

IO Islamic 3540

Date 16th century

Title Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmah*

Content A late 16th century Safavid copy of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmah*, probably from Shiraz containing 56 miniatures without attribution. On the basis of a miniature ascribed to Zayn al-‘Ābidīn in BL Or.12985, f.90v (*Garshaspnāmah*), the three double page compositions and 23 others may be attributed to him (ff.1v-2r, 10r, 130r, 138v, 144v, 153r, 166r, 176r, 183r, 195v, 206r, 356r, 454r, 463v, 477v, 490v, 502r, 519r, 528v, 536b, 547v, 561r, 568v-569r). The other artist, responsible for the remaining 32 illustrations, was more conventional in his treatment and exemplifies the normal late-sixteenth century Shiraz style at its best.

Illustrations)

(1v - 2r) Double-page miniature within a gorgeous illuminated border, of Sulaymān and Queen of Sheba.

(10r) Bath scene, illustrating the story in the preface of how Firdawsī scornfully gave away to a bath house attendant half the paltry reward Sultan Maḥmūd gave him for writing the *Shāhnāmah*.

(17r) Gayumarṣ and his court.

(25r) Farīdūn strikes down Zāḥḥāk in the palace in the presence of Jamshīd's sisters.

(35r) Tūr defeated and killed by Manūchihr.

(44r) Zāl embracing Rudābah.

(54r) The birth of Rustam.

(71v) Rustam and the White Demon.

(91r) The death of Suhrāb.

(98r) The fire-ordeal of Siyāvash.

(106r) Siyāvash playing polo with Afrāsīyāb.

(116r) The murder of Siyāvash.

(121v) Rustam in battle against Afrāsīyāb.

(130r) The enthronement of Kay Khusraw.

(138v) Persian troops sacking Farūd's castle.

(144v) The battle of Mount Hamavan between the armies of Gūdarz and Pīrān.

(153r) Ruhām and the Sorcerer.

(166r) Combat of Rustam and Ashkābūs.

(176r) Rustam in battle, after being visited by Pīrān.

(183r) Rustam attacking the fortress of Kāfūr the man-eater.

(195v) Pīrān saves Bīzhan from the gallows.

(206r) Rustam's raid on Afrāsīyāb's palace after rescuing Bīzhan.

(219r) Barzū lassoing Farāmarz.

- (225r) Combat of Rustam and Barzū.
- (238v) Encounter of Afrāsīyāb and Pilsam.
- (242r) Rustam falls in combat with Pilsam. The latter being kicked by Rakhsh.
- (254v) Human slain by Bīzhan.
- (262r) Combat of Gīv and Pīran.
- (274r) Rustam leading the Persian army to war with Afrāsīyāb.
- (281v) Kay Khusraw slays Ustuqīla the Kurd.
- (288v) The women of Afrāsīyāb before Kay Khusraw.
- (299r) Execution of Afrāsīyāb by Kay Khusraw.
- (307v - 308r) Double-page miniature within a sumptuous illuminated border. The enthronement of Luhrasp.
- (315r) Gushtasp killing the dragon.
- (324v) Death of Zarīr in battle between Iran and Turan.
- (339v) Isfandiyār's attack on Arjasp in the Brazen Fortress.
- (356r) Rustam shoots Isfandiyār in the eyes.
- (361v) The death of Rustam.
- (373r) Iskandar comforting the dying Dārā.
- (381r) Iskandar visiting the Ka'ba.
- (390r) Iskandar building the wall against Gog and Magog.
- (401v) Bahram Gūr winning the crown from between the lions.
- (411v) Bahram Gūr hunting.
- (416v) Bahram leading the Khāqān captive.
- (429r) Battle between Pīrūz and Khūshnavāz.
- (441v) Capture of the Roman fortress by Nushirvān.
- (454r) Battle between the Khāqān and the Haytalians.
- (463v) Introduction of chess at the court of Anushirvān.
- (477v) Anushirvān attacking a moated Roman fortress.
- (490v) Sāvā Shāh slain by Bahram Chūbīn.
- (502r) The blinding of King Hurmuz and burning of his palace.
- (519r) Khusraw embracing Maryam .
- (528v) Bahram Chūbīn killing the lion-ape.
- (536v) Khusraw and Gurdīya, sister of Bahram Chūbīn.
- (547v) Shirū'ī sends an envoy to Khusraw.
- (561r) Rustam killed by Sa'ad at the battle of Qadisīya.
- (568v - 569r) Double-page miniature within a sumptuous illuminated border: hunting scene. Upper part of 568v damaged and repaired.

Physical description

Material: Paper.

Foliation: ff 569.

Dimensions: 46 x 29.5 cm. [leaf].

Script: Nasta'liq in 4 columns of 25 lines per page on gold-sprinkled paper.

Decorations: 56 miniatures of which three are double compositions; magnificently illuminated heading on ff. 15v-16r; section headings throughout illuminated; margins on illustrated folios embellished with large floral scrolls in gold.

Binding: Modern scarlet morocco binding.

Ownership

Possibly Francis Edward Rawdon-Hastings, 1st Marquess of Hastings (1754-1826), Governor-General of India 1813-23

Bibliography

Hermann Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian manuscripts in the Library of the India Office* (Oxford, 1903-37)

Basil W. Robinson, *Persian Paintings in the India Office Library: a Descriptive Catalogue* (London, 1976)