the diagonally set hemistichs consume space that is equivalent to twenty to twenty-six lines per folio, or up to—and beyond—full-page pictures (pl. 33). The scribe’s hand appears identical to that in the main text, except insofar as the diagonal line is slightly more spacious. The slightly yellowish paper appears to be of a different batch, rather than a different sort, and indeed does seem to be used in some of the later areas of normal text. These facts do indeed suggest a change of plan in the course of production. The replacement folios occur in nine places.21 Since it is not certain which side of a folio was intended for illustration, the identification of subjects sometimes requires alternatives:

A. 216. Kay Khusrav slays Shidah in single combat.
B. 230. Kay Khusrav defeats the King of Malqan; he takes a ship to cross the Sea of Zarah.
C. 235, Kay Khusrav has Afrasiyab and Garisvar executed.

(Folio 253, though having much diagonal text, does not appear to be a replacement).22
D. 310, Iskandar visits Dara in the guise of an ambassador; he defeats Dara in a first battle.
E. 321, Iskandar slays Fur in single combat; he visits the Ka’bah.
F. 349, Shapur, son of Ardashir, is enthroned; he fights against the army of Rūm.24
G. 372, Bahram Gur slays a dragon; resting at the house of a dijān, he hears the wife’s complaint of injustice.
H. 382, Bahram Gur kills a kung.25
I. 395, Qubad is restored to the throne;
he pardons his brother Jamāsp; he comes under the influence of Mazdak. 6

Illustrations, order of work, and dating

There are thirty-one surviving illustrations, of which one is a double page (No. 22). The majority are contemporary with the text, but two illustrations are evidently painted later, and are considered to have been executed in India (Nos. 29, 31). The layout of illustrations and text has evidently been done with careful artistic intent: the break line is carefully placed, and there are variations in the upper lines of pictures, and to a lesser extent their lower lines. Presumably intentions were discussed between scribe and painters, since the outcomes are so effective.

Some illustrations were painted before their rulings, since these break to accommodate them (No. 1), but some were painted or completed after, since rulings can be seen under the pigment (No. 14). In most cases there is a slim gap between a picture and its rulings, which suggests that the picture was in place before the rulings, without demonstrating it conclusively. This mixed pattern of work with at least two activities pursued in parallel suggests a busy studio.

Since the work of a scribe is faster than that of a painter, the introduction of replacement folios was probably intended to accelerate the work. This must be taken together with the scribes errors, the two picture spaces not filled in Timūrid times, the uncompleted illumination, and the unfinished subheadings. 2 3 To this may be added not only the absence of a colophon, but also the introduction of the patron's name into two illustrations (Nos. 23, 25), as though to assert his patronage before it was too late. The inference must be that work was brought to a sudden end by Muhammad Jā'fī's death in the Spring of 1445. In consequence the greater part of the production would have been in or shortly before 1444.

Notes and seal imprints

Notes and seals are transcribed in appendix D.

A note, possibly of the Timūrid period, is discussed in chapter II. Previously published seals and notes of the Mughal period are considered in chapter VI, and recently revealed material is introduced and discussed by A. H. Morton in chapter VII.

Gold ornamentation that appears to obliterate the print of a seal occurs on five illustrated pages: Nos. 6, 21, 27, 28 and 30. This is not very meticulous work, and may have been done in conjunction with the remargining. The original imprint may have been made to mark and safeguard favourite pictures. 29
Notes

1) ROYI, 3, 1834, pp. vii, issue. Here "cases and cases are probably used to mean a binding in which the front and back covers were produced separately before being linked at the spine.

2) Robinson, RAS599, pp. 84–85, and notes 1 and 2, mentions a small file of correspondence on the manuscript in the archives of the RAS—in spite of the kind efforts of Alice McFann, assistant librarian to the RAS, this is not now to be found. Robinson observes that a date of 1867 in connection with the 1927 rebounding must be an error; he also records that after the 1931 exhibition J. V. S. Wilkinson worked on the rebounding of the folio and that the rebounding was performed by Zehfeldt.

3) At the time of writing the text is undergoing conservation, while the mounted illustrations are stored separately.

4) See Appendix VII.

5) Skins were also used in the Windsor facsimile.

6) Not as in Note 11, 124 (see appendix D, not yet as Lenz and Lowry, No. 43, 491).

7) The line that immediately precedes illustration and upon which it depends. See Farhad Mehran, "The Break-Line Verse: the Link between Text and Image in the first Slab Shamsa", Shamsa Studies, 1, pp. 151–69. For the transcription of break-lines in the in the RAS Shamsa see appendix A.

8) Priemela P. Somers, "The Arts of Calligraphy", AICA, p. 38, and pl. 15 as an example of his hand in 1661. In pl. 17 above see end of first bahmas above subscripting.


10) Robinson, RAS599, p. 1, notes the distribution as: first 25 folios black on gold, 25–200 outlined gold, 200–530 unoutlined gold; remaining subsections not written. This is broadly the pattern but the detail is more miss. Back on gold runs from f. 8b to 22a, but it is found occasionally up to 444a. 180f has subheadings in both black on gold and unoutlined gold.

11) "And all possessed of wit to see, and faith, Shall greet me with acclaim after my death."

12) Robinson, RAS599, p. 93, RAS599, p. 1, calculates that some 1,600 couples are missing. In 1998 he expresses this at 16f., which is current as to the epic, but does not reckon in the end of the pseudo, which might account for eight folios. The first line does not quite extend to the revenge of Malsichir for the death of Hr."


14) See Appendix B.

15) Robinson estimates 1,000 couples, 10f. if he places the start as a little later, when Rustam is sent to find Kay Qhidir, and sees the ending in the Fifth Exploit, the capture of Urart.".

16) Ouasely Add. 176, f. 69v.

17) Robinson, RAS599, p. 94 and RAS599, p. 1. A pencil note at the foot of 475b, "Here a leaf is wanting or misplaced", may have been made by Wilkinson: see also following note.


19) Some marks of red pigment on the newly opened f. 360b suggest that at some period the manuscript was stored less than carefully.


21) Folios 216 and 295 cache added to Robinson's list.

22) Folio 353 has some lines on the diagonal on both recto and verso but appears to match the surrounding paper. It probably results from the exigencies of positioning two preceding illustrations close together (No. 20, 254, 'Guatnap plays polo before the Quray'; with a double page to follow shortly (No. 22, 260-270), 'Guatnap in battle with Aristaeus or Balch'). If an illustration were projected here its subject would probably have been 'Guatnap defeats Flylos the Khazar'.

23) Following this, the spread text of 312 is the adjustment for illustration No. 26.

24) Quayd is here not the queen, but the region of Giliin (WKN, VI, p. 295, and IX, p. 295).

25) See chapter 1, note 37, on the rhino-wolf. However, since the exploit takes place in northern India, the straightforward rhinoceros seems more likely in this instance.

26) The third possibility seems unlikely thematically, but is allowed for by the text.

27) Robinson sees the wars as produced within the imperial scriptorium and involved rapidly after the prince's death, but the unfinished elements argue against this.

28) It would approximate in size to the seal of Jukang (see chapter VI), but it is not certain that it was his.
Chapter IV

The Illustration

1. Firdausi encour-
   aged of Ghazni (7a)

The first illustration through the Bāyāstān come to seek if he is the

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Chapter IV
The Illustrations

1. Firdausi encounters the court poets of Ghazni (7a)

The first illustration is set a third of the way through the Baysunghuri Preface. Firdausi has come to to seek the patronage of Sultan Mahmud. He dismounts near a garden and sends a servant to the city to tell friends of his arrival. Within the garden are the court poets of Ghazni, 'Unsuri, Farrukhi, and 'Asjadi, together with their handsome slave boys. Firdausi, who has completed his prayers, wishes to approach them; but they decide that so austere a presence would be tedious. They devise a test that they believe will be sufficient to send him away. Severally they will extemporize the first three lines of a quatrain that Firdausi must complete. Firdausi approaches and accepts the challenge. The poets offer:

"Than your cheek the moon is less bright
Your beauty such, no garden flower comes nigh it"

Firdausi completes with:

"Just as Giv's spear did in the Pashan fight."

The court poets are impressed. Wishing to know more:

"...the poets questioned him closely..."

His learning is evident, and eventually they introduce him to the court of Sultan Mahmud.

It is the lyrical landscape that strikes us first, the turquoise ground, flowering plants, stream, and trees with gently moving branches, setting the tone of an ideal world. Rock which juts precipitiously into the right margin, and the form of which is echoed by a willow higher in the picture, lifts the scene away from the ordinary, as does the golden sky. The line of the stream leads the eye to the attractive youth and a companion, both in the bright clothes of courtly fashion, but confined to the lower left corner as an adjunct of the principle action. Above the stream, the main focus of the picture is the exchange between the four soberly dressed elder men. Clearly the man to the right of the group is Firdausi: he is closest to the river, which seems to mark the limit of the garden; he wears brown, a warmer and tamer colour than the blue or green of the others; his