Notes

1 This is not one of the most impressionistic of Persian quatrains, and is here translated accordingly. The RAS manuscript has space for the lines, but they have not been written. Wilkinson, p. 10, reads Fushan in the fourth line, and understands this as the name of a person. WW, III, p. 15 (and IV, p. 27) understood Fushan as the name of a battle, but they admit the similarity to Fushan as the name of both the father and son of Airshah. After the quatrains Bâyazehroor’s preface continues: šāh hağıfis: jang-e gir va pasban paurvand (‘they asked for the particulars of the battle of Giv and Fushan’)—perhaps Bâyazehroor or the compiler of his preface is himself a little unsure.

2 Wind-blown willow, derived from Chinese painting, was particularly characteristic of Shiahr style in the early nineteenth century, but Firdowsi was aware of a poetic association of wind and willow long before Chinese painting became influential (WW, II, p. 370).

3 For the style of individual birds see chapter V and appendix C.

4 Wilkinson, p. 10. See BGW, pl. LXVI, No. 89; Ehsadollah Habibi, Ahizad-Master of Persian Painting, London and New York, 1996, fig. 97, and p. 156, where date and patronage are connected. See also Lent and Lowery, p. 281, cat. 155.

5 WW, I, p. 245, explains the name as ‘much defleshed’. Some connection with the Zand Astara or zand ‘soul’ also seems possible.

6 Adamova and L. T. Giethro, pp. 51–

7 Adamova and L. T. Giethro, pp. 51–52; see also Sohrab’s catalogue, 29.4.98, p. 56, the ‘Stephen’s Šīyāh-nāmeh’. In these ‘Red ground’ Šīyāh-nāmes of strongly Persian traditions the Sīmurg is approximately owl-like, whereas in a ‘Small’ Šīyāh-nāmeh under Chinese influence, it is phoenix-like (see Simpson, Ekko, pl. 1, Freer Gallery of Art, 29.31).

8 The unit of a naked human form—albeit usually female—carried by an eagle has a long history: a Scythian silver dish in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, has an example (Nesta Saichkooh Curtis et al., The Art and Archaeology of ancient Iran: New light on the Persian and Sassanid Empires, London and New York, 1998, pl. XII.

9 Mauzār Akai, p. 2, pl. 1, Or. 2780; Bredel, IPP, pl. A, II. 796. The motif is not absent from Bâyazehroor’s Šīyāh-nāmeh, but it has suffered a full in situus (Materiopictuspp., pp. 41–43).


12 Robinson, RAS58, pl. 2, knows of one other example only, H. 1504 Topkapi Sarayi Kütüphanesi, dated 1509.

13 In the baldaquin, the contrast between perspectival and the needs of the composition is won by the latter; perspective fights on in the floor tiles, perhaps with a view to showing that the pool is lower than the surrounding area.

14 It is not clear if his large handkerchief is significant; an attendant on the left has another such.

15 Both the ‘Small’ Šīyāh-nāmeh of the Freer Gallery of Art, 29.55, and the Afn Abar (Šīyāh-nāmeh, 186, where Fustam as a youth (author published to my knowledge).

16 Baysan sees the effect as chiaroscuro (Wilkinson, p. xvi).

17 See chapter I, note 16.

18 Folio 44a, rather than as Robinson, RAS57, p. 96, and RAS58, p. 2, ‘44b’.

19 Lent and Lowery, p. 59, cat. 16b; Shiáhnāmepp., pl. 71, Per. 114;

20 Materiopictuspp., p. 53.

21 As often remarked by Tiley.

22 Stichtakine, MT, pl. XXIII.

23 Gray, Pp. 920, p. 5. This probably precedes Baysan’s publication of No. 19 in the December issue of the Burlington Magazine.

24 Pinck-Wilson, Fifteenth Century, p. 10.

25 See chapter II, note 30.

26 Gray and Blaž, No. 39, where the horse is pacing.


28 Rather curiously, the horse and rider group has appeared blended into a composition from the Essex Or. 2790 in a recent sale item (Robinson, 19.4.07, lot 8).

29 Mengu to Qajar, p. 65, pl. 10.

30 As Robinson indicates, RAS57, p. 90, and RAS58, p. 4, this is the only illustration in which Rustam’s headgear is formed of the full snow-leopard mask, but the infant Rustam had worn a snow-leopard cap, No. 4. See also Simas, Poores, No. 130 for a late fourteenth century example.

31 The massive and light cloud colours can be seen as brightened versions of real colours of the Iranian landscape, especially when mountains and plateaus are viewed in afternoon light.

32 Bredel, IPP, pl. 89.

33 Adamova, PPH, xlvii, p. 137, 1/17, detail.


35 Gray, Pp. 43, 102a, H. 3153, Topkapi Sarayi Kütüphanesi.


38 In addition to its heroic suitability for the task, Rustam is connected to Sīnakan by complex bonds of marriage (WW, III, pp. 323–24).

39 The RAS manuscript has kayán haynand (‘royal lasso’), which seems to be a deliberate shift by the copyist perhaps modelled on kaws-i haynand (‘royal belt’).

40 Some other manuscripts have kaws-i haynand (‘to the prison the lasso’), which seems more likely.

41 Wilkinson, p. 46. See chapter VI.

42 Sonatk, An Anbar, pl. 4, and p. 775.

43 Assy or Assya Darya.

44 Robinson, RAS57, p. 98 and RAS58, p. 4, seems to suggest that Lahaiq is killed first.

45 WW, IV, p. 7–8, on the numerical problem of the Battle of the Twelve Rivals.

46 See below, discussion of No. 24.
47 In the RAS manuscript, rather than Jahn.
48 Robinson, *RA57*, p. 98 and *RA59*, p. 4, mistranscribed as ‘2334’.
49 The topography of the epic is confusing. Already A. Rogers, *Shah-Naham*, p. 239, sees Gang Dugh and Gang Behlout as identical; *WW*, p. 136, implies the same (i.e., p. 189, it is suggested that the location may be that later known as Kular-e Naderi).
50 Bredt, ‘Little people’.
51 Asarpay, *Spahii*, fig. 28, shows a comparable device from Panjikent;
Bertold, *Uighur Beg*, p. 157, on continuing interest in such engines.
52 This subject is found on 1354, 1623, Dair-i Kuch, Kirbat. For Zarab or Zirih see *Le Strange, Leo*, p. 7 and maps facing pp. 323, 331. On the eastern border of Sistan, it is of variable date and is now known as Lake Hamun, with its continuation Gawil-i Zirih.
54 Apparently nose-hoops are unfamiliar to Chardin, when he travels in Iran in the 1670s (*Rosalind F. Ferrier, A Journey to Persia: Jean Chardin’s Portrayal of a Safavide Empire, London and New York*, 1995, p. 25).
56 See chapter I, note 57.
58 These lines, preceeding the picture, are on p. 2156. The lines following the picture might be rendered: ‘Faces of men of Nim grew deathly pale. They blanched to hear the shouting and the rail’.
59 Wilkinson, p. 12, notes the picture as having been ‘considerably touched up, probably in India’. It is difficult to agree with this, though there are some touches to the ground. It seems possible that some smearing took place, either when the seal was imposed on the left side of the text, or when it was obliterated.
60 Adamova, *PP/6 Narvarging*, pp. 115-17, 112. The practice of showing a person as hero extends back at least to Isma’ili *Salih* (Bredt, *PPP*, p. 47).
61 Wilkinson, p. 62; Schoofkorte, pl. LXVI-LXXV, p. 117.
63 Facsimile, p. 5; *Narvaris and PP*, p. 42.
64 It is argued in chapter V that connections are made between Mohammad Juki and various figures in the epic, but that he is not to be seen as any one exclusively.
65 Binyon in Wilkinson, p. xiv.
66 Robinson, *RA57*, p. 99. The walls in No. 23 do not have the striaations of No. 18; the blue markings of No. 23 do not match those of No. 18, but they do match those of No. 28; the outer walls of No. 23, like those of No. 28, have motifs representing *banna*’s technique (‘Builder’’s’ glazed-brick units, see pl. 15).
69 Faconville, *Spahii*, p. 125; *Spahii*, *Parthenos*, No. 16.
71 Robinson, *RA58*, p. 5, notes the presence of the inscription.
72 WW*, p. 327, two princesses named Humay are married, respectively, to their brother and father.
73 Bredt, ‘Beyond the Poles’, pl. 11.
74 The RAS text reads *Baranahah*—the short vowels are here supplied by analogy with *Baramah*, a fifth century Bishop of Nishib.
75 Wilkinson, p. 81, notes that the girl has a less extreme punishment in *Nizami’s* version; the same is true of *Amir Khosro’s*.
77 This abkhaz household appears to be at a simpler level than we might expect for the background of *Farzad*.
78 This boy is particularly likely to be a rhino.
79 As opposed to his end in *Nizami’s* version where the gil’ (‘wild ass’) leads him to his gil’s ‘grave’ in a pit.
80 Hephaestion or White Horse. See chapter II, note 46.
81 In the RAS manuscript *Spahii*, perhaps modelled on Socrates; otherwise *Sphain*.
82 The RAS text has Zarzilar, rather than *WW’s* *Razil*i.
83 Norqom and Duria know not one other example.
84 The walls of No. 28 are a better match for those in No. 23 than for those in No. 18 (see note 60). An additional feature that distinguishes No. 28 from No. 18, but that does not occur in No. 23, is bluish stone at the base of the wall. In No. 28 the units are shaded on the right, but in No. 18 on the left. This probably indicates the work of two different painters (Bredt, *PPP*, p. 172).
85 A hero, or reformer of the sixth century BC.
86 Gray, *PPP*, p. 20, and *PP*, pp. 89-92, 93, particularly in this illustration.
87 The American breed name now comes to mind, but the colour is found earlier in Asia (*The Silk Road: Text, Travel, War and Faith*, ed. Susan Whitfield, London, 2004, pl. 176, ridden by a female polo player, 8th century, northern China). It may be that Ralakh, Bostan’s spotted mount, was originally imagined thus. However, the first realistic rendition in a Persian miniature appears to be that in the *Khamsah* of *Nizami*, Add. 5900 of the British Library, in an illustration datable no earlier than the 1490s and perhaps of the early sixteenth century (see Bahari, *Bahar*, fig. 68, where a date of 1520 is proposed).
Chapter V

Intentions and Achievements

Themes of the Cycle

The illustrations in great manuscripts are not simply a means of explaining the narrative, as this will often have been familiar to their patron from childhood onwards. But since the production of an illustrated manuscript would involve considerable cost, it seems evident that patrons spent, or intended to spend, a long time poring over them. Thus we may suppose that there is a purpose in the pictures beyond the service of the narrative.

It seems very likely that a patron would to a considerable extent exercise his choice with regard to the subjects illustrated, either in person or by delegation to a familiar scribe or librarian, and that choices so made would reflect his concerns. Though subjects might have been chosen for inclusion following tradition, or from a chance whim, studies of various manuscripts suggest that they sometimes contain more developed schemes devised to carry particular meanings. At the simplest level subjects might be selected to celebrate the deeds of the patron or his ancestors and the situation in which he found himself. The function might then be purely laudatory; but if, for example, there were an emphasis on warfare, the past might be used as an image of the future and the contemplation of pictures would have an element of mental preparation for action.¹ In these cases we may suppose that the patrons were conscious of the effects the illustrations were intended to produce. From the sophisticated world of late fifteenth-century Herat, there is some evidence of darker lucubrations.² Here it is less easy to be sure whether patrons in problematic situations commissioned an aid to communion with themselves or simply required the subjects they felt drawn to. However that may be, the contemplation of a manuscript individualized by a selected cycle would certainly be a more secure procedure than the discussion of problems with a courtier, and perhaps more effective. In the Shāhnāmah for Muhammad Jāki we find a scheme of a very individual character. Since this is the only manuscript that we can associate with him, we may assume that his personal choice was much involved, and that we thus have the possibility to see something of his mind.

Unfortunately discussion of the cycle of illustration in our Shāhnāmah must be hedged about with caveats, because of the three lacunae and the ten folios of spread text. Nevertheless, a broad comparison may be made with the cycles for his brothers. If we collate the forty-three narrative subjects in Ibrahim’s manuscript, and the nineteen subjects in Baysunghur’s Shāhnāmah (omitting the illustration to the Barūnīmah), with thirty-one surviving subjects in Muhammad Jāki’s manuscript, we have a total of seventy-two subjects (see appendix B). Among these, four only are shared by all three brothers:¹ Firdausi encounters the court poets of Ghazni’, ‘Rustam slays the White Div’, ‘Murder of Sīyavush at the borders of Garsivaz’ and ‘Rustam drags the Khaqan from his elephant’. Muhammad Jāki shares seven further subjects with Ibrahim, and one with Baysunghur. Thus eighteen subjects for Muhammad Jāki are shared with neither brother. It is notable that none of the surviving pictures for Muhammad Jāki shows a person enthroned—
though two folios of spread text might have been intended for such. This is not the case with his brothers: the frequency of themes in Ibrahim’s Shahnãmah is almost one in eight (with two further examples among the non-narrative pictures), and for Bâyüşhurgh almost one in three—indeed the figure of Jamshid appears to portray the patron. Where Muhammad Jûki shares a subject with Bâyüşhurgh, ‘Isfandîyâr slays Arjâs, even the empty throne included in the earlier picture is omitted in the later. It thus appears that Jûki had turned his mind away from that aspiration. The cycle for Ibrahim is densest in the early, mythological part of the epic, that for Bâyüşhurgh suggests intermittent attention, that for Muhammad Jûki grows in individuality in the course of the poem, and would do so even more distinctly were the spread-text subjects included.

There is in Muhammad Jûki’s manuscript a very clear interest in heroism. This includes several heroic encounters with mythical creatures (Nos. 4, 5, 14, 20), but such scenes are out-numbered by scenes of human warfare. The role of the individual hero in war is given strong emphasis, since, with two exceptions, it is single combats that are selected. Together with this epic view there seems to be an interest in warfare at a practical or technical level: thus we have ‘Fortress of Gang Dzhî is mined’ (No. 18), while four scenes that depend on a well-directed arrow recall the fact that we have records of the skill of Muhammad Jûki himself with the bow (Nos. 10, 12, 25, 27). In addition to the scenes of combat, our Shahnãmah has heroic scenes that are not directly military, showing escape and rescue. Two subjects suggest an appreciation of heroism even when it does not have the full approbation of the narrative. At the end of the first part of the work (No. 19), the paladin who die in the snow have, in the mind of the narrative, chosen the wrong course, but the inclusion of the subject suggests that the patron approves their loyalty. In the penultimate picture (No. 30), Bahram Gushást, who is in battle against the nominal hero, Khusrâw, is selected for illustration, presumably as an example of indomitable courage.

Another positive theme might be called ‘the foreign bride’, which has a clear relevance to Muhammad Jûki’s life. Though ‘Tahmânah comes to Rustam’ (No. 6) is a frequent subject, it is surely particularly apt for a patron who acquired a wife when engaged in a mission beyond the usual territory, and while receiving hospitality from a local ruler. Another frequent subject, ‘Rustam rescues Bûzan from the pit’ (No. 15), shows another foreign bride in Maniziäh, and though this story is less precisely apposite for the patron, the theme may have contributed to its selection. Similarly, while not actually portrayed, the foreign bride is a factor in the stories of three princes who are singled out for attention, Siyâvush, Gushást and Qubâid.

These princes, all of whom go into exile, are important figures in the cycle for Muhammad Jûki, but they are not the only ones of significance. The theme of the son or prince displaced or unvalued, who nevertheless performs valiant deeds and is either restored to his rightful position or killed, is widely available in the Shahnãmah, but its selection is not inevitable and so must be a matter of intention. The theme may already be present in ‘The Simurgh restores Zâl to Sam’ (No. 2), where the cast-off child is reconciled to his father, but in a distant, brilliant, mythical world. Moving towards a more normal sphere of action, we have in the death of Suhârî (No. 7) the son who is not only unrecognized, but doomed. The ‘Fire ordeal of Siyâvush’ is often shown, but it may have an extra resonance here, since he is tacitly recognized by the queen, his stepmother, while Jûki apparently had much to fear from the queen, his mother. The story of Siyâvush ends in murder, and his son Farûd, having shown his martial skill, is to die for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The story of Gushást is given special emphasis in our manuscript by a cluster of three subjects, the last being treated as a double page (Nos. 20, 21, 22). The first two, which show the young Gushást, hot-headed but valiant son of Luhrâs, who triumphs in peace and war and is eventually received back by his father, probably represent the most hopeful and assertive imaginations of Muhammad Jûki. The third subject appears instead to represent the older Gushást as Shah Rukh, and perhaps to encompass the reflections of Muhammad Jûki as Isfandîyâr, a son held at a distance by his father. Three further subjects turn to the contemplation of Isfandîyâr’s own story. The hero triumphs over Arjâs (No. 23), holds his own in combat with Rustam (No. 24), and then, since the world is not large enough to contain both him and Rustam, he is slain by Rustam (No. 25)—the story thus having a tragic profile. Muhammad Jûki’s name appears in the first and the last, suggesting his concentrated attention. In No. 23 he is presumably to be linked with the valiant Rustam since it is on name appears with the deified Rustam. It does not seek for a precise sequence of events or a meaningful to of the spread and there can be no doubt the triumphs of Bahram Gushást.

The story illustrated: the Qubâid’ (No. 39). Possibly there was an enthral or certain on the cord of their enthusiasm for the cycle of Muhammad Jûki’s councils of state life from natural to sudden profound epiphany or hero’s fortunate escape. He then finds the people who was accorded to Mâ bichâh after all.

The next battle against those immediately of the sickness, very likely that of reflection or even the patron. Not on the wrong side of a recognition or devastation etc. The third subject of the epiphany fight already been may determination already sick, he is a litter. The the mill’ (No. 3) forms an opposite in which the private was betrayed. This it
with the valiant, conquering Isfandiyar, but since it is on the gate of Arjasp’s castle that his name appears, there is a hint of a connection with the defeated also; in No. 25 he is distinctively associated with the victorious Rustam. It does not seem then that we should seek for a precise correlation of the patron with any one personage in the epic, or even in a sequence of events, but rather that certain situations or shapes of narrative are particularly meaningful to him. It is notable that the subjects of the spread-text pages, presumably projected and then cancelled, predominantly concern the triumphs of Kay Khusrav, Iskandar and Bahram Gur.

The story of Qubad is not frequently illustrated: thus the inclusion of ‘Escape of Qubad’ (No. 28) appears doubly significant. Possibly there was an intention to follow it with an enthronement scene, but in default of certainty on that score it may be considered in conjunction with the last three illustrations as the coda of the cycle. If it is indeed the case that Muhammad Juki was being excluded from councils of state, and was perhaps fearing for his life from natural or other causes, then the attraction of the theme of deliverance and a sudden profound change for the better in the hero’s fortune is readily understood. Freed from prison by loyal friends, Qubad is at once able to act as a free agent and acquire his foreign bride. He then finds support among the Hayatians, who peopled the district of Khuttal, once accorded to Muhammad Juki.

The next picture, ‘Talhaun dies during the battle against his brother Gas’ (No. 29), was not immediately completed, presumably on account of the sickness or death of the patron. It seems very likely that this subject expresses a topic of reflection or even a wish on the part of the patron. Not only because the brother who is in the wrong succumbs, but because he does so from a recognition of the surrounding devastation and not directly from physical force. The third subject of the sequence, ‘Bahram Chubinah fights on foot’ (No. 30), which has already been mentioned, suggests the stoic determination of Muhammad Juki; when already sick, he was carried round his provinces on a litter. The final picture, ‘Yazdagird hides in the mill’ (No. 31), again painted subsequently, forms an opposing pendant to ‘Escape of Qubad’, in which the prince is reduced, trapped and betrayed. This may well have been the outcome that Muhammad Juki had come to expect; perhaps he could reflect that Yazdagird’s body was treated with honour.

It thus appears that the tenor of the cycle matches well with what we may suppose to have been the major interests and preoccupations of Muhammad Juki, given the facts and suggestions that we have regarding his life. The cycle does not provide a roman à clef with an exact equivalence between historical and narrative persons; instead, it intimates the colouration of the sorts of situation revolving in the patron’s mind. The connection is not to be discovered by the prince, since it is there because he desired it to be so; still less is it there for anyone else to find, for surely this manuscript is conceived for the patron’s sole use. He is free to see himself or reflect on his fate in Siyarush or Gushtasp, Isfandiyar or Qubad, or indeed in the collective paladins in the snow. In the early stages of the cycle the choices made are relatively conventional, though we can read significance into them when the cycle is considered as a whole; but in the latter part, either because the patron is coming to a realisation of the expressive power of selection, or because events are weighing more heavily upon him, or both, a tragic- stoic view comes to the fore. Even the deselection of subjects, as indicated by the replacement folios, which may have been made mainly in the interest of hastening the completion of the work, can perhaps be read as removing scenes that did not serve the introspection of the moment.

The Aesthetic of the Illustrations

The serious intentions behind the selection of subjects do not preclude the desire to delight by their execution. The first means of doing this is by colour: it is not uncommonly said of fine Persian pictures that they have jewel-like colours, but in this Sháh-náma it is particularly the so-called semi-precious stones that come to mind, turquoise, amethyst and lapis lazuli, together with coral and gold. There are in addition strong accents of a rich red, orange and yellow; details in white and pink; and less prominent, though wide, use of dark green, brown and black.

The picture shape varies. Height ranges from full page to half, being mostly about two-thirds; twenty-two have some form of step in the upper line; twelve have extensions of greater or lesser importance into the margin; three have extended
width; one has text within the picture. All variations are used expressively.

Figures are rather smaller in the picture than in the Shāh-nāma of Ibn al-Ḥāfiẓ and Bayān al-Rūkhi. The figure drawing is in the tradition of delicacy of the undated illustrations remounted in the Kaufmann von Dohna of 1431, or of figures in the Ghulāt-i of 1426–27, but it has rather more solidity and vitality. Drawn with a passionate precision, the figures rely less on gesture than do those in the earlier works, and more on the posture of the body and on facial expression. With regard to posture we may instance the characterisation of the poets of Ghazvī or the paladins in the snow, the contained excitement of Tahmān of the hesitation of Afra’īm al-Dīthī. Examples of expressive faces that illuminate the narrative are legion, showing concentration, anticipation, glee, amazement, resignation. In addition, some faces take us beyond the demands of the narrative. In the pictures of Gushātpā we have portraiture by proxy, while the infant Rustam and some attendant characters offer touches of humour, a feature that is hardly characteristic of the Shāh-nāma of Ibn al-Ḥāfiẓ and Bayān al-Rūkhi.

It is abundantly clear through sequences of manuscripts and sketches in albums that artists were trained in repetitive copying of figures or groups, which, like the well-practised steps of a ballet, they could eventually make their own. Thus the L-shaped group formed by Iskandār and the dying Dara is very familiar, but receives in this manuscript an extra pathos from Iskandār’s raised shoulders. Running through the manuscript like a leitmotif are variations on a ‘death’ group in which one figure leans over another, who is prone, to dispatch him. More generally, riders or groups of riders, or riders on elephants are achieved by the same process of repetition and variation. It is also worthy of mention that in pictures for Ibn al-Ḥāfiẓ and for Muhammad Jākhi horses in the context of battles, with the exception of that of Gushātpā, are shown as harnessed; while those in Bayān al-Rūkhi’s four pictures of warfare are all unarmoured.6

In consequence of the relatively small figures, action is seen as though at a greater distance, and over a wider field. However, the relatively distant view by no means lacks intensity; instead, the action is seen with such clarity, that we seem to have a heightened vision. It is one of the great achievements of these illustrations to guide the attention of the viewer with implied space and movement and time. Since the figures are small, compositions depend heavily on landscape elements, or, less frequently, on buildings. Contrasting ground colours organise the scene; and the use of colour sometimes extends to a reflection of the character or situation of the persons shown, in the mode of the pathetic fallacy. Rock marks the edges of these zones of colour; it also has a more autonomous role, sometimes involving extensions into the margin, as an indicator of space, and—paradoxically—of movement, which may also imply time. Trees are mainly used as marks of emphasis or elements of balance. In the Herat tradition, the means used to depict their foliage are remarkably varied, ranging through solid colour, banded colour, contrasted leaves, impressionistic brush-strokes and stippling, while their trunks show a debt, by way of album paintings, to Chinese models. Where buildings are involved, their lines direct the attention, or their doors and windows frame a particular figure, but they are always invested with so much additional agreeable detail that the viewer does not feel excessively regulated. Within these schemes of composition figures play a role with their colour accents, direction of movement, posture, and accoutrements in the form of swords, bows, spears and polo-sticks. The element of pace is again often brought to the fore: it is narrowed to the instant a sword strikes home, the instant before or the instant after an arrow is loosed, or it is immensely slowed by the intensity of a gaze.

The Painters

Between Bayāngursh’s Shāh-nāma of 1430, or his Chahār Maqālāt of 1431 and Shāh Rūkhi’s Nizāmī of that year, and the probable 1444 of Muhammad Jākhi’s manuscript our knowledge of the development of painting in Herat is somewhat sparse. Of dated work we have the Mī’rājnāma of 1436, and a Nizāmī with one contemporary illustration of 1442 (British Library, Add. 25900). The first does indeed have a vivid palette, and it offers some expressive faces among the damned as they experience the tortures of hell. This pair of manuscripts, however, hardly explains how at the turn of that period this Shāh-nāma was produced with a new and dynamic style.

The painters of Muhammad Jākhi’s Shāh-nāma—for it is evident that they are a plurality—are shadowy figures that we descry only through—Rūkhi, we have to—scarcely a scattering of firm and bound moment. Nor can the rein of painters, a certain that: Rūkhi’s one of direct access to and Baysunghur’s passed into Jü one effect a royal, Rūkhi, stocked the fourteenth. However that was clearly a: whether remote or to hand— as a point of de fortress of Ga the re-use of th century pictur a radically diff ‘Farūq shoots the demon so Anthology, which is similar, but th demonstrates pictures in pas to bring to vie work of an art Isfandiyar’ the another pictur a wordless cri ‘Gustaham, hu Lahlīk’. More subject Portr. Sām’. As later shown in pros becomes a pre intended to re generic idea o surely present step towards w would be a fr The discourse manuscript ill only in about s a spectrum; re nevertheless, search can orl doomed to re advanced with.
only through their work. For the period of Shah Rukh, we have a few mentions of the acquisition of painters, a studio report to Baysunghur, and a scattering of anecdotes. It is not clear how firmly bound painters were to the patron of the moment. Nor is it clear to what extent they had access to the major works of the past. If it appears certain that for 'Gushtasp in battle with Arjasp at Balkh', one of Muhammad Juki's painters had direct access to the Shāhānshāh of both Ibrahim and Baysunghur, does that mean that both had passed into Juki's collection? Or was there in effect a royal, 'central' library belonging to Shah Rukh, stocked with material extending back to the fourteenth century available on request? However that may be, among the painters there was clearly a sense that work of the past — whether remembered, transmitted by sketches, or to-hand — was a resource that could be used as a point of departure. Thus we have in 'The fortress of Gang Dizh attacked with mines' the re-use of the composition of a fourteenth-century picture of the capture of Baghdad, with a radically different style of drawing; and in 'Farūd shoots Zarasp' the re-use of 'Humay kills the demon sorcerer' from Iskandar Sultan's Anthology, where the drawing is relatively similar, but the difference in nominal subject demonstrates the ingenuity of the painter. Two pictures in particular suggest a new willingness to bring to view thoughts about the contemporary work of an artist. In 'Rustam in combat with Islāndiyār' the painter is not simply reproducing another picture of combat, but he is also offering a wordless critique of another's work in 'Gushtam, having slain Farshidvard, dispatches Labārūk'. More clear to see is the case of the rare subject 'Portrait of the infant Rustam shown to Sim'. As later in the manuscript the patron is shown in proxy portrait, here the emissary becomes a proxy painter; the figure may not be intended to represent an individual, but the generic idea of a moment in a painter's activity is surely present. The picture is thus an interesting step towards the self-reference of painters that would be a frequent feature of Mughal painting.

The discerning hands amongst unsigned manuscript illustrations is often difficult, since variations in style tend to present themselves in a spectrum, rather than in discrete groupings; nevertheless, the scrutiny demanded by the search can only be useful. Identifications are doomed to remain at the level of hypotheses advanced with varying degrees of confidence. A complete list of such is offered as appendix C, but here it is perhaps sufficient to mention various stylistic groups, which may be the work of one painter, or possibly of one dominant painter and those whom he influenced.

It is fairly clear that, in spite of the reference to Ibrahim's Shāhānshāh in 'Gushtasp in battle with Arjasp at Balkh', no painters from the former worked for Muhammad Juki. On the other hand, there does appear to be a painter 'A' whose work is distinctly marked by the style of Baysunghur's Shāhānshāh, in the matter of colourful rock with bold texture markings suggestive of leopard skin, and a bold clarity in the composition. Since this style comprises three examples, they may all be mentioned:

No. 2 The Simurgh restores Zāl to Sim
No. 11 Ruhām attacks Bāzūr, the sorcerer
No. 26 Iskandar comforts the dying Dārā

A second painter, 'B', has also worked for Baysunghur in the Shāhānshāh and Chahār Maqālāsh, perhaps the Ḥūfī Ḍīyār, and in the Nizami of 1431 for Shah Rukh. This painter draws rather round faces and conveys a certain ease, even when portraying dire situations. Paradigms of this style are:

No. 3 Portrait of the infant Rustam shown to Sim
No. 10 Farūd shoots Zarasp
No. 19 The paladins in the snow

The third painter, 'C', is the most crucial to the enterprise. He draws faces somewhat narrower than those of the second painter, his interpretations are marked by intensity and complexity of characterisation, and his compositions are exceptionally daring and expressive. He undertakes the first illustration, as is frequently done by the chief painter, and he infuses his spirit into all the rest. Among his achievements are:

No. 1 Ferdusī encounters the court poets of Ghaznī
No. 6 Tahmīna comes to Rustam
No. 23 Islāndiyār slays Arjasp in the Brazen Bowl

This painter's style is related to that of the Gulistān of 1426–27, or indeed the Kālibhū to Dinnah illustrations remounted in 1431 His
slightly miniaturised buildings in No. 23 indicate an affiliation to western Iran, and it may be that he was trained in Tabriz.

In addition to these three styles of major importance, two sets of battle pictures may be the work of individuals—though they may result from the models used. The work of a painter ‘D’, who frames his combats with curled rock, would comprise Nos. 12, 17, 25, 30; while a painter ‘E’, particularly interested in the heroic Rustam, and favouring golden clouds, would produce No. 24. An old painter ‘F’ would paint No. 13; and a neophyte formerly trained in illumination No. 16.

Illustrations to the Khamsah of Iṣḥāq al-Dunyābī

Surrounding the colophon of the Khamsah (f. 325b), and in the same gold ziqa', an inscription records that the illumination and the illustrations were done by Khvājā 'Alī al-Tābrīzī. Since attributions are exceedingly rare at the period, this is valuable information. However, the assertion was evidently made in anticipation of eleven illustrations the authorship of one hand is very doubtful. Six pictures are drawn with a confident amplitude and have figures with a distinctly round face. A further three pictures have weak drawing and spindly figures, with at least a trace of later work. In both these groups most compositions have a long pedigree, extending to the Jalāyirid period or that of Iškandar Sulṭān. The remaining two pictures have faces less round than those of the first group, and a preference for beards.

What then is the role of Khvājā ‘Alī al-Tābrīzī? Stchoukine suggested that he should be identified with the Khvājā ‘Alī muqarnās, whom Bayānghur acquired from Tabriz, presumably in 1470. He would thus be a painter of a certain age, whose style was formed in Jalāyirid times and who might well favour traditional compositions and motifs. This may be exemplified in ‘Bahram Gūr in the Black Pavilion’ (pl. 66), with its Jalāyirid tabbed curtains, and small angels in the spandrels. We may imagine that this master painted the first group of pictures and laid out or dictated the compositions of the second. It is here assumed that Khvājā ‘Alī is Painter B of the Shāhnāmah. This proposition may seem at first not to differ from the views of Stchoukine and Robinson, who see his work in both manuscripts. However, they focus discussion upon ‘Combat of Iškandar and Dārā’ in the Khamsah, here seen as the weak work of a follower. In it some debt to the Shāhnāmah is of course undeniable in the isolated combatants, with supporting armies ranged up either side, the harnessed horses, and the blue foreground rock with its row of helmeted heads beyond. Curiously, Stchoukine makes his comparison with the rather atypical combat scene, ‘Rustam in combat with Īsfandiyār’, in which the combatants are alone and large in the picture. Robinson points out that the standard-bearer group in the Nizāmī picture equates to that in the Shāhnāmah’s ‘Farūd shoots Zarāsp’, and ‘Rustam shoots Askabūs’; he sees the group as ‘unchanged’—in spite of the squirming banner ends introduced in the Nizāmī. The factor that is not taken into account in these comparisons is the lack of a guiding composition in the ‘Combat of Iškandar and Dārā’, which leaves it somewhat insipid.

A better case for continuity from one manuscript to the other lies with pictures that are at first sight less evidently similar. The Shāhnāmah’s ‘Portrait of the infant Rustam shown to Sām’ has many points in common with the Khamsah’s ‘Bahram Gūr in the Black...