

city to combat the elephant, Mu'in has depicted a yurt-shaped tent with its dome extending into the upper margin and one of its ropes attached to the tree.

Illustrations of this popular episode are found in 17th-century *Shahnamehs*, including the mid-century manuscript in the Gulistan Palace Library. There the artist has emphasized the rage of the elephant and has included several figures that it has trampled. Most other Safavid renderings of this scene include numerous figures and a detailed architectural setting. By contrast, Mu'in has limited the figures to two men and the elephant, and has chosen to illustrate the minute after Rustam has subdued the elephant. The prototype for this composition may thus be an illustration of Khusrau defeating the lion from the *Khamseh* of Nizami rather than a *Shahnameh* image.³¹

5. *Rustam Lifts Afrasiyab up by His Belt*, fol. 39b.

The David Collection (fig. 19)

Still young and beardless, Rustam had acquired his tiger-skin cuirass and his magnificent horse, Rakhsh, by the time of this episode. He is portrayed on the battlefield effortlessly lifting the archenemy of the Iranians, Afrasiyab, by his belt into mid-air. Unfortunately, the weight of the Turanian king was too great. The belt snapped and Afrasiyab crashed to the ground, where he was surrounded by his troops and saved.

In keeping with his other illustrations in this manuscript, Mu'in has focused sharply on the protagonists while clustering the onlookers along the horizon and below in the foreground. The vertical format of the picture surface and the use of the lavender ground as a backdrop for the action emphasizes Rustam's feat of lifting Afrasiyab straight up in the air with one hand. While versions of this illustration in other 17th-century *Shahnamehs* depict the same moment of the story, in most of them Rustam and Afrasiyab are placed in the midst of the army on the battlefield. Here the figures holding battle horns at the top of the image as well as those wearing helmets imply a battle without overpowering the primary significance of the story and its illustration.

6. *The Death of Afrasiyab*, fol. 41a.

The David Collection (fig. 20)

This painting is out of place in the manuscript and has been inserted near where *Rustam Kills the White Div* was removed. (See Appendix I.) Afrasiyab was finally caught by the Iranians and brought before Kay Khusrau. After reminding Afrasiyab of all the noble and royal Iranians he had executed, Kay Khusrau beheaded him. Through the splattered red-brown blood Afrasiyab's white moustache is visible, attesting to his advanced age at the time of his death. The treatment of rocks that swoop toward the moody sky is typical of the work of Mu'in, as is the grouping of figures around the periphery of the image. Unlike the first five illustrations in the manuscript, this one is signed in the border below the outer marginal lines.

7. *Rustam Kills the Dragon with the Help of Rakhsh*, fol. 44a. The David Collection (fig. 21)

One of the most dramatic and attractive paintings in the manuscript, this illustration depicts Rustam slicing the back of a dragon that has coiled itself around Rakhsh as the horse bites him. The episode was the third of seven so-called courses that Rustam endured as he traveled through Mazandaran to rescue Kay Kavus, who had been taken captive by the White Div. Unwittingly Rustam had chosen to sleep near a dragon's lair. Twice the dragon emerged and Rakhsh awakened Rustam, who chided the horse because he could not see the dragon. The third time, as he was about to become very angry at the horse, Rustam noticed the dragon and both man and horse attacked and killed it.

Maintaining his customary palette of pink, purple, bright blue, and red, Mu'in has effectively contrasted the writhing blue dragon with pinkish Rakhsh and the purple ground behind him. Here the dragon's head is almost obscured as it is tucked in between the horse's saddle and its own back. Mu'in's drawings of dragons attacking other animals and a painting of a man attacked by a dragon indicate his abiding interest in the monsters.³² Despite the quarter of a century separating the David Collection *Shahnameh* and the single-page painting of a man



Fig. 5. *Rustam Kills the White Div.*
Whereabouts unknown.

attacked by a dragon in the British Museum, Mu'in continued to show his dragons with a single branch-like horn, flaming shoulders, and a long, flattened gold snout.³³ Unlike other mid-17th-century renderings of this episode, Rustam dominates the scene and the dragon threatens to constrict Rakhsh like a large snake.

8. *Rustam Kills the White Div.*

Whereabouts unknown³⁴ (fig. 5)

This illustration is the first in the chronological sequence of the *Shahnameh* to be removed from the David Collection manuscript. It portrays the final stage of Rustam, who rescued Kay Kavus from the White Div. Kay Kavus was blinded while being held captive and the only cure was the blood of the liver of the White Div. Here, Rustam eviscerates the *div* whom he has apprehended in a cave while his king stands tied to a tree at the right. As mentioned earlier, this composition differs minimally from an earlier version attributed to Mu'in in a *Shahnameh* with illustrations by various artists.³⁵

9. *Rustam Discovers Suhrab's Identity.*

British Museum, 1922.0711.0.2, signed and dated by Mu'in Musavvir *Ramadan* 1059 / September-October 1649 (fig. 3)

This painting illustrates the tragic meeting between Rustam and his son, Suhrab, when Rustam has mortally wounded the young soldier only to find, when he removed Suhrab's armor, that his armband contained the amulet that Rustam had given Suhrab's mother. After their first and only tryst, Rustam had never seen Suhrab's mother again, so his realization that he had killed his own son came as a terrible shock to him. Although this is the second in the sequence of images known to have been removed from the manuscript, it appears after a substantial gap in the narrative, suggesting that other illustrations, yet to come to light, may have been removed from the folios between the previous painting (no. 7) and this one. This image is of particular significance because it is the first dated page from the manuscript, but is dated nine months later than the first colophon in the manuscript. Whereas 16th-century versions of this scene show the two protagonists in the company of several or many other figures, in the 17th century, most of the illustrations of this episode revolve around the two main figures and their horses and grooms.

10. *Garsiwaz and Gurwi Slay Siyavush.*

The Israel Museum, 582.69³⁶ (fig. 6)

Also removed from the manuscript, this painting illustrates the execution of Siyavush at the hands of the Turanian Gurwi under orders from Garsiwaz. Siyavush was an Iranian prince, the son of Kay Kavus. He decided to leave Iran and go to the court of Afrasiyab because his stepmother had become enamored of him and then denounced him. In Turan he fell in love with and married the daughter of Afrasiyab. His good fortune did not last, however, because jealous courtiers turned Afrasiyab against him and he was doomed. Here the ringleader Garsiwaz has ordered Gurwi to murder Siyavush. Gurwi dragged him out into the countryside by his beard and then beheaded him, allowing his blood to run into a bowl.

The reason for excising this illustration from the manuscript probably has more to do with the popularity of the scene than with the innate qualities of the painting. Such well-known episodes would pre-