

knowing that he would come to Kabul to collect the tax. They ordered a deep pit to be dug and had sharp spikes placed in it. Then these were concealed. When Rustam arrived, he and Rakhsh fell into the pit and were impaled. Rustam realized that Shaghad was watching his demise hiding behind a tree, so with his last gasp Rustam shot an arrow that pierced the tree and killed Shaghad.

Mu'in has made the most of the narrow format of this page, squeezing Shaghad between the barren tree and the right-hand margin. The artist may have intended to alter Shaghad's pose, since his left hand appears in an anomalous position, perhaps because of its proximity to the margin. Also, the passage between his leg and the tree is either unfinished or else part of the tree was stripped of its bark. Rustam and Rakhsh, set off against the black pit, fit neatly between stepped text blocks. Although blood pours from Rakhsh, Rustam's wounds are less obvious, perhaps to emphasize his heroism, even in death. In the 1066 / 1655 *Shahnameh* in the Chester Beatty Library,⁴⁸ Mu'in has reversed the placement of the figures, with Shaghad behind the tree on the left and Rustam on the right, shooting at a less acute angle. While the figure of Shaghad is depicted in a more assured manner, the composition is less dramatic than in the David Collection version.

35. *The Hanging of Faramarz*, fol. 214b.

The David Collection (fig. 36)

Bahman succeeded his grandfather, Gushtasp. To punish Zal, the father of Rustam and ruler of Zabul, Bahman had Zal chained and plundered his palace and lands. Learning of Zal's fate, his grandson Faramarz decided to go to war against Bahman. The armies fought for three days, but the tide turned against Faramarz and he was left battling, wounded and alone. When Faramarz was brought before Bahman, the shah showed him no mercy, ordering that he be hanged upside down while still alive.

Here Bahman in his jeweled crown and robe of gold observes on horseback as Faramarz is hoisted with a noose around his neck, suspended from a hook. Mu'in has not followed the text by showing him upside down. Rather the action centers on the

mounted archers firing at the torso of Faramarz. Instead of figures watching the execution from the horizon, as in most of Mu'in's illustrations, all of them except the king are engaged in killing their enemy. A simplified version of this composition appears in the John Rylands Library *Shahnameh* of 1650 (Pers. 909).

36. *Iskandar Comforts the Dying Dara*.

Whereabouts unknown⁴⁹ (not illustrated)

When the Iranian king Dara was defeated in battle by Iskandar, known in the West as Alexander the Great, he sued for peace. Two of his ministers, however, thought that they could gain land and favors from Iskandar if they murdered Dara. When news of their deed reached Iskandar's ears, he rushed to be with Dara. He was unable to save his foe, who was also his half-brother in the *Shahnameh*, but did try to comfort him. The scene portrays Iskandar holding Dara in his lap while soldiers, elderly sages, and two bareheaded youthful mourners observe with sad expressions. A groom similar to the one in several of the David Collection *Shahnameh* illustrations stands with two horses in the right background next to an imposing leafy tree.

37. *Iskandar's March into the Gloom and Khizr's Discovery of the Water of Life*.

Private collection (fig. 14)⁵⁰

In his quest for the source of eternal life, Iskandar took the advice of the sage, Khizr, who set out with him in the Land of Darkness. At one point, the two became separated and Iskandar eventually reached a mountaintop, where the angel Israfil warned him of his impending death. Khizr, meanwhile, found the Water of Life, which he bathed in and drank. As in the image of *Rustam and the Iranians in the Snow* (no. 25, fig. 11), Mu'in has combined the two parts of this story in one image. In the foreground, Khizr and another sage kneel beside the darkened pool that is the Water of Life while two horses wait behind them at the left. At the right, Iskandar's troops are ranked beside and behind the king, all looking up, not down at Khizr. The ground has been painted black to suggest the Land of Darkness, and in the



Fig. 14. *Iskandar's March into the Gloom and Khizr's Discovery of the Water of Life*. Private collection.

background the mountains appear misty and less jutting than Mu'in's usual crags. The painting is a beautifully rendered evocation of the moment of Khizr's enlightenment and Iskandar's intimation of mortality.

38. *The Death of Iskandar*, fol. 237a.
The David Collection (fig. 37)

Although Alexander the Great sacked the Achaemenid capital at Persepolis and put an end to that great dynasty, he was transformed in the *Shahnameh* into a

Persian king. Scenes such as this of his death in Babylon enjoyed popularity in the late 16th century, perhaps in response to the depiction of this incident in the *Haft Awrang* of Jami produced for the Safavid prince Sultan Ibrahim Mirza.⁵¹ The illustration does not follow the text closely, since Firdausi did not describe the king as lying in the lap of a prince when he died. Mu'in has included three bareheaded youths holding kerchiefs, two of whom have laid their crowns on the ground. They gaze at the dead king, who lies crowned on his coat of mail beneath a parasol. Oddly, since Iskandar's youth is emphasized in the text, he has been portrayed with a white beard. Two soldiers frame the central figural group while horses and two grooms stand in the foreground. The landscape conforms to Mu'in's others in this manuscript.

39. *Ardashir Recognizes his Son Shapur Playing Polo*, fol. 243b. The David Collection (fig. 38)

Ardashir had ordered his minister to kill his beloved, the daughter of Ardavan, unaware that she was pregnant. The minister, who had this knowledge, hid her and her son, Shapur, until the boy was seven years old. At that point, to the joy of Ardashir, he confessed what he had done. The king then ordered his son and one hundred other boys to be brought together to play polo, stating that he would recognize his own son when he saw him.

Here, Ardashir looks admiringly at his son, who is about to run faster than the other boys to hit the polo ball, even though it came close to the king. The boy holding the polo ball, the only one not wearing a crown, is the groom whom Ardashir asked to send the ball in his direction to see how the boys would react. On the basis of dress, the boy in the golden robe and crown is the most likely candidate to be identified as Shapur. Interestingly, the boys are not playing polo on horseback, but play a game akin to hockey. The figure with the moustache next to the king is presumably his minister, while the other figures are servants or attendants. As in many of Mu'in's illustrations, the composition consists of two parts, the king and horsemen on the right and the boys on the left.