

means of separating the two main sections of the book. The figures would have appeared up-to-date and fashionable in 1650, and they might have injected an element of surprise to the reader perusing such a well-known text. As with the compositional deviations from the norm in Mu'in's illustrations to this manuscript, the pendant figures of a standing man and woman offer an unexpected element that must have been intended to delight the patron.

The Illustrations

Despite Mu'in's debt to his master Riza in many aspects of pictorial composition, palette, and subject matter, his individuality shines forth in the 1650 *Shahnameh*. The following section of this article will analyze each illustration stylistically and will propose where the known dispersed pages were placed in the original manuscript as well as the placement of others that have not yet surfaced.

1. *The Divan of Tahmuras*, fol. 8a.

The David Collection (fig. 15)

Tahmuras was the great-grandson of Gayumars, the first king in the *Shahnameh*. He ruled for only thirty years, but accomplished a great deal, teaching people crafts and domesticating animals. Although Tahmuras tamed the *divs* and captured Ahriman, the incarnation of evil, Mu'in has not chosen to portray him in a moment of drama or action. Instead, the beardless King Tahmuras is seated on a platform throne at the right, attended by two musicians and a cupbearer. Kneeling in the foreground at the left, one of the members of the divan, or council, gestures to Tahmuras with open hands, while two other men kneeling behind him drink wine. Two more cupbearers holding long-necked flasks stand behind them with heads inclined toward the enthroned king. This scene takes place at the beginning of the short chapter on Tahmuras.

The purple, fuchsia, and peach hues of the walls, floor-coverings, and one musician's robe are typical of Mu'in's paintings throughout most of his career. The blue mural in the niche with a bird in foliage

recalls the wall painting in Mu'in's image of the *Old Man Who Fell from the Roof*, which is dated 1050 / 1640-1641.²⁶ The figure wearing a turban with a *taj*, or vertical extension around which the turban cloth is wrapped, reflects the social category of the *Shahsevan*, or people strictly loyal to the shah, common in the first half of the 17th century. Although this composition is not innovative, it contains many of the traits associated with Mu'in Musavvir's manuscript illustrations. Moreover, the choice of episode is unique not only in Mu'in's work, but also in the 17th-century *Shahnamehs* listed in the Cambridge website.

2. *Faridun Binds Zahhak in the Presence of Shahrnavaz and Arnavaz*, fol. 13a.

The David Collection (fig. 16)

This scene depicts Faridun's victory over the evil king Zahhak while the two sisters of Jamshid, the previous shah, observe from the side. Zahhak knew that the young Faridun would defeat him because he had dreamed that an Iranian prince with an ox-headed mace would overpower him. While the battle raged between Zahhak's army and the citizens of his realm, he slipped into his palace, intent on murdering the sisters of Jamshid. Instead he encountered Faridun, who bashed his head with his ox-headed mace. Then, in response to a heavenly message, Faridun refrained from killing the evil king and instead bound and took him to hang in a cave for eternity. In the illustration, Zahhak's empty throne awaits Faridun at the right while his mace lies in the foreground. The sisters of Jamshid, among the few women who appear in the illustrations to this manuscript, raise their forefingers to their lips in the gesture of astonishment.

The palette of this scene closely resembles that of the previous illustration, with its purple ground, violet throne, and bright red passages. Although the impassive facial expressions and the women's poses are standard fare in the work of Mu'in, he has added some subtle touches to this illustration, notably the minor variation of the background of the wall painting – white in the throne chamber and gray in the room to the left. This suggests that the sisters stand

in a separate chamber, without interrupting the flow of the action taking place on a terrace in the foreground. The scale of the terrace is implied by the purple floor color, which fills the vertical strips between columns of text. Finally, the swooping bird in the mural above Faridun's head emphasizes the focal point of the composition.

A *Shahnameh* of 1650 copied in Isfahan contains another version of this illustration.²⁷ Rather than minimize the number of figures to focus on the key elements of the story, the Isfahan artist has added soldiers and courtiers as observers. These figures detract from the drama of Zakhak's capture and point up the care with which Mu'in populated his scenes in order to present the crux of the narrative. Why Mu'in and the Isfahan artist should have chosen to depict this episode, as opposed to the hanging of Zakhak at Mt. Demavand, is unclear.

3. *Zal Comes to Rudabeh's Palace and Sees Her on the Roof*, fol. 24b.

The David Collection (fig. 17)

Zal, the ruler of Zabul, learned of Rudabeh, the beautiful daughter of his tributary, the king of Kabul, and after enlisting the help of her handmaidens, came to her palace. Here she has loosed her long, musk-scented locks, which the *Shahnameh* says reached the ground from her balcony. Zal chose to send up a lasso of his own and climb it to her chamber. Although a gatekeeper sits beside the door to the palace, he appears unaware of Zal's conversation with his charge. Meanwhile, the handmaidens stand in an upper chamber with wine and incense, ready to greet the lover of their mistress.

This composition, with a prince on horseback conversing with a princess on a balcony or second-storey terrace of a palace, has a long history in Persian painting. Early 15th-century images of Khusrau at Shirin's palace from the *Khamseh* of Nizami were copied and adapted to other manuscripts such as the *Shahnameh* through the 15th and 16th centuries. Mu'in has included trees and other vegetation here, not only to suggest the landscape outside the palace, but also to echo the description of Rudabeh as "A cypress over which the full moon

shone."²⁸ The balcony extending into the right-hand margin may be unfinished and serves no pictorial purpose. Nonetheless, this is one of Mu'in's favorite architectural elements, found in many of his illustrations.

Another version of this illustration from a mid-17th-century manuscript produced in Isfahan²⁹ contains many of the same elements: the gatekeeper, the handmaidens, and other servants, but Zal is greeted at the door by a duenna rather than preparing to climb up a rope to Rudabeh's chamber. The style of the Isfahan miniature conforms to that of the Windsor *Shahnameh*,³⁰ a style that was in favor at the court of Shah 'Abbas II and at the courts of the most powerful figures in his government. However, despite its reference to an archaic rendering of the prince at the palace of his beloved, Mu'in's painting depicts the story less ambiguously than its fashionable Isfahan counterpart.

4. *Rustam Kills the White Elephant*, fol. 32a.

The David Collection (fig. 18)

As a boy, Rustam and his father Zal traveled to Sistan. After a night of revelry Rustam was awakened from his sleep by people shouting that the local chief's white elephant had broken loose and was on a rampage. Armed with his grandfather Sam's mace, Rustam went forth to confront the beast, but the gatekeeper attempted to stop him. Rustam responded by striking the gatekeeper on the head, smashing his way through the gate, and felling the elephant with a mighty blow to the head. In the painting, Rustam, dressed in his nightclothes and without turban or shoes, has just landed his mace on the elephant's head, as the gatekeeper lies bleeding next to the open gate.

Mu'in has retained the palette of purple, red, and violet here while adding another trademark element, the stormy sky with clouds depicted in his characteristic watercolor technique. Moreover, the sagging flesh of the elephant's legs and belly anticipates Mu'in's later animal drawings. The twisting bark of the tree also will appear often in Mu'in's manuscript illustrations. While the text of the *Shahnameh* implies that Rustam emerged from a walled palace or