

The Simurgh:  
Representations and their Meaning in Persian Painting

by

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## Abstract

The fantastic Simurgh, the mythical bird of ancient Persia, has maintained a significant presence in Persian culture. The visual and textual references to this bird manifest a mysterious and complex symbolism shaped around this super-natural creature in Persian literary sources. The Simurgh evolves from a myth, to the symbol of royalty, to the guardian of Persian kingdom, and finally to represent the Divine. This promotion and transformation is facilitated through the idea of divine protection and kingship inherited from ancient Persia, transforming the representations of the Simurgh into powerful images.

The intertextual analysis of the Avestan and Pahlavi references to the Simurgh, and their comparison with the characteristics of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma*, allows this study to trace the amalgamation of these sources in the Persian national epics. Through a process of literary creativity, Firdausi combines the characteristics of the two mythical birds, *Saēna* and *Vāreghna*, to shape the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma*. The transformation of ancient Persian myths into Islamic Persia continues in the works of Islamic philosophers such as Suhrawardi who, once again, synthesized the mythical bird of pre-Islamic Persia with its recent embodiment in the *Shāhnāma*. In this phase of transformation and in the work of Suhrawardi's contemporary, 'Attar, the Simurgh was raised to the symbol of the Divine.

It is in the light of these literary sources from the genres of epic literature and religious writings that the representations of the Simurgh are contextualized in this study, and the formation of three iconographic prototypes for the bird are proposed. In addition, the presence of the royal, divine, and Iranian glory (*farr-i īzadī*, *farr-i Īrānī*), sought for by both rulers and individuals in the Persian system of thought, charges the representations of the Simurgh in the illustrated manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* produced between the fourteenth and the seventeenth-century, in the realm of Persian painting in particular, as well as in Iranian visual vocabulary, in general.

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The chapters in this work do not follow a uniform transliteration system. The transliteration of Avestan words follows the C. Bartholomae's Avestan Dictionary, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*. The transliteration of Pahlavi words follows D. N. Mackenzie's *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*. For Persian and Arabic words, I have followed the transliteration system of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. The diacritical marks are only used for the names of written sources, and not for the names of individuals and places. 'Ayns and hamzas, however, are indicated in most cases. Dates are given in their 'CE' version.

## Introduction

To this day, the *Shāhnāma* has had an omnipresent impact on life, culture, society and art of the Persians for a millennium since its composition. The study of Persian art, its painting in particular, has always included references to or case studies of the illustrations of the *Shāhnāma* scenes and characters. Illustrating the stories of the *Shāhnāma* is a well-established tradition in Iranian visual culture<sup>1</sup> that precedes the composition of its text by Abulqasim Firdausi (940-1021). During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, following the composition of the *Shāhnāma*, excerpts of some episodes of this text decorated the surface of walls and objects, featuring some of its popular characters. The beginning of the Ilkhanid rule (1256-1353) however, marks the rise in popularity of the *Shāhnāma* text and the creation of illustrated manuscripts of this magnum opus of Persian literature. During the golden age of Persian painting from the fourteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, also known as the classical age of this art, this epic account was frequently illustrated, in fact more than any other text in Persian literature.<sup>2</sup>

The sudden popularity of the *Shāhnāma* and its illustrations amongst the Mongol rulers of Iran is related to the general interest of Ghazan Khan (r.1295-1304) and his followers in the illustrated books. The revival programs of Persian culture by the Mongols as an indication of their commitment to rebuild the country they had mass-destroyed prior to their establishment in Persia is also pointed out as a motive. The availability of the Chinese and European paintings, and the amusement of the mainly illiterate Mongol noblemen, who could not access the text, may be mentioned as other possible reasons.<sup>3</sup> The *Shāhnāma* also functioned as a vehicle to advocate for Persian heritage and identity at the time, when the new Mongol rulers of Persia needed to

identify with the Persian past to legitimize their rule. For them, the national epics might have served as a didactic source into the characters and deeds of the ancient Persian kings.<sup>4</sup>

Since then, illustrating the manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* became a tradition, as a result of which hundreds of illustrated volumes of this text have survived, probably making only part of the corpus of the illustrated *Shāhnāma* manuscripts. During the four hundred years of the classical age of Persian painting the rulers and royal members of the court frequently commissioned the manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*, with the aim of expressing their wealth and stability, or out of concerns for the legitimacy of their rule. The popularity of the *Shāhnāma* among the rulers of Persia is associated with its concentration on the ideas of kingship and legitimacy. These notions were relevant to these rulers, who employed the *Shāhnāma* to publicize their political and dynastic goals.<sup>5</sup> Hence, this collection of epic stories with the central theme of conflict between the two countries of Iran and Turan was transformed into an ideologically charged vehicle, meant to deliver a message each time it was produced. Following the royal models, commercial productions of the *Shāhnāma* also enjoyed popularity among the public and were sold in the market to individuals for their personal use and pleasure. Although, with the decline in manuscript production, illustrating the stories of this ‘Book of Kings’ lost its appeal during the recent centuries, the text, its narrations, and characters sustain their position in Iranian life and culture.

The subject of this study, the Simurgh, plays an active role in four episodes of the *Shāhnāma*. She appears as a wise bird, the possessor of the divine glory, and the protector of the Persian heroes. This Simurgh originates in Persian mythology, and is recorded in the religious writings of pre-Islamic Persia. She is involved in the act of creation by dispersing the seeds of all plants. She also represents the divine in Persian Islamic mysticism.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, a thorough

iconographic survey of the representations of this bird, as this study aims to do, necessitates the inclusion and evaluation of the images of this bird beyond the category of the *Shāhnāma* illustrations. By examining the visual representations of the Simurgh in the arts of Persia, I propose the establishment of three visual types for the Simurgh imagery. The mythological bird on the arts of pre-Islamic Persia was represented with composite visual features. Before the Simurgh reappears in the form of an elaborate Chinese phoenix in the *Shāhnāma* illustrations from the fourteenth century on, there was a period in which the representations of this bird extensively varied in appearance. While a few examples from this period reveal some abstract elements of a composite animal for the Simurgh, the majority of the images of this fantastic bird resemble a bird in nature. Among these types, the Simurgh of the classical age, the one that repeatedly illustrated the pages of the books, maintains its position in the contemporary art of Iran.

In Persian thought, the Simurgh is the possessor of the notion of royal and divine glory. The presence of this glory was understood as a requirement for a legitimate rule, thus the rulers of Persia constantly sought it. This concept was formulated through several pictorial emblems, one of which is the Simurgh. With a focus on the appearances of the bird in four royal manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* produced during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, I argue that the close association of this bird with the notion of royal glory, *farr-i īzadī*, shapes the inclusion of her image in the illustrative program of these manuscripts as determined by the patrons and their artists. It is this reception of the image of the Simurgh inherited from ancient Persia and indicated in both textual and visual references that shapes this reading. The composite bird represented on the Sasanian objects portrays the same desire for kingly authority. When contemporary artists of Iran depict the bird, however, it corresponds with their search for

national identity and addresses the notion of Iranian glory. During the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries,<sup>7</sup> the correlation with the longed-for glory and fortune turned the Simurgh into a powerful image, and it has been the way the representations of this fantastic bird have been received in the Persian system of ideas and beliefs since then.

### Review of Literature

The survey that follows briefly explores the primary literary sources of this study with attention to the editions, and in the case of sources in the Avestan and Pahlavi languages, to the translations that have provided the most constructive analytical readings of these texts for the study of the Simurgh. The composition of the *Shāhnāma* and its contents will be briefly discussed to provide a background to this text and its origins. The stylistic and symbolic analysis of the representations of the Simurgh engages a wide range of secondary sources that deal with Islamic and Persian art in general and the art of book painting in particular. Since the majority of the representations of the Simurgh belong to the illustrated manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*, the studies of these manuscripts, as well as scholarship related to the topic of this study, inevitably occupy most of the following review.

The primary sources of this study comprise the writings from across the genre, including religious, mystical, and epic, in which references to the Simurgh are made or where the bird plays an active role. The religious writings of the Zoroastrian faith in the Avestan and Pahlavi languages provide the earliest references to this bird. These sources have been translated into modern languages partially or in full. However, the analytical readings and Persian translations of the *Avesta* by Jalil Doostkhah and of *Bundahišn* by Mihرداد Bahar provide the most recent

and comprehensible translations of these ancient texts that facilitate the identification of the instances where the word ‘Simurgh’ appears, and what it refers to.<sup>8</sup>

In Persian literature, the Simurgh appears in two major works of poetry, one from the genre of epic and the other of mystical nature. The former, or the *Shāhnāma*, was composed by Abulqasim Firdausi<sup>9</sup> and completed in 1010 CE.<sup>10</sup> Firdausi combines the historical facts with mythical stories and characters of pre-Islamic Persia in three parts: the mythical, heroic, and historical. The four episodes in which the Simurgh is involved fall under the heroic section of Iranian national history.<sup>11</sup> To compose his *Shāhnāma*, Firdausi consulted several written sources as well as the oral narratives regarding the events and characters of the Persian past. One of his major sources was the Pahlavi account of *Khudāynāma*.<sup>12</sup> Prior to Firdausi’s edition, these stories were not only narrated orally but also were recorded in several written accounts, all called *Shāhnāmas*.<sup>13</sup>

Firdausi is generally acknowledged as a critical figure not only for recording Iranian national history but for raising Iranian nationalism, preventing the replacement of Iranian myths and legends with their Semitic counterparts, and above all, preserving the modern Persian language from the dominating Arabic language during the early centuries of the Islamization of Iran.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Firdausi and his ‘Book of Kings’ have been the subject of many thematic, analytic, interpretive, and textual studies by Iranian and non-Iranian scholars across the fields of literature, history, and sociology.<sup>15</sup> The text of the epics has been fully or partially translated into other languages.<sup>16</sup> For the purpose of this study, the edition produced under the direction of E.E. Bertels, in 1960s,<sup>17</sup> and the recent edition annotated and prepared by Djalal Khaleghi Motlagh are consulted. The latter, published in eight volumes, is regarded as the most critical edition of the epics and incorporates the highest number of manuscripts.<sup>18</sup> The textual comparison of the

episodes of the upbringing of Zal by the Simurgh and the killing of the Simurgh in these two editions reveals minimal discrepancies between the two texts.

The Simurgh is the main subject of the mystical poetry of Farid al-Din 'Attar (d.1221) in *Mantiq al-Tayr*. In an annotated edition of this text, Muhammad Reza Shafiee Kadkani provides an extensive survey of earlier writings that influenced 'Attar as well as a comparative analysis of the textual references of the terms.<sup>19</sup> This edition was consulted in reading of this mystical text.

The range of secondary sources consulted and reviewed, as the extended timeline of this research dictates, is vast and comprises scholarly works on ancient Persian art to its modern examples. The most influential study dealing with the representations of the Simurgh is conducted by the eminent Iranist, Hanns Peter Schmidt.<sup>20</sup> Through intertextual analyses of literary sources, including the Avestan and Pahlavi writings as well as the *Shāhnāma*, Schmidt prepares the ground for a comparative examination of the visual features of the Simurgh. As his focus remains on the Pahlavi counterpart of the Simurgh, naming the *Sēnmurw*, Schmidt reviews the features of the composite bird on the Sasanian objects and their visual elements borrowed from the natural or supernatural animals of the neighboring cultures. This model of text and image analysis is followed in the readings of the primary sources and their relationships with the representations of the Simurgh in the present study.

In interpreting the meaning of a motif in relation to its social and political contexts, Shapur Shahbazi relates the winged solar disc, which appeared repeatedly on Persian art from before Islam, to the social perception of this form as the representation of glory, either its Iranian or kingly variants.<sup>21</sup> The thesis offered by Shahbazi, although in opposition to many existing views and raising some objections, presents a notable example of translating a motif. Abolala Soudavar attributes the iconographical development of the symbolism of kingly glory (*xvarənah*)

in the arts of the Mughal India to the Ilkhanid Iran and the Sasanian and Achaemenid empires.<sup>22</sup> The divine sanction required to confirm kingly authority, according to Persian ideology, generated the formulation of new emblems to represent kingly ideology. Soudavar supports his readings of these symbols, including the nimbus, halo, handkerchief, etc., with primary textual references. It is in light of the scholarly works of these three scholars that I examine the correlation of the Simurgh to the royal, divine, and Iranian glory, and explain the power of its images.

Among the scholars who concentrate on the illustrated manuscript production of the medieval Islamic lands, Persis Berlekamp explores the social history and philosophical ideas around the production of books of wonder and science in *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos*.<sup>23</sup> She connects the representational illustrations of this genre in accordance with Islamic culture and ideology and not in its opposition. By deconstructing a 1322 manuscript of the Book of Wonders, she demonstrates the close cultural ties between the two artistic centers of Fars and Iraq under the Ilkhanid rule.<sup>24</sup> This connection and the possible social, intellectual, and visual similarities between the two centers allow her to propose that the recipients of this certain manuscript would be the bureaucrat scholars and not the Inju court members, as was supposed. To locate a manuscript in its social and political context, as Berlekamp does, allows the determination of the recipients of it, and perhaps the political and ideological intentions behind its production.

Similar to the text, the illustrations of the *Shāhnāma* have engaged many scholarly works. At first, art historians with a formalistic approach concentrated on placing the mostly dispersed manuscripts and their detached illustrations into their original cultural contexts, and then dealt with the issues of dating, attribution, and style. More recently, they entertained the notions of

content and the message of these illustrations. The nine illustrated manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* produced during the Ilkhanid period have been examined by the prominent figures of the field.<sup>25</sup> In a vivid analysis of the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma*, Abolala Soudavar compares the illustrative program of this manuscript with the historical events around the reign of the Ilkhanid ruler, Abu Sa'īd (r. 1316-35). He proposes that the manuscript is the *Abū Sa'īdnāma*,<sup>26</sup> mentioned by the royal Safavid librarian, Dust Muhammad (d. 1564) in 1544.<sup>27</sup> This detailed, comparative investigation of the illustrations of a manuscript with the contemporary history reveals a unique approach to, and understanding of the primary historical sources. The careful selection of the images to correspond with contemporary events and characters explains the absence of any representation of the Simurgh in this royal manuscript.

The examination of objects from other media decorated with the scenes of the *Shāhnāma*, and their probable use during the process of recitation of the stories,<sup>28</sup> as well as the survey of the illustrative program of the *Shāhnāma* stories on the tile program of Takht-i Sulayman, the Ilkhanid summer palace,<sup>29</sup> reveal some possible sources for the Ilkhanid *Shāhnāma* illustrations. These studies shed light on the old tradition of the *Shāhnāma* illustration before the production of manuscripts as well as on the reception of the *Shāhnāma* stories and their illustrations at the Ilkhanid court.

By examining the typological change in the frontispieces of the Inju *Shāhnāma* manuscripts from author-portrait type as used in the earlier manuscripts to the representations of royal figures, Marianna Shreve Simpson relates this shift to the Mongol ideology towards kingship and their rule, and the effectiveness of the *Shāhnāma* in demonstrating that ideology.<sup>30</sup> This adds up to the iconological meaning of these frontispieces and the historical figures they

present. Simpson's study presents a vivid example of a typological shift in representation that is charged with ideological and political purpose.

The content and ideology shaping the illustrative program of the three *Shāhnāma* manuscripts commissioned by the three Timurid princes in the second quarter of the fifteenth century have been examined by Eleanor Sims.<sup>31</sup> She points out the dominating theme of each of these three copies, and concludes that although each of them were meant to serve a different purpose and function as planned by their patron, they all address the notion of kingship. Charles Melville and Firuza Abdullaeva review the literary context and the illustrations of the Ibrahim Sultan's *Shāhnāma* manuscript (ca. 1420s, or early 1430s).<sup>32</sup> Barbara Brend published a monograph on the manuscript (now at the Royal Asiatic Society) made for the prince Muhammad Juki (d. 1445), probing the historical sources on the patron.<sup>33</sup> The authors of both these monographs conduct text and image analyses and detailed iconographic examinations of the manuscripts and their illustrations. Melville and Abdullaeva do not feel obliged to offer ideological or political intentions behind the cycles of illustrations in Ibrahim Sultan's *Shāhnāma*. For them, the political message that commissioning a manuscript of this text conveyed as a whole suffices. Barbara Brend, on the other hand, tracks the individual character of the patron, Muhammad Juki, through the illustrations of his copy of the epics. The clear emphasis on the subjects that he was concerned with turns the illustrative program of this manuscript into a display of the patron's state of mind rather than the actual events of his life. Such psychoanalytical deconstruction of a manuscript and its illustrations in relation to the patron's intentions and desires provides a useful model in probing the reception of images in the mind of their patron.

Amongst the Safavid *Shāhnāma* manuscripts, the most scholarly attention is paid to the copy produced for Shah Tahmasp (r. 1522-76). In the 1980s, Stuart Cary Welch and Martin Dickson offered attributions of the paintings and proposed the grand impact of this copy on the formation of the Safavid synthesis in painting.<sup>34</sup> Robert Hillenbrand examines the illustrative program of this majestic copy, proposing its particular reference to the political troubles of the time of its production.<sup>35</sup> He finds the dominating themes of war and royal authority amongst the illustrations to be in agreement with the political and ideological intentions of its patron in commissioning it and in later giving it away as an act of politic. The other two royal *Shāhnāmas* of the sixteenth century, made for Shah Isma‘il II (r. 1576-77) and Shah ‘Abbas I (r. 1588-1629), have not been published in full, but their patronage, artists, and the development of their style is best examined by Anthony Welch.<sup>36</sup> The deconstruction of the illustrative program of these manuscripts and the social and political purposes they meant to serve are yet to be investigated.

The great project of digitizing the illustrations of the *Shāhnāma* on an online database, carried forward by Charles Melville and Robert Hillenbrand, has made the illustrations, their collections, and associated references accessible through the *Shāhnāma* project website launched in 2004 (still in progress).<sup>37</sup> Without any doubt, any study of the *Shāhnāma* images owes a great debt to this project and these two great scholars of Persian history and art. In an article as part of a publication concentrating on the reception of the *Shāhnāma*, Francesca Leoni interprets the images of *dīvs* (demons) as pictorial representations of cultural ideas and preconceptions regarding evil. This is how these ugly-looking opponents of the heroes were viewed and understood as a part of the process of the reception of the *Shāhnāma*.<sup>38</sup>

In a great collection of the images of birds from Persian, Ottoman, and Mughal painting traditions, Michael Barry presents a text and image examination of such images, accompanied by

allegorical readings of them, and their historical iconography where appropriate.<sup>39</sup> Barry tracks the evolution of the Simurgh imagery from the Achaemenid era across the cultures to its final return to Persian painting of the fourteenth century in the form of a Chinese phoenix. Although his argument is not supported by supplementary material and might appear too allegorical on the surface, it has illuminated the path of the present study all along in tracing a visual form.

The Qajar royal paintings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the shift in royal interest from book paintings to life-sized portraits, and the ideology behind that change have been explored by Layla S. Diba.<sup>40</sup> She explores the innovative use of royal imagery during the Qajar era to demonstrate the dynastic power and the transformation of these life-sized images into the images of power.

Hamid Keshmirshakan writes the history of modern and contemporary art in Iran, while contextualizing it with relevance to the sociopolitical discourse of the time. He proposes that modernity, nationalism, and Shi'i identity are the most dominant discourses shaping this art.<sup>41</sup> Abbas Daneshvari interprets the art of Iranian contemporary artists through a more theoretical approach, stating that these works demonstrate uncertainty regarding conventional narratives and structures of knowledge. This ambiguity, prevailing the iconography of this generation, creates what Daneshvari calls, "the crisis of identity."<sup>42</sup> This approach allows contextualizing the works of some of the contemporary artists who have challenged with the theme of the Simurgh, and analyzing their reception of its meaning.

In an edition on the iconography of Islamic art, Anna Contadini relates the combined features of the two representations of the swan-phoenix in two Arab manuscripts of bestiaries to the complexities of the text, and as attempts to represent the imaginary.<sup>43</sup> Abbas Daneshvari, in the same edition, interprets the iconography of the seated ruler and the accompanying motifs,

including the bird, on early Islamic ceramic wares in the light of written sources.<sup>44</sup> Sylvia Auld also explores the significance of birds, peacock in particular, in Islamic beliefs and their possible origins, while deciphering the iconography of a kohl-pot.<sup>45</sup> In an exemplary work, examining the iconographic motif of the dragon, Sara Kuehn explores the perception and meaning of this beast in the medieval Turkey and its eastern neighboring lands.<sup>46</sup>

The summary of literature given above is selective of the studies and publications that inform this study in one way or another, and is by no means exhaustive. With regards to studies concentrated on the *Shāhnāma* text and illustrations a comprehensive list is provided by Marianna Shreve Simpson, covering the literature produced between 1975 and 2000.<sup>47</sup> This list and the subsequent publications during the next fifteen years up to present reveal that while literary historians have deconstructed the *Shāhnāma* text into cycles and characters, only a few art historians have concentrated on the analysis of certain episodes. The ideology shaping the illustrative program of a royal manuscript, the message that each episode meant to convey, the inclusion or absence of an episode, and the subjectivity of the patron and artists of a manuscript are the questions that demand close examination of images in relation to text. Although this project started with the goal of addressing these issues, it became evident that the iconographical development of the Simurgh imagery and its reception by royal patrons demand an extensive analysis of its pictorial and ideological origins beyond the domain of the *Shāhnāma* illustrations.

### Thesis Proposal

The abundance of illustrated pages depicting the stories of the Iranian national epics that have led to the emergence of the field of *Shāhnāma* studies in scholarship, and yet the limited number of case studies examining the representations of single episodes and characters inspired

me to choose the episodes in which a mythical bird, the Simurgh, the guardian of the Persian heroes and kings, plays a significant role.<sup>48</sup> From the beginning my attention to this fantastic bird has been shaped by my former readings of the Avestan and Pahlavi sources and my fascination with the impact of those literary sources on the evolution of this bird as the possessor of *farr*/glory in the *Shāhnāma*.

The upbringing of Zal and his return to his father by the Simurgh has been illustrated in four royal manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* produced during the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries and a single page painting most possibly affiliated with the patronage of a member of the Jalayirid dynasty (c. 1370s). In the case of the Timurid prince Muhammad Juki's manuscript (1444-45) the illustration of this episode generates one of the dissimilarities between this manuscript and the two copies made for the two other Timurid princes, the brothers of Muhammad Juki, both made slightly before his copy. In the great *Shāhnāma* of Shah Tahmasp, this episode is rendered in three sequential illustrations, which is a unique occurrence in this manuscript. In each of the manuscripts of Isma' il II (r. 1576-77), and 'Abbas I (r. 1587-1629) the Simurgh is delineated once, as conventional to the earlier copies produced prior to the Tahmasp's grand manuscript. The representation of the Simurgh remains absent from the illustrative program of the only royal manuscript of *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*.

But how were these royal images perceived by their viewers? Would the association of this mythical (and later mystical) bird with the notion of royal and divine glory determine its presence in the illustrative program of a royal manuscript? If so, what would these representations mean in the social and political realms of the Persian courts or in the minds of their patrons? What message they were supposed to deliver? These lavishly illustrated manuscripts had a limited audience made up of a royal patron and his companions. The

examination of the role of ‘patron’ in the production of a royal manuscript reveals that the presence of a representation of the Simurgh is informed and shaped by the cultural and social contexts in which the manuscript was produced. The ideological tendencies of the patron or the artists in charge of programming the illustrative cycles of these manuscripts characterize the presence of the fantastic bird. The extent to which the patrons and artists of the *Shāhnāma* manuscripts were familiar with the text or engaged in the formation of the copy cannot be exactly measured. Therefore, the association of the Simurgh with *farr*, her role as the protector of Persian heroes, even the abandoned ones, directs this study to measure the agency of the patrons or artists of these illustrations.

The concept of God-given glory, or *farr*, and its presence as a requirement of kingship and continuity of power, was transferred from pre-Islamic Iran, to the early Islamic rule of the Caliphs. The post-Mongol rulers of Iran inherited pre-Islamic Persian and Islamic ideologies, both of which required the presence of a superior authority to legitimize the rule. The presence of this divine glory was also extended to non-Persian rulers through their lineage to either the prophet Muhammad or Chingiz Khan, or both. This glory protects those who own it. According to the *Avesta*, the ancient kings of Persia owned this protection, and those who sought the kingship strived to gain it. In one of its shapes, this royal glory or victorious light, Bahram, appears in the shape of a bird. During the early centuries of Islam in Iran, Firdausi, the author of the *Shāhnāma*, who preserved and at the same time amalgamated the myths of the Iranian past in his masterpiece, related the ownership of the divine glory to the Simurgh. The supernatural powers of the bird could substantiate the concept of divine protection. The Simurgh was also adapted in the Iranian version of Islamic mysticism. The mysterious qualities of this bird in both shape and character matched the invisible qualities of the ultimate divine. These allegorical

meanings associated with the Simurgh caused uncertainty for the Ilkhanid rulers. Thus, when the bird returned to the art of the Ilkhanid Iran at the summer palace of Takht-i Sulayman (c. 1270s) it took the appearance of a Chinese phoenix. This transformation raises the question whether this new form was employed as a pictorial device to visualize an old concept? The absence of the Simurgh in the Great Ilkhanid *Shāhnāma* probably addresses the uncertainty around this bird and what it visualizes. The abundance of representations of the fantastic bird in provincial illustrated manuscripts however manifests the popularity of this motif. On the other hand, the social and political conditions in which the four royal manuscripts of this study were created allow tracing the patterns of reception of the images of this bird and evaluating the subjectivity of the programmer in including the representations of the Simurgh. Some of the patrons of the discussed manuscripts had close involvement in shaping of their *Shāhnāma* copies judging by the overall illustrative programs of these manuscripts. Those who did not exercise this level of engagement in their projects were substituted by their artists. Thus, the subjectivity of the artist is measured. The absence of the image of the Simurgh in the royal illustrated copy of *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* also is determined by its patrons' subjectivities, associated with their ideological attitudes towards this bird.

The decline in the production of illustrated manuscripts impacted the productions of the *Shāhnāma* but not the image of the Simurgh, which had long found its way to the decorative program of Iranian art. The contextualization of contemporary representations of the Simurgh directs the results of this study back to the main ideologies that transformed the Simurgh into a powerful image. These images display a desire for authorization and protection, not to rule, but to affirm the Iranian identity.

The present iconographic study of a significant motif in Persian art, the Simurgh, reveals the visual changes this complex motif had appropriated through time while three visual prototypes will be suggested to classify its representations. This study also explores the semantic transformations this bird endures in intellectual realm of Persia. The relationship between written sources from before and after Islam receives particular attention, and permits the interpretation of the Simurgh symbolism and its perception in Iranian system of thought. The association of the mythical bird with royal glory (*farr-i Kānī*), and its mystical counterpart with divine glory (*farr-i ʿizādī*) directs the interpretation of this motif. The Simurgh remains to be a complex motif in Iranian visual and intellectual culture to this day. Deciphering this motif in the light of primary written sources and its reception by the patrons and artists through an extended period of time, yet mainly limited to courtly atmospheres, will help explain this complexity.

### The Methodological and Theoretical Framework

The iconographic/iconological analysis of art forms, initially developed to interpret the art of the European Renaissance, has been adequately employed by many historians of Islamic art. While the majority of scholarly works on Persian painting focuses on the physical and thematic examination of manuscripts and their productions, few scholars concentrate on the evolution of a certain theme in Persian painting in general or within a manuscript. Such examples include Richard Ettinghausen's study of Bahram Gur imagery in Iranian art of the seventh to thirteenth century, or the contextualization of the images of *dīvs* as Iranian cultural ideas of evil in the manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* by Francesca Leoni.<sup>49</sup> While this study has benefitted from the studies on Persian painting, it is particularly indebted to the iconological studies of certain themes.

The visual analysis of the images representing the subject of this study, the Simurgh, as conventional in art historical practices commences with the iconographic analysis of each selected image. After an image is identified as the Simurgh, the formal analysis of its features as well as those of the illustration containing its form is undertaken. The identification of the images of the Simurgh on the pre-fourteenth-century objects through pre-iconographic and iconographic processes encounters some challenges. The variety of forms in which the bird is represented, the absence of accompanying texts, and different scholarly views constitute some of these challenges. On the contrary, the association of an image of the Simurgh with the illustrative program of a manuscript simplifies the contextual analysis of the image and its recognition as what it visually represents. Yet another challenge in selecting the visual material of any study on Persian art is the abundance of copies from the works of masters. This practice, originally being as a part of traditional art education, later became a source of monetary gain for the artists mastering in Timurid and Safavid styles of painting in modern Iran. Although most of these emulations, some added to earlier un-illustrated manuscripts, had private patrons, their dissociation from royal patronage distinguishes them from the primary visual sources of this study.<sup>50</sup>

Since the visual data of this study are mainly selected from the representations of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* manuscripts commissioned by or for the royal patrons, the iconological analyses of the images are highly informed by the information regarding the patron and his/her agency in the selection of the illustrative program of the manuscript as much as could be retrieved from the primary historical sources on the events and lives of these individuals. The royal status of the patrons of these manuscripts allows the subjectivities of these individuals, shaped by their ideologies, to engage in the act of cultural production. In this, the patrons are the

subjects constructed by ideology, as Louis Althusser theorizes in *Essays on Ideology* (1984). They receive these ideologies from their environments and societies and uphold them since these ideologies provide them with social meaning and identity.<sup>51</sup>

The artists' agency as creators of art works is equally important in interpreting a work of art in its social and historical context. As Homi Bhabha expands on the postcolonial theory and the cultural productions of subaltern subjects, it is in the momentary act of displacement that the agency of the subaltern agent obtains total authority.<sup>52</sup> This displacement of agency is observed in the production of two of the royal manuscripts of this study. Our present knowledge of the artists and their individual agencies, in particular those practicing before the sixteenth century, is indistinctive and limited to a few lines in early examples of art historical writings recorded in an ornate formal language. Yet those references are reviewed in the process of the iconological study of each work. On the other hand, the places and the cities in which the manuscripts were produced reveal ample information about the style as well as the physical characteristics of each manuscript and its illustrations. A comparative analysis of the manuscripts across genre confirms the major cities as the centers of production, thus the styles are named according to the city names. Yet the styles, artists, and the court ateliers moved through time following the effective patronage. As the iconographic/iconological analysis is comparative, examples of the representation of the Simurgh from across the media, and in a few cases from other cultures are considered to assist in the identification of the bird, as well as its visual and possible contextual similarities. On the other hand, the iconological analyses of the modern and contemporary examples of the Simurgh imagery are heavily shaped by the artists' agencies, their ideologies, and the notion of social identity. The three discourses of Iranian nationalism, Islamic identity, and Western modernity shape these determining ideologies.<sup>53</sup>

While iconographic/ iconological analysis informs the methodological framework of this study, semiotics provides a more precise theoretical framework for explaining the presence or absence of the image of the mythical or mystical bird within the illustrative program of the manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* and the single royal manuscript of *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*. The Semiotics or the theory of signs that interprets the relationship between the signifier and signified can bring more perspectives into art history, raising more questions regarding the context, the artist, the recipient, and the narrations around the work of art. The semiotic analysis of art works is not expected to provide a meaning for the work but rather to discover the ways the art works were understood by their viewers, as Roland Barthes defines.<sup>54</sup> Applying this theory, I not only intend to relate the image of the Simurgh as the signifier of the concept of royal and/or divine glory but also to extend that relationship and examine the way this meaning was perceived by the artists, viewers, and the culture that they belong to. In this study, however, the viewer/recipient of the work is limited to the patron and the courtly domain, while the culture that created this proposed meaning for the Simurgh remains the Persian culture at large. It is, in fact, with the participation of the viewer, the royal patron, that the creation of the meaning of royal glory in representations of the Simurgh is completed and perceived. The role of the patron, or the ideal viewer, engages the reception studies.<sup>55</sup>

The artist's perception of the visual characteristics of the Simurgh, on the other hand, is shaped by earlier representations of this bird in Persian pictorial tradition or the visual cultures available to the Persian painters, notably the Chinese renditions of the Phoenix. The transformation of cultural ideas, forms, and practices between cultures, facilitated through mechanisms of circulation, constructs transculturation or translation of cultural entities. Through the mobility of objects, cultural meanings and values are translated and transformed within and

between cultures, as Finbarr Barry Flood explains the extended encounters between Islamic and Hindu cultures.<sup>56</sup> However, the pictorial representation of the Phoenix, introduced to Persian culture mainly through gifting and trade systems with China was fully translated into a long-lasting concept in its recipient culture while maintaining its visual form. It is critical to have in mind that the present status of the illustrations of manuscripts mostly detached from their volume and dispersed in the collections across the world affects our perception of them as art works unrelated to their environments.

To build on a theory of response and how the images of the Simurgh in the royal manuscripts of the national epics were perceived by the royal patrons I construct my argument making use of David Freedberg's account of the power of images. He argues that images provoke strong responses in their viewers, not because of their aesthetic values but as a result of their presence.<sup>57</sup> Freedberg defines response as "the symptoms of the relationship between image and beholder" that include both active responses and beliefs generating behavioral actions in the beholder.<sup>58</sup> The effectiveness of images, the expectations of images by the beholder, and the reasons behind such assumptions are the factors Freedberg examines in his approach to the problems of response. These responses, he suggests, are related to the power of the images. In the study of the representations of the Simurgh and their possible power, the behaviors and actions of the targeted beholders, the patrons, cannot be measured in any manner. The effectiveness of the images and what they were expected to achieve, on the other hand, can be evaluated by the act of commissioning and including a representation of the bird in the illustrative program of a manuscript. Freedberg's work has been criticized for disregarding the relevant social and cultural contexts in evaluating the power of images. The presence of the image of the Simurgh and the responses it evoked, however, should be examined within the

social and cultural context in which were created and perceived, which in the case of this study would be the realms of the Persian courts. Therefore, the ways in which the representations of the fantastic bird worked and related to its recipients is influential in shaping the imagery of the Simurgh as the prototype (signifier or allegory) of royal or divine glory.

The examination of the literary sources of this study, which are largely divided into pre-Islamic Avestan and Pahlavi sources, Firdausi's *Shāhnāma* text, and references to the mystical Simurgh, notably in 'Attar's *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*, are informed by the intertextuality of these texts that relates them to one another, more than to their makers. Developed on Saussure's idea of language as a system or structure that pre-exists its user, the Structuralists (such as Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva) formed the concept of intertextuality. In this view, each text is related to other texts and the culture it is produced in, employing the concepts, codes, and practices that already exist.<sup>59</sup> In this context, the *Shāhnāma* owes to its pre-existing texts and oral traditions, the same way that the mystical writings of the Iranian philosophers reflect on the *Shāhnāma* text as well as on pre-Islamic religious writings.

### The Organization of Chapters

Chapter one of this study gathers the references to the Simurgh in the Avestan and Pahlavi sources, the *Shāhnāma*, and the *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*, to provide a background for understanding the Simurgh, her attributes, her visual characteristics, and her role in Persian culture. The concept of royal and divine glory (*farr/xvarənah*), and how it relates to the Simurgh are discussed in chapter two. The assimilation of the myth of the Simurgh from pre-Islamic mythology into the magnum opus of Persian literature, the *Shāhnāma* of Firdausi, and later into the Islamic mystical literature of Iran through the processes of harmonization and cultural

replacement are also discussed in this chapter. The visual representations of the Simurgh in Persian art of the pre-Islamic dynasties to the 1350s are analyzed in chapter three. This analysis leads to the categorization of the Simurgh imagery into two types: the Simurgh as a composite animal, and the Simurgh as a natural-looking bird. The visual representations of the Simurgh in the royal manuscripts are examined and contextualized in relation to the subjectivities of their patrons and artists in chapter four. This analysis adds a third category to the visual types of the Simurgh imagery as an elaborate bird, the image that developed into a prototype. The association of the Simurgh with the royal glory, perceived and desired by the patrons, explains the presence of the image of the Simurgh in the royal manuscripts examined in this study. The last chapter looks into the factors that caused the absence of the fantastic bird in royal Persian painting during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The reappearance of the bird in the works of the modern and contemporary artists of Iran shows the perceptions of the artists and their society in dealing with their cultural and artistic identities. These visually diverse renditions of the Simurgh refer to the notion of Iranian glory. This study concludes by proposing that the representations of the Simurgh are powerful images because of how they were perceived and what they were expected to do, regardless of their aesthetic features.

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<sup>1</sup> Marianna Shreve Simpson, “*Shāhnāma* Images and *Shāhnāma* Settings in Medieval Iran,” in *Ferdowsi’s Shāhnāma: Millennial Perspectives*, eds. Olga M. Davidson and Marianna Shreve Simpson (Boston: Ilex Foundation, 2013) pp. 72-85, p. 82. Simpson points this out in regard to the Takht-i Sulayman tile program.

<sup>2</sup> Oleg Grabar, “Why Was the *Shahnama* Illustrated?” *Iranian Studies* 43:1 (2010): 91-96, p. 91.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Hillenbrand, “New Perspectives in *Shahnama* Iconography,” in *Shahnama: The Visual Language of the Persian Book of Kings*, ed. Robert Hillenbrand (England: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Hillenbrand, “The Arts of the Book in Ilkhanid Iran,” in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353*, eds. Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003), pp. 137 and 154. Also see Nasrin Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma as a Mirror for Princes* (Boston: Brill, 2016), in which by examining primary sources and conducting a case study on the story of Ardashir in the *Shāhnāma*, the author demonstrates the didactic role of the text as understood by medieval rulers of Persia.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Melville, “Introduction,” *Shahnama Studies I* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge, 2006), pp. xix-xxvi, p. xxii.

<sup>6</sup> This refers to the branch of Sufism or *taṣawwuf* generated through the works of Persian philosophers and writers, such as Suhrawardi and ‘Attar.

<sup>7</sup> In scholarship, this period is traditionally known as the ‘golden or classical’ age of Persian painting. However, with the emergence of more examples of this art from before the fourteenth century, this term might lose its relevance.

<sup>8</sup> The evolution of the terminology for the Simurgh, and its references in the Avestan and Pahlavi texts will be discussed in chapter one.

<sup>9</sup> It comprises over fifty thousand couplets. Through time copyists inserted other epic accounts such as *Garshāspnāma* and *Burzūnāma* by other poets to extend the Firdausi’s account to sixty thousand couplets. These additions were recognized and removed from the body of the work in the Moscow edition. See A. Shapur Shahbazi, *Ferdowsī: A Critical Biography* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1991), p. 107.

<sup>10</sup> Abulqasim Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, based on Moscow edition, eds. E. Bertels and A. Nushin, 9 Vols. (Moscow, 1965-71, republished in Tehran: Hermes, 1378/2008), Vol. 2, p. 1893.

<sup>11</sup> For the detailed content and narrative styles of these three parts see Shahbazi, *Ferdowsī: A Critical Biography*, pp. 108-117.

<sup>12</sup> It is an official chronicle of Iranshahr recorded by the Sasanians that starts with the creation of the world and goes until the time this source was composed. See Muhammad Sharifi,

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*Farhang-i Adabīāt-i Fārsī* [The Encyclopaedia of Persian Literature], (Tehran: Muin, 1387/2008), pp. 868-69.

<sup>13</sup> Amongst these, a *Shāhnāma* composed in prose for an official under the Samanids (819-999), Abu Mansur ibn ‘Abd al-Razzaq (d. 961), by a group of Zoroastrian scholars in 958 CE is recognized by the scholars to be a vital source for Firdausi. A young poet, Daqiqi (probably 932-977), versified a part of the Abu Mansuri *Shāhnāma* in a thousand couplets. Firdausi completed this task and incorporated the Daqiqi’s account into his *Shāhnāma*. See Shahbazi, *Ferdowsī: A Critical Biography*, pp. 34-38.

<sup>14</sup> The scholarship on the nationalistic role of the *Shāhnāma* in Iranian culture, some of which is charged with extreme nationalist tendencies, is vast, but their review falls out of the scope of this study. There will never be enough emphasis on the significance of this account on Iranian culture; a study as the present one is by itself a manifestation of that.

<sup>15</sup> A very brief list of these studies, not inclusive of studies in Persian, is introduced by Marianna Shreve Simpson, “*Shahnama* as Text and *Shahnama* as Image: A Brief Overview of Recent Studies 1975-2000,” in *Shahnama: The Visual Language of the Persian Book of Kings*, ed. Robert Hillenbrand (England: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 9-23.

<sup>16</sup> Julius Mohl translated the full account into French in *Le Livre des Rois*, 7 vols., Paris (1838-76), republished in Paris, (1877-78). The first complete English Translation is by Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner in *The Shāhnāma of Firdausī*, 9 vols., London (1905-25). For a survey of studies on the *Shāhnāma* and their evaluation see Shahbazi, *Ferdowsī: A Critical Biography*, pp. 11-18. For a list of English translations of some episodes and the full account see Parvin Loloi, “Šāh-nāma Translations iii. Into English,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 2014, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sah-nama-translations-iii-English> (accessed on February 7, 2016). For an English translation of the key events see Aloqasim Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, trans. Dick Davis. (New York: Penguin Books, 2006). For a more recent translation of the first part of the account see Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings*, translated by Ahmad Sadri, illustrated by Hamid Rahmanian (New York: Quantuck Lane, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, 9 vols. (Moscow, 1960-71). Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*. Based on Moscow edition, 2 vols. (Tehran: Hermes, 1387/2008).

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<sup>18</sup> Abu'l-Qāsim Firdausī, *Shāhnāma*, annotated by Djalal Khaleghi Motlagh (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1988- 2009), accompanied by four volumes of explanatory notes. Ehsan Yarshater, the eminent Iranian scholar, sponsored this project.

<sup>19</sup> Farīduddīn 'Attār Nayshābūri, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, ed. Muhammad Reza Shafiee Kadkani (Tehran: Sukhan, 1385/2006).

<sup>20</sup> Hanns-Peter Schmidt, "The Sēnmurw: of Birds, Dogs and Bats," *Persica IX*, Jaarboek Voor het Genootschap Nederland-Iran Annuaire de la Societe Neerlando-Iranienne (1980): 1-85

<sup>21</sup> A. Shapur Shahbazi, "An Achaemenid Symbol: I. A Farewell to Fravahr and Ahuramazda." *Archaeologische Mitteilungen Aus Iran* 7 (1974): 135-44, and "An Achaemenid Symbol: II. Farnah (God-Given Fortune) Symbolized." *Archaeologische Mitteilungen Aus Iran* 13 (1980): 119-147.

<sup>22</sup> Abolala Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship*, (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Persis Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> Persis Berlekamp, "From Iraq to Fars: Tracking Cultural Transformations in the 1322 Qazwīnī 'Ajā'ib Manuscript," in *Arab Painting: Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*, ed. Anna Contadini (Boston: Brill, 2010), pp. 73-91.

<sup>25</sup> For example, Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair published a monograph on the great Ilkhanid *Shāhnāma* in *Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shāhnāma* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>26</sup> Abolala Soudavar, "The Saga of Abu-Sa'id Bahādor Khān: The Abusa'idnāme," in *The Court of Ilkhans: 1290-1340, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art* 12, eds. Julian Raby and Teresa Fitzherbert, 95-218 (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

<sup>27</sup> In a preface to Bahram Mirza's album, Dust Muhammad attributes the illustrations of an *Abū Sa'idnāma*, a *Kilīla va Dimna*, and a *Mi'rājnāma* to the hand of Abu Musa. See Wheeler Thackston, *Album Prefaces and Other Documents on the History of Calligraphers and Painters, Studies and Sources in Islamic Art and Architecture* 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 12 for both the Persian and its English translation.

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<sup>28</sup> Marianna Shreve Simpson, “*Shāhnāma* Images and *Shāhnāma* Settings in Medieval Iran,” pp. 72-85. She relates the tile program of Takht-i Sulayman, the Ilkhanid summer Palace of 1270s, representing the story of Furud with the 13<sup>th</sup> century beaker, at the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution (D.C. F1928.2) delineating the story of Bizhan and Manizha that follows the Furud’s story in the *Shāhnāma*. She proposes that while the reciter was narrating the first story in this royal hall, the audience could look at the tile revetment followed by the second story while the beaker was passed among the audience to look at its decorations.

<sup>29</sup> A.S. Melikian Chirvani, “Le Livre des Rois, Miroir du destin II: Takht-e Soleymān et la symbolique du *Shāh-nāme*,” *Studia Iranica* 20 (1991): 33-148.

<sup>30</sup> Marianna Shreve Simpson, “In the Beginning: Frontispieces and Front Matter in Ilkhanid and Injuid Manuscripts,” in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Eleanor Sims, “The Illustrated Manuscripts of *Shāhnāma* Commissioned by the Princes of the House of Timur,” *Ars Orientalis* 22 (1992): 43-68.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Melville and Firuza Abdullaeva, *The Persian Book of Kings: Ibrahim Sultan's Shahnama* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2008). The manuscript is also discussed by Elaine Wright, *The Look of the Book: The Manuscript Production in Shiraz, 1303-1452* (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 2012).

<sup>33</sup> Barbara Brend, *Muhammad Juki's Shahnamah of Firdausi* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> S. C. Welch and Martin Dickson, *The Houghton Shahnameh* (Cambridge: Fogg Art Museum, 1981). The manuscript was reproduced again by Sheila Canby in *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp: The Persian Book of Kings* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014).

<sup>35</sup> Robert Hillenbrand, “The Iconography of Shāh-nāma-yi Shāhi,” in *Safavid Persia*, ed. Charles Melville (London: Tauris, 1996), pp. 53-78.

<sup>36</sup> Anthony Welch, *Artists for the Shah: Late Sixteenth Century Painting at the Imperial Court of Iran* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976).

<sup>37</sup> <http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk>

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<sup>38</sup> Francesca Leoni, “Picturing Evil: Images of *Dīvs* and the Reception of the *Shāhnāma*,” in *Shahnama Studies II: The Reception of Firdausi’s Shahnama*, Studies in Persian Cultural History Series, Vol. 2. (Cambridge: Brill, 2012) pp. 101-118.

<sup>39</sup> Attār, *The Canticle of the Birds: Illustrated Through Persian and Eastern Islamic Art*, trans. Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis, Commentated by Michael Barry and Leili Anvar.

<sup>40</sup> Layla S. Diba, ed., *Royal Persian Painting: The Qajar Epoch 1785-1925* (New York: Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1998).

<sup>41</sup> Hamid Keshmirshekan, *Contemporary Iranian Art: New Perspectives* (London: Christie’s, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> Abbas Daneshvari, “Seismic Shifts Across Political Zones in Contemporary Iranian Art: The Poetics of Knowledge, Knowing and Identity,” in *Performing the Iranian State: Visual Culture and Representations of Iranian Identity*, ed. Staci gem Scheiwiller (New York: Anthem Press, 2013), pp. 101-120.

<sup>43</sup> Anna Contadini, “Musical Beasts: The Swan-Phoenix in the Ibn Bakhtīshū’ Bestiaries,” in Bernard O’Kane, ed. *The Iconography of Islamic Art: Studies in Honour of Robert Hillenbrand* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University press, 2005), pp. 93-101. The supernatural bird, *Arghūn* or *Suryānās*, in two manuscripts of bestiaries by Ibn-Bakhtishu’ (Ms. Or 2784, fol. 55v, British Library, and Ms. 898, fol. 112r, Biblioteca Real, San Lorenzo del Escorial) are discussed.

<sup>44</sup> Abbas Daneshvari, “Cup, Branch, Bird and Fish: An Iconographical Study of the Figure Holding a Cup and a Branch Flanked by a bird and a Fish,” in O’Kane, ed. *The Iconography of Islamic Art*, pp. 103-125. The author proposes that these combined motifs represent the three natures of the Senmurv (p. 119).

<sup>45</sup> Sylvia Auld, “Birds and Blessings: A Kohl-pot from Jerusalem,” in O’Kane, ed. *The Iconography of Islamic Art*, pp. 1-19. The author, however, seems to have confused the Simurgh with other mythical birds such as *Quqnūs* (see note 90 in the same source).

<sup>46</sup> Sara Kuehn, *The Dragon in Medieval East Christian and Islamic Art* (Boston: Brill, 2011). I am thankful to Dr. Milwright to bring this work to my attention.

<sup>47</sup> Simpson, “*Shahnama* as Text and *Shahnama* as Image,” pp. 9-23.

<sup>48</sup> To my knowledge, a similar approach is taken in examining the representations of the *dīvs* in the *Shāhnāma* illustrations by Francesca Leoni in her PhD thesis published as “Picturing Evil:

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Images of Divs and the Reception of the *Shahnama*,” where she relates the images of the *dīvs* to the well-rooted cultural ideas regarding evil in pre-modern Persia.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Ettinghausen, Bahram Gur’s Hunting Feasts or the problem of Identification,” *Iran* 27 (1979): 25-31. Francesca Leoni’s work is introduced above.

<sup>50</sup> References to the representations of the Simurgh in these twentieth-century copies will appear in chapter five. I am grateful to Dr. Sheila Blair for bringing up this issue to my attention.

<sup>51</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 203.

<sup>52</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 265.

<sup>53</sup> Hamid Keshmirshakan, *Contemporary Iranian Art: New Perspectives* (London: Christie’s, 2013), p. 10.

<sup>54</sup> Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, “Semiotics and Art History,” *Art Bulletin* 73 (June 1991):174-208, p. 184.

<sup>55</sup> The visual reception theory was developed through the works of Wolfgang Kemp. In this theory, the attention is on the role of viewer, instead of artist, in completing the work of art. See “Reception Theory,” *Grove Art Online*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ezproxy.uvic.ca/subscriber/article/grove/art> (accessed 2 November 2016)

<sup>56</sup> Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects in Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter*, 2009, pp.9 and 12. accessed through ACLS Humanities e-Book, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/cgi/t/text/pageviewer>

<sup>57</sup> David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 28.

<sup>58</sup> Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, p. xxii.

<sup>59</sup> Ann D’Alleva, *Methods and Theories of Art History* (London: Laurence King, 2005), pp. 135-36.

## Chapter One:

### The Simurgh in Persian Literary Sources

The Sīmurgh (hereinafter Simurgh)<sup>1</sup> appears as a fabulous bird in ancient Iranian literature preserved in Avestan and Pahlavi languages, and lives through the classical Persian literature of medieval and pre-Modern Iran, up to contemporary Iranian literature. The many significant attributes given to this fantastic bird in literary sources transform the Simurgh into a symbol/myth/phenomenon. To understand the significance and meaning of the Simurgh in Persian art, the study of the evolution of this bird through literature is essential. In this chapter, the Avestan and Pahlavi sources of pre-Islamic Persia from the body of Zoroastrian religious writings provide the first references to this bird, its qualities, responsibilities, and its living place.<sup>2</sup>

The references to the Simurgh in these sources, though scattered and indirect, inform the reappearance of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma*, where the fantastic bird and its mate are involved in four episodes. These episodes have been repeatedly illustrated in the manuscripts of this national epic, produced during the flourishing age of Persian painting from the early fourteenth to the early eighteenth century, and after that in other forms of painting. These four stories are narrated in this chapter. The details in recounting these episodes might appear unnecessary, especially for a reader acquainted with the Persian national epics. Yet, I believe the knowledge of these details becomes crucial in reading their paintings, as well as in evaluating the text and image relationship, the familiarity of the painter with the illustrated story, and possibly its production. The last group of literary sources introduced in this chapter belongs to the mystic literature of Iran. During the early centuries of Islam in Iran, the mystic writers recognized the

mythical Simurgh and adapted it to symbolically represent the creator in their faith. Although several mystic poets and writers incorporated this bird into their writings to represent the final stage of the mystical path, one versified account, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* by Fariduddin ‘Attar Nishaburi (d. 1221), surpasses them all in quality of narration. Several copies of this work were also produced, mostly during the second half of the fifteenth century, when the mystical trends were highly popular at the Persian court. Since the Simurgh functions as the final destination in this account, a summary of that with references to the bird and its characteristics is recounted in this chapter.

### The Simurgh in the *Avesta*

The first references in written sources to the fantastic bird of this study, the Simurgh, appear in the *Avesta*, or the holy book of the Zoroastrian religion. The *Avesta* is the oldest Iranian written account in a language referred to by scholars as the Avestan language. The account was composed sometime between 1500 and 800 BCE, but has been recorded in written form only during the sixth century CE. According to the Parsis, the *Avesta* was received by Zoroaster from Ahuramazda, then Gamasp received it from Zoroaster, and finally Adarbad, a holy man under Shapur II, restored it.<sup>3</sup> In its present form, the *Avesta* includes six parts among which its third part, *Yašt*s, contains the references to *Saēna*, or the Simurgh, in the Avestan language.<sup>4</sup> The Persian word ‘Simurgh’ is the equivalent of the Avestan word ‘*Mərəyō saēno*,’ and the Pahlavi or Middle Persian word ‘*Sēnmurw*.’ In the *Avestan* language *mərəyo* is the same as *maro* in the Pahlavi language, which has changed into *murgh* in Modern Persian, meaning ‘bird.’ The second part, *saēno*, equivalent of *sēn* in Pahlavi, and *si* in Modern Persian, is the word for eagle or falcon.

The first reference to the *Saēna* in the *Avesta* belongs to *Rašn-yašt*,<sup>5</sup> the twelfth *Yašt* of the *Avesta*. This passage refers to the residing place of the bird that is described as the tree of all remedies in the middle of the *Farākhkart* Sea.

Oh the rightful Rašn, if you be on a tree where the nest of the Simurgh is situated -that is in the middle of the *Farākhkart* Sea, the tree that includes all the good and powerful remedies and the doctors all seek, the tree that contains the seeds of all plants-, we still call upon you for assistance.<sup>6</sup>

The second reference to *Saēna* in the *Avesta* is presented in *Farvardīn-yašt*; the thirteenth *Yašt* of the *Avesta* that is devoted to the *fravašis*, the inner powers in every being, and in their praise.<sup>7</sup> This long *Yašt* includes a list of the names of Iranian men whose *fravašis* are praised and worshipped. In two *Yašts* the word *Saēna* is recorded. *Farvardīn-yašt* 97 reads:

We worship the Fravashi of the holy Saēna, the son of Aûhm-stut, who first appeared upon this earth with a hundred pupils.<sup>8</sup>

And for the second time in *Farvardīn-yašt* 126:

We worship the Fravashi of the holy Tîrônakathwa, of the Uspaēsta-Saēna house.

We worship the Fravashi of the holy Utayuti vit-kaki, the son of Zighri, of the Saēna house. We worship the Fravashi of the holy Frôhakafra, the son of Merezîshmya, of the Saēna house.<sup>9</sup>

Contrary to the reference in *Rašn-yašt*, the word *Saēna* in these two occurrences in *Farvardīn-yašt* does not refer to a bird. While the *Farvardīn-yašt* 97 is clearly praising a holy man with many followers, the *Farvardīn-yašt* 126 refers to three men of the *Saēna* family whose *fravašis* are praised. It has been suggested that *Saēna* was the name of a wise man, probably a physician, whose attributes are borrowed for the bird *Saēna*, the present Simurgh. The three men mentioned in *Farvardīn-yašt* 126 are of his family.<sup>10</sup> The Pahlavi sources, examined below, will help to shed some light on this duality of man-bird.

In the fourteenth *Yašt* of the *Avesta*, or *Bahrām-yašt*,<sup>11</sup> there are no direct references made to the bird *Saēna* or Simurgh. However, in one of his ten incarnations, Bahrām [or *Vərəθrayna*], the deity of victory, is described with attributes that resemble the characteristics of the Simurgh in Persian literature.<sup>12</sup> *Vərəθrayna* or Bahram appears to Zoroaster in ten different shapes, including a strong wind, a beautiful bull, a white horse, a camel, a boar, a beautiful youth of fifteen, the bird *Vāreghna*, a wild ram, a fighting buck, and a bright man. In all these shapes, Bahram owns the glory.<sup>13</sup> At the beginning of this passage, he introduces himself as “the most glorious in Glory ... and the best-healing in health-giving.”<sup>14</sup>

In his seventh appearance to Zoroaster, in the shape of a bird, Bahram is described as ‘the creation of Ahuramazda, in the form of *Vāreghna*, who would take [his prey] in his claws and tear it apart with his beak. *Vāreghna*/ Bahram is also described as the fastest among the birds, and the lightest among the high-flying creatures. He is the only creature who can escape an arrow, no matter how well it is in flight. The whole day, *Vāreghna* flies on the highest of the mountains looking for prey, scratches on the branches of the trees, and listens to the canticles of birds.’<sup>15</sup> These descriptions resemble the qualities of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma*, as will be demonstrated below. But the resemblance does not stop there.

Later on, in the same *Yašt*, *Bahrām-yašt*, Ahuramazda refers to this seventh form of *Vāreghna*. The conversation happens between Ahuramazda and Zoroaster; Zoroaster asks Ahuramazda:

34. If a spell be laid upon me by the sinister men, what would be the remedy?

Ahuramazda responds:

35. Take a feather of that high-flying bird, *Vāreghna*, and pat your body with it, and with that feather break down the enemy's [spell]. 36. The one who owns a bone or feather of this brave bird cannot be defeated or killed by any wise man. That feather of the bird of birds would protect him and bestow glory and splendour on him.... 38.

Everyone is in fear of the one who has [this] feather, like my enemies who are scared of me [Ahuramazda].<sup>16</sup>

The healing effects of the feathers and bones of this brave bird, the protection and glory that this bird bestows on their beholders, are similar to the characteristics of the mythical Simurgh in Persian epics. There is, in fact, a direct reference to the resemblance between the two birds, the Simurgh (*Saēna*) and Bahram (*Vāreghna/vərəθrayna*) in the *Bahrām-yašt* 41:

We worship Bahram, created by Ahuramazda. May the victory and Glory (*farr*) [of Bahram] encompass this house and the cattle; as the Simurgh and the heavy clouds that cover the mountains.<sup>17</sup>

As these references reveal, some of the main characteristics pointed out for the bird *Vāreghna*, as the seventh form of Bahram in *Bahrām-yašt*, are the supernatural and healing powers as well as the protective and glorious powers of his feathers and bones. Moreover, the enormous size of the bird is described in comparing the bird with clouds that cover the mountains. These features are all shared with the Simurgh, the guardian of the Persian heroes in the *Shāhnāma*. Clearly, the *Avesta* appears as the earliest written source in associating a bird with such characteristics. These are the features that remain in Persian literary history, shape the mythical Simurgh, and gain new symbolic definitions.

### The Simurgh in Pahlavi Sources

The other references to the bird Simurgh appear in the Pahlavi literature. This group of texts are mostly religious writings written in Middle Persian or Pahlavi language by the Zoroastrian clergy after the Muslim conquest of Iran during the ninth and tenth centuries, thus preserving the religious and literary traditions of the Zoroastrians of the Sasanian period.<sup>18</sup> The first in this category is the *Bundahišn*, which provides an account of the Zoroastrian cosmogony and cosmography, and the creation of the world by Ahuramazda.<sup>19</sup> According to chapter nine, on the creation of animals in the Greater or Iranian *Bundahišn*, Ahuramazda creates three classes of animals, of which the bird is the second.<sup>20</sup> Under these three classes there are five genera of animals, of which the fourth is the bird. Amongst the birds, the three-toed Simurgh is the largest. These five genera are divided into two hundred and sixty two species. There are one hundred and ten species of birds, including the Simurgh, of which the Simurgh and the bat have milk in their teat and feed their young.<sup>21</sup> In regenerating, the Simurgh is categorized with other larger birds

that have forty days in seed state, thirty days in mixed state, fifteen days in egg formation, and ten days in growing feathers.<sup>22</sup>

According to *Bundahišn*, there is a role for the Simurgh in the reproduction of all plants. The ‘tree of a thousand seeds,’<sup>23</sup> that grows in the middle of *Farākhkard* Sea, contains the seeds of all plants. Every year, the Simurgh scatters those seeds to mingle with water. Then Tištar<sup>24</sup> seizes the seeds with rainwater and rains them across the regions.<sup>25</sup> The tree of thousand seeds is the same tree introduced as the tree of the Simurgh in *Rašn-yašt* (XII.17), the first reference to this bird in the *Avesta* (mentioned above).

Another Pahlavi text, *the Selections of Zādspram*,<sup>26</sup> also attests to the tree of all seeds as the house of *Sēnmurw* from where this bird scatters the seeds into the water.<sup>27</sup> In the book of the *Mēnōg ī xrad*,<sup>28</sup> another Pahlavi text, the responsibility of scattering and distributing the seeds of the plants, however, has been divided between the Simurgh and another bird named Chanmrosh, (LXII. 37-42):

37. And Sīnamrū’s resting place is on the tree which is Jad-bēsh (opposed to harm) of all seeds; 38. And always when he rises aloft, a thousand twigs will shoot forth from that tree; 39. and when he alights, he will break off the thousand twigs, and he sheds their seed therefrom. 40. And the bird Chañmrôsh for ever sits in that vicinity; 41. and his work is this, that he collects that seed which sheds from the tree of all seeds, which is Jad-bēsh, and conveys it there where Tishtar seizes the water, 42. so that Tishtar may seize the water with that seed of all kinds, and may rain it on the world with the rain.<sup>29</sup>

The Pahlavi sources examined so far introduce the Simurgh as the bird in charge of scattering the seeds of all plants. The living place of this bird is on the tree of all seeds in the middle of the *Farākhkard* Sea to facilitate its role.<sup>30</sup> This Simurgh matches the description for the *Saēna* bird in *Rašn-yašt* of the Avesta. However, in the book of *Dēnkard*,<sup>31</sup> another Pahlavi text, *Sênô* or the Avestan *Saēna* is mentioned as a man and is listed as one of the six disciples of Zoroaster. In book IX, 17 Ahuramazda says to Zoroaster:

Maintain this religion steadfastly, for through the assistance of this religion I, who am Aûharmazd, will be with thee, and the omniscient wisdom becomes thine, and extends to thy disciples, Maîdôk-mâh, Parshadgâvô, Sênô, Kai-Vistâsp, Frashôstar, and Gâmâsp, the teacher of public observance and will to the righteous, besides many of the people who are diligent and even those who are idle, and their good works and praise will be owned by thee.<sup>32</sup>

There are more references to Sênô as a person in the book of *Dēnkard*. Once, in Chapter XXXIII, he is introduced as a priest, and the son of Hûmstûv, from the countries of the Sênân,<sup>33</sup> while the book VII of *Dēnkard* provides more information about him:

6. And Sênôv of the high priests, as about him it says even this: ‘The religion becomes a hundred years old when Sênôv is born, and two hundred years when he passes away; he was also the first Mazda-worshipper with a life of a hundred years, and who walks forth upon this earth with a hundred disciples.’<sup>34</sup>

In *the Selections of Zādspram*, also, Sênô is listed as one of the six great upholders of the religion, who is followed by a hundred disciples.<sup>35</sup> These remarks about *Saēna*, a priest and an influential character in promoting the religion of Ahuramazda, as indicated in the Avestan *Farvardīn-yašt*, the Pahlavi *Dēnkard*, and *the Selections of Zādspram*, clearly reveal that a man with that name and from a religious rank had existed.

Except for the similarity of the names, none of the sources examined above suggest a connection between the wise man and the bird. However, in Persian literature, (the national epics in particular), the Simurgh appears to have a combination of these qualities ascribed to *Saēna*, the Mazdean priest, Bahram (*Vāreghna*), the god of victory, and the bird that lives on the tree of all seeds. These qualities in brief are wisdom, the ownership of Glory (*farr*), and the healing power. The supernatural powers of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* are all affiliated and mostly performed through Zal, who is from the family of Iranian heroes, and is also known for his wisdom. It is probable that at some point the qualities of this wise man and the bird were interchanged and reshaped through the Simurgh-Zal relationship.

### The Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma*

The Avestan and Pahlavi sources collectively provide us with some information on the characteristics of this bird as associated with glory, the distributor of the seeds of all plants, and some physical features such as its size and grandeur, as well as its regeneration. The same bird reappears in New Persian literature,<sup>36</sup> preserving some of these ancient features, while earning some new attributes and roles. The main source written in the New Persian language, and that informs this study and inspires the primary visual evidence of the representations of the Simurgh, not only for this study but in the realm of Persian painting, is the *Shāhnāma* or *the Book of the*

*Kings*.<sup>37</sup> The character of the Simurgh, the guardian of the family of Persian heroes, the descendants of Nariman, is closely involved with Zal. The fantastic bird not only saves the young Zal, but saves his family members a couple of times through the narration. The evil counterpart of the bird appears only once, confronting the Persian prince-warrior, Isfandiar. These four episodes are recounted below.

The first reference to the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* occurs in the chapter of the reign of Manuchihr,<sup>38</sup> where the life story of Sam is narrated. Sam, one of the heroes<sup>39</sup> of Iran, was looking forward to becoming a father for a long time before his son was born. Finally, his son, Zal, was born as a beautiful child but with white hair. The devastated Sam interpreted that as a bad omen<sup>40</sup> and ordered his men to take this demon's child<sup>41</sup> to a far land where the Simurgh lived. Following his order, his men left the noble-born child on a mountain, unknown to him, where the Simurgh lived:

where was placed the house of the Simurgh,  
the house that was unknown to this little one  
left him on the mountain and they returned  
this is how went on for many long years<sup>42</sup>

Searching for food for her young, the Simurgh was flying up as high as the clouds when she noticed the crying, hungry, naked child left under the heat of the sun. The bird flew down and grabbed the child and carried him up to the peak of the Alburz Mountain, where her nest was, to feed her chicks. While the Simurgh and her young were looking at this nice-looking child in tears, *Yazdān* (God) bestowed mercy<sup>43</sup> upon them:

“looked the Simurgh and the young at that newborn whose tears were blood  
surprisingly, they treated him with kindness and stared at that fine-looking face”<sup>44</sup>

That is how Zal was saved and raised by the Simurgh into a handsome young man.

Years passed until Sam received the news of his son becoming a capable glorious man.<sup>45</sup> He had a dream about his son and was advised by his wise men<sup>46</sup> to ask for God’s forgiveness for abandoning his innocent child. After his second dream, Sam gathered his wise men and his army leaders to depart to the mountains in search for Zal. Finding the mountains as high as the Pleiades,<sup>47</sup> with the bird’s nest made from sandalwood and ebony<sup>48</sup> like a grand palace on its peak, Sam sighted the horrifying Simurgh at the nest. He asked for God’s forgiveness and assistance in getting his son back. At the nest, the Simurgh told Zal: “your father, the champion of the heroes is looking for his son and I have to return you to him safely.” Zal disagreed with the Simurgh’s decision and asked if she had become tired of having him. He continued:

“your nest is my luminous home your two feathers are the glories of my crown”<sup>49</sup>

The Simurgh replied “Once you visit the court of the Kianids, their crown and their throne, this nest will not satisfy you anymore. Take these feathers of mine with you as the signs of my glory (*farr*) and protection since I have raised you as one of my own children. If you face any hardness, put one of my feathers into fire and my glory (*farr*) will be with you at once. I will appear immediately as a black cloud and will bring you back to this nest.”<sup>50</sup>

After the Simurgh gently calmed the young son of Sam, she carried him down the mountains and returned him to his father. Upon receiving his fine-looking son, with long hair

and mammoth-like body, Sam nodded his head in front of the Simurgh and praised her. He asked his son to forget the past. They started their journey back to the city while the army celebrated this reunion. Upon their return, king Manuchihr received them. After seeing Zal, he advised his father to never leave the young man again since he had the royal *farr* with him. Sam recounted his experience at the Alburz Mountain, encountering the bird who raised his son, right after he asked for God's help and pardon. He reported the story once to the king and once to the wise men, with whom he left Zal to be educated while he was away at the battle defending Persia. Every time, Sam praised the virtuous noble bird. That is how the story of Zal and his upbringing by the Simurgh was spread around the world.<sup>51</sup>

I abandoned the son that God gave me	I disparaged him out of my ignorance
The noble Simurgh picked him up	Being assigned by God
Raised him as a tall cypress tree	I am contemptible and the bird is noble <sup>52</sup>

Since then, the Simurgh became associated with the lives of Zal and his descendants. Zal turned into a hero like his father, and became in charge of Zabulistan in the absence of his father. He married the moon-faced, cypress-bodied Rudaba, the daughter of Mihrab, king of Kabul, and from the family of Zahhak.<sup>53</sup> This union between the two families of Faridun and Zahhak, the ancient enemies, raised some conflicts. Finally, the match was approved by the king Manuchihr, whose astrologers predicted the birth of Persia's greatest hero of all times as the fruit of this marriage. The day came that Rudaba was to give birth. She was ill and in pain from the heavy burden, and fainted, unable to deliver her child. "In his despair to see his love in pain and in fear of losing her, Zal thought of the Simurgh and her feather. He joyfully announced the good news

to Sindukht, Rudaba's mother. He brought a brazier, put on a fire, and burnt a small piece of the feather. The air grew dark at once and the supreme bird<sup>54</sup> appeared like a cloud that rains pearls;<sup>55</sup> the pearls that adorn the soul."<sup>56</sup>

The Simurgh inquired about Zal's reason for sadness at this happy time, when his lion cub is about to be born. After hearing Zal's plea, the Simurgh instructed Zal to "bring a glittering sword and a skilful man."<sup>57</sup> First, have the moon-faced Rudaba drink some wine to get drunk and become free of pain and worry, so when the man cuts through her belly, she won't feel any pain. Then, he can pull the lion cub out and her belly will be covered in blood. You have to sew up the wound with no fear. Mix and grind the herb I will tell you about with milk and musk and dry them in shade. Apply the blend on her wound to see its healing on the same day. Pat her body with my feather [*parr*] since the shadow of my glory [*farr*] is felicitous. Thank God and be happy."<sup>58</sup> Then the bird pulled off a feather from her wing, dropped it, and flew up. Zal grabbed the feather and did as the bird advised him. That is how the future champion of Iran, Rustam, was born.

The next reference to the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* occurs under the reign of Gushtasp, during the seven trials of Isfandiar, the son of this king. This Simurgh, however, is not the same Simurgh who raised Zal and helped him with his supernatural healing powers at the birth of Rustam. This bird is described as a terrifying bird and the hunter of wild animals. Its living place and size, though, resemble the first Simurgh of the *Shāhnāma*. In a later episode, the guardian-Simurgh introduces this bird as her mate. When defeated by Arjasp, the Turanian king, Gushtasp seeks help from his son, the great Iranian warrior, Isfandiar. The king, under the influence of his courtiers, had formerly imprisoned his warrior-son, accusing Isfandiar of demanding the throne. Yet Isfandiar agreed to face the Turanians and save his two sisters, who were held captive in a

brass fortress in Turan.<sup>59</sup> On his way through the land of Turan, he was guided by a Turanian general, Gurgsar, and conquered all the difficulties of the seven stations, one of which was to face the horrifying bird, the Simurgh.<sup>60</sup> In the fifth station, Gurgsar warns Isfandiar about the Simurgh:

Your task is more difficult at this station. You have to be more prepared and act wiser since you are about to face the supreme bird on a mountain with its peaks in the sky. The bird is told to be combative as a mountain, and that could easily lift an elephant up to the clouds. When the bird flies, and opens the wings, the *farr* [light] of the sun would not reach the earth.<sup>61</sup>

Isfandiar thought of a solution to defeat the fearsome bird. He built a wooden chest covered with wooden spikes, mounted on a chariot. He left his army behind and rode his horse and chariot to the mountains where the Simurgh lived. He landed there and hid in the chest.

The bird noticed the chest followed by the army and the battle horn. He flew down the mountain like a black cloud, shielding the light of the sun and the moon, aiming to grab the chest as a tiger grips its prey. But the spikes pierced through his legs and wings. His struggles to free himself were in vain, and his glory and elegance were diminished. The chest and chariot were covered in blood. The two chicks of the Simurgh who witnessed the scene flew down from their nest when they saw the bird covered in blood. Similar to their parent, they were huge and their flight darkened the air. At this point, Isfandiar came out of the chest, killed the magical (*chārigar*) bird

with his knife, and left the bird miserable. The bird's feathers covered the ground from mountain to mountain, veiled by its *farr* (glory).<sup>62</sup>

Isfandiar successfully passed all the seven ordeals, freed his sisters from the brass fortress, killed the Turanian king, Arjasp, and returned to Iran in victory, expecting to be assigned to the throne by his father, as he had been promised. But his father put him on another terrifying mission, this time to travel to Zabulistan to capture Rostam and bring him back to the Iranian court in chains. Only then would the prince be rightfully ascending the Iranian throne and crown. Earlier, Gushtasp had asked for Rostam's help in facing the Turanians but the aged hero<sup>63</sup> had refused to help the Iranian king. Before assigning such a task to Isfandiar, Gushtasp was informed by his counsellor of his son's fate, who was destined to die in Zabulistan fighting with Rostam.<sup>64</sup> Regardless of this knowledge the order was out. Although Isfandiar was hesitant about fighting with the greatest hero of Persia, who had saved the Kianid throne several times through history, he started his way to Zabulistan, hoping to convince Rostam to turn himself in without a fight. Rostam was also reluctant to fight with this young capable prince of Persia, who had protected Iran against the Turanians. Nonetheless, he could not admit the shame of being chained and carried to the Persian court, as Gushtasp had planned. After many unsuccessful talks between the two champions, trying to convince each other to accept a peaceful solution, the day of the fight arrived, as the fate had destined. The two lion-hearted heroes fought fearlessly till the end of the day when Isfandiar shot both Rostam and his horse, Rakhsh, with his diamond-headed arrows. Wounded and in pain, Rostam left the battleground and asked Isfandiar to resume the fight the next day when daylight was back. When his father, Zal, and his family<sup>65</sup> saw Rostam and Rakhsh, they were terrified of losing them, and eventually losing the land of Zabulistan where

they had ruled and lived in for centuries. Zal thought of the Simurgh and her wisdom to help them out of this crisis. He took with him three braziers filled with fire and three wise men to a high land.<sup>66</sup> The magician [Zal]<sup>67</sup> took a feather out from his robe and burnt a piece of it. Suddenly, the night became darker. Immediately, the bird appeared before the miserable Zal who greeted and praised her with burning sandalwood in braziers. “The bird asked ‘Oh King, what has happened that you put up this smoke inquiring my help?’”<sup>68</sup>

Zal explained his misery, and the fear of losing both his son and his country. The Simurgh<sup>69</sup> soothed his grief and told him to bring Rustam and Rakhsh before her. She pulled out four arrowheads from Rustam’s body, and drew the blood from the wounds with her beak. Then, she rubbed one of her feathers on the wounds, which were healed right away. The bird instructed Rustam to apply her feather, soaked in milk, on the wounds until they healed completely. She performed the same procedure on Rakhsh, and drew out six arrowheads from the body of the steed. Then she addressed Rustam: “the mammoth-bodied warrior, why did you fight with Isfandiar who is invincible?”<sup>70</sup> It would not be a shame to bow your head before Isfandiar since he is the protector of Iran and a remarkable warrior. If you avoid him, it will not be a surprise because he is the hero who with his trickery and sword destroyed my mate, that strong bird.”<sup>71</sup> Then she continued:

Now if you promise me to invite Isfandiar to peace and do your best to end this fight, I will help you and raise you to the sun. I will reveal to you the secret of skies out of my love for you. Fate has destined that whoever kills Isfandiar would live in misery and pain in this life and afterlife. Now, grab a glittering dagger, mount Rakhsh and follow me.<sup>72</sup>

The bird directed the warrior near a sea, and then she flew down and darkened the sky. She showed a pathway to Rustam. She tapped Rustam's forehead with her feather and asked him to come closer. She sat next to a tamarisk<sup>73</sup> tree rooted deep in the earth with its branches in the sky. She instructed Rustam to choose a straight branch that tapered at the tip, and warned him that this tamarisk wood should not be disregarded since it holds Isfandiar's essence. The Simurgh directed Rustam to strengthen the wood in the fire, fix an old arrowhead at its tip, and install feathers on it. This was the way to wound Isfandiar. The bird supervised Rustam through all the steps preparing the shaft. Then she asked him again "to appeal for the end of this fight before the Persian prince, but if he disdains you, take the arrow that had been soaked in wine and point it toward Isfandiar's eyes. This is the way that tamarisk-worshippers do. Once your heart is filled with wrath, the fate would drive this arrow into Isfandiar's eyes."<sup>74</sup> Then, the Simurgh embraced Zal to say goodbye as if they were of one piece.

The next morning Isfandiar was surprised to see Rustam at the battlefield with all his wounds healed. He told Rustam that "you, who were close to death yesterday, are healed today only because of Zal's trickery."<sup>75</sup> As it was destined, Isfandiar did not accept Rustam's appeal for peace. Neither could Rustam admit to be chained at the Iranian court. Rustam shot the arrow as the Simurgh instructed, and that was how, with the help of the Simurgh, (the protector of Zal and his family), the life of Persian prince-warrior, Isfandiar, came to an end. Before his last breath, he withdrew the arrow from his eyes, and his body was covered in his blood. As he was laid down, surrounded by his army men, he addressed them: "Zal's son did not kill me in a chivalrous way. Look at this tamarisk wood in my fist. This wood, led by the Simurgh and the trickster Rustam, ends my days. Zal who knows all the tricks of the world, used his magic on me."<sup>76</sup>

Rustam, as had promised to Isfandiar in his last breaths, watched over Isfandiar's son, Bahman. Later as Firdausi narrates, Rustam's life was put to an end by the trickery of his step-brother, Shaghad. When Bahman, Isfandiar's son, ascended to the Iranian throne, he attacked Zabulistan, seeking revenge for his father's blood. He killed Rustam's son, Faramarz, and chained Zal. As the Simurgh warned, misery remained with the one who killed Isfandiar, even after death.

The Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* has collected the attributes given to her namesake, the *Saēna*, the bird *Varēghna*, and the Mazdean priest-physician from the *Saēna* family, as were recorded in the Avestan and Pahlavi sources. Similar to those examples, the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* covers the mountains with its shadow, owns the divine glory, *farr-i īzadī*, and protects whoever owns that *farr*. She also has the wisdom and knowledge of a wise man in healing and saving the heroes under her protection. The only element that has changed from those ancient sources in the *Shāhnāma* is that the bird's habitat is no longer on the tree of all plants in the middle of *Farākhkart* Sea, as described in the *Avesta*, but on top of the Alburz Mountain. According to the *Avesta*, the feather and the bone of the bird *Vāreghna* can break any spell and protect whoever owns them, while the bird *Saēna* is associated with healing powers. Moreover, the rightful deity Rašn may be called from the Simurgh's nest and thus is connected with the bird. Similarly in the *Shāhnāma*, as the bird reveals to the young Zal, her feather is a symbol of *farr*. The Simurgh is a wise bird gifted with the knowledge of medicine and sorcery with which, at least twice, she saves the life of Rustam and Rudaba, the son and wife of Zal. These qualities could be borrowed from the physician-priest Saēna, as seen in *Farvardīn-yašt*. The Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* inherits the qualities of the deities of both victory and truth, Bahram and Rašn, through the two birds of *Vāreghna* and *Saēna*.<sup>77</sup> In the battle of Rustam and the invincible

Isfandiar, it is in fact the Simurgh that takes the *farr* away from the Persian prince Isfandiar.<sup>78</sup> Although Isfandiar had been the great warrior of Persia and had saved the country against the Turanians, he agreed to fight with Rostam out of his desire to gain the throne, and thus slopped away from the rightful path. As attested in the *Avesta*, in order to be qualified to sit on the Persian throne, the Iranian kings had to receive the *farr*, or *xvarənah*, from Ahuramazda, the supreme god. They can lose the *farr* once they depart from the path of virtue. With the interference of the Simurgh, Isfandiar, the protector of Iran and the rightful religion, never ascended to the Iranian throne.<sup>79</sup>

#### The Simurgh in 'Attar's *Mantiq al-Tayr*:

Many mystic writers wrote treatises on the conference of the birds in which the Simurgh signifies the divine presence. Nonetheless, the finest example of Persian mystical poetry, in which the Simurgh represents the divine being, is created by Fariduddin Muhammad 'Attar Nishaburi<sup>80</sup> in his versified account, *Mantiq al-Tayr*, or as it was originally named *Maqāmāt-i Tuyūr*, the conference of the birds. In this masterpiece of mystical literature, 'Attar narrates the journey of the birds in search for the Simurgh, the obstacles that they face in this path, the withdrawal of some and destruction of some other, and finally accomplishing the path and attaining the Simurgh's presence by only thirty of these birds, *sī murgh*.<sup>81</sup> The whole account of *Mantiq al-Tayr* is a conversation between the birds, mainly between the hoopoe, the wise bird who answers the philosophical questions and the complaints raised by the rest of the birds.

At the beginning of his book, after the prelude and praising God, Muhammad and the four caliphs, 'Attar introduces twelve kinds of birds. He devotes five couplets to describe each bird, its physical as well as characteristic qualities. These twelve birds are hoopoe, finch, parrot,

partridge, falcon, francolin, nightingale, peacock, cock pheasant, pigeon, turtledove, and hawk. Each of these birds, in fact, represents a type of character. When all the birds come together looking for a king (Shah) to rule and direct them, the wise hoopoe invites them to join him to travel to the sole king of all birds who lives at the *Qāf* Mountain and is no one but the Simurgh. The Simurgh is close to all but all are far from him.

We have a sovereign; past Qāf's mountain peak  
The Sîmorgh lives, the sovereign whom you seek  
And She is always near to us, though we  
Live far from her transcendent majesty<sup>82</sup>

In all occasions, the hoopoe's advice to the birds is complimented by one or more anecdotes. In one of these anecdotes the Simurgh is described as follows:

At the beginning, the Simurgh passed through the country of China at midnight. One of her feathers was dropped in that land and it excited everyone. Many colors and many forms were generated by it. This feather is now in China.<sup>83</sup> If it was not because of her feather and her *farr* (glory) there would have been neither color nor form. Since she is hidden, no more can be said about her.<sup>84</sup>

It was in China, late one moonless night,  
The Sîmorgh first appeared to mortal sight-  
She let a feather float down through the air,  
And rumours of its fame spread everywhere;

Throughout the world men separately conceived  
An image of its shape, and all believed  
Their private fantasies uniquely true!  
(In China, still this feather is on view,  
Whence comes the saying you have heard, no doubt,  
“See knowledge, unto China seek it out.”)  
If this same feather had not floated down,  
The world would not be filled with Her renown-  
It is a sign of Her, and in each heart  
There lies this feather’s hidden counterpart.  
But since no words suffice, what use are mine  
To represent or to describe this sign?  
Whoever wishes to explore the way,  
Let him set out - what more is there to say?<sup>85</sup>

The Simurgh’s portrayal inspired the birds. They became impatient to start their journey to their king and to abandon the selves. But since the journey was long, each brought an excuse and declined to join the group. Some of them blamed their physical weaknesses for this long journey, some were too proud to look for the Simurgh. The hoopoe announced that all the birds in this world are the images of the Simurgh’s shadow. One’s heart has to be polished as a mirror for one’s eyes to be able to see the Simurgh.<sup>86</sup>

Thus we were born; the birds of every land

Are still Her shadows – think and understand.

...

Your heart is not a mirror bright and clear

If the Sîmorgh's form does not appear<sup>87</sup>

Learning the secret, thousands of birds became eager to see their lord. They chose the hoopoe as their leader in this difficult journey. On their way, the birds encountered many doubts, and raised many complaints regarding their sinfulness, uncertainty, ego, pride, love of gold and ostentation, love of the beloved, fears of death, and bad luck. They brought up questions about purity, hope, justice and loyalty, the manners before the Simurgh, their love for the Simurgh, the gifts they should present to the king of birds, and what gifts to ask for. A bird declared satisfaction with his spiritual state, and finally an exhausted bird asked about the length of the journey. After wisely addressing all the questions and complaints, and supporting his responses with a few anecdotes, the hoopoe revealed the seven valleys of the Way to the Simurgh. These valleys are the Quest, Love, Insight, Detachment and Serenity, Unity, Bewilderment,<sup>88</sup> and at last, Poverty and Mystical Annihilation:<sup>89</sup>

‘before we reach our goal’, the hoopoe said

‘The journeys seven valleys lie ahead;

...

The first stage is the valley of the quest;

Then Love's wide valley is our second test;

The third is Insight into Mystery,

The fourth Detachment and Serenity-  
The fifth is Unity; the sixth is Awe,  
A deep bewilderment unknown before,  
The seventh Poverty and Nothingness,  
And there you are suspended, motionless,  
Till you are drawn – the impulse is not yours –  
A drop absorbed in seas that have no shores.<sup>90</sup>

Through the voice of the hoopoe, ‘Attar explains the seven paths every Sufi should go through to achieve the ultimate truth. Hearing all the struggles and obstacles that they had to overcome during this journey, the birds’ hearts were filled with fear; some died there at once, the rest commenced their long journey. The journey took many years, during which many of them perished. At last, from those hundreds of thousands of birds, only thirty wounded, weak, and heartbroken birds survived.

A world of birds set out, and later remained  
But thirty when the promised goal was gained,  
Thirty exhausted, wretched, broken things,  
With hopeless hearts and tattered, trailing wings<sup>91</sup>

At this final stage, they were advised by a messenger, a “nameless Glory”<sup>92</sup> to go back, since they would not be able to conceive the glory of the king. But the birds’ determination convinced the messenger to open the gate to the world behind the veils, to the light of lights.

They were given a written page to read and discover the Simurgh. Their souls were revived. They saw the Simurgh in themselves; the thirty birds (*sī murgh*) were in fact the Simurgh. The more they gazed, the more they saw themselves as well as the end of the search for the Simurgh. Still puzzled, the birds heard their Lord saying:<sup>93</sup>

And silently their sovereign replies:  
‘I am a mirror set before your eyes,  
And all who came before My splendour see  
Themselves, their own unique reality;  
You came as thirty birds and therefore saw  
These selfsame thirty birds, not less nor more;  
If you had come as forty, fifty – here  
An answering forty, fifty, would appear;  
Though you have struggled, wandered, travelled far,  
It is yourselves you see and what you are.’<sup>94</sup>

This is where the journey of the birds and their quest for the Simurgh ends. Unlike the other literary sources examined earlier, with the *Shāhnāma* at their top, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* does not provide much information on the visual appearance of the bird. Instead, it focuses on the spiritual grandeur of the bird and the state of being it represents. Nevertheless, ‘Attar and other mystical writers adapted the characteristics such as divine glory, hiddenness, and omnipresence to describe this bird, the metaphor of the Creator.

## Conclusion

The presence of the Simurgh in Persian literature is significant. The references to the Simurgh in the written sources, examined above, reveal that there is more than one definition for this bird and what it represents. The fantastic bird is appointed to execute pivotal roles in Avestan and Pahlavi religious sources, the effect of which is apparent in her responsibility to protect the Persian heroes in the Iranian national epics. The Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* has a variety of qualities that no single bird was described with before that. In the *Shāhnāma*, the Simurgh collects the attributes of the two birds, *Saēna* and *Vāreghna*, and a wise man from the *Saēna* family. Therefore, it becomes a developed form of all three characters. In mystical writings, the bird reaches its highest moral position and represents the creator. Meanwhile in other genres of literature, including encyclopaedic sources, and that will be discussed in the next chapter, the Simurgh is usually introduced with a combination of characteristics. Sometimes the bird is described in a purely narrative style, merely as a wondrous animal.

Since the thirteenth century, the Simurgh and her role have not changed much in the literary sources. The bird remains a significant creature with supernatural capabilities. In the Iranian visual culture, however, the attribute that encourages her presence, at least with regards to the royal manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*, is the one she adapted from the bird *Vāreghna*. It is her close connection with the glory that justifies her elaborate representations through royal manuscripts.

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<sup>1</sup> The word Simurgh is the New Persian form of the Avestan ‘Saēna’, and the Pahlavi or Middle Persian ‘Sēn’ or ‘Sēnmurw.’ All variations of the word will be used in this chapter. The transliteration of the word, each time it is used, follows the transliteration system applicable for its relevant language. From now on, the New Persian form of the word will appear without the long vowel diacritic, and as ‘Simurgh’.

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<sup>2</sup> These sources have, partly or as a whole, been translated into western languages since the seventeenth century when the sacred books of the east attracted the attention of western scholars. However, my primary references in understanding the characteristics of this mythical bird, with regards to Persian translations of the *Avesta* and *Bundahišn* in particular, are the works of two prominent scholars of Persian mythology, Mihرداد Bahar and Jalil Doostkhah. The invaluable English translations of these texts by James Darmesteter, West, and Anklesaria have also been consulted. The full citations of these sources will appear in subsequent notes.

<sup>3</sup> James Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part I, Introduction, from *the Sacred Books of the East*, ed. F. Max Muller, Vol. IV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1880, reprinted 1972 in US), pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

<sup>4</sup> The other five parts in order are *Gāthās* (Gāthās), *Yasna*, *Visperad*, *Khurda-Avesta*, and *Vendīdād*. The *Yašts*, with only twenty-one *yašts* known to us, is the longest part of the *Avesta*. It includes the hymns, composed in a highly poetical and epical nature, in praise of certain deities or divine beings, the *izads* and *amshāspands*. See Jalil Doostkhah, “Introduction,” in *Avesta*, trans. Jalil Doostkhah (Tehran: Murvarid, 1371/2002, 16<sup>th</sup> edition, 2012), pp. one to thirty-five.

<sup>5</sup> This *yašt* is dedicated to the Avestan *rašnav*, or the Pahlavi *rašn*, who is the deity of justice, or the divine judge. With Mitra and Srōš, they are the three judges who weigh the deeds of men after death. See Darmesteter, James, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, from *the Sacred Books of the East*, ed. F. Max Muller, Vol. XXIII (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883, reprinted 1972 in US), p. 168. *Rašn* is the thirteenth *amshāspand*, and the son of Ohrmazd and Sipandarmaz. Along with Mihr and Bahram (same Mitra and Srōš), *Rašn* circles among the armies in battle and bestows the victory upon the rightful ones. The deity also assists the innocents and destroys the thieves. See Mihرداد Bahar, *Pazhūhishī dar asātīr-i Iran: pāra-i nukhust va pāra-i duyum* [A Research on Iranian Myths: parts one and two], (Tehran: Agah, 1375/1996), p.83, footnote 36.

<sup>6</sup> *Avesta*, trans. Doostkhah. p. 400. The translation from Persian to English is by the present author. Darmesteter has chosen the bird ‘eagle’ to stand for the word *Saēna* in his translation of the text (XII.17): “Whether thou, O holy Rashnu! art on the tree of the eagle, that sounds in the middle of the sea Vouro-Kasha, that is called the tree of good remedies, the tree of powerful remedies, the tree of all remedies, and on which rests the seeds of all plants; we invoke, we bless Rashnu, the strong.” See Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, p. 173. He adds that the word

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‘eagle’ has been chosen to stand for ‘the Saêna’ that appears as the Sīnamru or Simurgh in later mythology. See same page, footnote 1.

<sup>7</sup> The *fravaši* (or Pahlavi *frawahr*) is a powerful supernatural being in the *Avestan* language. See Mary Boyce, “*Fravasi*,” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2000. All the creations of Ahuramazda, including Gods, men, and the elements of nature, have a *fravaši* that protects them. Various interpretations have been offered by the scholars on the meanings and functions of *fravašis*. For a summary see Doostkhah, “appendix,” in *Avesta*, vol. II, pp. 1024-25.

<sup>8</sup> Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, p. 203.

<sup>9</sup> Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, p. 219. Darmesteter explains that Aûhm-stut is possibly “the holy falcon, praiser of the lord.” See same source, p. 203, footnote 4. Doostkhah summarizes these *yašts* (97-142) and identifies the equivalent of these names with characters in Iranian mythology and epics. See *Avesta*, trans. Doostkhah, p. 426.

<sup>10</sup> Ali Soltani Gordfaramarzi, *Sīmurgh dar qalamru-i farhang-i Iran* [The Simurgh in Iranian Cultural Domain], (Tehran: Mubtakiran, 1372/1993), p. 22-23.

<sup>11</sup> *Bahrām-yašt* is dedicated to the Avestan *vərəθrayna* (Middle Persian Warahān, Persian Bahram), the warrior god, also the god of victory. Bahram has ten incarnations, one of them being the falcon or bird of prey. See G. Gnoli and P. Jamzadeh, “Bahram (*Vərəθrayna*),” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (1988, updated 2011).

<sup>12</sup> For example, the capabilities of this bird in flying to the summit of mountains, listening to the birds, as well as the healing effects of its feathers and bones recall the characteristics of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* and *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*, as will be discussed below.

<sup>13</sup> Glory (the Avestan *Xvarənah*, Persian *farr*) becomes the requirement of kingship for the Persian rulers. Its types and significance will be examined in chapter two of this study.

<sup>14</sup> Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, p. 232.

<sup>15</sup> *Avesta*, trans. Doostkhah, pp. 434-35. While Darmesteter chooses the word ‘raven’ for the bird *Vāreghna*, Doostkhah keeps the Avestan word *Vāreghna* in his translation for the bird. Darmesteter translates this part as “19. Verethrangha, made by Ahura, came to him the seventh time, running in the shape of the raven that ... below and ... above, and that is the swiftest of all birds, the lightest of the flying creatures. 20. ... he overtakes the flight of an arrow ... 21. ... he

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grazes the top of the mountains, he grazes the depths of the vales, he grazes the summits of the trees, listening to the voices of the birds.” See Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, p. 236.

<sup>16</sup> *Avesta*, tarns. Doostkhah, p. 438. Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, p. 241. “If you have a curse thrown upon me, a spell told upon me by the many men who hate me, what is the remedy for it? 35. Ahura Mazda answered: Take thou a feather of that bird with ... feathers, the Vārengana, O Spitama Zarathustra! With that feather thou shalt rub thy own body, with that feather thou shalt curse back thy enemies. 36. If a man holds a bone of that strong bird, no one can smite or turn to fight that fortunate man. The feather of that bird of birds brings him help; it brings unto him the homage of men, it maintains in him his glory... 38. All tremble before him who holds the feather, they tremble therefore before me;... .”

<sup>17</sup> *Avesta*, trans. Doostkhah, p. 439. Darmesteter’s translation: “Verethraghna confounds the glory of this house with its wealth in cattle. He is like that great bird, the Saēna; he is like the big clouds, full of water, that beat the mountains.” See *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, p. 242. For another translation see Hanns-Peter Schmidt, “The Sēnmurw,” *Persica* 9 (1980): 1-85, p.5.

<sup>18</sup> Carlo G. Cereti, “Middle Persian Literature i. Pahlavi literature,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, (2009).

<sup>19</sup> It also includes a short history of the Kianids and Iranshahr. There are two surviving versions of this Pahlavi text: the first and shorter text is known as the *Indian Bundahišn*. The Second and more accurate text is known as *Iranian Bundahišn*. See D. Neil Mackenzie, “*Bundahišn*.” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (1989). For a Persian translation of the *Iranian Bundahišn*, see Farnbagh Dādagi, *Bundahišn*, trans. Mihrdad Bahar (Tehran: Tus, 1378/1999, third edition 1385/2006). For English translation see *Zand Ākāsīh: Iranian or Greater Bundahišn*, trans. and transliterated by B.T. Anklesaria (Bombay, 1956). For a translation of *Indian Bundahišn*, see E. W. West, *Pahlavi Texts*, Part I: The Bundahis- Bahman Yast, and Shāyast lā-Shāyast, *The Sacred Book of the East Series*, ed. F. Max Muller, Vol. V (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1880, reprinted 1970), pp.3-151.

<sup>20</sup> The other two are the earth dwelling and the water dwelling animals. Mihrdad Bahar translates this as bird (*paranda*) while West reads the text as *sar i dēz* and translates as “those of the hill summits.” Anklesaria translates “those passing over the mountain, that are moving widely, and those flying on wings, - they are not tamable by hand,-” see *Zand Ākāsīh: Iranian or*

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*Greater Bundahišn*, trans. Anklesaria, p.119. Since my main source is the Iranian *Bundahišn*, and Mihrdad Bahar's reading of the text is one of the most reliable ones, I rely on his translation. Bahar has read through three manuscripts for his translation of the text. See Farnbagh Dādagi, *Bundahišn*, trans. Bahar, p. 78 (9:95).

<sup>21</sup> *Bundahišn*, trans. Bahar, pp. 78-79 (9.95 and 9.97). In the original Pahlavi text, the word is 'Sên.' Anklesaria translates it as 'Saêna,' and Bahar translates as 'Simurgh.' The translation to English is by the present author and from Bahar's text.

<sup>22</sup> *Bundahišn*, trans. Bahar, p. 85 (9.111). Also see *Zand Ākāsīh*, trans. Anklesaria, p. 141.

<sup>23</sup> *hizār tukhma*

<sup>24</sup> An Old Iranian astral divine being. In the *Avesta*, the eighth *Yašt* is devoted to this deity.

<sup>25</sup> *Bundahišn*, trans. Bahar, p. 87 (9.115-2, 116).

<sup>26</sup> *The Selections of Zādspram* or the *Anthology* is written by Zādspram, a ninth century Zoroastrian author and scholar. The book deals with the subjects similar to *Bundahišn*, including Zoroastrian cosmology, the events of Zoroaster's life, and the eschatology of the religion. See: Philippe Gignoux, "Zādspram," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (2005). For the latest study and translation of the text see Ph. Gignoux and A. Tafazzoli, *Anthologie de Zādspram*, *Studia Iranica*, Cahier 13 (Paris, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> For an English translation see Schmidt, "the Sēnmurw," p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> A Pahlavi book from the genre of advice, both practical and religious, that includes 63 chapters. A symbolic character called Dānāg (wise) raises questions, and receives responses from the spirit of Wisdom (mēnōg-ī-xrad). Like many other Pahlavi texts, the book is based on oral tradition and has no known author. The style and contents of the text suggest a late Sasanian date (6<sup>th</sup> century) for the text. See Ahmad Tafazzoli, "Dadestan ī Menog ī Xrad (Judgments of the Spirit of Wisdom)," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (1993).

<sup>29</sup> *The Book of The Mainyo-i Khard*, trans. E. William West (London: Apa-Oriental Press, 1871, reprinted 1979), p. 186 (LXII, 37-42). Hanns Peter Schmidt also has translated this part. See "the Sēnmurw," p.6. He has translated *Jad-bēsh* as 'without evil.' He applies the pronoun 'it' to refer to both birds, which seems more accurate since it prevents any gender specification.

<sup>30</sup> Yet, another source referring to the two birds and their role in scattering the seeds from the tree of life appears in a New Persian source called *the Pahlavi Rivāyat* of Hormazyār Farāmarz,

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by Bamanji Nusserwanji Dhabhar (Bombay, 1932), p.99. My reference is Schmidt, “the Sēnmurw,” p. 8 since I could not locate this source.

<sup>31</sup> *Dēnkard* (or *Acts of the Religion*) is a tenth century Pahlavi text edited by Ādurbād Ēmēdān, initially written by Ādurfarnbag ī Farroxādān in the early ninth century. It included nine books on the Mazdean religion, a compilation of the preserved material from the religion. See Philippe Gignoux, “Dēnkard,” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (2011). A. Tafazzoli and Z. Amuzgar have published the most recent translations of the books V, VII, and IX into Persian.

<sup>32</sup> *Pahlavi Texts: the Book of Dīnkard*, part IV, trans. W.E. West, ed. Max Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXXVII, Book IX, chapter 17, p.230.

<sup>33</sup> *Pahlavi Texts: the Book of Dīnkard*, part IV, chapter 33, p. 262. West believes Sēnân to be the people about Samarkand.

<sup>34</sup> *Pahlavi Texts: the Book of Dīnkard*, part V, trans. West, ed. Max Muller, *The Sacred books of the East*, Vol. XLVII, Book VII, chapter 12: 6, p. 83.

<sup>35</sup> *Pahlavi Texts: Selections of Zadsparam*, part V, trans. West, ed. Max Muller, *The Sacred books of the East*, Vol. XLVII, Chapter 23: 11, p.166.

<sup>36</sup> New Persian language forms as a result of a gradual change after the demise of the Sasanian empire and the Arab conquest of Iran in mid 7<sup>th</sup> century, and is in fact the natural continuation of the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) language, but written in Arabic script. See Paul Ludwig, “Persian Language: Early New Persian,” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (2013).

<sup>37</sup> The *Shāhnāma*, a versified account of about 60,000 couplets, composed by Abulqāsim Firdausī (d.1020), finished in 1010 CE, combines the ancient history of Iranians and their kings with myths and fantasies around the lives of heroes and kings, starting from the beginning of creation to the end of the last Sasanian king. Compiled at the early centuries after Muslim conquest of Iran, this epic collection preserves the ancient history of a nation, and therefore becomes the identity of Iranians who were ruled mainly by foreign rulers for the next centuries after its composition.

<sup>38</sup> According to the *Shāhnāma*, by succeeding Faridun, Manuchihr is the seventh king of Iran.

<sup>39</sup> *Jahān Pahlivān*= cavalier

<sup>40</sup> *bad nishān*

<sup>41</sup> *bachcha dīv*

<sup>42</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, based on Moscow edition (Tehran: Hermes, 1387 /2008), p. 85;  
 Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, annotated by Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, Book I (Tehran: 1368 /1989), p.  
 166. The English translations of the *Shāhnāma* are by the present author, unless otherwise noted.

بدان خانه این خرد بیگانه بود	به جایی که سیمرخ را خانه بود
برآمد بر این روزگاری دراز	نهادند بر کوه و گشتند باز

<sup>43</sup> *mīhr*

<sup>44</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, p. 86.

بر آن خرد خون ازدو دیده چکان	نگه کرد سیمرخ با بچگان
بماندند خیره بدان خوب چهر	شگفتی برو بر فکندند مهر

<sup>45</sup> *nīk pey pūr ba farrahi* (*farr* is here with Zal)

<sup>46</sup> *mūbadān*

<sup>47</sup> *thurayyā*

<sup>48</sup> *Shīz*, Dick Davis translates it as ebony, See *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, trans. Dick Davis (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 65. Dihkhoda describes it as a type of black wood from India that is used to make bowls, trays, bows and arrows. Retrieved from online edition: <http://parsi.wiki/dehkhodaworddetail-b16e8eb88c0a4d00979ace7b73e7fd46-fa.html>

<sup>49</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, p. 88, and Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, p. 171.

دو پَرِ تو فَر کلاه من است	نشیم تو رخشنده گاه من است
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The slight difference is the word *farkhunda* (fortunate) in the latter edition, instead of *rakhshanda* (lustrous) in the former. Dick Davis translates the second couplet as “two of your feathers have been a glorious crown for me.” See *Shahnameh*, trans. Dick Davis, p. 65. I believe it depends on the reading of the verse to translate the phrase as ‘the glorious crown’ or ‘the glories of my crown.’ My reading suggests the second translation.

<sup>50</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, p. 88; Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, Book I, p. 172.

ببینی و رسم کیانی کلاه	چنین پاسخ داد که گر تاج و گاه
یکی آزمایش کن از روزگار	مگر کاین نشیمن نیاید به کار
خجسته بود سایه فتر من	ابا خویشتن بر یکی پَر من
ور از نیک و بد به روی آورند	گرت هیچ سختی به روی آورند
ببینی هم اندر زمان فتر من	بر آتش بر افکن یکی پَر من
ابا بچگانّت برآورده ام	که در زیر پَرّت پیورده ام
بی آزارت آرم به این جایگاه	همان گه بیایم چو ابر سیاه

<sup>51</sup> For the full chapter in Persian see Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, pp. 84-93; Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, Book I, pp. 164-180; for a summary in English see *Shahnameh*, trans. Dick Davis, pp. 63-69.

<sup>52</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, p. 92; Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, Book I, p.179.

پسر داد یزدان بینداختم	ز بی دانشی ارج نشناختم
گرانمایه سیمرغ برداشتش	همان آفریننده بگماشتش
بپرورد او را چو سرو بلند	مرا خوار بد مرغ را ارجمند

<sup>53</sup> Žahhāk succeeded over Jamshid and ruled Persia with tyranny. Finally, Faridun put an end to his oppression. In Pahlavi sources, Zahhak is affiliated with Ahriman. According to *Bundahišn*, his mother is from the lineage of Ahriman. See *Bundahišn*, trans. Bahar, p. 149; also see *Bundahišn*, trans. Anklesaria, p. 293. The genealogy of both Faridun and Zahhak is recorded there.

<sup>54</sup> *murgh-i farmānravā*

<sup>55</sup> *marjān*= coral or small pearl, also means life and soul.

<sup>56</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, p. 138; Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, Book I, p.266.

همان پسر سیمرغش آمد به یاد	بخندید و سیندخت را مژده داد
یکی مجمر آورد و آتش فروخت	وز آن پسر سیمرغ لختی بسوخت
هم اندر زمان تیره گون شد هوا	پدید آمد آن مرغ فرمانروا
چو ابری که بارانش مرجان بو	چه مرجان که آرایش جان بودد

<sup>57</sup> 'yeki mard-i bīnā dil-i pur fusūn.' Dihkhuda explains *pur fusūn* as skillful, expert, sometimes mixed with trickery. Dick Davis translates it as "a man with spells," (Davis, p. 105). *Binā-dil* means clear-minded and intelligent. See F. Steingass, *A comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2006). As the narration continues, a *mūbad* (priest) performs the surgery. *Shāhnāma* website records 126 paintings illustrating this scene, however they mostly delineate the moments after or before the surgery thus the figure of *mūbad* is rarely depicted.

<sup>58</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, pp. 138-39; Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, Book I, pp.266-67. For English translation see Dick Davis's translation, pp.104-105.

<sup>59</sup> Or *rūn-dizh*. This brass fortress is represented in two remarkable illustrations in the *Shāhnāma* manuscripts of Baysunghur, 1430 (Ms. 61, at the Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran), and of Muhammad Juki, 1444-45 (Ms. 239, the Royal Asiatic Society, London).

<sup>60</sup> This is the fifth ordeal. The other six are slaying the two wild wolves, the two ferocious lions, a dragon, a sorcerer, and surviving the severe weather of cold and drought in the desert.

<sup>61</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, p. 956; Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, Book V, p. 240.

گراینده تریاش و بیدارتر	بدین منزلت کار دشوار تر
برو بر یکی مرغ فرمانروا	یکی کوه بینی سر اندر هوا
چو پرنده کوهیست پیکار جوی	که سیمرغ گوید و را کار جوی
ز دریا نهنگ و به خشکی هژبر	اگر پیل بیند بر آرد به ابر
تو او را چو گرگ و چو جادو مسنج	نبیند ز برداشتن هیچ رنج
همان رای پیوسته با رای او	دو بچست با او به بالای او

چو او بر هوا رفت و گسترده پر ندارد زمین هوش و خورشید فر

<sup>62</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, pp. 956-57; Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, Book V, pp. 242-43.

پیش لشکر و ناله بوق دید	چو سیمرغ از دور صندوق دید
نه خورشید بد نیز روشن نه ماه	ز کوه اندر آمد چو ابری سیاه
بر آن سان که نخچیر گیرد پلنگ	بدان بد که گردون بگیرد به چنگ
نماند ایچ سیمرغ را زیب و فر	بر آن تیغها زد دو پا و دو پر
چو تنگ اندر آمد فرو آرمد	به چنگ و به منقار چندی تپید
خروشان و خون از دو دیده چکان	چو دیدند سیمرغ را بچگان
که از سهمشان دیده گم کرد راه	چنان بر دمیدند از آن جایگاه

...

بغرید با آلت کارزار	ز صندوق بیرون شد اسفندیار
چه زور آورد مرغ پیش نهنگ	ز ره در بر و تیغ هندی به چنگ
چنان چاره گرم مرغ بیچاره گشت	همی زد بر و تیغ تا پاره گشت

...

زمین کوه تا کوه پر پر بود ز پرش همه دشت پر فر بود

<sup>63</sup> By then, Rustam was 600 years old.

<sup>64</sup> This episode, the battle between Rustam and Isfandiar, the two greatest heroes of the *Shāhnāma*, is one of the highlights of the epic, and has become both publicly and scholarly popular. There are 255 illustrations depicting the death of Isfandiar, as recorded in the *Shāhnāma* project website (<http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk>).

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<sup>65</sup> The main characters accompanying Rustam were Faramarz, his son, and Zavara, his brother.

<sup>66</sup> The three braziers recall the three sacred fires that Ohrmazd created at the beginning of creation to protect the world like three *farrs*. See *Bundahišn*, trans. Bahar, p. 90.

<sup>67</sup> Throughout the *Shāhnāma*, in many instances, Zal or *Zāl-i Dastān* is referred to as a magician, a sorcerer, or a wizard [*fusūngar*, the one who knows *Jādū*]. *Dastān* means trickery, see *Loghatnama-i Dihkhuda*. Dick Davis, however, suggests that *Dastān*, a supposed patronymic that Rustam received from his father, is in fact his own epithet because of his trickster hero status, and that Zal received this name after his son, since the myth of Rustam is a much older myth than Zal's. As he points out "the first qualification for a trickster hero is that he must gain significant victories by trickery, rather than simply by a direct trial of strength or by military confrontation, and that he must save himself from death or other disasters in the same way." (p.235) He adds that tricksters are also associated with magic and sometimes with specific animals whose skin or feathers they wear to receive their characteristics. In a few occasions, including the battle with Isfandiar, in his confrontation with his son, Suhrab, and with the white Div, Rustam uses trickery to save his life. His famous armor is a tiger skin, *babr-i bayān*. See Dick Davis, "Rustam-i Dastān," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2, The Uses of Guile: Literary and Historical Moments (Spring 1999): 231-241. The other examples Dick Davis applies are verbal trickeries. In this episode, however, Rustam's victory over Isfandiar is achieved by the knowledge of the secret about Isfandiar's Achilles's heel, revealed to him by the Simurgh.

<sup>68</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, p. 1026; Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, Book V, p. 398.

بدو گفت سیمرغ شاهها چه بود      که آمد از این سان نیازت به دود

<sup>69</sup> In his translation of this chapter, Dick Davis uses the masculine pronoun for the bird. We know the Simurgh of this episode is the same bird that raised Zal and assisted his family during the birth of Rustam. The male counterpart of this bird was the one killed by Isfandiar in his fifth station, earlier in the account. The Simurgh refers to this bird, killed by Isfandiar, as her mate and companion. For Dick Davis's translation see p. 410.

<sup>70</sup> *Rūīn-tan*. Isfandiar is invincible and his only body parts that could be harmed are his eyes.

<sup>71</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, p. 1027; Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, Book V, p. 401. This refers to the other Simurgh that Isfandiar killed during his seven ordeals.

بیر هیزی از وی نباشد شگفت  
مرا از خود اندازه باید گرفت  
که آن جفت من مرغ با دستگاه  
به دستان و شمشیر کردش تباه

<sup>72</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, p. 1027-28; Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, Book V, pp. 401-402.

<sup>73</sup> *gaz* tree that grows next to seas and rivers. It can grow up to 15 meters high and tolerates dry weather and draught. It grows in Zabul, too. See *Loghatnama-i Dihkhuda*. It could be the same tree of all plants in the middle of the *Farākhkard* Sea, that has healing powers as appeared in the *Avesta*.

<sup>74</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, p. 1028; Khaleghi-Motlagh's edition, Book V, pp. 404-405, with slight variation on the last couplet.

جو پوزش کنی چند نپذیردت  
همی از فرومایگان گیردت  
به زه کن کمان را و این چوب گز  
بدین گونه پرورده در آب رز  
ابر چشم اوراست کن هردودست  
چنان چون بود مردم گز پرست  
زمانه برد راست آن را به چشم  
بدان گه که باشد دلت پر ز خشم

<sup>75</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, p. 1029.

ز نیرنگ زالی بدین سان درست  
وگر نه که پایت همی گور جست

<sup>76</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, p. 1033.

به مردی مرا پور دستان نکشت  
نگه کن به این گز که دارم به مشت  
ز سیمرخ و ز رستم چاره گر  
فسونها و نیرنگها زال ساخت  
که اروند و بند جهان او شناخت

<sup>77</sup> Shahrukh Miskub, *Muqadama-yi bar Rustam va Isfandīār* [An Introduction on Rustam and Isfandiar], (Tehran: Franklin, 1353 /1974), pp. 64-65.

<sup>78</sup> Rukn al-Din Khusravi suggests that it is the physician-sorcerer Zal who in fact kills Isfandiar. Zal starts with the ritual of burning the Simurgh's feather and sandalwood, then he changes into the shape of the Simurgh and performs that symbolic fly, and darkening the earth under his shadow. Then, with a piece of wood taken from the sacred tree of all plants, he targets the eyes of Isfandiar, the representative of 'black magic,' and kills him. See Rukn al-Din

Khusravi, "Isfandiar, the Simurgh, Zal, and the magic-medicine," *Namāyishhāye Āīnī* 6, *Chīstā*, No. 5, (1366-67/1987), p.531. Dick Davis, on the other hand assigns all the trickeries to Rustam. See Dick Davis, "Rustam-i Dastān," pp. 231-241.

<sup>79</sup> In the episode of Rustam and Isfandiar the drama is thrilling and strong. Besides his bravery to protect his land, Isfandiar is known as the follower and protector of the right religion in the *Shāhnāma*, and yet the Simurgh takes his *farr* away and reveals his secret to Rustam. Zal, on the other hand, knowing the misery and despair that would be laid on the destroyer of Isfandiar, facilitates this act by his own son, Rustam, to protect his territory, Zabulistan.

<sup>80</sup> Farīduddīn 'Attār Nishābūrī was born in the village of Kadkan, near Nishabur. His other works are *Ilāhīnāma*, *Asrārīnāma*, *Muṣībatnāma*, *Mukhtārīnāma*, *Tadhkarat al-Ulīā*, and a *Dīvān*. He died in 627 or 618 H.Q./1221 during the Mongol invasion of Iran.

<sup>81</sup> In Modern Persian *sī* means number thirty, and *murgh* means bird.

82

هست ما را پادشاهی بی خلاف  
در پس کوهی که آن هست کوه قاف  
نام او سیمرغ سلطان طیور  
او به ما نزدیک و ما زو دور دور

For English translation see Farīd-od-Dīn 'Attār, *The Canticle of the Birds: Illustrated through Persian and Eastern Islamic Art*, p.104. The transliteration of the original words in quotations follows the source, therefore, appears different from the rest of the text. For the Persian text see 'Attar, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, ed. Shafīee Kadkani, pp. 263-64. In their earlier translation of the text, Darbandi and Davis used a masculine pronoun to address the Simurgh, but they have revised it in the new publication. See Farid Attar, *The Conference of the Birds*, trans. Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis (UK: Penguin Books, 2013), p.43.

<sup>83</sup> Since ancient times in Iran, China was known as the land of many fine arts.

84

گر نگشتی نقش پرّ او عیان  
این همه غوغا نبودی در جهان  
این همه آثار صنع از فرّ اوست  
جمله انمودار نقش پرّ اوست

'Attar, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, ed. Shafīee Kadkani, p. 265.

<sup>85</sup> 'Attār, *The Canticle of the Birds*, trans. Darbandi and Davis, p. 106.

<sup>86</sup> 'Attar, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, ed. Shafīee Kadkani, pp. 280-81.

صورت مرغان عالم سر به سر سایه اوست این بدان ای بی خبر

...  
دیده سیمرغ بین گر نیستت دل چو آیینه منور نیستت

<sup>87</sup> 'Attâr, *The Canticle of the Birds*, trans. Darbandi and Davis, p. 130.

<sup>88</sup> Afkham Darbandi has translated 'hayrat' as 'Awe' in 'Attar, *The Conference of the Birds*, p. 180, as well as in 'Attâr, *The Canticle of the Birds*, p. 295.

<sup>89</sup> 'Attar, *Manṭiq al-Tayr*, ed. Shafīe Kadkani, pp. 281-380. Mystical annihilation is a translation for the word *fanā*. Darbandi and Davis chose 'Nothingness' instead. See 'Attâr, *The Canticle of the Birds*, trans. Darbandi and Davis, p. 295.

<sup>90</sup> 'Attâr, *The Canticle of the Birds*, trans. Darbandi and Davis, p. 295.

گفت مارا هفت وادی در ره است چون گذشتی هفت وادی در گه است

...  
هست وادی طلب آغاز کار وادی عشق است از آن پس، بی کنار  
پس سیم وادی ست آن معرفت پس چهارم وادی استغنا صفت

هست پنجم وادی توحید پاک پس ششم وادی حیرت صعیناک

هفتمین وادی فقر است و فنا بعد از این روی روش نبود تو را

در کشش افقی روش گم گرددت گر بود یک قطره قُلزُم گرددت

See 'Attar, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, ed. Shafīe Kadkani, p. 380.

<sup>91</sup> 'Attâr, *The Canticle of the Birds*, trans. Darbandi and Davis, p. 366.

عالمی پر مرغ، می بردند راه، بیش نرسیدند سی آن جایگاه

سی تن بی پال و پر رنجور وسست دل شکسته، جان شده، تن نادرست

'Attar, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, ed. Shafīe Kadkani, p. 422.

<sup>92</sup> As Darbandi and Davis suggest for the word *chāvuush*. See 'Attâr, *The Canticle of the Birds*, p. 366.

<sup>93</sup> 'Attar, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, ed. Shafīe Kadkani, pp. 422-27.

<sup>94</sup> 'Attâr, *The Canticle of the Birds*, trans. Darbandi and Davis, p. 370. Or see Attar, *The Conference of the Birds*, trans. Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis, p. 235.

بی زفان آمد از آن حضرت خطاب کآینه است این حضرت چون آفتاب

هر که آید خویشتن بیند درو جان و تن هم جان و تن بیند درو

چون شما سیمرغ اینجا آمدید سی در این آینه پیدا آمدید

گر چهل و پنجاه مرغ آید باز پرده ای از خویش بگشایید باز

'Attar, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, ed. Shafīe Kadkani, p. 427.

## Chapter Two:

### The Simurgh in Persian Ideology

The significance of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* relates to her possession of the Glory (*farr*). In the Persian national epics, many characters, their deeds, and their fates, are explained through their possession of the divine or royal glory, (*farr-i īzadī* or *farr-i shāhi*), or its absence. In Iranian ideology, *farr*, or the Avestan *xvarənah*, and Pahlavi *xvarrah*, is a notion bestowed on every Iranian by the creator. It brings protection and grace to its possessor while its presence is a requisite for a king to lead a legitimate rule. Similar to the study of the characteristics of the Simurgh presented in primary sources in chapter one, this chapter examines the references to *farr* in those sources, although briefly. The references to *farr* or *xvarənah* in one of the chapters of the *Avesta* reveal the connections between the *farr* and the bird *Vāreghna*, as one of its physical forms. This passage would assist us in understanding the origins of the characteristics of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma*, her ownership of this notion, and her autonomy in using it. Likewise, to understand the qualities of the mystical Simurgh, and her origins, the works of the mystic writers prior to ‘Attar, who have mentioned this bird, are examined. The mystical writings of Iran are numerous and diverse, and fall out of the scope of present study. Thus, this part mostly focuses on the works of Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (d. 1208) through which, most probably, the modification of the mythical Simurgh to its mystical counterpart has been facilitated. The Simurgh also appears in popular literature and traditions of Iran, mainly as a wondrous animal.

It is only part of a normal process that the literature, religions, and myths of the Persians after Islam have been inspired and influenced by the ones preceding them in this land. The Simurgh in Persian literary sources, such as the *Shāhnāma* and *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, is not an

exception. The qualities this bird had gradually acquired originated from various sources, making her survival in the Persian system of thought possible. The last part of this chapter touches on those sources and attempts to define the process of transformation regarding the myth of the Simurgh.

### The Concept of *farr* (*xvarənah*)

One of the key characteristics associated with the Simurgh in Persian literature is the bird's possession of Glory (Avestan *xvarənah*, Pahlavi *xwarrah*, and the Persian *farr*). The word *xvarənah/farr* (*ah*) has its origins in the Old and Middle Persian languages. Modern scholarship has proposed many equivalents for this word, including glory, splendour, luminosity, shine, fortune, charisma, and kingly majesty, among which 'Glory' offers the closest interpretation.<sup>1</sup> The word refers to a well-established concept in ancient Iranian ideology and has been repeatedly recorded in the *Avesta* and the Pahlavi sources, where those who possess this Glory are highly regarded.

There are several references to *farr/xvarənah* in the *Avesta*, according to which there are two types of *farr*, both created by Ahuramazda. The first, or the Iranian *farr* (*farr-i Īrānī*) belongs to all worthy Iranians. In *Aštād-yašt*, the eighteenth *Yašt* of the *Avesta*, Ahuramazda introduces this *farr* to Zoroaster as his own creation. *Farr-i Īrānī* can defeat Ahriman and the enemies of Iran, and bestow wisdom, wealth, and prosperity on Iranians.<sup>2</sup> The second type of *farr*, also created by Ahuramazda, is the royal *farr* (*farr-i Kīānī*). The references to this *farr* appear in *Zāmyād-yašt*,<sup>3</sup> where *farr-i Kīānī* and those who possess it are praised. According to this *Yašt*, at the beginning of creation this *farr* was with Ahuramazda. Then, *amshāspands*, *īzads*, and the celestial beings, including Mithra,<sup>4</sup> Zoroaster, Jamshid, and the kings of Kianid dynasty

owned this kingly Glory. This list ends with Soshyant at the end of the world.<sup>5</sup> However, this Glory would not stay with its possessors forever, and would leave them upon their wrong doings. An example from *Zāmyād-yašt* demonstrates this: “Jam (Jamshid), the king of Iran, who ruled the country with prosperity and wealth, owned this kingly Glory until he lied, and then the *farr* left him for the first time in the form of the bird *Vāreghna*.<sup>6</sup> Then, Mithra received it. For the second time, when the Glory departed Jamshid in the form of the bird *Vāreghna*, Faridun, the next king of Iran, received it.”<sup>7</sup>

In the same *Yašt* (*Zāmyād-yašt*), Ahuramazda advises Zoroaster that everyone shall try to seize the Glory that is hard to grasp, but whoever grasps it will be given the gifts of *Āthurbān*,<sup>8</sup> will live in prosperity, and will be victorious over his enemies.<sup>9</sup> Thus, as attested in *Zāmyād-yašt*, all creations, the good and the evil, struggle to seize the *farr*. It is also recorded that after the fight between Azhidihak and Azar over this task, the *farr* plunges into the sea of *Farākhkart*.<sup>10</sup> Afrasiab, the Turanian king and warrior, jumps into that sea several times to capture the *farr*, but each time the *farr* runs away from him. At every point of its departure (*farr*'s) a bay is created in that sea. By running away from the Turanian ruler, the kingly Glory or *farr-i Kīānī* remains in the family of Iranian kings.<sup>11</sup>

The *farr* can appear in several physical shapes. In another passage of *Zāmyād-yašt*, among the physical forms that the *farr* can take, one is the form of the bird *Vāreghna*, the same bird that Bahram, the god of victory and the benefactor of *farr*, turned into.<sup>12</sup> The transposition of *farr* into the bird *Vāreghna* suggests the two entities of bird and Glory are interchangeable and can be considered as being one. *Vāreghna*, a bird most similar to a falcon or eagle in appearance, has always been popular in Iranian traditions and has repeatedly adorned the Achaemenid and Sasanian artefacts.<sup>13</sup> In the *Avesta*, no direct connection between the *Saēna* and the *farr* has been

recorded. Instead, it is the bird *Vāreghna* that has strong associations with the notion of *farr*. As Shahbazi argues, *Vāreghna* is the same popular bird (eagle or falcon) that has acquired a mythical character with the visual characteristics of an eagle-dragon. It received the name of *saēna-murya*, and gradually developed into the Simurgh.<sup>14</sup> The similarities between the *Vāreghna* in the *Avesta* and the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* provide ample evidence for this argument on the evolution of the Simurgh from *Vāreghna*, the physical form of *farr*.

In the book of creation, *Bundahišn*, several references are made to *xvarənah* and those creations that receive it from Ahuramazda. In the creation of mankind from the rhubarb plant, originating from the Gayumarth's seeds, the male and female, *Mahlī* and *Mahlīāna*, are accompanied by a third party that is *xvarənah*. In response to the question of whether the material body or the *farr* was created the first, Ohrmazd responds "that it was the *farr* that was created first. Then, the body was created. Finally, the *farr*, that is the soul, entered those bodies."<sup>15</sup> It is probably based on this passage in *Bundahišn* that Henry Corbin, the French philosopher, defines the Light of Glory or *xvarənah* as "the archetype-Image" of the soul that identifies with the soul.<sup>16</sup> Being luminous is one of the qualities of *xvarənah* or *farr*, as described in *Zāmyād-yašt*. Also, according to *Bundahišn*, Ohrmazd created the three sacred fires of the Mazdeans similar to three *farrs* to protect the world.<sup>17</sup>

The concept of *farr* in its luminous form was adapted in Islamic mysticism (Sufism or *taṣawwuf*).<sup>18</sup> In this faith, "an inner light" guides the faithful through the way to reach the eternal reality. The more the seeker liberates himself from the worldly aspects of life and polishes the mirror of his heart, the closer he will come to the source of that Light. Through this long and demanding process of purification and detachment, also called transformation, the heart will be gifted by love and gnosis. For Sufis, the heart is like a light, that with polishing can experience

the divine essence, or the light of the lights.<sup>19</sup> The final goal for the seeker is to achieve this union. This is when the soul perceives the truth in the “light of God” that illuminates everything before him. This final stage is annihilation, or *fanā*.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, being luminous is one of the characteristics of the Simurgh in *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*, as all that can be seen by the thirty birds, who reach the final stage, is the Light of Lights, the ultimate Light. The final stage, *fanā*, has been elaborated and defined in writings of Islamic poets, who usually have used intricate metaphors to illustrate this stage. In case of ‘Attar’s *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*, the absolute Reality, or the light of the Lights, is symbolically represented through the presence of the Simurgh. The association between the *farr* and the Light (or the luminous nature of the *farr*) is not as strongly established in the *Shāhnāma*. In fact, the only connection between the Simurgh and fire or any luminous quality, in the Persian national epics, is the way the bird is summoned. As she instructed Zal, the bird appears once a small piece of her feather is burnt in fire.

In Persian visual culture, the *farr* has always been symbolized by a pair of wings.<sup>21</sup> Gradually, the words *farr* and wings (*parr*) were interchangeably used to refer to the royal Glory.<sup>22</sup> In some examples, *farr* takes the shape of a winged ram. In an episode of the *Shāhnāma*, the young Ardishir, the future founder of the Sasanian dynasty, is followed by a beautiful mountain sheep during his escape from the Parthian king, Ardavan. When Ardavan inquires about the sheep, his counselor defines the animal as the Ardishir’s *farr*, whose feather would bring him kingship and good fortune.<sup>23</sup> In some editions of the *Shāhnāma*, the beautiful sheep that followed Ardishir, as his *farr*, is said to have wings similar to a Simurgh and a tail of a peacock.<sup>24</sup>

The concept of kingly Glory, or *farr-i Kīānī*, that cannot be forcibly seized and would depart upon any evil doing, became a vital requirement for Iranian kings. As a sign of kingship,

even non-Persian kings of Iran sought this Glory to justify their rule over the Iranians. As Gnoli states, this Iranian ideal of kingly Glory or *xvarənah* lived through the first empires of Iran and generated similar concepts in the neighbouring cultures. In other words, it is transformed into ‘the hereditary dynastic charisma.’ This idea of kingship survived among the Sasanians and passed into the Islamic culture of Persia, then remained as the Divine Glory, or *farr-i īzadī*, bestowed by God on the Persian kings and heroes.<sup>25</sup> Numerous references to *farr* and the possessors of *farr-i īzadī* among Iranian Kings and heroes appear in the *Shāhnāma*. As the episodes of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* attest, this fantastic bird is not only among the possessors of this Glory but can bestow this Glory on whoever lives under her shadow or symbolically owns her feathers. In other words, this bird can be a transformed version of the *Vāreghna*, one of the physical forms of the *farr*. This is how this bird guards the descendants of Sam-i Nariman and Zal, even against the Iranian Kings, who owned the kingly glory but lost it.<sup>26</sup>

### The Simurgh in Persian Mystical Literature

In Persian mystical literature that was shaped after the Islamicization of Iran, the Simurgh acquires a new role. The perfection of the soul, the love of the creator, and the search for the true self are the main themes of this genre of literature. In this genre of literature, the fabulous Simurgh that has been the guardian of Persian heroes, protecting them with her wisdom and under the shadow of her glory in the *Shāhnāma* and other Persian epics, becomes a representation of the Divine. This new character for the bird, as Shafiee Kadkani suggests, is formed by the fusion of the characteristics of the Simurghs in the *Avesta* and the *Shāhnāma* with those of the mythical birds having similar qualities from the neighbouring lands of Iran. In all

these accounts however, the Simurgh remains a fantastic bird that gradually and through history acquires more astonishing features.<sup>27</sup>

One of these neighbouring cultures that might have contributed to the mystic concept of the Simurgh could be the Arab Bedouin culture in which 'Anqā<sup>28</sup> is a mythical bird. Similar to the Iranian Simurgh in the mystic literature of Iran, 'Anqā is neither approachable nor observable. It is the combination of the characteristics of these two Iranian and Arab birds, as well as the stories created around them, that led the mystic poets' imaginations to turn the Simurgh into a symbol of the ultimate truth or God. It is not exactly known when this mystic feature was added to the Simurgh. However, there are many examples of literary accounts from the early twelfth century on in which this bird represents the Divine being.<sup>29</sup>

The language of the birds and the mysteries of their discourse had been discussed in Persian literature for at least two centuries prior to 'Attar's work and could have possibly been inspired by the story of Solomon and his knowledge of the language of the birds in the Quran.<sup>30</sup> Amongst all the sources that have possibly influenced the story line in 'Attar's *Mantiq al-Tayr*, Suhrawardi's<sup>31</sup> *Şafir-i Sīmurgh*, or *the Whistle of Sīmurgh*<sup>32</sup> seems to be more relevant to this study. In his introduction, Suhrawardi presents the Simurgh and its living place as follows:

The illuminated ones have revealed that once a hoopoe leaves her nest and cuts off her feathers with her own beak in the spring with the intent of reaching the *Qāf* Mountain, it takes her a thousand years to reach the shadow of the mountain. Then the mountain will become her home and she becomes the Simurgh whose song everyone could hear, although there are only a few who can hear. Everyone is with her but most are without her:<sup>33</sup>

You are with us, and you are not with us;

You are the soul, hence you are not apparent.<sup>34</sup>

Her shadow is the salvation for the sick, no matter whether they suffer from the ailments of hydropsy or slow consumption. She effaces leprosy and puts an end to all evils. ... Know that all colours derive from Simurgh, although she herself is without colours. ... All knowledge derives from the incantation of this Simurgh. The marvellous instruments of music, such as the organ and others have been produced from its echo and its resonance. ... Her nourishment is fire. Whoever binds a feather of her wings on his right side will pass through fire without burning. The morning breeze stems from her breath. This is why the loving tell her the mystery of their hearts, the secrets of their intimate thoughts. Even the words written down here are inspiration from her.<sup>35</sup>

The Simurgh, as Suhrawardi describes, shares some of the characteristics of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma*. Living at the mountaintop, Mount *Qāf*<sup>36</sup> in this case, having the power to cure disease, and protecting whoever owns one of her feathers are the shared features. On the other hand, the same bird is introduced as the source of everything, all knowledge and science, in which it resembles the mystic concept of the Simurgh as a metaphor of the creator.

In his other treatise, '*Aql-i Surkh*', Suhrawardi states that the Simurgh lives on the *Ṭubā* tree, a tree on a mountain that is the source of all plants and fruits on earth. In the morning, the Simurgh leaves her nest on that tree to fly over the world. Because of her feathers, or her flight, fruits and plants would grow everywhere. These qualities match exactly with the descriptions of the bird *Saēna* in the Avestan *Rašn-yašt*. Suhrawardi continues this treatise by mentioning the story of Zal and his upbringing by this bird, as well as the story of Rustam, Isfandiar, and the

Simurgh's role in saving Rustam's life. Suhrawardi's narration, however, differs slightly from the *Shāhnāma*, and in some parts, resembles the mystic interpretation of the Simurgh: at the battle of Rustam and Isfandiar, it is the light of the Simurgh that makes Isfandiar blind, and there are no real arrows involved. Whoever looks at the light of the Simurgh mirrored in any polished surface would lose his eyesight. According to Suhrawardi, Zal prepared armour of polished iron for Rustam to wear, and covered his horse by polished mirrors, and sent them to the battlefield facing the Simurgh in the sky. Once Isfandiar approached and faced them in the battleground, the rays of the Simurgh reflected on Rustam's armour and its mirrors and dazzled his eyes. He misapprehended that piercing light as arrow wounds in his eyes, fell to the ground, and was destroyed by the Persian hero. "It seems those two branches of *gaz* (that blinded Isfandiar), as appeared in stories, were in fact the two feathers of the Simurgh."<sup>37</sup> Suhrawardi continues that, "those who own no knowledge believe there is only one Simurgh. But on the contrary, in every moment a Simurgh comes from the *Ṭūbā* tree to the earth, and the former Simurgh ceases to exist."<sup>38</sup> The light that Suhrawardi associates with the Simurgh is one of the features of *farr*, as discussed above.

Jalal al-Din Muhammad Mulavi, the Persian Sufi poet and philosopher (1207-73), also mentions the Simurgh as the representation of the creator. On one occasion, the prophet Muhammad describes the creator as having a shadow on earth similar to the *Qāf* Mountain and a soul like the Simurgh who always flies on the summits.<sup>39</sup>

### The Simurgh in Other Literary Sources

The *Shāhnāma* of Firdausi inspired many works of Persian epics in terms of style and content. One example of such epics is *Farāmarznāma*<sup>40</sup> which records the events around the life

of Rostam's son, Faramarz, his journey to India, and his seven trials as customary for all Persian heroes. The references to the Simurgh in this account, with some minor differences, resemble the same bird in the *Shāhnāma*. According to this account, in his journey through the sea in his ship, Faramarz encountered a huge mountain at night. He saw a light shining like the sun at the peak of the mountain. When inquired, he was told that it was a magnificent bird with a massive body, whose wings covered the skies, who hunted lions and elephants, and all creatures lived in its fear.<sup>41</sup> Faramarz spent the night there. The next day, as the enormous bird flew, the hero shot the bird with his arrow, knocked him down, and cut his wings with his dagger. The greatness of the bird in size and the way it was diminished by the hero resemble the story of Isfandiar's fifth ordeal, though there is no mention to the name of the Simurgh for this bird.<sup>42</sup>

On another occasion in his sea voyage, Faramarz encounters the Simurgh, the protector of Zal and his family. The hero and his ship are struck with a storm, and he is lost on an island. The natives of the island advise him to appeal for help from the Simurgh, who lives on the highest mountaintops. According to them, this bird owns all sorts of knowledge, and is the only one who can help the lost men in finding their way. Faramarz recalls that his grandfather, Zal, had given him two feathers of the bird to burn and call for help when needed. He did as he was told and the bird appeared immediately and guaranteed to help Faramarz and whoever is from Zal's descent. The Simurgh not only helped the hero find his crew and his way back but also took him to the palace on top of the mountain where Zal grew up.<sup>43</sup> The wise bird equipped the hero for his return journey with three stones<sup>44</sup> and a feather for the time of need. This way, the bird re-establishes her bond with Zal's family.<sup>45</sup>

Another imitation of the *Shāhnāma* is *Garshāspnāma*, that was composed in verse in 1066 CE by the poet Asadi Tusi (d. 1072). This source records the accounts of the life of

Garshasp, the hero and king of Zabulistan, who lived and ruled during the reign of Zahhak and Faridun.<sup>46</sup> In *Garshāspnāma*, the Simurgh has its home made of ebony and sandalwood on a tree of many branches,<sup>47</sup> on a black mountain reaching the moon, on an island called *Rāmnī*. The bird is the king of birds, who all live peacefully in that island. Other animals live in fear of the Simurgh, but the bird does not harm men. It provides them with food and helps the lost ones to find their way. Asadi Tusi gives a poetic description of the bird:

When the bird flies the sky is covered with hundreds of colors like a carpet. The sky resembles a garden with many blossomed trees. When flying fast, it is like a mountain covered with flowers and tulips with thousands of rainbows at its top. The flap of its wings generates such a wind that afflicts the wave on the sea. Its sound makes the wild animals flee away.<sup>48</sup>

The Simurgh in *Garshāspnāma* seems to have the qualities of both of the Simurghs in the *Shāhnāma*, the guardian of Iranian heroes, and its mate. It hunts and grabs the lions, elephants, and whales while it helps the human beings without harming them. The poetic representation of the bird by Asadi Tusi might have inspired the representation of the same bird in Persian mystical poetry. The bird's nest in this account, however, on a tree at the peak of a mountain, amalgamates the Avestan and Pahlavi sources with Firdausi's descriptions. There are two other epic sources with references to the Simurgh called *Sāmnāma* and *Burzūnāma*.<sup>49</sup>

The Simurgh is also introduced in the scientific and encyclopaedic genres of writing, as well as books of wonder. In these sources though, mostly the physical appearance and the living place of the bird are described. A late eleventh-century account provides some information about

the Simurgh and her appearance. The living place, the enormous size, and the body strength of the bird are pointed out by the author Abi al-Khayr in his *Nizhatnāma-yi 'Alā'ī*, where he describes the Simurgh as follows:

The Simurgh lives in *Kabūd* (blue) Sea on an island near the tropical line where no man can reach there, many trees and large animals live there, but the Simurgh is larger than all. When she opens her wings, they are like the ship sails. She has a long beak like an iron pickaxe, and sharp claws that could grab an elephant. When the bird flies, the mountain rocks shake and move.<sup>50</sup>

In a late twelfth century book of wonders, *'Ajā'ibnāma* or *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt va Gharā'ib al-Mujūdāt*, the Simurgh is recorded as the king of the birds, also called *'Anqā*, who lives in a tree on the *Qāf* Mountain surrounded by the seas. Then, the author narrates the disagreement between the bird and Solomon over 'the destiny' being in the hands of God only, in which the Simurgh was proven wrong and has hidden from all eyes since then.<sup>51</sup> The visual features of the bird in this source resembles with the Simurgh in *Garshāspnāma* of Asadi Tusi, mentioned above. This story seems to be rooted in the popular narratives about the bird that explain her disappearance. Other sources with references to the Simurgh include a book of wonders by Qazvini (d. 1283), also called *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt*, as well as a bestiary by Ibn-i Bakhtishu', titled as *Manāfi' al-Ḥayawān*. These last two sources will be discussed in chapter three, where the representations of the Simurgh in the illustrated copies of these texts are discussed.

## The Feather of the Simurgh

As attested in most of the literary sources examined above, the feather of the Simurgh has had a notable value in Iranian literature and culture. It brings protection and splendour upon its owner. The two words, feather (*parr*) and glory (*farr*), are used in pairs in several verses in both the *Shāhnāma* and *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*. Thus, the feather (or wing, as *parr* also means wing) becomes the physical form or the sign of divine or royal glory for the Persians. Ahuramazda informs Zoroaster of the advantages of this feather. Zal and his descendants benefit from having it, and all the advancement of science and arts in China are related to a feather of the Simurgh that fell in that land. In Islamic tradition, the feather of archangel Gabriel appears to have the same protective function.<sup>52</sup> Suhrawardi, who has integrated many elements of pre-Islamic religion and culture of Iran into his mystic philosophy, acknowledges the wing of Gabriel as the source of all creations in one of his treatises titled *Āvāz-i par-i Jibri 'īl*.<sup>53</sup> In the same treatise, he brings in the concept of the duality of light and darkness from Zoroastrianism and relates each of the two wings of the angel with one of these elements.<sup>54</sup>

## How the Simurgh found her way into Iranian Mysticism:

The role of the Simurgh and her significance in the *Shāhnāma*, as the rest of this narrative account, reflects the pre-Islamic thoughts and myths of the Persians. The transformation of this bird into a mystical allegory, on the other hand, requires some justification. From the early years of Islam, and with the formation of the first Islamic empire, the Umayyad dynasty (661-750 CE), the Muslims started expanding their faith and their empire as far as Egypt and Spain in the west and India in the east. Through these expansions, Muslims interacted with other religions and their followers. These interactions as well as the growing

number of theoreticians of Islamic mysticism in non-Arab cultures, who produced many mystical writings in non-Arab languages, introduced new elements into Islamic mysticism from those cultures and religions. The interactions with non-Muslim cultures in the early Islamic dynasties of the Umayyad and the Abbasid (750-1258 CE) include contacts with Buddhists, Hindus, and Manicheans in the east, and Jews and Christians in the west. Works of Greek philosophy and science were also translated into Arabic starting from the early ninth century, which infused some aspects of that philosophy into mystical writings. However, some scholars regard the role of these influences to be secondary.<sup>55</sup>

Another significant influence was from Zoroastrianism, the ancient religion of Persia. The shift of the Abbasid capital from Damascus to Baghdad in the early formative years of this dynasty provided contact with Persian culture and its traditions. This contact resulted in the integration of Zoroastrian elements into Islam and its branch of mysticism. As Schimmel states: “Persian traditions from the ‘Book of the Kings’ were incorporated into the Arabic narrative literature, helping the shape of the image of the ideal ruler; and Persian mythology was to become a substitute for the weak pre-Islamic Arabic tradition.”<sup>56</sup> Zarrinkoob relates the presence of pre-Islamic Iranian elements in the mystical philosophy of Islam to social and religious interactions, the political turmoil at the end of the Sasanian era, and the readiness of the Zoroastrians to accept a new faith, introduced through the Muslim conquest of Persia. These converted Zoroastrians incorporated some of the principles of their former faith into their new religion, Islam, and contributed to the elaboration of its mystical dimension, the contribution that makes Persia “the cradle of early Sufism,” as Zarrinkoob states.<sup>57</sup>

The common principle between Zoroastrianism and Islamic mysticism is man’s connection with the creator. According to Zoroastrianism, every deed is produced as a result of

the collaboration between man and one of the good or the evil principles. These dual concepts of good and evil, Ohrmazd and Ahriman, and light and darkness are the principles of Zoroastrianism that man's free will collaborates with. In spite of the fact that Zoroastrianism is based on the duality of principles, it preserves the ideology that although existence starts as a duality, it concludes in a unity.<sup>58</sup> The unity of the two entities of body and soul is essential in Zoroastrianism. In this ideology, the soul and the body and the spiritual and the material are not considered detached.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, in 'Attar's *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, the journey of the birds commences in duality of the soul and body, and ends in the unity. The dual concepts of heaven and hell, and the vision of God as the goal of the journey, are the mystical concepts of Zoroastrianism that Arda Viraf, the Zoroastrian priest describes in the Pahlavi book of *Ardāy Vīrāfnāma*.<sup>60</sup> There are other characters recorded in the Avestan and Pahlavi literature who have experienced the journey of the soul to the other world.

The other argument to look for Zoroastrian elements in Islamic mysticism is the Zurvanite tendencies of this religion that were developed towards the end of the Sasanian era.<sup>61</sup> Zurvanism was a monotheistic form of Zoroastrianism with Zurvan, the deity of Time, as the supreme God, and the father of Ahuramazda and Ahriman, and under whom Ahuramazda created all good things.<sup>62</sup> The dual spirits of good and evil are introduced for the first time in *Yasna* 30 of the *Avesta*. Based on the interpretations of this *Yasna*, some scholars believe the Zoroastrian magi in the late fifth century BCE developed the monism of *Zurvan*.<sup>63</sup> The monotheism advocated by Zurvanism, provided that such an ideology existed as an organized faith by the end of the Sasanian dynasty, could facilitate the introduction of Zoroastrian elements in its monotheistic form to the Iranian version of Islam.

The association of duality of principles and unity is not unique to Zurvanite belief in pre-Islamic Persia. Manichaeism, from which its supreme God, Zurvan, is borrowed in Zurvanism, also extended the idea of dual variations, but between the natural and the supernatural, and the body and the soul. According to Manichaeism, a secret or mystical gnosis, achieved by practice and observation, saves the soul or the light from the body or darkness to arrive at final salvation. This knowledge assists the transformation of the soul into achieving the light.<sup>64</sup> This final salvation or the rebirth into light, as well as the separation of the dual elements of the body and the soul through the process of transformation, can be compared with the mystical concepts of annihilation and the path. Since Manichaeism was fought as a heresy in Zoroastrian Persia, its followers spread out to the east and the west, where the elements of this dualistic mysticism inspired Islamic mysticism.<sup>65</sup>

Yet another ancient Iranian religion or mystical cult is Mithraism, in which the initiate has to pass through seven stations to reach the place of light, the ultimate destination. This resembles the journey of the soul to union with the Divine in Islamic mysticism.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Zarrinkoob believes that Iranian Sufi poets were familiar with the Central Asian Shamanism, in which the shaman was a priest-doctor who could communicate with the godhead through difficult practices and rituals of a mystical nature.<sup>67</sup>

Some scholars consider Sufism to be altogether an Iranian version of Islam.<sup>68</sup> Among them, the French orientalist and philosopher, Henry Corbin, emphasizes the role and importance of Persia and its pre-Islamic heritage in the development of an esoteric version of Islam, and Shi'ism, in Iran. In doing so, and based on the philosophy of illumination created by Suhrawardi, Corbin introduced the "imaginal" world to stand for *'ālam-i mithāl*. Corbin believed that Suhrawardi was inspired by the Zoroastrian cosmology and angelology, as well as the concept of

*xvarənah*, the Light of Glory.<sup>69</sup> Suhrawardi's philosophy introduced an intermediary world of archetypal images in which changes of the body, the soul, and their angels happen. In Mazdean cosmology, there is an energy that sanctifies both states of being, naming *gītik* and *menuk*, from the beginning of their creation to the end. According to the Mazdean view of creation, incorporated by Suhrawardi into the philosophy of restoration, this energy, *xvarənah*, or the Light of Glory, generates coherence in a being, provides it with power, and destines the victory of the possessor of this light over the darkness of evil.<sup>70</sup>

The notion of *xvarənah*, the divine Glory, or *farr-i yazdān* remained alive among the followers of Suhrawardi, who are called *Ishrāqīyūn*.<sup>71</sup> As S. H. Nasr relates, there are many interests in Suhrawardi and his philosophy even up to the present because “he had successfully synthesized the philosophical thought of ancient Persia and Islamic philosophy” and in that sense he is compared to Firdausi in the realm of epic poetry.<sup>72</sup> Thus, when Islam arrived in Persia by the Arab conquest, it confronted different religions and beliefs with mystical tendencies. Most of these mystical elements, however, entered the world of Islamic mysticism through the works of Persian mystical poets including ‘Attar. It is in the works of these authors that the fantastic Simurgh of the most available masterpiece of Persian literature, the *Shāhnāma* of Firdausi, was borrowed as a symbol to represent the Divine. The fantastic bird already possessed strong ties with Glory, the Glory that equals light. It had a magical and supernatural essence. So it emerged as the perfect metaphor to portray the Light of Lights.

### The Simurgh: the Myth

The origins of the Simurgh in Iran should be traced among the myths of this land. The Avestan and Pahlavi sources as well as Persian literary works all preserve the ancient Iranian

myths. In understanding and studying them, the transformations or displacements of the myths due to religious and social changes should be considered. When a society accepts a new religion, in the case of Iran Zoroastrianism and later Islam, the deeply rooted myths of that society, as well as the rituals associated with them, inevitably change in their form and appearance in order to survive.<sup>73</sup> The same change is revealed within Mazdean literature. For example, while references to mythological characters and stories in Avestan texts are limited, the details on those myths in the Pahlavi literature are abundant and incorporate many ancient Iranian beliefs and shamanistic behaviors.<sup>74</sup>

Through the history of Persia, Iranian myths have experienced two major phases of transformation. These changes or transformations are caused by the newly introduced organized religions and the transformations of the society after accepting those religions. The first transformation happened with the spread of Zoroastrianism in Iranian society, when the Indo-Iranian gods of pre-Zoroastrianism had to change in order to survive. The second transformation took place after the Muslim conquest of Persia.<sup>75</sup> During this second transformation, as Kargar defines, the Iranian myths were related to the Semitic myths<sup>76</sup> and received some characteristics of those. In other words, in order to save their myths, the Iranians related their myths and legends to the Semitic ones.<sup>77</sup> In this process, some of the Zoroastrian myths were changed in form, appearance, and theme.<sup>78</sup> Kargar does not substantiate this argument with details on how the Zoroastrian myths and narrations adapted some Semitic characteristics in order to save them under the new religion, Islam. Yet his statement suggests a reasonable source to look for the origins of some of the Zoroastrian legends preserved in Islamic narrations.

Furthermore, Shaul Shaked believes this process of the syncretism of Iranian traditions with the Semitic legends of their neighboring lands may have begun before the arrival of Islam in

Iran and at the time of the Sasanian rule. Shaked defines this form of cultural contact as “assimilation through harmonization.”<sup>79</sup> This harmonization, however, happened in only one of the two forms of Zoroastrian religion, being popular Zoroastrianism, while the priestly version of the religion remains clear of such syncretism. This amalgamation of contradicting cultures, as Shaked describes, was a pragmatic solution for creating a unified history, devoid of existing conflicts regarding the source of creation. The result of this amalgamation, Shaked believes, to be a unified but artificial tradition.<sup>80</sup> Based on the idea of harmonization and syncretism between the Iranian and Semitic cultures, it seems reasonable to search for the possible Semitic elements in the story of the Simurgh in its mystic form. The emergence of the Simurgh in Iranian mystical poetry can also be defined through such syncretism. The myth of the Simurgh and her name, already available in Iranian culture, probably was borrowed to stand for the divine being in Islamic mysticism. But in this case, it was not just the name that was appropriated. The writings of Suhrawardi alone, regarding the Simurgh and its characteristics, suggest that the Simurgh in the mystical writings of Iran hold stronger ties with the Zoroastrian myth of this bird than just an appropriation of name.

Avestan and Pahlavi sources, however, do not delineate any discrepancy or even variation regarding the role and the image of the Simurgh. Indeed, the image of the Simurgh presented in the *Shāhnāma*, composed after the second phase of mythological transformation according to Kargar’s categorization, does not differ much from the Mazdean sources, except for the subjectivity of the bird acting on her intellect, independently using her super-healing powers. This discrepancy could be explained by the nature of these two genres of sources, one being of religious and the other of epic and narrative nature.

This subjectivity is explainable. During the period when Firdausi composed his *Shāhnāma*, coinciding with the early centuries of Islam in Iran around the tenth and eleventh centuries, a shift happened in Iranian thought and literature. This shift resulted in the revival of pure Iranian culture and language. Firdausi's *Shāhnāma* undoubtedly represents the peak of such literary works. The characters, myths, and narrations of ancient Iran, in order to survive, had to be adjusted to the new social and religious status of Iranian society. As Bahar Mukhtarian states, when the ancient gods and heroes of Iran reappear in Firdausi's *Shāhnāma*, they have mostly lost their sacred positions. Since the age of Firdausi historically dissociates from the ancient epic beliefs, rituals, and the society that created them, Firdausi is given with the opportunity to practice literary creativity. In this case, the author is somehow free in his narrations and is able to borrow some details from the oral history of the nation in order to proceed with his story line. The author, here, aims to transform the culture in its historic sense from past to present, rather than preserving the beliefs of an ancient society. When the ancient beliefs fade, displacement happens, meaning that the body of the story remains the same and the mythical concepts (origins) become literary ones.<sup>81</sup> The transformations in the characters of some of the ancient Iranian myths and kings as seen in the *Shāhnāma* have been examined by modern scholarship.<sup>82</sup> The same approach could be considered while exploring the changes in the characteristics of the Simurgh from the Avestan and Pahlavi sources into the *Shāhnāma*. The magnificent bird, who lived in the tree of all healings, unites with the bird who was the guardian of whoever possesses its feather or bone, and becomes the guardian of the family of the greatest Persian heroes. The newly shaped bird also performs medical or magical treatments similar to a physician or sorcerer, in the *Shāhnāma*. The bird also obtained the *farr*, as the bird *Vāreghna* did. This transformation can be explained as an adaptation for the new society to preserve an old myth.

Certainly, the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* has not fully lost her sacred position in the process of literary creativity in a narrative text. The bird is still capable of protecting and healing those who possess her feather. She has the knowledge of secrets and that is how she changes the destinies of the two greatest heroes of Persia, Rostam and Isfandiar.

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<sup>1</sup> Gherardo Gnoli, who has contributed many studies to the concept and etymology of this word, has summarized all the scholarly debates and various interpretations of it in “Farr (ah), Xvarənah,” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (1999).

<sup>2</sup> *Aštād-yašt* 1 and 2. This is a short yašt, dedicated to Aštād, the goddess of righteousness. On several occasions through this yašt, the Iranian *farr* is praised. See *Avesta*, trans. Jalil Doostkhah (Tehran: Murvarid, 1371/2002), p. 481. For English translation see *The Zend-Avesta*, trans. James Darmesteter, Part II, pp. 283-84.

<sup>3</sup> The nineteenth *Yašt* of the *Avesta* that is devoted to the Earth, description of mountains, the kingly Glory, and the praise of those who own this kingly Glory, including the Kianid kings of Iran. This *yašt* seems to be an influential source for the *Shāhnāma* regarding the history of Kianids.

<sup>4</sup> Mithra is the god of heavenly light, the preserver of truth, oaths and good faith. The tenth and one of the longest chapters of the *Avesta*, *Mihr-yašt*, is devoted to Mithra. According to this *Yašt*, Mithra is followed by a blazing fire and “the awful kingly Glory” or فر توانای کیانی. See *Avesta*, trans. Doostkhah, p. 384, and Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, p. 153.

<sup>5</sup> Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, pp. 286-309.

<sup>6</sup> *Vāreghna* is the same bird that Bahram, the god of victory, appeared in its shape in one of his seventh incarnations.

<sup>7</sup> *Zāmyād-yašt* 19.34-36. *Avesta*, trans. Jalil Doostkhah, p. 490-491, and Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, pp. 293-94.

<sup>8</sup> Or Āoravan is the social class of priests, one of the three classes of ancient Iranian society. See Mary Boyce, “Āoravan,” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (1987, updated 2011).

<sup>9</sup> *Zāmyād-yašt* 53. There is a discrepancy in translations of this part. While Darmesteter translates it as “whoever shall long for the illumination of knowledge, he has the gifts of an

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Athrarvan,” (Darmesteter, Part II, p. 299), Doostkhah translates this part as “he will be given the illuminating Aturbānī gifts,” (*Avesta*, Doostkhah, p. 494).

<sup>10</sup> According to the *Avesta*, this is the sea where the tree of all plants grows, and the Simurgh lives.

<sup>11</sup> *Zāmyād-yašt* 56-64. *Avesta*, trans. Doostkhah, pp. 493-503. Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, pp. 300-302.

<sup>12</sup> The relevant references in *Bahram-yašt* were introduced in chapter one.

<sup>13</sup> Achaemenes, the eponym of the Persian kings, was said to have been raised by an eagle. See A. Shapur Shahbazi, “An Achaemenid Symbol: II. Farnah (God-Given Fortune) Symbolized,” *Archaeologische Mitteilungen Aus Iran* 13 (1980): 119-147, p. 137, note 97.

<sup>14</sup> Shahbazi, “An Achaemenid Symbol: II. Farnah (God-Given Fortune) Symbolized,” p. 138.

<sup>15</sup> *Bundahišn*, chapter nine, trans. Mihرداد Bahar (Tehran: Tus, 1378/2001), p. 81. For English translations see Anklesaria, *Bundahišn*, p.129. In his translation, Anklesaria chooses the word ‘Light’ to stand for the Pahlavi word Khvarēh.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shī‘ite Iran*, trans. Nancy Pearson, Bollingen Series XCI: 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p.14. The passage is not identified in the text.

<sup>17</sup> *Avesta* (19.10), trans. Doostkhah, p. 487. *Bundahišn*, trans. Bahar, p. 90.

<sup>18</sup> The Arabic word for Islamic mysticism or Sufism. It derives from the word *ṣūf*.

<sup>19</sup> Abdol-Hosein Zarrinkoob, “Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective,” *Journal of International Society for Iranian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. ¾ (1970):139-220, pp. 186-87.

<sup>20</sup> *Fanā*, annihilation or nothingness, is the final stage of the mystical path in which the seeker’s soul becomes annihilated, surrounded by the light of God, and finally submerged in the existence of God. See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), pp. 47 and 142.

<sup>21</sup> Shahbazi argues that the winged-circles in Achaemenid art represent either the *farr-i Īrānī* (winged-circle) or *farr-i Kīrānī* (winged-circle with a human bust). He rejects the identification of this motif as either Ahuramazda or *fravaši*, as were formerly suggested. See A. Sh. Shahbazi, “An Achaemenid Symbol: I. A Farewell to Fravahr and Ahuramazda,” *Archaeologische*

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*Mitteilungen Aus Iran* 7(1974): 135-44. And its following article, “An Achaemenid Symbol: II. Farnah (God-Given Fortune” Symbolized.”

<sup>22</sup> Shahbazi, “An Achaemenid Symbol: II. Farnah (God-Given Fortune” Symbolized,” p. 139.

<sup>23</sup> Firdausi, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, pp. 1187-88. *Shāhnāma*, trans. Dick Davis, p. 538.

چنین داد پاسخ که آن فرّ اوست

به شاه‌ی و نیک اختری پراوست

The word feather, *parr*, on the second line could possibly be a reference to the Simurgh’s feather. Schmidt discusses this passage, too. See Schmidt, “The Sēnmurw,” p. 20.

<sup>24</sup> One reference is pointed out by Prudence Oliver Harper in *The Royal Hunter: Arts of the Sasanian Empire*, (New York: Asia Society, 1978), p. 96, and endnote 13. Harper refers to the translations of the *Shāhnāma* by J. Mohl and R. Levy and notes that “this reference to the *senmurw* as the ‘royal fortune’ was apparently not in the original version of the *Shah-nameh*.” Harper suggests this passage is a later addition to the text. I have checked both sources, in neither of which the ram’s wings are compared to the Simurgh’s. See *The Epic of the Kings: Shah-nama, The National Epic of Persia*, translated by Reuben Levy (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 259-60. Also see *Le Livre des Rois par Abou ’l-kasim Firdousi*, translated by Jules Mohl (Paris: Imperiale, 1976), pp. 290-291. However, Harper refers to the 1877 publication of Mohl’s translation. Another similar reference is in *Šāhnāmāh*, ed. Turner Macan (Calcutta, 1829), p. 1374, noted by Shahbazi, in “An Achaemenid Symbol: II. Farnah (God-Given Fortune” Symbolized,” p. 140, footnote 119.

<sup>25</sup> Gnoli, “Farr (ah), Xʿarənah,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

<sup>26</sup> This is a reference to the story of Rostam and the Iranian prince Isfandiar whose father, Gushtasp, departed from the path of virtue.

<sup>27</sup> Muhammad Reza Shafiee Kadkani, “Introduction,” in Farīduddīn ‘Attār Nishābūrī, *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*, ed. Muhammad Reza Shafiee Kadkani (Tehran: Sukhan, 1385/2006), p. 163.

<sup>28</sup> ‘*Anqā* had a massive body and could lift up animals as big as elephants from the ground. Its feathers contained all the colors, and it lived up to a thousand years. In some accounts, ‘*Anqā*’s invisibility is explained because of its shame for not believing in fate, in the story of Solomon. It is also said that a curse was put on the bird by one of the Arab prophets before Islam to become invisible because of the violence it committed. In Shi‘i accounts, ‘*Anqā*’s hiddenness is related to

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the bird's denial of 'Ali's leadership that made God to curse the bird to become hidden in the seas. According to the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, the 'Ankā' was incorporated with the Iranian Simurgh, and its hiddenness resembles the attributes of the hidden Imam. See Ch. Pellat, "'Ankā'," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs. (accessed 26 November 2015),

[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/anka-SIM\\_0672](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/anka-SIM_0672).

The other bird in Arabic accounts that approximates the Simurgh is *al-Rukhkh*, that once existed but is now extinct. It was an ostrich-like bird, probably witnessed by the Arab travellers on their journeys, who in their narrations turned it into a fantastic bird with enormous body and feathers. See U. Marzolph, "al-Rukhkh," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition* (accessed 26 November 2015) [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-rukhhk-SIM\\_6327](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-rukhhk-SIM_6327). The massive size of body and eggs seems to be the only common feature between the Iranian Simurgh and al-Rukhkh. Whether these birds represented or possessed the glory, Arabic 'izz, is a question to be answered. To my knowledge, in Arabic visual culture, there is no figural representation for the concept of glory.

<sup>29</sup> Shafīe Kadkani, "Introduction," in 'Attār, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, p. 167. Shafīe Kadkani mentions that before 'Attar, the authors including Abulrajā' Chāchī (d.1137), Ahmad Ghazālī (d.1141), and 'Ayn al-Qudāt-i Hamidānī (d. 1130) employed the Simurgh as a metaphor of the Divine in their writings.

<sup>30</sup> Shafīe Kadkani, "Introduction," in 'Attar, *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, p. 103. Shafīe Kadkani reviews some of these early sources that could possibly have inspired 'Attar. These include Abdul Vahhab ibn-Muhammad's *Al-Fuṣūl* (10<sup>th</sup> c.); Abubakr 'Atiq-i Suriani or Surabadi's *Tafsīr-i Sūrābādī*; Sanai-i Ghaznavi's (d. early 12<sup>th</sup> c.) *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*; and Haqayeqi-i Khaqani's *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* (early 12<sup>th</sup> c.). In addition to these versified accounts, Shafīe Kadkani examines some prose accounts that have been suggested to have inspired 'Attar in shaping the plot of his *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*. These accounts chronologically are: Ibn-i Sina's *Risālat al-Ṭiyyar* (early 11<sup>th</sup> c.) in Arabic, translated by Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi into Persian. The author rejects the possibility of this account influencing 'Attar, as the text does not suggest any similarity in plot with 'Attar's *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*. The other source is Ahmad Ghazali's *Risālat al-Ṭiyyar* in Persian, translated and shortened into Arabic by Muhammad Ghazali (d. 1126). Yet another

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source and most likely the strongest source of inspiration for ‘Attar is Abulraja-i Chachi’s *Ruḍatt al-Farīqayn* that narrates the journey of the birds and suggests the mystic concept of annihilation at the end. The other source is Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi’s *Ṣafīr-i Sīmurgh*, that will be discussed in the text. Yet another possible source is Najm al-Din Razi’s *Risālat al-Ṭuyūr* (he was a contemporary of ‘Attar).

<sup>31</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyā Suhrawardī, also known as Shaykh-i Ishrāq, was a mystic leader and the founder of ‘the Philosophy of Illumination.’

<sup>32</sup> Henry Corbin has translated this treatise as “the Incantation of Simurgh,” into French. Wheeler Thackston translated it as “The Simurgh’s Shriill Cry.”

<sup>33</sup> Suhrawardi, *Majmū‘a-yi Muṣanafāt-i Shaykh-i Ishrāq*, ed. Sayyid Husayn Nasr (Tehran: Pazhuhishgah ‘Ulum-i Insani va Mutali‘at-i Farhangi, 1373/1994), pp. 314-15. The translation and summary of the text is by the present author. For an English translation see Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi, *The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises: A Parallel Persian-English text*, trans. Wheeler Thackston, Bibliotheca Iranica, intellectual Series, No. 2 (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1999), pp. 91-92

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بامائی و بامانئی ، از آن پیدا نئی

See *The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises*, trans. Thackston, p. 91. The punctuation is added by the editor and translator, Wh. Thackston. Neither of the two Persian texts, edited by S. H. Nasr and Shafiee Kadkani, suggests this punctuation.

<sup>35</sup> The translation of this last part of Suhrawardi’s introduction is from Johann Christoph Bürgel, *The Feather of Simurgh: The Licit Magic of the Arts in Medieval Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), p. 7. The author has used Henry Corbin’s French version of the treatise for his translation. The two Persian sources of *Ṣafīr-i Sīmurgh* that I used differ slightly in text. One is Suhrawardi, *Majmū‘a-yi Muṣanafāt-i Shaykh-i Ishrāq*, ed. S. H. Nasr, pp. 315-16. The other is published in “Introduction” of ‘Attar’s *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*, by Shafiee Kadkani, pp.127-28, based on a copy of *Safīna-i Tabrīz*, compiled by Mas‘ud-i Tabrizi in 721-723 H. See the same source, p. 61, footnote 5. The French and English translations are closer to the source edited by Nasr. For example, in the Nasr edition, as well as in translations by Bürgel and Thackston, the nourishment of the Simurgh is recorded as fire, whereas in Shafiee Kadkani’s text

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it is *uns*, or love. In using the feminine pronoun for the Simurgh, I followed Bürgel's translation, and I assume he has followed Corbin's translation. In his English translation, Thackston applies the masculine pronoun to make reference to the Simurgh.

<sup>36</sup> In Sufi ideology, *Qāf* is the cosmic mountain in the east that surrounds the lower world, with its peak in the sky connecting the earth and the heaven. The Simurgh lives at its top where only the illuminated ones can reach. See Farīd-od-Dīn 'Attār, *The Canticle of the Birds: Illustrated through Persian and Eastern Islamic Art*, trans. Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis, iconography by Michael Barry (Paris: Diane de Selliers, 2013), p.411.

<sup>37</sup> Suhrawardi, "Aql-i Surkh," in *Majmū'a-yi Muṣanafāt-i Shaykh-i Ishrāq*, ed. S. H. Nasr, pp. 226-239, p. 234. Thackston translates as: "the 'two-feathered shaft' they talk about must be the Simurgh's two wings." See *The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises*, p. 28.

پنداری آن دو پاره گز که حکایت کنند دو پر سیمرخ بود

<sup>38</sup> Suhrawardi, "Aql-i Surkh," ed. H.S. Nasr. pp. 232-34

<sup>39</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Mulavī, *Mathnavī-i Ma'navī (The Mathnavī)*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Tehran: Hermes, 1386/2007), p. 133.

<sup>40</sup> There are two versions of *Farāmarznāma*, both in verse. A prose account of the work in twelve volumes had apparently existed but was not preserved or known. The first poem was composed between the mid eleventh and early twelfth centuries, now conserved in two manuscripts at the British Library and the Bibliotheque Nationale. The second verse account that was published in Bombay in 1906 by a Zoroastrian includes stories on the lives of Rustam and his daughter, Gushasp Banu, and two books on the adventures of Faramarz in India. The source of this second account, as Djalaj Khaleghi-Motlagh suggests, is probably a Pahlavi book translated into Persian. See Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Farāmarz-nāma: a Persian epic recounting the adventures of the hero Farāmarz," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (1999). This second account is the reference used here.

<sup>41</sup> There are many pictorial examples of giant birds, including the Simurgh, carrying animals of their prey, as will be examined in chapters three and four of this study.

<sup>42</sup> *Farāmarznāma*, ed. Rustam ibn-i Bahram ibn-i Surush (Bombay, 1324 /1906, reprinted in Iran 1376). pp. 310-12.

<sup>43</sup> According to the *Shāhnāma*, Zal grew up in the Simurgh's nest, similar to any bird's nest made of ebony and sandalwood. When Sam went to the Alburz Mountain he saw a palace, but Firdausi does not provide any details about this palace.

<sup>44</sup> One stone was to generate wind to move the ship forward, the other to stop the wind, and the third to show the direction towards the land.

<sup>45</sup> *Farāmarznāma*, pp. 344-52.

<sup>46</sup> Garshasp was the paternal uncle of Nariman, the father of Sam, and grandfather of Zal. Asadī Tūsī records the adventures of this dragon-slayer and his travels to Turan, China, and India. The author indicates that he has taken the stories from a written book on the adventures of Garshasp. See François de Blois, "Garšāp-nāma," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (2000).

<sup>47</sup> *dirakht-i gushan shākh* (*gushan* means many, countless).

<sup>48</sup> Ali ibn-i Ahmad Asadi Tusi, *Garshāspnāma*, ed. Habib Yaghmayi (Tehran: Tahuri, 1354/1975), pp.152-54.

ازو شد چو صد رنگ فرش آسمان	پدید آمد آن مرغ هم در زمان
شکفته درختان درو گونه گون	چو باغی روان در هوا سرنگون
ز بانگش گریزان دد از دشت و کوه	ز باد پرش موج دریا ستوه

<sup>49</sup> *Sāmnāma* by the poet, Khājū-yi Kirmānī (d. 1349), is a versified account with epic and romantic content that narrates the stories of Sam's adventures in his journey to China.

*Burzūnāma*, attributed to 'Atā-yi Rāzī (d. 1097), is an epic account on the life of Burzu, the son of Suhrab, who became one of the Iranian heroes. For both accounts see Muhammad Sharifi, *Farhang-i Adabīāt-i Fārsī* [the Encyclopedia of Persian Literature], (Tehran: Muin, 1387/2008), pp.775 and 285. I have not examined these two sources. The life of Burzu happens around the time of Rostam and Zal, and thus might include references to the Simurgh.

<sup>50</sup> Shahmardān ibn Abī al-Khayr, *Nizhatnāma-yi 'Alā'ī*, ed. Farhang Jahanpur (Tehran: Muasisa-yi Mutaliat va Tahqiqat-i Farhangī, 1362/1983), p. 129. My reference is Shafīee Kadkani, "Introduction," in 'Attar, *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*, p. 163. The feature of the long beak recalls the long beak of the *Quqnūs*.

<sup>51</sup> Muhammad b. Mahmud Hamadānī, '*Ajā'ibnāma*, ed. Ja'far Mudaris Sadiqi (Tehran: Markaz, 1375/1996), pp. 287-88. The text is composed in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, probably before Qazvini's Arabic version of this cosmography. According to this source 'Solomon reminded the Simurgh that everything in this world would happen on God's will. For example, that night a boy

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was born in the east and a girl in the west. Upon God's will, their fate was for them to unite. The Simurgh disagreed and claimed to be able to change this fate. So she took the girl to the *Qāf* Mountain and raised her in a tree above the sea. God destined for the boy to become a merchant and travel to the east and see the beautiful girl in that tree. The boy entered into a dead horse skin and instructed the girl to ask the Simurgh to carry the skin to her nest for the girl to play with it. She did so. Once in the bird's nest, and while the bird was away, the boy came out and the two mingled, so the girl was impregnated. Solomon called for the Simurgh and the girl, declaring that God's fate is reached. The Simurgh carried the girl in the horse skin and when both the girl and the boy came out of it before Solomon, the Simurgh was embarrassed, trusted in God's will and disappeared forever.'

<sup>52</sup> Ali Nuruzi Panah, "Simurgh," in *Chīstā*, vols. 2 and 3 (September/November 1370/1991): 237-247, p.245.

<sup>53</sup> Suhrawardi, "*Āvāz-i par-i Jibri 'il*," in *Majmū 'a-yi muṣanafāt-i Shaykh-i Ishrāq*, ed. H.S. Nasr, pp. 208-223, p. 217.

<sup>54</sup>"*Āvāz-i par-i Jibri 'il*," pp. 220-22. For English translation see Suhrawardi, *The Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises*, trans. Thackston, pp. 8-19, page 17 in particular. Two other references by Suhrawardi to the Simurgh and its feathers in "*Aql-i Surkh*," and "*Ṣafīr-i Sīmurgh*" have been pointed out earlier.

<sup>55</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 33 and 10. Schimmel quotes from Nicholson who defines Sufism as "a native product of Islam itself." See Reynolds, A. Nicholson, *the Mystics of Islam*, 1914, reprinted, 1962.

<sup>56</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>57</sup> Zarrinkoob, "Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective," p. 139.

<sup>58</sup> Zarrinkoob, "Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective," pp. 139-145.

<sup>59</sup> R.C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (London and New York: Putnam, 1961), p. 275.

<sup>60</sup> Zarrinkoob, "Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective," p. 145. This text narrates the journey of a man named Vīrāf to the Other World after having an intoxicating drink and becoming unconscious for seven days. In his journey, Viraf sees scenes from heaven filled with people who have done good deeds in their lives, from hell with evil-doing people suffering there,

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and of a third group of people whose good and evil deeds were equal, living in limbo. See Dariush Kargar, *Ardāy-Vīrāf Nāma: Iranian Conceptions of the Other World*, Studia Iranica Upsaliensia 14 (Sweden: Uppsala Universitet, 2009), p. 19. As Kargar states the origin of *Ardā Vīrāfnāma* was a pre-Zoroastrian (Indo-Iranian) text (p. 25) that after becoming a Zoroastrian text has been increasingly “Zoroastrified.” (p.26). No date is known for the composition of *Ardā Vīrāfnāma* (p.52), but it must be very old since there is a reference to the name of Viraf as Wīrāz in *Farvardīn-yašt* among those who are praised for their good religion. See Kargar, p, 188 referring to Mary Boyce, “Middle Persian Literature,” (1968). Moreover, the journey to the Other World is an old theme and was experienced by other characters, as attested in Avestan, Pahlavi, and Zoroastrian Persian sources. For example, Jamshid, Zoroaster, and Kerdir also travel to the Other World and return to propagate the good deed after seeing heaven and hell. The similar journey of the man to the Other World appears in Iranian literature of after Islam in works of Tabari, Ghazali, Maulavi, and Sanai (59-61).

<sup>61</sup> There are many debates on the Zurvanite tendencies of the Sasanian kings and priests. Mary Boyce argues for the Sasanian kings holding Zurvantie beliefs. See Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London and New York, Routledge, 1979, reprinted 2001), pp. 112- 117. Boyce and a group of scholars including Zaehner believe that Zurvanism was a considerable Zoroastrian heresy, practiced by the Sasanian kings. Their sources for such a conclusion are the non-Iranian reports of the Sasanian period, the Manichean references to *Zurvan* as the supreme God, and finally the Zoroastrian sources composed after the Sasanian decline. One of the key sources that these scholars interpret in favor of Zurvanism is a 13<sup>th</sup> century Persian treatise called ‘*Ulamā- yi Islām*. See R.C. Zaehner, *Zurvan: A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955, reprint, 1971). For the Persian text and its English translation see Giulio Colapaodi, “The ‘*Ulamā-yo Islām*: an Open Question,” *Eurasian Studies*, IV/1 (2005): 75-98. Shaul Shaked rejects the existence of Zurvanism as an organized faith opposing the Zoroastrian mainstream and therefore causing a heresy. His argument is based on the absence of any references in Zoroastrian sources to Zurvanism as a heresy, as it was in the case of Manichaeism and Mazdakism. There are several references to *Zurvan* in Avestan and Pahlavi sources as a God. These references would have raised sensitivity if they had any connotation of a heretical faith such as Zurvanism. Shaked concludes that the myth of *Zurvan*

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was only one of the several myths of creation believed by Zoroastrians, either the learned or the theologically untrained people. Therefore, it did not cause any opposition by the Sasanian theologians. See Shaul Shaked, “The Myth of Zurvan: Cosmology and Eschatology,” in *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity Presented to David Flusser*, ed. Ithamar Gruenwald, Shaul Shaked and Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa (Tubingen: Mohr, 1992), pp. 219-240. For a summary of earlier discussions see Mary Boyce, “Some Further Reflections on Zurvanism,” in *Acta Iranica*, Textes et memoires, Vol. XVI, Papers in Honor of Professor Ehsan Yarshater (Leiden: Brill, 1990): pp.20-29

<sup>62</sup> The reference to *Zurvan* or Time in the *Avesta* appears in *Tīr-yašt* (8. 11) where *Tištar*, the deity of rain, says “if men would worship me with a sacrifice in which I were invoked by my own name, as they worship the other *Yazatas* in which they are invoked by their own names, then I should have come to the faithful at the appointed time; I should have come in the appointed time of my beautiful immortal life, should it be one night, or two nights or fifty, or a hundred nights.” See Darmesteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part II, pp. 96-97. Also in *Vendīdād* 19.13 and 19.16 Zoroaster is advised to worship, and in fact he praises the boundless Time. See same source, pp. 207-208.

<sup>63</sup> Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Manchester, 1984), p. 96.

<sup>64</sup> Zarrinkoob, “Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective,” p. 144-146.

<sup>65</sup> For more on Mani and Manichaeism see G. Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism* (London and New York, 1965). According to this source, the substance of the divine being, entirely different from intellect or matter, is light: “God was the father of the blessed light,” (p. 45).

<sup>66</sup> Zarrinkoob, “Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective,” p. 144. The seven grades that the initiate has to pass are the raven, the bride, the soldier, the lion, the Persian, the courier of the sun, and finally the father, that is the final and ultimate grade for a Mithrae to reach. The raven is the symbol of a messenger. For more on Mithraism and the similarities of Iranian cult of Mithra, and Roman Mithraism see Roger Beck, “Mithraism,” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (2002).

<sup>67</sup> Zarrinkoob, “Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective,” p.143, and endnote 4, p. 211.

<sup>68</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 10. These figures are S. H. Nasr and Henry Corbin.

<sup>69</sup> Daryush Shayegan, “Henry Corbin,” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (1993, last updated 2011).

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<sup>70</sup> Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, pp. 12-13. In Zoroastrian mythology, the world is divided into three parts: the upper world or the world of Ahuramazda is the world of light, the lower world that belongs to Ahriman is the world of darkness, and the world between these two is a void (Avestan *vayu*, Pahlavi *wāy*, Persian *tuhīgī*) where the two evil and good forces encounter each other. *Vayu* is also the name of the deity of the war. See Mihrdad Bahar, *Pazhuhishī dar āsātīr-i Iran, pari-i nukhust o doyyum* (Tehran: Agah, 1375/1998), p.39, footnote 12; also see *Bundahišn*, trans. Bahar, p.33.

<sup>71</sup> Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, p. 274, footnote 30. The School of Illumination or *ishraq* began by Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi in the thirteenth century Persia (born 1153) who was inspired by the Greek Platonism, some earlier Islamic philosophers such as Ibn-i Sina, as well as by the Mazdean worldview, and Sufism of the time. According to this school, God is the Light of Lights and the spiritual part of the cosmos is luminous. The material part of it is where the darkness and shadow lie. In describing his angelology, Suhrawardi structures many orders of light, incorporating many Mazdean elements. The highest angel in his angelology is called after the Avestan deity Bahman.

<sup>72</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi, *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia, Vol. 4, From the School of Illumination to Philosophical Mysticism* (New York and London: Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2012), p. 21-22.

<sup>73</sup> Mahin Saddiqiyan, “Chigūnigī-i tahavvul-i usṭūrihā-yi Irānī dar rivāyathā-yi dauri-yi islāmī,” *Yād-i Bahar: Yād-nāma-yi dr. Mihrdad Bahar* (Tehran: Agah, 1376/1997), p.287. In studying the narrations of Muslim writers about the Iranian myths, Saddiqiyan suggests three approaches towards some myths that appeared unreasonable for their time. These writers excluded these stories altogether, or replaced them with some more reasonable narrations. In some cases, these writers narrated the stories in their original form and interpreted them in a way to justify them. One of these unbelievable myths is the story of Zahhak and the two snakes growing on his shoulders.

<sup>74</sup> Bahar, *Pazhuhishī dar āsātīr-i Iran*, p. 16. Bahar notes, contrary to the Pahlavi literature, the faith introduced in Avestan and Vedic sources is clear of any superstitious and shamanistic beliefs.

<sup>75</sup> Kargar, *Ardāy-Vīrāf Nāma: Iranian Conceptions of the Other World*, pp. 185-86.

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<sup>76</sup> Or *Isrā'īlīyāt*. Semitic myths, culture, and languages developed in the ancient near east, in the lands between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean Sea, where the three religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were born. As a result, these myths survived in all these three religions.

<sup>77</sup> Kargar, *Ardāy-Vīrāf Nāma*, pp. 186-87. As examples, he introduces Gayumarth, who was adapted to Adam, Jamshid to Solomon, and Tahmurath to Noah. He does not explain the characteristics adapted for each figure.

<sup>78</sup> An example is the pre-Zoroastrian cult of worshipping Anahid, the goddess of the water. One of the temples of this water-goddess was changed into the shrine of Bibi Shahrbanu, who according to the Shi'ī legends was the daughter of the last Sasanian king, Yazdgird III, and the wife of Imam Husayn, the third Imam of the Shi'as. For a detailed study of this transformation see Mary Boyce, "Bibi Shahrbanu and the Lady of Pars," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 30, No. 1, Fiftieth Anniversary Volume (1967): 30-44.

<sup>79</sup> Shaul Shaked, "First Man, First King," in *From Zoroastrian Iran to Islam: Studies in Religious History and Intercultural Contacts* (UK: Variorum, 1995), pp. 245 and 254.

<sup>80</sup> Shaul Shaked, "First Man, First King", p. 252. In this study, Shaked examines the transformations in the legend of Yama and Gayumarth as attested in pre-Islamic Zoroastrian sources, Zoroastrian sources after Islam, and writings of Muslim writers. The other type of harmonization is a result of translation, and is less concerned with the fusion of cultures. It is to equate the name of the mythical characters in one culture with the available names in the other culture. For example, Gayumarth, the first man in Iranian mythology, is identified with Adam in Islamic sources.

<sup>81</sup> Bahar Mukhtarian, *Darāmadī bar sākhtār-i usṭūra-yi Shāhnāma* [An Introduction to the Mythical Structure of the *Shāhnāma*], (Tehran: Agah, 1389/2010), pp. 37-38.

<sup>82</sup> Mukhtarian studies the characters of Tahmina, Siavush, Faridun and Zahhak in *Darāmadī bar sākhtār-i usṭūra-yi Shāhnāma*. The characters of Rustam, Isfandiar, Suhrab, and other main figures of the national epics have also been studied by others.

Chapter Three:  
The Representations of the Simurgh  
in Persian Art prior to the 1350s

The association of the *farr* or *xvarənah* with the Simurgh, as the literary sources examined in the previous chapters reveal, is indisputable. This chapter gathers an inventory of the visual representations of the Simurgh in examples of art works from various media from pre-Islamic Persia to the medieval period up to the mid-fourteenth century. By examining the visual characteristics of the fantastic bird in these works, I demonstrate the formation of two visual prototypes for the Simurgh. The first type includes the representations of this bird as appear on the pre-Islamic objects and works of architecture with their most definite examples from the last century of the Sasanian rule (224-650 CE) in Iran. These images clearly depict a supernatural creature with composite and stylized features. The identification of the Simurgh in the visual examples produced during the seven hundred years from the fall of the Sasanian dynasty to the mid-fourteenth century is based on their similarities with their Sasanian forerunners. This second category reveals the evolution of a visual type from the stylized [abstract, non-realistic] Simurgh to that of a more naturalistic bird. The association of the Simurgh with Sasanian royalty has convinced the scholars to identify the Simurgh imagery on Islamic object, the second prototype of this study, as a merely decorative element.

By examining the visual characteristics of the Simurgh represented on the pre-fourteenth century objects, this chapter functions as an introductory survey of the appearance of the Simurgh in Iranian visual vocabulary. The stylistic analysis of the images of this fantastic bird rendered during the ‘golden age’ of Persian painting, as depicted in the five royal

manuscripts of *Shāhnāma* (examined in the next chapter) attest to the formation of a new and distinct visual type. Yet, this introduction demonstrates the continuation of the Simurgh imagery in Persian art from ancient Persia to its pre-modern era as well as its flexibility to accept new forms that assured its survival in a different visual milieu. Although the visual material introduced in this chapter appears to be numerous and diverse with regards to their media, I do not claim to have exhausted the visual sources representing this bird during this extended time span. Nonetheless, I have tried to include as many examples as could relate to the main argument of this study. In few instances, visual examples from other cultures are briefly mentioned to compare the visual characteristics as well as the symbolic interpretations of this fantastic bird with its counterparts in those cultures.

#### The Representations of the Simurgh in ancient, and early-Islamic Art of Iran

The date of the earliest representation of the Simurgh in Persian art is not assertively established yet, and modern scholars hold different views on this matter. Michael Barry suggests the earliest surviving portrayals of this bird to date as early as the fifth century BCE decorating the Achaemenid rock reliefs. He identifies the “Lady ‘Eagle-Bird’” carved between the protecting sphinxes above the head of the Persian kings in Persepolis (Figure 1) and Susa as the representations of Saêna-Meregha or the Simurgh. He proposes, in the process of synthesizing all the pre-existing art forms of Persia, the Achaemenid art evolved the motif of the solar disk into a bird.<sup>1</sup> This hypothesis adds on to the problem of the identification of this winged motif that reappears, with or without a human bust in the middle of the wings, on Persian objects from the Achaemenid times on. While some scholars recognized the motif as the representation of Ahuramazda, the supreme god according to the Zoroastrian faith, others accepted it as an

emblem for *fravašis*, the powerful supernatural beings and the aiders of Ahuramazda.<sup>2</sup> Yet, another group of scholars including Jamzadeh, and more strongly, Soudavar propose the motif of spread wings to be the representation of *xvarənah*, the royal glory.<sup>3</sup> The last argument supported through several examples of the spread wings positioned above the head of the kings on Sasanian seals and coins seem to be fully acceptable. The identification of the Achaemenid winged solar disc with the human bust as the Simurgh proposed by Michael Barry, although appears attractive as a strong link between the image of the fantastic bird and the concept of royal glory in Persian art as early as the fifth century BCE, demands more investigation.

The more generally accepted representations of the Simurgh belong to the Sasanian era. Camilla Trever, a Russian scholar, was the first to identify the composite bird on the Sasanian objects as the representations of the *Sēnmurw* (the Pahlavi word for the Simurgh, hereafter *Senmurw*) defined in the Pahlavi texts. The majority of the scholars agreed to this identification. She also singled out some Simurgh-like animals demonstrating the characteristics of a composite animal with a dog head in the arts of Scythians.<sup>4</sup> Hans Peter Schmidt suggests that these composite birds with the legs of an animal of prey appearing on the pre-Sasanian examples might be considered as the stylistic forerunners of the Sasanian *Senmurw* imagery, yet it is not clear whether they were called with this name or not.<sup>5</sup>

Although the first definite examples of the Simurgh imagery appear on the Sasanian art, the date of such occurrence is still under debate. Lukonin proposes the wing and the animal head on the headdresses of the queen and the prince on the coins of Warahran II (r. 276-293 CE) to be the portrayals of the Simurgh (Figure 2).<sup>6</sup> For it is perhaps in the Sasanian art that for the first time the animal forms represented the Zoroastrian divinities and their incarnations.<sup>7</sup> It also became a Sasanian tradition to decorate the crowns of the rulers with the symbols of the gods.<sup>8</sup>

For example, the wing and the animal head on the crown of the Warahran II are proposed to represent the god of victory, *varaθrayna*, who is the king's name patron.<sup>9</sup> Robert Göbl confidently identifies the image of the Simurgh on the Hephthalite<sup>10</sup> coins from the seventh and eighth centuries, either partially or fully rendered, as the crown-emblem. He argues that such representations of the Senmurw, while carrying a pearl-necklace in its mouth, or sometimes without it, convey the investiture, and in some cases substitutes the phrase "his glory increased." Therefore, Schmidt interprets this example as a possible support for his argument on the image of the Senmurw manifesting *xvarənah*.<sup>11</sup> The motif of the spread wings with or without other symbolic elements continued to decorate the crowns of the kings on Sasanian coins as well as on the coins produced for the early Muslim rulers of Persia who inherited the minting system of the Sasanian Empire.<sup>12</sup> The association of the spread wing motif with the concept of royal glory in the Sasanian art is unquestionable. In many examples, it decorates the crowns of the kings or appears above their seated figures. Its reading as the image of the Senmurw, as Lukonin suggests, however, remains skeptical for now until a strong association between the winged motif and the Senmurw, also suggested by Michael Barry, be substantiated.

The examples that could be certainly connected to the Simurgh and its representation in the Sasanian art appear much later. The two Sasanian Senmurws decorating the garments of a king, once during hunting and probably once as a horseman, carved on the rock reliefs of the great iwan of Khusrau II at Taq-i Bustan from the late fifth or sixth century CE (Figure 3a-b) are generally accepted as the representations of the Simurgh.<sup>13</sup> Ghirshman proposes that these decorations on the garments of the figures demonstrate "an enlargement of the weavers' repertory of forms, purely decorative elements being combined with figures."<sup>14</sup> As the garment decorations at the Taq-i Bustan testify, the textile industry had been in an advanced stage during

the late Sasanian era, and the motif of the Simurgh was frequently used as a decorative motif on the surviving textile fragments (Figure 4).<sup>15</sup> The representations of the Simurgh on the garments of the kings on the reliefs at Taq-i Bustan attest that, at the end of the Sasanian era, the Simurgh was recognized as a royal emblem associated with the royalties.<sup>16</sup> The other known example of the visual appearance of the Simurgh in Sasanian art is a bronze plate from the seventh century, now preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 5).<sup>17</sup> These representations on the rock reliefs, textiles, and metal dishes commonly demonstrate the general characteristics of the Sasanian Simurgh as a composite creature. The animal has the head of a dog showing its teeth, and rolled-up nose tips. Its three-clawed paws belong to an animal of prey, one of which is usually raised in an attacking position. The feathers of the wings are individually represented and curl towards the front. The long oval-shaped tail is usually raised up behind the body of the animal, and sometimes, individual feathers are represented. In most cases, the tail is adorned with stylized vegetal motifs. In fact, it resembles a realistic depiction of a peacock tail in its raised form.<sup>18</sup> The back of the animal's neck is decorated with stylized ornaments that resemble a mane. The ears are tall and held in upright position. On the Metropolitan bronze plate, the fork-shaped tongue and the sharp teeth of the animal are meticulously rendered. Based on this iconographic difference as well as other features such as the turn of the wing ends towards the tail rather than the neck, and the bended position of the paws on the Metropolitan dish, Harper suggests the association of this dish with the arts of eastern Iranian lands, probably even Sogdiana.<sup>19</sup> She also connects the representations of the Simurgh on the rock reliefs of Taq-i Bustan with the arts of western Iran. She proposes that these representations were possibly used as models for the images of the Simurgh on rock reliefs at Mshatta, the Umayyad winter palace of the eighth century, near present-day Amman, Jordan.<sup>20</sup> Schmidt reviews the origins of the

composite elements and considers the impact of various animals, including the Greek hippocampus, the Babylonian griffin, the Chinese dragon, and the Scythian forerunner of the animal, as suggested by various scholars.<sup>21</sup> Phoenix, rightly, is not mentioned among the possible models, as the composite pre-Islamic Senmurw does not share any visual elements with that Chinese mythical bird. In the above examples the tail of the mythical Simurgh resembles a peacock tail. There might be a possible relation between the peacock and the world of light in Manichaeism. But, this bird, the peacock, plays no significant role in Zoroastrian symbolism, hence has no symbolic connotations in Sasanian art. It is only the form of its tail that is borrowed in representing the Simurgh in the Sasanian and early Islamic works of art.<sup>22</sup>

Another composite animal, the ‘camel-bird,’ decorating a Sogdian silver ewer at the Hermitage Museum, resembles the representations of the Simurgh on a Sasanian silver ewer also at the Hermitage Museum (Figure 6).<sup>23</sup> There is no indication of the presence of the Simurgh in the art of Sogdiana before the Arab conquest. Boris I. Marshak proposes that since the Simurgh was closely associated with the Sasanian cult, the Sogdians refrained from using the image of the Simurgh on their art, but instead adopted some of its features for the camel-bird that stood as their dynastic symbol.<sup>24</sup> The similarity of forms in these two Sogdian and Sasanian composite animals is remarkable and strongly suggests an artistic interaction or influence of one culture on the other. In the Sogdian art, except for the Simurgh, a variety of flying creatures carry beribboned rings towards the seated figures possibly with royal, religious or military affiliations in the mural paintings of the ‘Rustam Cycle’ in Panjikent, south of Samarqand.<sup>25</sup> Scholars generally agree on the association of these composite birds and flying animals with the old Iranian concept of *xvarənah* or the royal Glory, and on their function in bestowing fortune upon the kings, warriors and religious characters.<sup>26</sup> Matteo Compareti confirms B. Marshak’s

hypothesis that identifies the flying animals at Panjikent as the original Senmurw, and the winged composite beast, similar to the Sasanian composite beasts, as the manifestation of royal glory. He justifies this view by arguing that the strong association of the Senmurw with the Zoroastrian faith would have prevented its image to be used in the Islamic and Byzantine Christian art. Following Marshak's argument, he concludes, these composite animals in Sasanian art represent Divine Glory, appropriately perceived in other host cultures. Marshak believes the representation of the Senmurw on the Sasanian silver ewer at the Hermitage Museum (Figure 6) is the *xvarənah* of the Kianids, the ancient Persian legendary dynasty, and is not a Senmurw.<sup>27</sup> Yet, he acknowledges the general identification of the image as the Senmurw by scholars. Compareti, on the other hand, appears to be more confident in rejecting these composite images as the Senmurw. Instead of looking into Sasanian examples, Compareti brings in several examples from the Sogdian art to reject the commonly accepted view of the composite Sasanian bird as the Senmurw. He, further develops his argument on the absence of any representations of the 'Rustam cycle' in Sasanian art, thus finds it impossible to identify a representation for the original Sasanian Senmurw.<sup>28</sup> A closer reading of the Avestan and Pahlavi sources certainly would show that the Senmurw is not solely a companion to Rustam. Yet, these justifications suggested by Marshak and Compareti for the presence of the Senmurw on Sogdian art might appear unnecessary considering that the image of the Senmurw/Simurgh is in fact one of the several manifestations of royal glory; the concept that might have or have not been transferred to the other cultures when the image did.

A popular theme decorating the Sasanian objects is a double-headed bird, sometimes carrying a human figure. A large Sasanian silver plate from the fifth or sixth century, at the Riza 'Abbasi Museum, Tehran, portrays a double-headed bird with no human figure (Figure 7)<sup>29</sup>

while a silver plate from the late Sasanian period, now at the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, delineates a bird carrying a woman (Figure 8).<sup>30</sup> Lukonin identifies the bird on the Hermitage dish as the bird Garudha (Figure 9)<sup>31</sup> and the woman as Anahita, the goddess of fruitfulness and the symbol of the equinox.<sup>32</sup> Except for its individualized feathers, the bird on this image does not resemble the composite Senmurw as seen on other Sasanian objects, but matches the stylistic characteristics of the double-headed bird on the Sasanian silver plate. B. Marshak believes similar scenes portray well-known mythical themes of Garuda and Nagini in India and Central Asia, in form of an eagle taking away a woman. Later, he remarks that the Sasanian example might refer to the ascension of Zoroastrian good deeds to heaven.<sup>33</sup>

The theme of a human figure being lifted by a bird, as represented on the Sasanian silver plates, at the Hermitage Museum and the Riza 'Abbasi Museum, has apparently enjoyed some popularity in later eastern Islamic and western Christian cultures. It appears on two twelfth-century paintings decorating the muqarnas zones of the central ceiling of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo (Figure 10).<sup>34</sup> These paintings that might have been rendered by imported Muslim artists from the Fatimid Egypt, generally create a curious case of study due to their eastern, Islamic and even pre-Islamic central Asian style. Since the artists in charge and the style of rendition in these paintings were probably the continuation of the Islamic and eastern traditions, the design of a bird and the lifting figure could have been incorporated merely as a decorative motif known to the artists familiar with the Sasanian examples.<sup>35</sup> The painted panels on the ceilings of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo and their hybrid sources fall out of geographic and chronological of this discussion yet remain open to interpretations. The appearance of this theme on Sasanian examples however, in all probability, refers to the Zoroastrian theme of the ascension of the soul and the good deeds to heaven, and provides a

visual model for the theme of Zal being carried to Mount Alburz by the Simurgh and similar scenes in illustrated scientific and wonder manuscripts of Persian painting (discussed below).

Another exciting example of a composite bird, a ‘priest-bird,’ appears on the decorated walls of a Sogdian tomb discovered during the last decade in Xi’an, northern China. On the eastern wall of this stone sarcophagus, the Zoroastrian themes of heaven and the ascent to heaven are portrayed, while the southern wall is crowded with images of guardian gods, demons, musicians and two ‘priest-bird’ figures (Figure 11).<sup>36</sup> Each of the two figures of the ‘priest-bird’ appears to have the upper body of a bearded man characterized with the Sasanian priestly features, such as a mouth-cover, and a Sasanian cap decorated with a crescent, and stands in front of a Sasanian fire alter performing the rituals. The rest of the body, however, is of a bird, and as suggested by scholars, belongs to a cock. This bird is associated with the deity Surūš, who assists and judges the process whereby the souls of the deceased pass from the bridge to heaven.<sup>37</sup> The shape of the wings, their spread position on the sides of the priests’ heads, and the depiction of individual wing feathers, however, is reminiscent of the spread wings of the Simurgh. Although this particular image does not resemble any Sasanian representations of the Simurgh, it recalls the spread wings and the human bust carved on the Achaemenid reliefs of Susa and Persepolis, suggested by Michael Barry as the representations of the Simurgh. Among the references to *Saēna* in the *Avesta*, there is a Zoroastrian priest with the same name, as was formerly discussed. The characteristics of wisdom and the knowledge of healing attributed to the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* might have been borrowed from this man, *Saēna*. The images of the ‘priest-bird’ on this stone sarcophagus relate well with both the Simurgh and Zal in the *Shāhnāma* and the suggested possibility that Zal himself was the sorcerer-priest who learned his knowledge from the Simurgh. He performed some rituals with fire, burning a feather or aroma

woods (*ūd* and Sandal) every time he needed the help of the wise bird and some magic to happen.<sup>38</sup>

The Sasanian Simurgh with its composite features survived the Islamic conquest of Iran, and decorated objects in various media after the fall of the Sasanian dynasty from the seventh century onwards. An example is a stucco plaque from the main palace at Chal Tarkhan, Eshqabad, from the seventh or early eighth century, representing a Simurgh with features similar to its Sasanian counterpart (Figure 12). Although this inclusion might have a purely decorative nature and be devoid of any symbolic significance, the association of the Simurgh with royalty, as Harper suggests, might be the reason of its survival in early Islamic art as an architectural decoration on the walls of palaces.<sup>39</sup> A fur-lined silk caftan discovered in north Caucasus is attributable to eighth or ninth century Iran. It is decorated with rows of pearl-bordered roundels, each framing a Simurgh inside (Figure 13). The birds on this caftan resemble the Simurgh on the royal garment on the Taq-i Bustan reliefs and reveal the adaptation of Sasanian and Sogdian motifs in the early Islamic art of Iran.<sup>40</sup> Another example is a gilded silver tray from ninth or tenth century on which four typical Sasanian composite Senmurws in stylized roundels alternating with vegetal forms in roundels surround a central medallion filled by yet a larger Senmurw (Figure 14).<sup>41</sup>

The Sasanian Senmurw not only survived through its representations on textiles but also was spread and imitated beyond the Sasanian realm in the Christian world, in all probability as a decorative motif. An example of a representation of the Sasanian composite Senmurw or Simurgh appears on a Byzantine lead seal from the tenth century that belonged to a merchant named John.<sup>42</sup>

## The Representations of the Simurgh in Ilkhanid Art

The next group of surviving examples of representations of the Simurgh does not share either stylistic or composite elements of the examples reviewed so far, and fully departs from that artistic tradition. A group of tiles in various shapes and techniques are associated with Takht-i Sulayman, the Ilkhanid summer palace in the Azerbaijan region,<sup>43</sup> and attest to a rich tile program that once decorated the walls of this palace. One of the recurring motifs on these tiles is what is generally referred to as the Chinese phoenix, sometimes on a pairing tile with the image of a Chinese dragon (Figures 15-16a-b).<sup>44</sup> The combination of the phoenix and dragon usually decorated royal belongings in China and was the sign of power and kingship. The appearance of these two forms in Iran, as Masuya states, demonstrates the strong interactions between China and Iran under the Mongol empire. She adds that these purely Chinese forms were incorporated into the Iranian artistic traditions and obtained new meanings as the Iranian mythical bird, the Simurgh, and dragon.<sup>45</sup> Melikian Chirvani examines the association of the Simurgh and the dragon (*izhdihā*) in an Iranian context representing the dual spiritual and earthly aspects of royalty. He notes, however, that the iconographic representations of these beasts, unlike what is generally accepted as Chinese, adheres to the Iranian pictorial tradition with regards to forms, outlines, and flat colors while the Chinese influence is present on the treatment of the twisting tail and the bony neck of the Simurgh, and the dorsal ridge and mouth of the dragon. Chirvani adds that it is at the Takht-i Sulayman that the Simurgh with its Sufi connotation entered the court of the Ilkhans in Iran and decorated the walls of their palace. At the same time, as Chirvani proposes, these Simurghs also represent royalty just as the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma*, the sovereign bird (*murgh-i farmān ravā*) does.<sup>46</sup> Another group of tiles from the same site bears some calligraphic lines from the *Shāhnāma* text, while some depict scenes of its popular

episodes and characters, such as Faridun, and Bahram-i Gur with his slave girl, Azada.<sup>47</sup> These examples attest to a well-established tradition of decorating royal palaces with stories of the *Shāhnāma*, indicating an Iranian tradition to transfer the concept of kingship. Masuya, however, explains the introduction of the Chinese symbols of kingship, the phoenix and the dragon, into this existing tradition as a calculated move through which the Iranian craftsmen and architects were confronted by the Chinese imagery and accommodated them recognizing their value for the Ilkhan.<sup>48</sup> Michael Barry, on the other hand, believes the image of the Chinese phoenix that came back to Persia under the Mongol rule during the thirteenth century was in fact a modification of the Sasanian Sunbird. He adds that the Iranians knew and admired the image of the Chinese phoenix, available to them through Chinese silks prior to Mongol arrival in Iran, and associated the image with their mystical Simurgh.<sup>49</sup> Thus the debate over the origin of the Chinese phoenix appearance of the Simurgh in the Ilkhanid art, here, generates the question of whether the Iranian craftsmen confronted the image of the bird as a sign of kingship for the first time through Chinese materials available to them and simply accommodated the Ilkhan's will to include this sign of sovereignty to decorate their artistic creations? Or were they already familiar with the royal connotations of this image and used it to decorate the walls of palaces and the other royal belongings following an old tradition that they inherited? The image of the bird depicted on the tiles of Takht-i Sulayman clearly imitates a Chinese style in appearance, and attests to the importation of Chinese imagery to Iran. But the symbolic connotations that this bird carries on the walls of this royal structure are informed by the long established Iranian ideologies. The representations of the Senmurw/Simurgh on the Sasanian objects (examined above) perform as the emblems of royalty. Therefore, Chirvani's argument in associating the Simurgh on these tiles with both royal and mystical meanings appears quite tenable. In other words, in this tile program

a newly imported image with some royal significance, as perceived by the Ilkhan, represents the Iranian concepts of royal and divine presence. In this case, a foreign imagery, the Chinese phoenix, replaces the Sasanian representation of the Simurgh, but sustains its original meaning. This visual replacement of the Simurgh imagery, taking place during the Mongol era in Iran, results in establishing this form for the representations of the Simurgh in Iranian visual vocabulary. This tradition, as will be observed through examples of paintings in the following chapters, is practiced till present.

The blooming production of illustrated manuscripts under the Ilkhans and their regional rulers allows tracing the representations of the fantastic Simurgh in the art of book painting from the last quarter of the thirteenth century on in Iran. The Ilkhans who established their rule in northwestern Iran, in cities of Maragha, and later Tabriz and Sultaniyya, trusted their local rulers with the political matters in the major southern provinces of Fars and Iraq. Similar to the decorative program of the Takht-i Sulayman, the book illustrations produced in northern centers reveal Chinese influences. One such example of Iranian encounter with Chinese art appears on the treatment of landscape elements in the illustrations of *The Book on the Usefulness of Animals* or *Manāfi‘ al-Ḥayawān* by Ibn Bakhtishu‘, produced in Maragha, northwestern Iran, between 1297-1300.<sup>50</sup> In general, the paintings of this manuscript show the integration of the visual forms from both the school of Baghdad and the Chinese elements. Ettinghausen observes that while the illustrations of the earlier chapters of *Manāfi‘ al-Ḥayawān* are depicted in the style of Baghdad, “Arab painting” as he notes, the rest of the illustrations show an influence of Chinese painting in varying degrees.<sup>51</sup> Hillenbrand believes that the Chinese models performed as a catalyst for the Iranian painter who incorporated those elements into his own style.<sup>52</sup> In the manuscript of *Manāfi‘ al-Ḥayawān*, the presence of Chinese elements is limited more to the treatment of

landscape and seems to have worked more as the proposed impetus for the Iranian painter. One of the animals depicted in this bestiary is the mythical Simurgh surrounded by a landscape with Chinese elements (Figure 17).<sup>53</sup> The bird seems to be an introductory image of the Simurgh that appears in the fourteenth-century illustrations of the *Shāhnāma* (as will be discussed below). The significance of this image is not only because of its colorful and embellished appearance that suggests itself as a precursor of the Simurgh imagery in the golden age of Persian painting but also because it is the only representation of the fantastic bird in a painting produced in an Ilkhanid center close to the court. In this painting, the Simurgh has a body and feathers of a regular bird, maybe even a rooster, with elaborate, colorful, and twisted tail and tail feathers. The same colors and twists are repeated on its neck. Its beak resembles an eagle's beak. The minimal landscape around the bird does not allow much conclusion on the bird's size; no sign of massiveness is indicated, though. The blue wavy area of the picture frame, similar to the Chinese cloud bands, represents the sea and therefore the bird's living place. The illustration is located under a chapter title "on the appearance of the Simurgh" and the single line below it describes the bird as follows: "The Simurgh is all-encompassing [or 'is on the great sea'], on the islands near the equator, and people could not reach there, and has a pleasant weather."<sup>54</sup> The line clearly is describing the living place of the bird, although it can metaphorically refer to the Simurgh's unreachable position in mysticism.

Around the same time that the manuscript of *Manāfi' al-Hayawān* was illustrated in Maragha, other scientific books were produced in regional centers in Iraq following a pre-Mongol tradition. The city of Baghdad was an active center of manuscript production and the birthplace of 'Arab painting' prior to the Mongol conquest during the first half of the thirteenth century. This city, as Marianna Shreve Simpson points out, and contrary to what was generally

understood, continued to be an active center of cultural and intellectual production during the second half of the thirteenth century, and contributed to the formation of the Ilkhanid painting in the 1290s.<sup>55</sup> Under the administration of the historian ‘Ata Malik Juvayni (d.1283), who governed Baghdad for the Ilkhans from 1259 to 1282, the region soon regained its position as the center for scholarly activities. The manuscripts of scientific writings continued to be produced and used by a class of “scholar-bureaucrats” at the provincial cities.<sup>56</sup> From the genre of encyclopedic writings, a cosmographic account on the wonders of creation, *‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt wa Gharā’ib al-Mujūdāt* by the prominent judge and scholar, Zakaria b. Muhammad Qazvini (d. 1283), has been immensely popular and was repeatedly illustrated.<sup>57</sup> A copy of this text was produced in the author’s lifetime in 1280 in Wasit, and remains as the first surviving copy of this text.<sup>58</sup> In this wonders-of-creation book, an entry in the chapter on birds is devoted to *‘Anqā*, the Arabic counterpart of the Simurgh, and its unusual acts.<sup>59</sup> This entry is illustrated in a manuscript of this text produced probably in Mosul, c. 1300, also known as the London Qazvini (Figure 18a).<sup>60</sup> The fantastic bird in this illustration has an overall appearance of a rooster with emphasis on its colorful tail feathers, head horns or feathers, and particularly large claws. In his text, Qazvini also refers to a giant bird in a concluding story in the chapter on the Seas. This giant bird that lived on an island in the Persian sea was frequently illustrated as part of a narrative. In this story, a wandering man from Isfahan saved himself from a deserted island by hanging from the bird’s legs and flying away.<sup>61</sup> This narration is illustrated in Qazvini’s own manuscript (1280) as well as in the London Qazvini.<sup>62</sup> The surrounding texts on the illustrated folios of this story do not specify the type of the bird and only refer to it as a giant bird (*tā’ir-a ‘azīm*).<sup>63</sup> In the London Qazvini the bird is represented as a giant rooster sitting on a tree with big wattles, head feathers and red spiky neck feathers (Figure 18b) and shares similar features with the representation of

'*Anqā* in this manuscript (Figure 18a). Both of these birds in this Mosul manuscript bear resemblance with the Simurgh in the manuscripts produced in Isfahan and Shiraz during the first half of the fourteenth century that will be discussed below. The bird of the story of the man from Isfahan in the manuscript produced in 1280 in Wasit (Figure 19), though, suggests different features for the giant bird; the white bird, (*abyaḍ al-lawn*) as the text of this copy defines it, resembles a dove with elaborate neck feathers. The Qazvini's book of wonders was also produced in the province of Fars.<sup>64</sup> In a later copy of the '*Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt*, produced in 1322 for the Inju rulers of Fars (Figure 20a), the entry on '*Anqā* has an illustration of the bird with composite features of an owl head and horns, eagle's beak, even fish scales covering its body, maybe an attempt to show the body feathers, and a slightly decorated tail.<sup>65</sup> This image resembles the representations of the Simurgh in manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* produced for the same family of patrons in the second quarter of the century (examined below). The story of the man from Isfahan is also illustrated in this copy but the giant bird clearly differs from the image of the '*Anqā* in this manuscript (Figure 20b). Qazvini also writes on unusual behaviors of '*Anqā* that once stole a bridegroom from his wedding and flew away carrying the young man in its talons. The story and the bird are depicted in a copy of '*Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt*, from the late fifteenth century, Iran (Figure 21).<sup>66</sup> The appearance of the bird in flight while carrying a human body shares elements with the story of the Simurgh and Zal, as well as all the other ascension scenes discussed above. However, the meaning of the images of the birds, '*Anqā* and the Simurgh, as defined in their narrative sources, vastly differ. The inclusion of a giant bird carrying a human figure in a book of wonders of creation narrates a supernatural phenomenon, which its illustrations were meant to generate astonishment and awe in their viewers. While the surviving illustrated copies of '*Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt*, in general, attest that the Mongol conquest of Iranian

cities did not altogether cease the manuscript production in provincial centers, they also show that a scene of a giant bird holding a man in its flight preserved its element of wonder among the scholars. Persis Berlekamp proposes that the scholarly interactions and visits between the western cities of Wasit, Mosul, and Baghdad and the southern cities of Shiraz, Yazd, and Kirman stimulated closer connections, than what was previously thought, between these centers. These connections eventually impacted the artistic production of these cities and engaged their political elite.<sup>67</sup> In their stylistic features, the illustrated manuscripts produced in the regional centers of Iraq and Fars also reveal an artistic interaction between these cities. The representations of the giant bird and the *Anqā* in this group of wonders-of-creation copies do not suggest a unified type for the appearance of a giant bird that causes astonishment. These examples remain uncertain on the look of the giant bird whereas each illustration probably reveals the attempts made by its artist in depicting an animal of wonder. The same stylistic variability will be observed in the representations of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* manuscripts of the early fourteenth century.

#### The Representation of the Simurgh in the Earliest Known Manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*

The surviving examples of art works including wall paintings, textiles, ceramics, and metalwork depicting the scenes of the *Shāhnāma*, produced before the fourteenth century, are presently scattered over a long span of time and regions, and do not allow tracing the evolution of a tradition. Yet, their presence attests to an existing tradition of illustrating the stories of the book of epics well before the fourteenth century. Popular characters and stories include the story of Faridun and his sons; Bahram-i Gur and the slave girl, Azada; Rostam in battle or hunting scenes; and Zakhak.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, the source of these stories and characters for their use in the

decorative vocabulary of Persian art might have been the oral tradition around these folk and mythical stories and not the *Shāhnāma* text, at least not its written account. The advent of the fourteenth century, however, marks the creation of the first illustrated manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*, as it is generally identified for now. With changes brought into the social, cultural, and political domains of the Persian world by the Mongol conquest of the country, the interest in the national epics, to the extent of illustrating the whole text, appears reasonable. The Mongol rulers' personal interests in the lives of the ancient kings of Persia, or the effectiveness of the *Shāhnāma* text in legitimizing their rule are considered to be some of the reasons in raising its appeal.

Altogether, there are nine illustrated manuscripts of the national epics and some illustrations in an album that were produced in the first half of the fourteenth century. Only one of these manuscripts is affiliated with the patronage of the Ilkhanid court while the rest are produced in provincial centers of Fars, and probably Iraq. The three small manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*, attributed to ca.1300 and possibly the city of Baghdad by Marianna Shreve Simpson, are commonly regarded as the earliest known examples of this text being illustrated.<sup>69</sup> In all these three manuscripts, the episode of Zal at the Simurgh's nest is illustrated. Interestingly, the two paintings of the Freer and the Second Small *Shāhnāmas* (Figures 22 and 23) demonstrate the same moment of the story when Sam and his men come to Mount Alburz to ask for Zal's return while the illustration of this episode on the First Small manuscript depicts a few moments later (Figure 24).<sup>70</sup> Simpson observes that the programming of these manuscripts follows a close text-image relationship where the images are located very close to the lines that they depict. With regards to the illustrations of the story of Zal and the Simurgh, though, this observation only agrees with the Freer illustration. The Freer illustration of this scene is in fact located very close

to the text it depicts: Zal and the Simurgh are at the top of the mountain, with its height emphasized by the elevating picture frame equal to three lines up in the left. Sam is at the bottom of the mountain looking up and raising his hands in an appealing gesture. The lines on the right of the picture frame narrate this exact moment. The location of the image at the upper half of the page leaves enough space for the rest of the story to be scribed on the same page. The appearance of the illustration of this episode in the Second Small *Shāhnāma* at the bottom of the page leaves room for the story to be narrated only up to the moment when Sam reaches the mountain skirt. Zal and the Simurgh are still at the nest located on a tree, sharing the same horizon with where Sam and his companions stand.<sup>71</sup> Thus, the text and image do not relate as closely as argued. This scene in the First Small *Shāhnāma*, depicted in a rectangular band almost at the bottom of the page, shows an advanced moment of the story when the Simurgh has convinced the young Zal to go back to his people. Zal, the bird, and her chicks are at the bottom of the mountain facing Sam and his two companions. The surrounding text of this image narrates the conversation between the Simurgh and Zal that happened in the nest, and does not get to the moment this illustration is depicting. The painter of this illustration has clearly decided to depict a different moment of the story from what the surrounding text narrates. Simpson proposes that the scribe of these texts wrote down the verses while a storyteller, or *Shāhnāma-khān*, who knew the lines by heart, was orally narrating them.<sup>72</sup> When the story approached its climax or the scribe anticipated its nearing, he left a blank space in between the text, in forms of square, rectangle, or stepped frames, to be filled later by the image of that scene.<sup>73</sup> Based on the similarities of these group of *Shāhnāmas*, Simpson also proposes the possibility of these manuscripts, most strongly with regards to the First and the Second Small manuscripts, to be produced either by one person(s) in sequential years, or by two people working at the same time

and location that allowed them to probe each other's works regularly.<sup>74</sup> Although the depiction of the story of Zal and the Simurgh in all these three *Shāhnāma* manuscripts demonstrates a unity in the illustrative program of these copies, the variable texts of these folios do not imply the inscription of the copies at the same time and following a simultaneous recitation of the text. Even if that was the case, the scribes integrated their own versions of the words, the ones that they knew by memory.

For the sake of this study, and in order to trace a reasonable line in the evolution of the Simurgh imagery, the Simurgh in the First Small *Shāhnāma* will be compared with the representation of the same bird in the Morgan Library *Manāfi' al-Ḥayawān* (c. 1297-1300, Maragha), created around the same time, possibly in a different city (Figure 17). The Simurgh represented in the First Small *Shāhnāma* shares neither the colorful palette nor the thick black outlines of the bestiary Simurgh. However, the two birds share similar forms in treatment of their elaborate tails and the feathers around their necks. Despite their differences, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the painters of these two illustrations have used or been inspired by the same source for the appearance of the mythical birds they portrayed. The source of visual information available to these illustrators, one working in the city of Maragha and the other in Baghdad, remains to be identified. However, the Chinese textiles decorated with the motif of the Chinese phoenix, as portable and widely traded objects appear to be the most immediate answers.<sup>75</sup>

Another group of book paintings, that based on their stylistic similarities are attributed by scholars to one city, probably Isfahan, from almost three decades later, 1330s to 1340s, provides this study with the next visual representations of the Simurgh. This group includes a Small *Shāhnāma*, also known as the Gutman *Shāhnāma*,<sup>76</sup> and some illustrations from a

*Shāhnāma* mounted on albums known as Diez Albums.<sup>77</sup> The representations of the Simurgh in this group of paintings demonstrate remarkable differences in visual features of the bird compared with the images from the three Small *Shāhnāmas* examined above. The Simurgh in the Gutman *Shāhnāma* resembles more a rooster than a Chinese phoenix (Figure 25).<sup>78</sup> When it sits at the top of the mountain conversing with Zal, whose father is kneeling down asking for his son's return at the foot of the mountain, the Simurgh appears as a composite bird; it is portrayed with the head and wattles of a rooster, beak of an eagle, horns or ears similar to an owl, wings of any ordinary bird, and two long curling tails that, unlike in the Small *Shāhnāma* examples, are not spreading in the air but remain tight together and extend down the mountain. However, the painter of the Gutman *Shāhnāma* has decided to treat the evil counterpart of the Simurgh, the one who fights with the Iranian prince Isfandiar in his fifth ordeal, in a different manner, with long ribbon-like tails and spread colorful wings. The bird is still not large in size and in fact does not occupy much space in the painting (Figure 26).<sup>79</sup> The example from the Diez Album A represents the scene of Rostam's birth that is divided into two parts with a curtain between Rudaba and her four nurses on the right and Zal, the half body of the Simurgh and the brazier on the left (Figure 27).<sup>80</sup> Clearly the sources available to the artists of the Gutman *Shāhnāma*, and the Diez albums illustrations, possibly once belonging to a manuscript, produced in Isfahan, were different from those known to the artists of the Small *Shāhnāmas* practicing in western Iran. While the Simurghs in the three Small *Shāhnāmas* of the early fourteenth century reveal some Chinese influence, the visual sources of the fantastic birds in the manuscripts produced in central Iran could have simply been the birds in nature. In order to convey its supernatural origin, the artists of these folios combined the body parts of various birds in depicting the Simurgh. The possible patrons of these manuscripts were the local families who ruled the city of Isfahan on

behalf of the Ilkhans before their fall in 1336, and during the politically confused years following their demise. The presence of these copies suggests that a school of painting with distinctive characteristics from both the Ilkhanid and Shiraz paintings, yet with similarities with the latter, existed in Isfahan during the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>81</sup> The stylistic variance of the Simurghs illustrated in each of the centers during the fourteenth century completed by the examples produced in Shiraz that will be examined below, allows including the provenance of each illustration or manuscript as an influencing element in shaping the visual characteristics of the Simurgh.

Close to the region of Isfahan, another city was active in production of illustrated books and remained so during the golden age of Persian painting. In the second quarter of the fourteenth century the city of Shiraz, in the southern province of Fars, was governed by the provincial dynasty of the Inju on behalf of the Ilkhans. The Inju family enjoyed an increasing authority towards the end of the Ilkhan's power in Tabriz after 1335-36. The production of four illustrated copies of the *Shāhnāma* could be associated with the Inju court, all produced between 1330 and 1353 CE.<sup>82</sup> Although the illustrative programs of these manuscripts do not follow a regular pattern and are variable and selective, unlike the small *Shāhnāmas*,<sup>83</sup> the episode of Sam asking for his son at the Simurgh's nest is illustrated in three of these copies.<sup>84</sup> The illustrations in the *Shāhnāma* of 1333 (Figure 28) and the Stephens *Shāhnāma* (Figure 29) both depict the moment after the conversation between the Simurgh and Zal at the nest had occurred; the bird and the boy seem ready to fly down towards Sam who is waiting for them at the bottom of the mountain. In the *Shāhnāma* of 1333 illustration, the stepped shape of the painting is used to depict the height of the mountain with the Simurgh on its peak one level up on the left compared to where Sam stands.<sup>85</sup> The Simurgh's head in this illustration is depicted from a frontal view

with characteristics more similar to an owl, with round face and round eyes, and two black-outlined horns.<sup>86</sup> Its beak could be of an eagle; the neck and part of the wing feathers are depicted as streaky. The tail feathers are neither long nor colorful, but are as long as the bird's legs and are individualized with black outlines. Interestingly, a round black line, similar to a halo, surrounds the head of the bird.<sup>87</sup> The representation of the Simurgh in this episode in the Stephens *Shāhnāma* does not resemble an owl-looking bird anymore. Instead, it approximates a composite bird with some features of an owl with longer horns or head feathers, as well as the wattles of a rooster, and very long, twisting, and colorful tails with curls at the end. The image of the Simurgh in Qawam al-Din's *Shāhnāma* of 1341 could be a clue to connect these two representations.<sup>88</sup> The long twisting tail and streaky body feathers are all that can be observed through the poor status of the image I have. This type of elaborate tail, absent in the representation of the earlier Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* of 1333, might be an influence from Tabriz since after the fall of the Ilkhans in 1335-36 and the cease of royal patronage, most probably some artists moved from Tabriz to Shiraz where the Inju family actively patronized the artists.

The evil counterpart of the Simurgh is only represented in the first manuscript of this group (H. 1479), dated to 1330 (Figure 30).<sup>89</sup> In this illustration, the massive, colorful body of the Simurgh with spread wings and tails covers more than half of the horizontal band of the painting, pushing the hero to the far left. This painting reveals the elements of the Inju style in coloring, thick outlines, treatment of its limited landscape and vegetal forms, although the facial features of Isfandiar along with his costume and armor show the Chinese influence as practiced at the court of Tabriz. This reveals that the Inju painters may have already been familiar with the state of the arts and its visual paradigms at the court of Ilkhans. In the illustration of *Rustam*

*Shoots Isfandiar* from the same manuscript (Figure 31),<sup>90</sup> oddly, two Simurghs, instead of one, are represented, emphasizing the symmetrical arrangement of the scene. While one bird flies behind Rustam and towards him, the second one flies away from behind the Persian prince, on the right, to the margins. They both are colorful and have elaborate tails. In fact, the representations of the Simurgh in the Inju *Shāhnāma* of 1330 are the most embellished ones amongst the Inju depictions of the fantastic bird.<sup>91</sup> Yet none of the representations of the Simurgh in these four manuscripts reveal exact similarities with a Chinese inspired Simurgh similar to the ones decorating the tile program of Takht-i Sulayman or the many examples on Chinese textiles. The Inju artists of these folios might not have seen any connection between the two birds of the Iranian mythical past and its Chinese counterpart. They probably followed a pre-established model for the appearance of this mythical bird that definitely owned composite features. Thus, the feature of long and twisting tails for the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* manuscript of 1330 and the Stephens manuscript displays the earliest attempts at incorporating the visual elements of the Chinese fantastic bird for the guardian of Zal and his family in southern provinces.

Two illustrated pages from a manuscript of *Mūnis al-Aḥrār fī Daqā'iq al-Ash'ār* also include two representations of the Simurgh.<sup>92</sup> Stefano Carboni attributes the illustrations of this manuscript to the time of copying the text in 1341 in Isfahan, thus belonging to the same category as the Gutman *Shāhnāma*, while Elaine Wright identifies them as later additions to the text, probably in 1350s, in Isfahan or Shiraz, under the Inju patronage.<sup>93</sup> In this manuscript, the Simurgh and *Humā*, the two mythical birds, are illustrated along with the other natural birds in two registers, all facing left, and do not show any supernatural features (Figure 32).<sup>94</sup> The two Simurghs in this manuscript of *Mūnis al-Aḥrār* are depicted with rooster-like wattles, parrot-like

beaks, head feathers, and individual treatment of feathers on their bodies. They neither have significant tails nor the claws of a predatory bird, nor there is any emphasis on their massiveness. The same technique of combined features is applied to depict the supernatural nature of these birds, as in the other examples from Isfahan and Shiraz, discussed above.

### Conclusion

The identification of the pre-Islamic representations of the Simurgh as well as the exact date of their occurrences remains to be a topic of scholarly debate. The earliest proposed appearances of this mythical bird, as on the Achaemenid rock reliefs of Persepolis, and the Sasanian coins of Warahran II, are limited to a pair of spread wings. Both identifications remain speculative for now. The definite depictions of the Simurgh as revealed on the late Sasanian objects demonstrate the reception of the Simurgh as a composite bird with stylized elements borrowed from several animals. Common to all these examples are the wings of the Simurgh, a reference to its association with the family of birds. This composite creature denotes the first visual prototype for the imagery of the Simurgh.

The few examples of the representations of the Simurgh during the medieval period in Iran vary stylistically. While the earlier examples (e.g. the silk caftan at the Hermitage) demonstrate a stylized rendition of the bird, the depictions of the Simurgh on the book illustrations of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries lean towards a realistic portrayal of the bird (e.g. in the manuscripts of *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt* and *Mūnis al-Aḥrār*). Although, the Simurghs illustrated in the cities of Iraq and Fars stylistically vary from one another they all resemble one or more birds of nature. In the examples from the northwestern Iran or Iraq, the Small *Shāhnāmas*, the Simurgh possesses all the features of a natural bird slightly influenced by

the visual elements of a Chinese phoenix. The Inju Simurghs of the mid-fourteenth century are shaped on combined elements borrowed from several birds, the attempt most likely to create a supernatural animal. Similar characteristics define the fantastic bird depicted in the manuscripts attributed to Isfahan. This group constructs the second visual prototype of the Simurgh imagery that is a naturalistic type. Among all the visual examples of the fantastic bird, examined above, the only depictions that match the visual characteristics of the Simurgh in the five royal manuscripts of this study are the soaring birds decorating the tile revetments at the Ilkhanid summer palace of Takht-i Sulayman (c. 1270s), and its contemporary silk fragments. Thus they can be considered as the stylistic forerunners of the third visual prototype for the representation of the Simurgh, proposed in the next chapter.

The Simurgh in its pre-Islamic context carried royal and divine connotations, apparent in both written and visual sources. The same bird in the early centuries of Islam in Iran, inspired by Suhrawardi's philosophy of Light, seems to have divine associations, performing as a facilitator to raise the human soul to a heavenly status. While depicting a narrative, the representations of the Simurgh carrying a human figure in illustrations of the *Shāhnāma* might refer to this divine aspect, whereas the human figures carried by the bird in the scientific manuscripts, such as *ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt*, are inspired by the folk narratives around the bird's existence.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Barry, "Sîmorgh in Persia's Sky," in Farīd-od-Dīn ʿAttār, *The Canticle of the Birds: Illustrated through Persian And Eastern Islamic Art* (Paris: Diane de Selliers, 2013), p. 32. From this short reference it appears that Michael Barry is suggesting the winged disk with or without a

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human body between the wings formerly known in scholarship as the representation of Ahuramazda is in fact the Simurgh. Although Barry's hypothesis comes out as bold and lacks sufficient evidence it should not be altogether ignored. Once the association between the Simurgh and *xvarənah* becomes firmly established, as Schmidt has done with regards to the Sasanian examples, Barry's assertion would appear as provable. For now, it is referred to as a hypothesis. For images of Persepolis see Arthur Upham Pope, *Persian Architecture: The Triumph of Form and Color* (New York: George Braziller, 1965), pp. 42 and 44, and figures 28

<sup>2</sup> For a brief review of the positions held by various scholars see Matteo Comparati, "The Spread Wings on Armenian Steles: Its Meaning and Parallels in Sasanian Art," *Iran and the Caucasus* 14, and 30. no. 2 (2010): 201-232, p. 207, footnote 12.

<sup>3</sup> Parivash Jamzadeh, "The Winged Ring with Human Bust in Achaemenid Art as a Dynastic Symbol," *Iranica Antiqua* XVII (1982): 91-99. Abolala Soudavar, *The Aura of the Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2003), p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Trever studied these examples in Camilla V. Trever, *The Dog-Bird. Senmurv-Paskudj*, (Leningrad: The Hermitage Museum, 1938). I have not consulted the text directly but Schmidt reviews this source and concludes that it does not assist in defining the composite features of the Simurgh. See Hanns-Peter Schmidt, "The Sēnmurw: Of Birds, Dogs and Bats," *Persica* IX, *Annuaire de la Société Néerlandaise-Iranienne* (1980): 1-85, p.23. The Scythians were the Iranian tribes who lived on the steppes of central Eurasia between 7<sup>th</sup> BCE to 4<sup>th</sup> CE.

<sup>5</sup> Schmidt, "The Sēnmurw: Of Birds, Dogs and Bats," pp. 22 and 24.

<sup>6</sup> Vladimir G. Lukonin, *Persia II*, translated from Russian by James Hogarth (Switzerland: Nagel, 1967), p. 177. Also discussed in Schmidt, "The Sēnmurw," p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Lukonin, *Persia II*, 158-77. Lukonin suggests this as a "special canon" established in Sasanian art (p.159), and that "the origin of these representations is to be found not in reminiscences of ancient Oriental art but in Hellenistic and Roman prototypes." (p. 177)

<sup>8</sup> Robert Göbl, "Sasanian Coins," in *The Cambridge History of Iran, The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanid Periods*, Vol.3, Part 1, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 322-340, p.325. Online publication, 2008, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521200929.012>

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<sup>9</sup> This identification has been suggested by Göbl (1960) and Lukonin (1967). Schmidt reviews the early representations of the Simurgh and the related hypotheses proposed by the scholars of the field. See Schmidt, “The Sēnmurw,” pp. 25-26. For an image of the Warahran II’s coin see Lukonin, *Persia II*, plate 113.

<sup>10</sup> A dynasty of nomads who ruled in Central Asia from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century CE.

<sup>11</sup> This has been suggested by Göbl (1967), and Schmidt confirms it. See Schmidt, “The Sēnmurw,” pp. 37-38. Images are reproduced in Robert Göbl, *Dokumente zur Geschichte der Iranischen Hunnen in Baktrien und Indien*, I-IV (Wiesbaden, 1967).

<sup>12</sup> Under the early Muslim rulers, the Sasanian mints were used to strike coins only by adding the phrase ‘in the name of God’ in the margin. For images of some of these coins and their discussion see Helen W. Brown, “The Umayyad Coins in Oxford,” in *Islamic Art in the Ashmolean Museum*, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art, Part One, ed. James Allan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): 51-81.

<sup>13</sup> Taq-i Bustan is located near present Kirmanshah in western Iran. For reproduction of the boar hunting scene at Taq-i Bustan see Roman Ghirshman, *Persian Art: The Parthian and Sasanian Dynasties 249 BC- 651 AD*, translated by S. Gilbert and J. Emmons (New York: Golden Press, 1962), plates 236, 270 and 272. For more detailed reproductions see Prudence Oliver Harper, *The Royal Hunter: Art of the Sasanian Empire* (New York: Asia Society, 1978), figures 34a and 34b, p. 96, and figures 50 I, J, K and L, p. 121. The image of the Simurgh on the back wall of the iwan of Khusrau II is depicted in a roundel while the one on the sidewall is not.

<sup>14</sup> Ghirshman, *Persian Art: The Parthian and Sasanian Dynasties*, p. 226.

<sup>15</sup> Some of the examples of Sasanian textiles decorated with an image of the Simurgh in roundels are: one 7<sup>th</sup> century silk fragment with yellow designs on green ground, found wrapped around the relics of St. Lupus, now divided between the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Another silk fragment from the same time is preserved at the National Museum, Florence. For reproductions see Ghirshman, *Persian Art: The Parthian and Sasanian Dynasties*, p. 228, illustrations 275 and 276, p. 229.

<sup>16</sup> Harper, *The Royal Hunter*, p. 94.

<sup>17</sup> Fletcher Fund (60.141), height 3 cm, diameter 36.8 cm.

<sup>18</sup> Schmidt, “The Sēnmurw,” pp. 28-29.

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<sup>19</sup> An Iranian-speaking region in Central Asia

<sup>20</sup> For the comparison see Harper, *The Royal Hunter*, pp. 94-96, including figure 34. The carved stone façade, the left entrance wall, at Mshatta, now preserved at Staatliche Museen, Berlin, is decorated with animal forms in roundels including the Simurgh and suggest a Sasanian influence along side other artistic influences from the west and the east. For a discussion see Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar, and Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art and Architecture, 650-1250* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 50-51.

<sup>21</sup> Schmidt, “The Sēnmurw,” pp. 29-30.

<sup>22</sup> Schmidt, “The Sēnmurw,” pp. 42 and 45. Schmidt notes that it is beyond the borders of Iran, in fact in India, that the peacock carries a religious and royal symbolic significance.

<sup>23</sup> The two animals only differ in the form of their heads, jaws, and mane. For an image of the Sogdian ewer see Schmidt, “The Sēnmurw,” fig. 12. For an image of the Sasanian silver ewer see Lukonin, *Persia II*, illustration 165.

<sup>24</sup> This is suggested by Boris I. Marshak in *Sogdijskoe srebro* (Moskva: Nauka, 1971), 138. My source is Schmidt, “The Sēnmurw,” pp. 35-37.

<sup>25</sup> The old city of Panjikent in present Tajikistan was an active city of Sogdiana in pre-Islamic Central Asia until the Muslim arrival in the eighth century. The images include camel or horse-headed birds, fish-tailed creatures, and a lion-headed bird flying towards the head of the hero in “the Rustam cycle.”

<sup>26</sup> Although the concept was borrowed, the scholars emphasize the originality of the Sogdian versions of the flying animals. See Guitty Azarpay, “Some Iranian Iconographic Formulae in Sogdian Painting,” *Iranica Antiqua* XI (1975): 168-177.

<sup>27</sup> Boris I. Marshak, “Zoroastrian Art in Iran under the Parthians and the Sasanians,” in *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion, and Culture*, ed. Pheroza J. Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree (New Jersey: Grantha, 2002), pp. 134-147, pp. 140-41.

<sup>28</sup> Matteo Compareti, “The So-Called *Senmurv* in Iranian Art: A Reconsideration of an Old Theory,” in *Loquentes linguis. Studi linguistici e orientali in onore di Fabrizio A. Pennaccietti*, eds. P.G. Borbone, A.M. Mengozzi, and M. Tosco (Wiesbaden, 2006), 185-200. I retrieved the article from academic-edu. pp. 189-204. See p. 192.

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<sup>29</sup> Acc. No. 160, The Riza 'Abbasi Museum, Tehran. The object's size is not indicated on the museum entry.

<sup>30</sup> Titled as 'Dish: Eagle Bearing a Woman,' first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, 22.2 cm, at the Hermitage Museum website, no access number is provided. For an image see Lukonin, *Persia II*, color plate 195.

<sup>31</sup> Garudha is an animal deity in Hindu and Buddhist mythology that appears as a bird with characteristics similar to the Simurgh. Lukonin, however, does not justify his proposition of the depiction of Garudha on a Sasanian plate. Later in Mughal India, the emperor Akbar orders a Persian translation of the Sanskrit epic *Rāmāyānā*, called *Rāmnāma* in which Viṣṇū rides the bird Garuda, the solar bird, equivalent of the Simurgh. The bird resembles the Simurgh of Persian painting. The painting is attributed to Yusuf 'Ali, c. 1598-99, Lahore, now at Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. For an image see Barry, *The Canticle of the Birds*, p. 191.

<sup>32</sup> Lukonin, *Persia II*, 1967, p. 225. He adds that it was during the reign of Shapur II and under his chief priest, Aturpat's supervision that the text of the *Avesta* was edited. Therefore the cult of Anahita was transformed, and connected the goddess more with waters, and vegetation. It is at this time that many images of this deity, her maids, and women carrying fruits and vegetables were produced. See Lukonin, *Persia II*, p. 182.

<sup>33</sup> Marshak, "Zoroastrian Art in Iran under the Parthians and the Sasanians," pp.144 and 146.

<sup>34</sup> The island of Sicily fell under the Muslim rule from 827 to 1061 until it was captured by the Normans and was back to Christianity again. Muslim culture, however, became embedded in the Norman culture of the eleventh century on and the fusion of these two cultures as well as the Byzantine elements of the pre-Muslim era of Sicily formed the illustrative program of Cappella Palatina. See Richard Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting* (New York: Skira, 1977), p. 44.

<sup>35</sup> The same motif of a bird carrying human figures also appears on two plates, probably from 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>-century Hungary, in Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. For a study of the painting at the Cappella Palatina see Ernst Grube and Jeremy Jones, *The Painted Ceilings of the Cappella Palatina*, Supplement I to *Islamic Art* (New York: East-West Foundation, 2005). The two paintings on the muqarnas zone, discussed here, are reproduced on pp. 75 and 77 and are discussed on page 245. The Hungarian examples are reproduced on page 244.

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<sup>36</sup> Two inscriptions on the southern side of the sarcophagus, one in Chinese and one in Sogdian language indicate the owners of the tomb as Wirkak and his wife, a man from Central Asian origin with Zoroastrian faith. Wirkak and his travel to heaven have been discussed in chapter two of this study. For details on this tomb see Frantz Grenet, Penelope Riboud, and Yang Junkai, “Zoroastrian Scenes on a Newly Discovered Sogdian Tomb in Xi’an, Northern China,” *Studia Iranica* 33 (2004): 273-284. [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) (Accessed June 2014)

<sup>37</sup> Grenet, Riboud, and Junkai, “Zoroastrian Scenes on a Newly Discovered Sogdian Tomb in Xi’an, Northern China,” pp. 278-79. Surūš performs as an angel in the Persian epics, the *Shāhnāma*, who appears as a rescuer to Khusrau Parviz in his battle with Bahram-i Chubina. When Khusrau Parviz is trapped between the army of Bahram from behind and a mountain in front of him, he prays to the creator for help, and in response, Surūš flies down to him on a horse, grabs his hand and rescues him from the deadly situation into safety. Firdausi describes the angel wearing a green garb, a reminder of the green bird who protects the rightful souls in the other world described by the Sufi master, Simnani, referred to by Corbin. See Firdausī, *Shāhnāma*, Moscow edition, Vol. 2 (Tehran: Hermes, 1387/2008) p. 1741. For English translation see *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, trans. Dick Davis (New York: Penguin, 2007), p. 878. This scene with the angel Surūš is represented in the *Shāhnāma* illustrations including the *Shāhnāma* of Shah Tahmasp, folio 708 v, attributed to Badshan Qara, now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, (1970.301.73), reproduced in Sheila Canby, *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014), p. 317.

<sup>38</sup> Examples are the birth of Rustam, the healing of the wounded Rustam and Rakhsh, and the secret of defeating the Rustam’s rival, Isfandiar.

<sup>39</sup> Harper, *The Royal Hunter*, p. 118. The image of stucco is reproduced on the same page. The stucco is now preserved at the British Museum (BM 135913), measuring 16.9 x 19.3 cm. The other examples of the representations of the Simurgh in early Islamic architecture are found at Qasr al-Hayr West, Syria, and palaces of Mshatta and Khirbat al-Mafjar, Jordan.

<sup>40</sup> Ettinghausen et al., *Islamic Art and Architecture*, p. 126. The caftan is preserved at the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. For an image see the same source, p. 125, fig. 202.

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<sup>41</sup> The tray is now at the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin. The image is reproduced in Ettinghausen et al., *Islamic Art and Architecture*, p. 123, fig.198. At this early Islamic period in Iran, many Sasanian iconography and designs were applied on metal works (p. 123).

<sup>42</sup> It is now at the Harvard University Museum (1059). See Alicia Walker, “Islamicising Motifs in Byzantine Lead Seals: Exoticising Style and the Expression of Identity,” *The Medieval History Journal* 15 (2012): 385-413, p. 389. The author states that the selection of these “Islamicised” animal motifs helped the owners of the seals to convey their social identities. Andre Grabar has studied the spread of the Sasanian art motifs in the Christian World in “Le Rayonnement de l’art sasanide dans le monde chrétien,” *La Persia nel Medioevo*, Accademia dei Lincei. Anno CCCLXVIII.

<sup>43</sup> The palace was built over the Sasanian fire temple of Azar Gushasp. The construction of this site was probably undertaken during the Abakha’s reign (1265-82 CE), as the dates on some tiles found at this site indicate. See Tomoko Masuya, “Ilkhanid Courtly Life,” in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353*, ed. Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002), p. 84.

<sup>44</sup> Some of the tiles with the image of the Simurgh include: an underglaze tile at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (12.49.4); an overglaze star tile at Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institutions, Washington DC. (S1997.114); a hexagonal unglazed and underglaze tile at Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst (I.1988.10), all attributed to Takht-i Sulayman, in the 1270s. All images are reproduced in Masuya, “Ilkhanid Courtly Life,” figures 97, 101, and 95 respectively.

<sup>45</sup> Masuya, “Ilkhanid Courtly Life,” p.97.

<sup>46</sup> A.S. Melikian Chirvani, “Le Livre des Rois, Miroir du Destin II: Takht-e Soleymān et la Symbolique du *Shāh-nāme*,” *Studia Iranica* 20 (1991): 33-148, pp. 107-108, and p. 105.

<sup>47</sup> Melikian Chirvani has studied these tiles; see Melikian Chirvani, “Le Livre des Rois, Miroir du Destin II: Takht-e Soleymān et la Symbolique du *Shāh-nāme*,” pp.33-148

<sup>48</sup> Masuya, “Ilkhanid Courtly Life,” pp. 102-103.

<sup>49</sup> Barry, *The Canticle of the Birds*, p. 32.

<sup>50</sup> Manuscript 500, at the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, is a Persian translation of an original eleventh-century text in four discourses on human beings, wild beasts, birds, and insects

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and reptiles by Ibn Bakhtishu'. This copy was prepared for a private patron, probably copied from a royal manuscript made for Ghazan Khan. It includes 103 illustrations executed by at least three artists, and some modern additions and restorations. See Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni, "Catalogue" in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan*, p. 244. For other manuscripts of Ibn Bakhtishu's bestiary see Anna Contadini's works.

<sup>51</sup> Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, p. 135-136. Elsewhere he calls the style of earlier paintings in this manuscript the last examples of the Iraqi action style. See Ettinghausen et al, *Islamic Art and Architecture: 650-1250*, p. 261. Komaroff and Carboni also observe the amalgamation of both pre-existing traditions in the area and the Chinese elements in the original paintings of this manuscript. See Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni, "Catalogue" in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan*, p. 244. Barbara Schmitz points out the similarities in text, script, and the painting techniques, with the figural style on Seljuq ceramics, and therefore proposes a Persian association for these first eleven paintings. See Barbara Schmitz, *Islamic and Indian Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1997), p. 13.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Hillenbrand, "Arts of the Book," in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan*, p.143. It is not exactly known what Chinese models were available to Iranian artists of the time. Chinese textiles, however, were traded and were commonly available.

<sup>53</sup> Folio 55r (15.1 x19.2 cm), The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (M.500), reproduced in Komaroff and Carboni, eds. *The Legacy of Genghis Khan*, figure 169, p.142. This painting is among those attributed to painter III by Schmitz (p. 15). She also mentions a large fabulous bird in the scene of Jonah swallowed by a giant fish, fol. 78v added by a painter/restorer in the early twentieth century who used the Simurgh in fol. 55 as its model (p.12). Painter III of Morgan Library *Manāfi' al-Ḥayawān* also is responsible for depicting the Simurgh in the British Library *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt* (Or.14140, fol. 122v). See Schmitz, *Islamic and Indian Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, p. 21. For a reproduction of the image see same source, fig. 27. Based on stylistic similarities with the Pierpont Morgan Library's *Manāfi' al-Ḥayawān*, Stefano Carboni attributes the British Library's *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt*, also known as the London's Qazvini, to the same date, and produced in Mosul. This book of cosmology is in Arabic and there are at least five more known manuscripts of this account. See Stefano Carboni, "The London

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Qazwini: An Early 14<sup>th</sup>-Century Copy of the ‘*Ajā`ib al-Makhlūqāt*,’ *Islamic Art* III (1988-89): 15-31. For the illustration of the Simurgh see the same source pl. VII B.

<sup>54</sup> My translation is from the Morgan Library image.

اندر صورت سیمرغ

سیمرغ اندر دیار محیط باشد اندر جزیرها بنزدیکی خط استوا و مردم بدان جای نرسند و هوای خوش دارد

Schmitz observes that the Simurgh “is identified in the margin as ‘*anqā*”, See Schmitz, p. 21. The margins in the image I have are not published.

<sup>55</sup> Marianna Shreve Simpson, “The Role of Baghdād in the Formation of Persian Painting,” in *Art et Société dans le Monde Iranien*, Volume prepare par C. Adle (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1982), pp. 91-116.

<sup>56</sup> Persis Berlekamp, “From Iraq to Fars: Tracking Cultural Transformations in the 1322 Qazwīnī ‘*Ajā`ib* Manuscript,” in *Arab Painting: Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*, ed. Anna Contadini (Boston: Brill, 2010), pp. 73-91, p. 83.

<sup>57</sup> Zakarīā Muhammad Qazwīnī was born in Qazvin and settled in Mosul and Wasit after the Mongol attacks to Iran. The original account was written in Arabic, and later was translated into Persian as well as Turkish. See Persis Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), pp.13-14.

<sup>58</sup> It is preserved at Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MSS cod. arab. 464.

<sup>59</sup>As was discussed in chapter one, ‘*Anqā* resembles the Simurgh in *Garshāspnāma* and some old tales regarding a huge bird who preyed on human beings. This bird owns neither the wisdom nor the healing characteristics of the Simurgh, the guardian of Zal and his family as appears in the *Shāhnāma*. My references to the images of ‘*Anqā* is only to examine the possible iconographic similarities that the artists applied while illustrating the ‘*Anqā* in the manuscripts of ‘*Ajā`ib al-Makhlūqāt*, either in Arabic or in Persian copies.

<sup>60</sup> Ms. 14140, fol. 122v, The British Library, London. Also reproduced in Stefano Carboni, “The London Qazwīnī,” plate VII B.

<sup>61</sup> The story is similar to how Sindband saved himself by hanging from the Simurgh’s legs in *The Thousand and One Nights*. In ‘*Ajā`ib al-Makhlūqāt*, the man is a merchant from Isfahan who had to leave his ship to save his companions.

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<sup>62</sup> MSS cod. arab. 464, fol. 65b, Staatsbibliothek, Munich, and Ms. Or. 14140, fol. 39a in the London Qazvini, discussed above. Both images of the Isfahani merchant's rescue are reproduced in Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image and Cosmos in Medieval Islam*, pp.58 and 63.

<sup>63</sup> Persis Berlekamp who published three of the illustrations of this story in London (c.1300), Munich (1280), and Istanbul (1322) manuscripts identifies the birds as the *rūkh*. Possibly the examination of the other folios of the text has convinced her that these giant birds are the *rūkhs*. Carboni, following the Arabic text, refers to this bird in this story as a 'giant bird' that I believe is a safer identification. See Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image and Cosmos in Medieval Islam*, pp. 59 and 62; and Carboni, "The London Qazwīnī," p.16. The 1280 manuscript adds 'with white color' in describing the bird.

<sup>64</sup> A manuscript of this text produced in Shiraz probably related to the Inju school of painting and earlier than the 1322 manuscript remains in fragments in Gotha, Germany (A1506). Karin Rührdanz studied this manuscript in "Islamische Miniaturhandschriften aus den Beständen der DDR: Qazwini- illustrationen des 14. Jahrhunderts," *Wiissenschaftliche Zeitung der Universität Halle* 22 (1973): 123-25.

<sup>65</sup> Fol. 166a, MSS. Yeni Cami 813, at Süleymaniye library, Istanbul, also reproduced at Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image and Cosmos in Medieval Islam*, p. 64, fig.29.

<sup>66</sup> Fol. 408a, Ms. 178, at the Royal Asiatic Society, London, reproduced in Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image and Cosmos in Medieval Islam*, p. 65, fig. 30.

<sup>67</sup> Berlekamp, "From Iraq to Fars," p. 79.

<sup>68</sup> The celebrated beaker at the Freer Gallery of Art (F1928.2), from the 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century, Seljuq dynasty, decorated with the whole cycle of Bizhan and Manizha from the *Shāhnāma*, is a remarkable example. See Marianna Shreve Simpson, "The Narrative Structure of a Medieval Iranian Beaker," *Ars Orientalis* 12 (1981): 15-24. Also see from the same author, "Shāhnāma Images and Shāhnāma Settings in Medieval Iran," in *Ferdowsi's Shāhnāma: Millennial Perspectives*, ed. Olga M. Davidson and Marinna Shreve Simpson (Boston: Ilex foundation, 2013), pp. 72-85; and "Narrative Allusion and Metaphor in the Decoration of Medieval Islamic Objects," *Studies in the History of Art*, Vol. 16: *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Marianna Shreve Simpson and Herbert Kessler (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1985), pp. 131-49.

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<sup>69</sup> Simpson, *The Illustration of an Epic*, p. 280. These manuscripts are known as the Freer Small *Shāhnāma* at the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC; the other two are known as the First and the Second Small *Shāhnāmas* and their folios are dispersed in collections around the world. All three have six columns of text written in *naskh* script. While the Freer manuscript (30.5 x 21.7) includes a frontispiece and fifty-nine illustrated pages (Simpson, pp. 56 and 70), the First Small *Shāhnāma* has 114 paintings with the majority of seventy-nine folios at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, (Ms. 104, Simpson, p. 85), and the Second Small *Shāhnāma* with 47 surviving illustrations (Simpson, p. 89). The First and Second Small *Shāhnāmas* are heavily illustrated with a rate of an illustration on every second or third page as Simpson reconstructs the manuscripts (p.109). The margins of both manuscripts have been cut down and replaced.

<sup>70</sup> These folios are preserved at: the Freer Gallery of Art (Acc. No. F192931). The Freer Gallery website indicates Shiraz as the provenance of this work; The Second Small *Shāhnāma* is at the Portland Art Museum (Acc. No. 70.27.2); The First Small *Shāhnāma* is preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Acc. No. Rogers Fund, 69.74.1). For images with better quality refer to the relevant museum websites. For the arrangement of all these examples the double-directional compositional type is used, which is applied when two major characters are present in one scene. Simpson suggests three major compositional types in her study of the three Small *Shāhnāmas*. Simpson, *The Illustration of an Epic*, pp. 180-186.

<sup>71</sup> The tree does not appear to be on a mountain. On the contrary, it seems to be by a sea delineated by the wavy lines under the tree. Simpson refers to the unusual presence of a footed armed man under the tree facing Sam. She suggests he could be Sam's page or his guide to the mountain. Simpson, *The Illustration of an Epic*, p. 200.

<sup>72</sup> Simpson, *The Illustration of an Epic*, p. 106.

<sup>73</sup> Simpson, *The Illustration of an Epic*, p. 251-52.

<sup>74</sup> Simpson, *The Illustration of an Epic*, p. 253.

<sup>75</sup> A silk tapestry with phoenixes on a field of flowers, from eastern Central Asia, 13<sup>th</sup> c. at the Textile Traces Collection, Los Angeles (T.0292), our Figure 34, is an example of such textiles.

<sup>76</sup> Formerly was known as Schulz *Shāhnāma* after its former owner. Now the manuscript is owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. This manuscript was formerly associated

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with the other three Small *Shāhnāmas*, but based on its stylistic similarities with the manuscript of *Mūnis al-Aḥrār*, Swietochowski attributes its production to the city of Isfahan between 1330 and 1340 CE. See Marie Lukens Swietochowski, “The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Small *Shāhnāma*,” in *Illustrated Poetry and Epic Images: Persian Painting of the 1330s and 1340s*, Marie Lukens Swietochowski and Stefano Carboni (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), pp. 67-81.

<sup>77</sup> Now preserved at Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, the Diez albums hold 15 illustrations of the *Shāhnāma*, without any text, as well as hundreds of examples of drawings. For a reconstruction of albums see Julian Raby, “Contents and Contexts: Re-viewing the Diez Albums,” in *The Diez Albums: Contexts and Contents*, eds. Julia Gonnella, Friederike Weis, and Christoph Rauch (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 15-51.

<sup>78</sup> Acc. No.1944.290.2v. at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, reproduced in *Illustrated Poetry and Epic Images*, catalogue no. 8, p. 83.

<sup>79</sup> Acc. No.1974.29.28r. at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, reproduced and discussed in Swietochowski and Carboni, *Illustrated Poetry and Epic Images*, catalogue no. 34.

<sup>80</sup> Folio 71 S.7, at Staatsbibliothek, Berlin. For a full picture of this folio and its three paintings see Julia Raby, “Contents and Contexts,” plate 3. For a discussion of the *Shāhnāma* images on Diez Albums see Eleanor Sims, “Images of Firdausi’s *Shahnama* in the Diez Albums in the Berlin State Library,” in *Heroic Times: A Thousand Years of the Persian Book of Kings*, eds. Julia Gonnella and Christoph Rauch (Berlin and Munich: Edition Minerva, 2012). I could not access this source directly.

<sup>81</sup> Swietochowski, “The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Small *Shāhnāma*,” p. 81.

<sup>82</sup> These four manuscripts are: H.1479 at the Topkapi Palace Museum Library, dated to 1330 CE, 37.5 x29 cm, with 92 illustrations; Dorn 329 at the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg, dated to 1333, 35.5 x27.5 cm, with 50 illustrations and the possibility of more paintings in its original form; Qawam al-Din Hasan’s manuscript, presumable date of 1341, with 108 illustrations, 37x30 cm, dispersed in various collections, with its major part at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Per 110); the Stephens *Shāhnāma*, with a date on its shamsa as 1352-53 but probably started earlier, 29.1 x 21 cm, including 108 text-illustrations, with its major part belonging to the Ebrahimi Collection, now on long-term loan to the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

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(LTS 1998.1.1) while seven of its folios, including eight paintings are dispersed at various collections. For details see Eleanor Sims, “Thoughts on a *Shāhnāma* Legacy of the Fourteenth Century: Four Īnjū Manuscripts and the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma*” in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 269-74; also see same source, Elaine Wright, “Patronage of the Arts of the Book under the Injuids of Shiraz,” pp. 248-268.

<sup>83</sup> Marianna Shreve Simpson, “A Reconstruction and Preliminary Account of the 1341 *Shāhnāma*,” in *Persian Painting from the Mongols to the Qajars*, ed. Robert Hillenbrand (London and New York: Tauris, 2000), 217-47, p. 227.

<sup>84</sup> These are Dorn 329 or the *Shāhnāma* of 1333 (021v) at the Russian National Library, St. Petersburg; Folio 21r, from Qawam al-Din’s *Shāhnāma* of 1341 (LNS 36 MS.) at the Kuwait National Museum; and Folio 0160 from the Stephens *Shāhnāma*, at the Ebrahimi Collection.

<sup>85</sup> Each level is equal to four or five verses up.

<sup>86</sup> These clearly are not head feathers, but horns.

<sup>87</sup> I do not recall any depiction of a halo for the Simurgh on any examples of art works.

<sup>88</sup> Now at the Kuwait National Museum. I only have a small black and white image of this illustration.

<sup>89</sup> Folio 145a. Measuring 11 x 22.5 cm, at The Topkapi Saray Museum, Ms. H. 1479. For an image see Filiz Çağman and Zeren Tanindi, *The Topkapi Saray Museum: The Albums and Illustrated Manuscripts*, trans. J.M. Rogers (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1986), plate 39.

<sup>90</sup> Folio 156a. Measuring 37.7 x 29.3 cm, at The Topkapi Saray Museum, Ms. H. 1479. For an image see Elaine Wright, *The Look of the Book: Manuscript Production in Shiraz, 1303-1452*, Occasional Papers, New series (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 2012), fig. 80, p. 155.

<sup>91</sup> They appear as attempts to imitate the Chinese or Ilkhanid depictions of the Simurghs.

<sup>92</sup> Or *The Free Men Companion to the Subtleties of Poems* is an anthology of Persian poetry, written and compiled by Muhammad ibn Badr al-Dīn Jājarmī in 1341 in Isfahan. A double-page frontispiece and six folios with eleven illustrated sides are the only illustrations of a 257-folio text. The illustrated folios are now at various public collections in the United States. See Stefano Carboni, “The Illustrations in the *Mu`nis al-ahrār*,” in *Illustrated Poetry and Epic Images*, pp. 9-

24. See pp. 9-11. The manuscript itself belongs to the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, Kuwait (LNS 9 MS).

<sup>93</sup> See Carboni, “The Illustrations in the *Mu`nis al-ahrār*,” p. 21, and Elaine Wright, “Patronage of the Arts of the Book under the Injuids of Shiraz,” in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 248-268 (262-64); also see Elaine Wright, *The Look of the Book*, p. 41.

<sup>94</sup> The two Simurghs of *Mūnis al-Ahrār* are almost identical. One is at the Cleveland Museum of Art (1945.385.b). Shiraz is recorded as the provenance of this folio on the museum website. The accompanying verse to this band of painting with four animals reads: “Prey to his hawk and prey to his cheetah are: Vulture and *simurgh*, elephant and rhinoceros.” (p. 32)

صيد باز و صید یوز او شده  
کرکس و سیمرخ و پیل و کرگدن

This couplet appears in the section attributed to the poet Muhammad Ravandi and in praise of Sulaymanshah, a Seljuq prince. Morton doubts both attributions since different versions of the same poems are recorded in praise of other Seljuq rulers and attributed to other poets and not to Ravandi. See A.H. Morton, “The *Mu`nis al-ahrār* and Its Twenty-ninth Chapter” in *Illustrated Poetry and Epic Images*, pp. 49-66, p.51. The other illustration is at the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC. (F1946.14), also Shiraz is recorded as the origin of the work on its website. The two lines of verse (*rubā`ī*) accompanying this image appear right after the astrological poems, by Badr al-Din Jajarmi, the compiler’s father and a known poet, and read:

“Wiles of francolin, spirit of hawk, quickness of magpie  
Music of nightingale, splendor of *humā*, glance of partridge,  
Breast of duck, wrath of eagle, beauty of peacock,  
Cheek-down like parrot, hair like raven – attainable as *Sīmurgh*”

دراج فن و باز منش ، عکه فعال  
بلبل نغمه، همای فر، کبک دلال  
بط سینه ، عقاب کینه، طاوس جمال  
طوطی خط و زاغ زلف و سیمرخ وصال

The poet has listed twelve birds with their attributes. The Simurgh is the one whose union is desired but of course is not achievable. Both illustrations are reproduced in Swietochowski and Carboni, *Illustrated Poetry and Epic Images*, catalogues no. 3, and no. 7.

## Chapter Four:

### The Representations of the Simurgh in Royal Persian Manuscripts:

1325-1675

The art of book illustration, Firdausi's national epics in particular, had great appeal among the Ilkhan rulers of Iran, who employed the arts of the book as an instrument to publicly declare their commitment to the religion and cultural heritage of the people they ruled as foreigners, hence addressing their concerns for the legitimacy of their rule to their Turko-Mongol and Persian subjects.<sup>1</sup> The number of surviving illustrated manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* all produced during the first half of the fourteenth century, nine in total, clearly attests to a sudden rise in the popularity of this text at this time. This trend, however, solidified into a tradition among the Iranian royalties, who continuously found this text attractive in accordance with their political and personal aspirations.

Hundreds of illustrated manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* have survived. Thanks to the Cambridge *Shāhnāma* project, they can now be conveniently located. This chapter, however, deals only with the manuscripts of the national epics commissioned by the Iranian rulers and/or the royal members next to the throne. Moreover, only those manuscripts in which the episodes involving the Simurgh are represented will be discussed. Through stylistic analysis of the representations of this fantastic bird, as delineated in four royal *Shāhnāma* manuscripts and an album page with royal affiliation all produced between the late fourteenth and the late seventeenth centuries in Persian court ateliers, I intend to demonstrate the establishment of an iconographic prototype as the image of the Simurgh, with different visual characteristics from its forerunners. The late fourteenth-century depiction of this bird on an album page marks the creation of this prototype in the art of the book, while its continuation transforms the image into

an established form in the visual vocabulary of Iran up to this day. Moreover, examining the political and personal ideologies behind the production of each of these royal manuscripts reveals that some of these royal patrons had active roles in the production of their *Shāhnāmas* while others left this task to their directing artists. While probing those ideologies, I shall incorporate illustrations of the story of Zal being raised by the Simurgh and his return to his father, Sam, to argue that inclusion of this episode in the illustrative program of a certain manuscript is informed by the symbolic connotation that this bird conveys: the presence of the royal glory, *farr*. The patrons' ideological concerns for royal protection, a requirement for Iranian kingship hence consistently desired, are revealed through illustrations of this episode.

### The Royal Manuscripts

The first and only illustrated manuscript of the *Shāhnāma* that can be firmly associated with the royal patronage of the court of the Ilkhans in Tabriz (1258-1335) is the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma*, formerly known after its owner, the Belgian dealer Georges Demotte. The illustrations of this manuscript are mostly devoted to kings, their courtly activities, battles and mourning scenes. These scenes appear to have been programmed to serve “a conscious and complex ideological concern”<sup>2</sup> or to “evoke an episode of Mongol history.”<sup>3</sup> This manuscript is proposed to be the *Abū Saʿīdnāma* referred to by the Safavid royal librarian, Dust Muhammad (d. 1564), in his preface to an album prepared for Bahram Mirza (1517-1549), composed in the fifteenth century, while its illustrations depict the events and characters of the reign of Abu Saʿīd (r. 1316-35), the last Ilkhanid ruler.<sup>4</sup> There is no representation of the Simurgh in this first known royal manuscript of the *Shāhnāma*. In fact, the only fourteenth-century representation of the story of the upbringing of Zal by the Simurgh with a royal affiliation is an album page prepared for the

Jalayirid Sultan Uways (r. 1356-74) and attributed to the painter, Shams al-Din, executed in the 1370s.<sup>5</sup> Dust Muhammad records Sultan Uways as the patron of Shams al-Din, the painter who contributed to a *Shāhnāma* with a square layout, inscribed by Khwaja Amir ‘Ali. He also notes that after Sultan Uways’s death, Shams al-Din did not work for any other patron but spent his time training his student, ‘Abd al-Hayy, who himself taught Sultan Ahmad Jalayir (r. 1382-1410) the art of painting, and the Sultan created a drawing in *Abū Sa‘īdnāma*.<sup>6</sup> Whether prepared as an addition to the Ilkhanid great *Shāhnāma* or as an album page, the patronage of this painting is associated with the Jalayirid rulers.

The patronage of the four royal manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* in which the story of Zal and the Simurgh is portrayed, however, are associated with a Timurid prince and three Safavid rulers. The Timurid prince Muhammad Juki (d. 1445) ordered his manuscript not long before his untimely death around 1444-45 in Herat. His unfinished manuscript with thirty-one paintings is now owned by the Royal Asiatic Society, and on loan at the British Library, London (Ms. 239).<sup>7</sup> Folio 16 verso (Ms. 239. 16b) in this manuscript depicts *The Simurgh Restoring Zal to his Father, Sam*. No colophon has survived for the manuscript, yet two references on the decorations of the paintings to the name of Muhammad Juki are identified as indications of the name of the patron responsible for this volume. These two references appear on the upper frieze of the gate of the *rūn-dizh* (the brazen hold) where the name of ‘Muhammad Juki Bahadur’ is inscribed in white *kufic* script on blue tile decorations in *Isfandiar Slays Arjasp in the Brazen Hold*, and the name of ‘al-Sultan-i al-A‘zam Muhammad Juki’ inscribed with gold on the banner carried by the Rustam’s army in *Rustam Shoots Isfandiar in the Eyes with the Double-Headed Arrow*.<sup>8</sup> Prior to Muhammad Juki’s commissioning of a *Shāhnāma* manuscript, two copies of the national epics were completed at the order of his two brothers. These are a copy made for Baysunghur,

completed in 1430 in Herat, now in Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran (no.61),<sup>9</sup> and an undated copy dedicated to Ibrahim Sultan, made possibly between 1430 and 1435, or earlier in the 1420s, in Shiraz where he was a governor, now preserved at the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Ouseley Add.176).<sup>10</sup> However, the story of Zal and the Simurgh is illustrated only in Muhammad Juki's manuscript.

Among the Safavid rulers who commissioned manuscripts of the national epics during the sixteenth century, the *Shāhnāmas* of Shah Tahmasp (r.1524-76), Shah Isma'īl II (r. 1576-77), and Shah 'Abbas I (r. 1587-1629) include illustrations of the story of Zal and the Simurgh. The most magnificent copy of the *Shāhnāma* (produced in Tabriz) with 258 paintings on gold-sprinkled paper and 759 folios bound originally in gilded leather is affiliated to Shah Tahmasp's patronage. The manuscript is undated since its colophon is missing except for a date on an architectural panel above the chamber vault in *Ardashir and the Slave Girl Gulnar* (folio 516v) that corresponds to the year 1527-28 (934 H.) indicating the year in which this painting was executed. The production of this grand project probably started slightly before its patron's enthronement in 1524 but mainly occurred during the first fifteen years of his rule between 1522 and 1537. Here the story of Zal and the Simurgh is represented through three sequential paintings, all in full pages. These are folio 62v, preserved at the Art and History Collection, courtesy of Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution (LTS1995.2.46); folio 63v at the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (I.5/77); and folio 64v that belongs to the Ebrahimi Collection, courtesy of Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution (ELS2010.7.2).<sup>11</sup>

Shah Isma'īl II's copy of the *Shāhnāma*, produced during his short reign in Qazvin, now survives with fifty-two paintings, all illustrating the stories from the first half of the account. It

was left unfinished upon the patron's death in 1577.<sup>12</sup> Most of these illustrations are marked with contemporary attributions to the names of artists that Shah Isma'īl II could gather in his *kitābkhāna*. These attributions along with stylistic and layout characteristics of the manuscript reveal its royal affiliation and its date to the reign of this monarch.<sup>13</sup> Seven paintings in this manuscript including the scene of *The Simurgh Returning Zal to his Father, Sam*, are attributed to Sadiqi Bek-i Afshar (c. 1531-1608), a leading figure in production of the manuscript, whose role passed his patron's.<sup>14</sup> Of the two illustrations of the Simurgh in this manuscript, *The Simurgh Returns Zal to his Father, Sam*, is preserved at the Riza 'Abbasi Museum, Tehran (Acc. No. 615-124), while *The Fifth Ordeal of Isfandiar: the Killing of the Simurgh* belongs to the Aga Khan Museum, Toronto [2005.1.103 (Ir. M. 69/D)].

A manuscript of the *Shāhnāma*, probably prepared for Shah 'Abbās, attributed to 1587-97 in Qazvin, is now preserved at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Ms. Per. 277).<sup>15</sup> This undated manuscript remains in fragments with sixteen paintings including fourteen illustrations executed at the time of production in the late sixteenth century and two paintings added during the reign of the Safavid Shah Sulaymān also known as Safi II (r. 1666-94), in the late seventeenth century signed and added by the artist, Muhammad Zaman (d. before 1721). This unfinished manuscript has no colophon but its dating is attributed to the year of Shah 'Abbās's coronation, 1587, and took about a decade to finish in 1597.<sup>16</sup> None of the sixteenth-century paintings is signed, thus attributions are suggested by modern scholarship based on stylistic attributions. Sadiqi, the director of the project, contributed three paintings to this manuscript while the young talented Riza 'Abbāsī (d. 1635) executed four of the sixteenth-century paintings. The rest of the sixteenth-century illustrations, seven in total, are attributed to the hand of a less-

skilled follower of Riza.<sup>17</sup> The painting of *The Simurgh Carrying Zal to her Nest* (Per. 277.12a) is attributed to Sadiqi.

To complete the visual data of this study, a manuscript of the mystical allegory of *Mantiq al-Ṭayr* by Farid al-Din 'Attar is also examined. The purpose of this examination is to find out whether the mystical Simurgh has been represented there, what its visual characteristics would be, and what ideological sources shaped its inclusion or absence in the illustrative program of this royal copy of *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*. This manuscript was produced at the royal court of the last Timurid ruler, Sultan Husayn. As recorded on its colophon, this copy is dated to 1483 and was inscribed by Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi. This manuscript, now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Acc. No. 63.210), was not completed, and four spaces at the beginning of the manuscript were left unused.<sup>18</sup> It entered the Safavid library in 1510 when Shah Isma'īl I captured Herat and moved the royal library artists and manuscripts to his capital, Tabriz. From there, the manuscript was moved as a part of the royal library to Qazvin and later to Isfahan. Altogether, this manuscript includes eight paintings, four were executed by the time of its production in Herat, and four paintings added to the manuscript later under the order of Shah 'Abbas, the fifth Safavid ruler, in early seventeenth century Isfahan before he presented the restored manuscript to his family shrine of Shaykh Safi in Ardabil in 1609.<sup>19</sup> New gold-flecked margins, a frontispiece indicating its donation, *waqf*, as well as a new gilded binding were added at this time.<sup>20</sup> But the dedication page of the manuscript was removed from its body at this stage of restoration.<sup>21</sup> Among the eight paintings illustrating the pages of the *Mantiq al-Ṭayr* manuscript of 1483, the one that relates to this study and in fact the only one that represents the main theme of the mystical allegory is *The Concourse of the Birds* (folio 63.210.11). It is a seventeenth-century addition.

## Stylistic Analysis of the Representations of the Simurgh

Among the four episodes of the *Shāhnāma* in which the Simurgh plays a role, two are more frequently illustrated: the upbringing of Zal by the Simurgh, and the fifth ordeal of Isfandiār, the killing of the evil counterpart of the Simurgh. Contrary to its contemporary productions at provincial centers, discussed in the previous chapter, none of these episodes are among the fifty-eight illustrations of the first known royal manuscript of this text, the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma*.<sup>22</sup> However, the character of Zal as a wise man, with white beard and turban, is illustrated five times, of which three appear in the chapter of the reign of Manučihr.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, three of these paintings depict Zal in a courtly scene, positioned next to the throne of the king. On their thematic categorization of the illustrations in the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma*, Grabar and Blair identify twenty-one illustrations with the theme of supernatural or fantastic events that include hunting and battle scenes.<sup>24</sup> However, the number of illustrations that depict fantastic or wondrous creatures is as low as six paintings out of the fifty-eight known paintings of this manuscript.<sup>25</sup> Thus, this infrequency of wondrous and monstrous animals in the illustrations of the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma* justifies the absence of the image of the Simurgh. Moreover, the concentration of this volume on evoking the events and characters of the Mongol history, designed under the supervision of Abu Sa‘id’s vizier, Ghiath al-Din (d. 1336), did not leave room for representing episodes with no clear correlation in the Ilkhanid history.

The first representation of the Simurgh on an illustrated page that suggests itself as the iconographic forerunner of the fifteenth and sixteenth-century images of this fantastic bird belongs to a group of paintings mounted on albums now preserved in Istanbul and Berlin.<sup>26</sup> These albums include some fragments of the *Shāhnāma* delineating comparable stylistic

characteristics with the paintings of the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma*.<sup>27</sup> One illustration mounted on album H.2153 depicts *The Simurgh Carrying the Infant Zal to her Nest* (Figure 33). Based on its stylistic features, scholars generally attribute this painting along with other similar illustrations in this album to the Jalayirid master painter, Shams al-Din who prepared them for Sultan Uways Jalayir in Tabriz during the 1370s. As Atasoy observes, in this illustration the surrounding nature has taken the primary role and does not allow the body of the bird to appear enormously large.<sup>28</sup> The chinoiserie elements in treatment of mountains and rocks suggest stylistic similarities with the illustrations of the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma*; they, in particular, are reminiscent of the mountains and trees in the background of *Bahram Gur Killing a Dragon*.<sup>29</sup> The figure of the Simurgh in this painting also reveals the use of chinoiserie elements in its overall style and elaborate twisting tails. The rich colors and the clear outlines of the body and neck feathers, however, follow a Persian tradition. Presuming this illustration belonged to a manuscript made for Sultan Uways, it constitutes the first representation of the Simurgh for a *Shāhnāma* manuscript with some royal affiliation.<sup>30</sup> The fact that this illustration, either with a group of *Shāhnāma* fragments or in a manuscript,<sup>31</sup> remained in the possession of the ruling dynasties of Iran during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries speaks of its importance.<sup>32</sup> In addition, this fourteenth-century illustration of the Simurgh marks the initiation of the Simurgh imagery repeated in the Persian painting of the following centuries. As will be discussed below, the illustrations of the episode of Zal and the Simurgh in the manuscripts commissioned by prince Muhammad Juki and Shah Tahmasp in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries both demonstrate direct influences in style and composition from this image. In fact, based on these influences Cagman and Tanindi suggest that these Jalayirid paintings were taken to Herat and inspired the Baysunghur's copy of the epics, and later were returned to Tabriz, probably by Shah Isma'īl I (r.

1501-24), where they became an inspiration for the Shah Tahmasp's manuscript of the *Shāhnāma*.<sup>33</sup>

By contrast, the Simurgh in this album illustration does not generate any apparent link with its predecessors represented in manuscripts produced during the first half of the fourteenth century in the cities of Shiraz, Isfahan, Maragha, and possibly Baghdad. Therefore, the image does not relate to the formative age of Persian painting.<sup>34</sup> However, the appearance of the Simurgh in flight with its wings and tail unfurled closely resembles the soaring bird on the tile program of Takht-i Sulayman as well as the phoenixes decorating the Chinese and Central Asian textiles abundantly available at the court of Ilkhans and largely appreciated by them.<sup>35</sup> A certain silk textile, from thirteenth century eastern Central Asia, with phoenixes on a field of flowers may be of examples of motifs brought by the relocated textile workers to the Ilkhanid Iran (Figure 34).<sup>36</sup> The similarities between the flying bird in this silk textile and the soaring Simurgh in the album page of our discussion, and their figures and positions in the surrounding landscape are remarkable. Although we might never be able to firmly conclude whether the phoenixes on the pre-Mongol Central Asian textiles and on the other Chinese imported objects (Figure 35 a-b) or the Simurghs decorating the tile program of Takht-i Sulayman inspired the creator of this scene, possibly Shams al-Din, it certainly is the amalgamation of the Chinese elements of design with the Persian traditions of coloring that shape the appearance of this truly fantastic Simurgh, with no composite features.<sup>37</sup>

#### The Representations of the Simurgh in the Timurid *Shāhnāma* Manuscripts:

Although Timur commissioned manuscripts of Persian literature and histories (as recorded by chroniclers)<sup>38</sup> no known *Shāhnāma* manuscript is attributed to his patronage.<sup>39</sup> A

group of large paintings including scenes of the *Shāhnāma*, resonating with the visual traditions of Muzaffarid and Jalayirid paintings and mounted on the Istanbul album H. 2152, include a scene of *the Simurgh Healing Rustam and his Horse, Rakhsh*, from the story of the battle of Rustam and Isfandiar (Figure 36).<sup>40</sup> Because of their large size and vivid compositions, Lentz and Lowry are inclined to relate these paintings with Timur's patronage. Their large size and absence of any text also suggest their use during the *Shāhnāma* recitations, or *Shāhnāma-khānī*.<sup>41</sup> In this album painting, the image of *The Simurgh Healing Rustam* portrays the exact moment when the bird treats the hero's wounds. Zal is holding the seated, half naked body of Rustam from behind while the Simurgh removes an arrow from the hero's shoulder. Rakhsh is sitting facing his master with the brazier that Zal had used earlier for burning a feather in front of him. Rustam's mother, Rudaba,<sup>42</sup> stands at the far left of the scene. The long head feathers of the bird resemble the image of the Simurgh in *Mūnis al-Ahrār* of 1341, or later (Figure 32).<sup>43</sup> The body feathers are individually treated with black outlines. Her elaborate tail is long and twisting but clearly different from the tail of the Jalayirid Simurgh carrying Zal to her Nest in album H.2153. The two curling tails consist of fin-shaped extensions all along. The black and white reproduction does not allow any judgment on the coloration of the bird, although compared to the pale tonality of color covering the mountain and most of the picture plane, the bird appears to be darker. Based on the appearance of the Simurgh alone, a provenance of central Iran, possibly Shiraz is more tempting. As well the treatment of landscape does not share much with the school of Tabriz at its time of production. It could have been executed by one of the Shirazi artists moved by Timur to his capital, Samarqand, where he met the Jalayirid artists, such as 'Abd al-Hayy,<sup>44</sup> or had the chance to examine the works of that school such as *the Simurgh Carrying Zal to Her Nest* in Istanbul album H. 2153.

The illustrated manuscripts of *Shāhnāma* commissioned by the three Timurid princes reveal some general characteristics of the Timurid canon that can be defined as reduced texts on the picture plane, high horizons, the vertical arrangement of the characters and elements of the painting to create depth, repetition of compositions, idealized characters, and glowing colors.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, they follow the Timurid visual standards delineated in the paintings of the lyrical poetry in which figures with formal expressions and the elements of composition are carefully arranged in the stylized and theatrical manner of the Timurid art.

The number of shared episodes illustrated in all three manuscripts is as low as four,<sup>46</sup> while altogether there are two representations of the Simurgh in these three royal manuscripts.<sup>47</sup> Among the heroic scenes illustrated in Ibrahim Sultan's *Shāhnāma* there exists a fascinating illustration of Isfandiar's fifth labor when he kills the evil counterpart of the Simurgh (folio 263 verso; our figure 37). The bird and the hero that represent the only elements of this painting are pushed down by a four-column text and an illuminated heading at the top of the page. The background is in plain gold, devoid of any landscape elements that could have been covered in the process of restoration or repainting of this manuscript.<sup>48</sup> The bird is colored in the limited palette of the Shiraz style with red, blue, pink, and purple. While it is flying from the upper right-hand corner of the picture to the left, her long neck is twisted towards the right to face the hero. The elaboration of the head and its feathers, as well as the long curling tails of the Simurgh, demonstrate the chinoiserie elements, while its body and wings somehow remain loyal to the fourteenth-century representations of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāmas* produced in Shiraz.<sup>49</sup> The hero stands out of the picture frame, another characteristic of Shiraz painting. There is no evidence of Isfandiar's arrowed-box and chariot in which he hid and deceived the giant bird. One of the characteristics of the paintings produced at this stage in Shiraz was a tendency to exclude

the nonessential elements and characters in depicting a story,<sup>50</sup> which could explain the exclusion of the hero's chariot in the scene. The preoccupation of Ibrahim Sultan with battle and hunting is attested in two frontispieces that show him involved in those activities.<sup>51</sup> Also at the beginning of the manuscript, on the back of the scenes representing probably Ibrahim Sultan in battle, in hunting, and at the court, there exist five line drawings with touches of gold and in fine quality including an ink drawing of a Simurgh struggling with a dragon, folio 7 recto, (Figure 38).<sup>52</sup> These drawings could have been the valuable works of older masters, probably surviving from the Iskandar Sultan's workshop, and the reason for their unusual addition to the beginning part of a manuscript of the *Shāhnāma* might have been to raise the stature of the manuscript.<sup>53</sup> This drawing of the fantastic bird resembles the many drawings preserved in Istanbul albums, H.2152 in particular, as well as in the Diez Albums. David Roxburgh studies the process of the design and method of transferring these designs as applied in artistic productions of Timurid workshops in the first part of the fifteenth century. This process ensured the unity of forms in all royal productions.<sup>54</sup> Many of these drawings show traces of transfer of some sort either to other papers or to objects from different media. For example, the lines of a drawing of two Simurghs in an oval medallion, mounted on a page in album H.2152<sup>55</sup> are pricked by pinholes showing this drawing was once used as a pounce.<sup>56</sup> It and two more drawings representing the Simurghs in the Diez Albums (Figure 39)<sup>57</sup> appear to belong to the decorative category among the three categories suggested by Lentz and Lowry,<sup>58</sup> and their designs were most probably used as models transferred into other media. Lentz and Lowry identify one of the drawings in the Diez Album (f.73. S.49, # 1) as a design for decorating quivers. In fact, in several paintings from Baysunghur's *Shāhnāma*, the quivers carried by soldiers are decorated with the images of the Simurgh.<sup>59</sup> The drawing of the Simurgh and a dragon in Ibrahim Sultan's *Shāhnāma* manuscript

does not appear to belong to the decorative category and resembles a preparatory drawing of a story. Yet, since there is no such an event as the struggle between the Simurgh and dragon in the *Shāhnāma*, this drawing can be categorized under the pictorial category, and as an independent experimentation by the artist. Therefore, the inclusion of these five drawings in the illustrative program of a manuscript with a specific context as the *Shāhnāma* remains questionable. They probably have been added to the manuscript when the frontispieces were added.<sup>60</sup> In any case, the purpose they serve within the illustrative program of this copy, besides elevating its rank,<sup>61</sup> is unclear.

The illustration of *The Simurgh Carrying Zal to his Father, Sam*, in the manuscript of Muhammad Juki (folio 16 v) somehow covers for the absence of this scene in other Timurid princely *Shāhnāmas* (Figure 40). The high quality of its paintings makes this copy one of the finest manuscripts of the Persian epic. The sophistication of the Herat style of painting and drawing has met with the brilliant and joyful palette of these illustrations, thus their marriage contributes to the otherworldly and fantastic mood of the Muhammad Juki's manuscript.

Muhammad Juki's *Shāhnāma* shares the first illustration of *Firdausi Encounters the Court Poets of Ghazna* with the two manuscripts of his brothers, Ibrahim Sultan and Baysunghur. Robinson observed two major lacunae in the text of this manuscript,<sup>62</sup> with the first lacuna starting towards the end of the preface up to the revenge of Manuchihr on Tur and Salm. This section could include at least two illustrations of some popular scenes such as *Jamshid Teaches the Crafts* and *the Murder of Iraj*<sup>63</sup> or *Zahhak Nailed to Mount Damavand*.<sup>64</sup> In its present condition with thirty-one paintings and no frontispiece, the illustration that follows the *Firdausi Encounters the Court Poets of Ghazna*, therefore the second painting of this manuscript and the first illustration of the narrative, happens to be the scene of *The Simurgh Restoring Zal to*

*Sam* (folio 16b). In most of the royal manuscripts of *Shāhnāma*, the illustrations of the non-narrative part at the beginning of the manuscript are followed by an illustration representing one of the mythical kings of ancient Persia. Hence, the first illustration of the narrative part restates the royal presence.<sup>65</sup>

Robinson defines this painting as one of the most remarkable paintings in this manuscript and attributes it to a senior artist familiar with an earlier style. He observes some elements of the Shiraz style of painting on the depiction of Sam's face, and in the treatment of the single tree on the horizon. He compares these elements with the work of the school of Ibrahim Sultan.<sup>66</sup> Brend also relates the diagonal line of the descending Simurgh to the representation of this episode in the Inju *Shāhnāma* of 1333, discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>67</sup> However, the overall composition recalls the Jalayirid painting of this episode, preserved in Istanbul album H. 2153 and attributed to Shams al-Din, discussed above. In this only known representation of the Simurgh, guardian of Zal, in a royal Timurid manuscript the figures of the Simurgh and Zal are located in the center of the picture space, therefore attracting the viewer's entire attention. The brilliant colors of Timurid palette and its precise finish create one of the most glamorous Simurghs of Persian painting. The Simurgh's head is located right on top of Zal's head and functions as a crown or cover over the boy's head. The bird's face resembles a rooster's head with an elaborate golden comb and green neck feathers. Her golden beak and eyes are minutely outlined so they transfer the vitality of the moment for the Simurgh. Her body is mainly covered by the body of Zal, but the visible parts of her breast are covered in dark blue scales, while her back and shoulders are orange with black feather lines. Her wings are equally spread on two sides of her body and that of Zal, providing full protection for the young man in their descent. The wing coverts are tinted in orange, dark green and cream with the primary wing

feathers sharply spread into the air; all details are meticulously finished. The position of the tail in an almost vertical line behind the Simurgh's body conveys the sense of descent from the height of the mountain and in preparation for landing. The child-like body of Zal is securely located against the bird's breast. He appears calm and assured of his safe flight or future. The Simurgh and Zal are surrounded by landscape elements, yet plenty of space is provided for them to fly by keeping the center of the painting empty for their bodies to occupy.<sup>68</sup> Sam is humbly kneeling down and raising his hands to thank the magnificent bird. His single companion however, seems to be cautious with the remarkable event, and places his hand on his sword.<sup>69</sup>

The multi-colored rocks on the left introduce the rock patterns in the late fifteenth-century paintings.<sup>70</sup> The painter has successfully created an exceptional mountain as the dwelling of a supernatural bird, strongly distinguished from the common hillside landscape where the man lives. The colorful rocks creating leopard-skin patterns, and sharp compositions appear to be the characteristics of the work of a certain painter A who contributed to Baysunghur's *Shāhnāma*; Brend attributes this painting along with two other illustrations in Muhammad Juki's *Shāhnāma* to his hand.<sup>71</sup> After the eyes are settled on the polychromatic view of the mountain, the viewer can discover the Simurgh's children in her nest with orange dominating their bodies, and yet more elaborate green and golden head feathers and combs. The twigs make the nest end in sharp tips. The same treatment is demonstrated on the two clusters of dead wooden branches sticking out of the rocks, as well as on the branches jutting out of the cypress tree on the right.<sup>72</sup> The leafless branches either in the form of a tree or as projecting branches from a green tree reappear in other paintings of this manuscript, as they were frequently repeated in the *Shāhnāma* manuscript of Baysunghur.<sup>73</sup> More than any other elements in this painting, the clouds remain loyal to the Chinese representations of clouds. Altogether, there are four illustrations in this

manuscript that deal with the subject of supernatural or wondrous creatures. Interestingly, common to all these four paintings are the rocks with curling segments represented with unusual features either in their colors or in the sizable space they occupy; possibly these rocky clusters were applied as devices to transfer the scene into an unknown world.<sup>74</sup>

This single royal Timurid representation of the guardian of Zal, with its vivid colors and striking composition, and executed in Herat, highly resembles the fourteenth-century depiction of the bird on an album page, produced in Tabriz. Therefore, based on stylistic grounds, a continuation of form in representing the Simurgh is identifiable in which the Chinese elements such as the elaborate and twisting tails, spread wings with individualized feathers, curling neck feathers, and fancy head comb, usually employed in depicting the phoenix, are applied. By the mid-fifteenth century, when this painting was executed, the Chinese elements were fully integrated into Persian painting. The productions of the Timurid royal library, the surviving drawings in particular, reveal the Chinese influences. The Chinese phoenix, as a mythical bird and a symbol of royalty in its home culture, provided the most appropriate visual model for the Simurgh in Persian art. In meaning, however, the Simurgh already possessed the royal and mythical connotations, so remains a purely Persian entity in the eye of its viewers. Nonetheless, the Chinese elements help reinforcing the royal presence.

#### The Representations of the Simurgh in the Safavid *Shāhnāma* Manuscripts:

In the magnum opus of sixteenth-century Persian painting, the *Shāhnāma* manuscript of Shah Tahmasp, unlike any former manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*, the episode of the upbringing of Zal by the fantastic Simurgh and his return to his father is illustrated in three sequential paintings that fall among the first hundred folios of the text produced between 1522 and 1527 under the

direction of Sultan Muhammad (d. circa 1530). These are Folio 62v: *Zal Is Sighted by a Caravan* (Figure 41); Folio 63v: *Sam Comes to Mount Alburz* (Figure 42); and Folio 64v: *Sam Returns with Zal* (Figure 43). Welch and Dickson who first published this manuscript propose its production date between 1522 and 1537 and under the direction of three master painters of the Tahmasp's workshop. These directors, who also contributed some of their best works to this project, were Sultan Muhammad as the director of the project from the beginning till 1527, Mir Musavvar responsible till 1532, and Aqa Mirak till the end of the project in 1537. Dickson and Welch also propose this time span, with the presence of Bihzad, the master of Herat style, as the head of the Safavid royal workshop, as well as Sultan Muhammad, the master of Turkmen style, as the period when the two Turkmen and Timurid styles were amalgamated, therefore forming the new Safavid synthesis.<sup>75</sup>

Sultan Muhammad, a painter from Tabriz or Iraq, mastered in the Turkmen style of western Iran before Bihzad arrived at the Safavid court of Tabriz in 1522, as Qazi Ahmad, the Safavid Chronicler of the late sixteenth century, records.<sup>76</sup> In his preface to Bahram Mirza's album, Dust Muhammad, the contemporary scribe and art critic of the time, highly praises Sultan Muhammad's work.<sup>77</sup> The most fascinating of his contributions to this manuscript, as well as to Persian painting in general, is *The Court of Gayumars*, attributed to him by Dickson and Welch, where his carefully selected and tempered colors, proportioned human figures, complex rock formations, and crowded yet minutely outlined details prove his already mature style by the time he executed this painting.<sup>78</sup> While the design of the three paintings of the story of Zal and the Simurgh is attributed to Sultan Muhammad, the execution of the first two are attributed to 'Abd al-'Aziz, and the third to Qadimi, all identified by Dickson and Welch. Khwaja 'Abd al-'Aziz, a

painter from the city of Kashan, was trained by Shah Tahmasp, who called Khwaja as his pupil, as Qazi Ahmad records.<sup>79</sup>

The first of these three paintings, *Zal Is Sighted by a Caravan*, includes the six couplets narrating the upbringing of Zal, how that helpless child came to be a strong man, and the news of his glory reaching Sam. The painting depicts Zal as a young naked man, sitting on the tip of blue rocks, close to the nest where the two chicks of the Simurgh are located. Their open beaks and extended necks as well as Zal's raised left hand are all directed towards the massive body of "the alluring Simurgh"<sup>80</sup> that occupies the upper right quarter of the painting. The bird is carrying a gazelle in her beak and a bleeding leopard in her claws to feed to Zal and her chicks. This Simurgh clearly differs from the Herati royal Simurgh of Muhammad Juki's manuscript of *Shāhnāma* 1444-45. Its colorful and twisting body, feathers and tail recall the Jalayirid Simurgh of the late fourteenth century, also executed in Tabriz.<sup>81</sup> The dominant color of her body as well as of the whole painting is blue, while her wing feathers are individually outlined and tinted in light green and red tips. The mastery of fine brush, however, is preserved for depicting the fine feathers on her back and breast. The two long twisting tails with extended curls wind in two different directions and fill up the yellow-ochre, probably once gold, background. The Simurgh's form, more than any other preceding examples, resembles the drawings of the fantastic bird prepared in royal workshops as models to decorate the objects from other media, including illumination and marginal decorations. The rocks are brilliantly colored in blue, purple, pink, and green and occupy the left half of the painting. The birds and animals are hidden in this orchestration of color. The overall colorful palette, and the wide faces and narrow shoulders of the figures on the bottom right of the painting attest to its early date of production when Sultan

Muhammad directed the project, and the elements of Turkmen painting were still considerable in the Safavid painting.

The next illustration (folio 63v)<sup>82</sup> depicts the moment after Sam's second dream when he called for his army and approached the mountain of Alburz where he saw the giant bird and pleaded to her for his son's return, as the nine couplets on the upper and lower parts of the painting narrate. Sam's raised hands also convey a conversation. But the Simurgh and Zal far on top of the mountain appear to have started their own conversation, in which the Simurgh convinces the young man to return to his people where he belongs and assures him of her protection by giving him her feathers.

Closer examination of the blue body of the Simurgh draws attention to the golden dots on her body and legs. Her big claws, her comb, and part of her back feathers are red. Her wings are painted in light blue, green, with red brush strokes, and touches of gold. Similar to the earlier Simurgh (folio 62v) her tail has two long curling extensions spreading in the golden sky on the upper right side of the painting, each delineating a different color combination, one with pink and blue, the other with purple and green. The cloud band-like or flower-like decorations design the tail extensions. The brush strokes depicting the feathers are extremely fine. Her golden beak is open to show that she is conversing with Zal.

The Simurgh's children in the nest resemble their mother in appearance but a lighter blue is used on their bodies, possibly to show their younger age. Zal is sitting with them in the nest so only his upper body, with an infant-like belly, is apparent. His hands and arms, however, are grown, and similar to his father's, are raised to convey that a conversation is in process. His round wide head is covered by fine white hair. The nest that these three figures are positioned in is made of a cluster of cream, brown, and black outlines depicting wooden sticks, yet it looks soft

and spongy. The extensive details in the depiction of rocks in folio 63v, with human and animal heads hidden amongst them, are absent from the rocks in folio 62v and make one question the execution of both illustrations by one hand. The minutely executed rocks with all the hidden faces in folio 63v resemble the equal treatment of the rocks in *The Court of Gayumars* (folio 20v) rendered by Sultan Muhammad in the same manuscript.<sup>83</sup> I suggest that Sultan Muhammad played a more active role in the execution of folio 63v than simply designing this illustration, and in fact carried out parts of this painting.<sup>84</sup>

Similar to folio 62v, a pair of birds, a pair of male and female gazelles, and the head of a leopard emerging from behind the mountain, staring at Sam, represent the animal inhabitants of the mountain in *Sam Comes to Mount Alburz*. The right half of the painting is devoted to Sam and his army, made up of four mounted figures on a pistachio green plain landscape tipped by purple rocky formations. One of the men is pointing to the top of the mountain where the Simurgh and Zal are located, while another figure has a finger on his mouth showing his astonishment. Sam and three men of his army have the Safavid sticks, or *tāj*, in their headgears. The costume of a long stick in the turban was initiated by Shah Isma‘il to distinguish the Safavid men from others. Costumes and textiles represented in the illustrations of this manuscript signify the social status of the figures they adorn.<sup>85</sup> For example, Sam’s turban is decorated with a black stick with two feathers, portraying his supremacy and noble status while the two older men have red sticks in their turbans revealing their Qizilbash origin. The dark blue horse cloth is decorated with a medallion and a golden Simurgh similar to the marginal decorations. The worldly and easily comprehensible right half of the painting allows the viewer’s eyes to move comfortably to the left side of the painting that, with its richer palette, and numerous contorted forms, belongs to the fantastic world of animals and hidden faces.

The two folios of 62v and 63v are categorized by Dickson and Welch as the second group of works by ‘Abd al-‘Aziz in this manuscript in which Sultan Muhammad as the designer carried out most of the under drawing while ‘Abd al-‘Aziz was solely in charge of their painting. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz created powerful and energetic scenes and mostly enjoyed the freedom of his lively brush in depicting the nature, vegetal forms, rock grotesqueries, and animals.<sup>86</sup> Although he never surpassed the skills of his master, Sultan Muhammad, and had Sultan Muhammad not played any deeper role in the painting of these two illustrations, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s two representations of the Simurgh and her surrounding environments could certainly equal some of his master’s works.

The last of these three paintings, attributed to Qadimi, delineates the end of this episode, when Sam returns with Zal to the city. The moments represented in earlier manuscripts, such as *The Simurgh Carrying Zal down the Mountain* or *Sam Kneeling down to Thank the Bird* (both represented in one illustration in Muhammad Juki’s manuscript) are absent in this last of the three illustrations. Instead, the aftermath of the return has been portrayed. Sam in his royal attire is leading his army, with Zal sitting on an elephant in front. A procession is in process, celebrating the return of Zal, who is now dressed in royal clothing<sup>87</sup> and has been given the ox-headed mace.<sup>88</sup> The lower half of the painting is populated by eighteen figures with round faces and short necks attesting to the Turkmen provincial style of the artist of this folio, possibly originated in Gilan. The cleft mustaches for men, and the large bulging eyes of the animals, including the Simurgh, conform to Qadimi's style.

The Alburz Mountain here is shifted to the upper right corner of the painting, and is located behind Zal, Sam and their accompanying army. The overall treatment and outlines of the rocks vary remarkably from folio 63v, *Sam Comes to Mount Alburz*.<sup>89</sup> The technique of

extending the painting into the margins, that had been practiced since late fourteenth century in Persian painting and was elaborated during the fifteenth century, is here applied to allow the peak of the mountain to fall beyond the borders of the painting. The Simurgh's nest with her two anxious chicks in it, as well as one of those hidden faces near the nest facing the others, occupy the right upper corner of the gold sprinkled margin. The Simurgh, with its spread wings and tails and long twisted neck resembles the Simurgh in the first illustration of this trilogy. Her blue colored body dotted in gold, her red claws and comb, green and blue wings, her golden beak, as well as her two spreading, blue, green and purple tails follow the color and pattern of the two former folios. One remarkable difference, however, is the popped-up eye of the bird, that with assistance of her twisted neck towards the nest transfers a feeling of anxiety, as if she is in a rush to return to her children, her nest, and her known territory. The perceived anxiety, however, might be related to leaving Zal, whom she raised as her own child, behind. Moreover, her body in flight is delineated thin and fleshless and does not belong to an animal of her grandeur.

Dickson and Welch have attributed this illustration to Qadimi, who was a portraitist, a poet, and a man of god, brought to the royal *kitābkhāna* by Shah Tahmasp.<sup>90</sup> According to Dust Muhammad, Qadimi prioritized content over form and created his paintings and drawings as they should have been.<sup>91</sup> This preference for realism and earthiness is evidently apparent on the faces of both his human and animal figures. Dickson and Welch identify the scene of *Sam Returns with Zal* with the portrayal of the Simurgh as one of the most refined contributions of Qadimi to this manuscript.<sup>92</sup> The similarity of Qadimi's Simurgh to Turkmen drawings of animals and beasts preserved in Istanbul albums made these authors associate the painter of this scene to the Turkmen style of Aq Qyunlu in Tabriz, as someone who was not only familiar with but also raised in the continuation of that school.<sup>93</sup>

Isfandiar's fifth labor, when he kills the evil counterpart of the Simurgh, is also portrayed in this manuscript where, unlike Ibrahim Sultan's painting of the same episode, the great size of the painting allows all the elements of the story to be included in the scene. The blue figure of the giant bird shows a full twist on his demise and successfully portrays the dramatic episode (Figure 44).<sup>94</sup>

Shah Tahmasp's royal workshop was dispersed by the mid sixteenth century. The presence of the Mughal emperor Humayun (r. 1530-40 and 1550-56) in exile at the Safavid court coincided with Tahmasp's change of heart with regards to the arts. Consequently, some of the master painters of the Safavid court, including the ones who contributed to the royal manuscript of *Shāhnāma*, were recruited by the Mughal emperor and followed him to his court upon his return to India. These artists, including Mir Musavvar, his son Mir Sayyid 'Ali, and 'Abd al-Samad, established the school of Persian painting at the Mughal court and further developed the school of Mughal painting with its own distinctions. Although Mughal emperors clearly took pride in ownership of the Timurid manuscript of Muhammad Juki's *Shahnama* in their library, there are no known illustrated copies of this text commissioned by them. Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605) had a particular interest in listening to Persian classics and is recorded to have commissioned a copy of the *Shāhnāma* that is either lost or not yet identified. A group of five paintings, including a painting of *Zal in the Simurgh's Nest* (Figure 45), is proposed to belong to this copy.<sup>95</sup> However, S.C. Welch attributes this painting to the Humayun's patronage while he was ruling from Kabul (1550-55), executed by Mir Sayyid 'Ali.<sup>96</sup> This painting is rendered in a pure Safavid style. Two paintings in Shah Tahmasp's *Shāhnāma* are attributed to Mir Sayyid 'Ali attesting to his participation in that project as a young artist who had the chance to see the representations of the Simurgh designed by Sultan Muhammad and executed by 'Abd al-'Aziz

and Qadimi.<sup>97</sup> Yet his portrayal of the fantastic bird and, more curiously, of her living place appear different from the same scene in Shah Tahmasp's *Shāhnāma* and examples prior to that. In this illustration, the bird's nest is located on top of a giant tree that occupies most of the picture space. The surrounding rocks do not suggest the tree is located on the tip of a mountain. The body of the bird does not seem grand compared to the tree that holds her nest. The only elements referring to her fantastic nature are the long colorful spreads of her tail that almost reach the ground. Her twisted head turns towards Zal and her only child in the nest. In general, this painting remains a manifestation of Safavid mastery in depicting nature. To this study, it remains fascinating to note how a painter who had just left the Safavid borders decided to depict the bird's living place as it was narrated in ancient written sources and contrary to the visual examples that he had available to him. In explaining this variance, two possible assumptions could be made. One could be the preference of the artist and/or of his patron while the other might be the existence of a different tradition, either oral or written, regarding the Simurgh and her living place in the region this illustration had been rendered, possibly Kabul.<sup>98</sup> However, the tastes of the artist-patron appear to have been more influential in shaping this illustration since the earlier royal illustration of this episode produced in this region, in Muhammad Juki's *Shāhnāma* produced in Herat, follows the text and depicts the bird's nest on the heights of the Alburz Mountain.

The next royal manuscript was prepared for Shah Isma'īl II. In this manuscript, the scene of *The Simurgh Returns Zal to Sam*<sup>99</sup> is attributed to Sadiqi and in fact reveals Sadiqi's hand in the treatment of natural elements (Figure 46). The rocks located in the middle section of the painting represent the Alburz Mountains that separate the grounds where Sam and his companion stand from the golden sky, which the bird occupies. There are no signs of the hidden

faces in the rocks except for possibly some mild attempts on the four rocks around the spring. The faces of the figures, however, reveal precise details with fine brushes and even finer outlines. Sam's hands are raised either in appreciation or as a receiving gesture while his face does not show any sign of conversation and remains silent. Beyond these earthly elements appears a beautiful golden sky, divided in half by the thick dark trunk of a tree where the Simurgh's nest is positioned. The extension of landscape elements into the margins is applied more powerfully here, depicting the magnificent bird's living place with her four children in the nest beyond the borders of the page and out of reach; the similar extension of composition was observed in the illustration of Zal's return to the city on folio 64v in Shah Tahmasp's manuscript. The variance of the nest on a tree and the number of the chicks between this painting and the earlier examples certainly reveal the artist's distinct choice. The centrality of the tree and its massiveness are comparable to the Mir Sayyid 'Ali's rendition of this episode at the Mughal court, but there would not be any chance for Sadiqi to have seen that work.

The Simurgh is carrying the peaceful Zal in her golden claws while the boy is holding the bird's leg. In her descent, the bird is turning her face towards the father of the young boy. Her body is tinted light blue with round patches of darker blue. Her body feathers end in fine white brushes. Her wings are lifted up, probably to show her flight position, though they seem to be compressed because of the shortage of space, an unexpected incident in Sadiqi's calculated compositions. Her wings are colored in red and white while the feathers are in light and dark cream with black outlines. The same shades of cream continue into her two spreading tails extended to the area above the margins. Similar colors paint the beak, comb and wattle of the bird. The color combination tinting the Simurgh in the present painting is generally lighter and unique to this manuscript, as appears in the overall pallet of this painting. The four young birds

in the nest are colored in similar shades of cream as their mother's body is. The wooden twigs making the nest are made of harsh strokes of black color revealing Sadiqi's hand. The gray and blue clouds remain Chinese in style and fill any blank space in the golden sky. Sadiqi was provided with another opportunity to adorn the fantastic bird in a *Shāhnāma* commissioned by the next great patron of the arts, Shah 'Abbas, in 1587-97 where he created one of his finest works.

The other painting of the Simurgh in Shah Isma'il II's manuscript depicts the evil counterpart of the magnificent Simurgh being killed by Isfandiar in his fifth labor on his way to *rūin-dizh*, the brazen hold. This painting is attributed to Siyavush the Georgian, also a student of Muzaffar 'Ali, who contributed the largest number of paintings to this manuscript (Figure 47).<sup>100</sup> The composition is powerful and intense, mostly because of the large tree on the left that holds the bird's nest and chicks in it. Once again, the living place of the bird appears to be on a tree.<sup>101</sup> The Simurgh's body appears small in comparison to the large tree and nest as well as the dominating four columns of text that squeeze the battle scene from above and below. Clearly, no emphasis in massiveness was intended in depicting the bird. Isfandiar sitting in his chariot and the five members of his army who are hiding behind the mountain witnessing the challenge all seem to be fixed and unemotional to the scene. Only the twisting body of the bird, the tree and cluster of clouds in the upper right corner convey a dramatic moment. The blue and red body feathers of the Simurgh, however, follow the traditions of earlier Safavid and Timurid Simurghs in the *Shāhnāma* illustrations and clearly differ from Sadiqi's rendition of this bird in this manuscript.<sup>102</sup>

The painter Sadiqi, who had once demonstrated his skills in portraying the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* manuscript of Shah Isma'il II, 1576-77 (discussed above), was appointed the

director of the royal library by Shah 'Abbas I. Having the experience of depicting this subject matter, Sadiqi probably preserved the right to depict *The Simurgh Carrying Zal to her Nest* (Figure 48)<sup>103</sup> in the *Shāhnāma* manuscript of this monarch for himself.<sup>104</sup> Thus he created one of the most impressive paintings of late sixteenth century in Iran.<sup>105</sup> The painting is undoubtedly one of the finest works executed by this sixteenth century master of Safavid painting and a pure manifestation of landscape in that tradition. After more than a decade, when Sadiqi was assigned to illustrate this episode for the second time, the illustrative program of the manuscript, probably designed fully or partially by him as the head of the library, required the depiction of the beginning of the story when the Simurgh finds the abandoned Zal and takes him to her nest. The four lines of the text written in small boxes in the upper right and lower middle of the painting narrate the exact moment the painting is depicting. Thus the image is devoid of any human or urban elements except for Zal's figure, and allows the Simurgh, her chicks, and the infant Zal to be represented in their living environment. In fact, the rocky landscape and its floral elements appear to dominate over the theme of the painting. The animal drawings in the margin simply complete this manifestation of nature and relate to the theme of the painting more than any other illustration in this manuscript. The palette applied on the rock masses is rich and includes a variety of blue, purple, pink, and dominating orange. The rock forms emerge from the ground in the lower part of the foreground, covering the lower margin and gradually rising up. The second layer of the rocks in orange color appear to be trembling with volcanic motion towards the peak of the mountain, where finally the pink and purple rocks form the tip of the Alburz Mountain and surround the bird's nest. This whole rocky mass with its elevating movement reinforces the flight of the Simurgh towards her nest and directs the viewer's eyes to

the peak of the mountain. The “four season” trees of this painting, with their uplifting branches emphasize this movement, too.<sup>106</sup>

The pale orange color of the Simurgh’s tails in the former painting has turned to a warm shade of orange that covers the whole head, neck, wing feathers, and tail twists of the fantastic bird in her upright flight. Touches of greenish-blue complete her head comb and the tip of her wing feathers, as well as the second twists of each tail. In all, the colors of her body are more in harmony compared to the earlier painting and complement the vitality of the image. Her face is eagerly turned towards her destination and her children while the infant Zal peacefully rests in her big brown talon that convincingly belongs to an animal of prey, more so than what was relayed in the earlier painting of the Simurgh by this artist. While the deep blue sky, covered by white patches of clouds, indicates a far distance, the curled patches of brown and white clouds surround the tip of the mountain and separate the two areas. The Simurgh’s nest of twisting twigs appears to be spacious; even though it holds her three children there is still more room in the nest. In interpreting the splendor of this painting it would suffice to call it “a profound, pantheistic vision of a charged nature whose forces infuse the simurgh’s world with enormous energy,” as Anthony Welch describes.<sup>107</sup>

This was not the last time this artist dealt with the representation of the fantastic bird. Close to the completion of Shah ‘Abbas’s *Shāhnāma*, the proud Sadiqi commissioned his own manuscript of *Anvār-i Suhaylī*, a rather rare move by an artist in that time. Its hundred and seven miniatures provided him with plenty of space to show his talent in depicting the nature. A painting of a Simurgh in this manuscript manifests his final challenge with the fantastic bird, as this manuscript is the last known and firmly attributable work of Sadiqi (Figure 49).<sup>108</sup> The elements of innovation and imagination that generally lack from Sadiqi’s contributions to the

royal manuscripts, except in his *Simurgh Taking Zal to Her Nest* in Shah ‘Abbas’s *Shāhnāma*, appear to be present in his paintings of *Anvār-i Suhaylī* as well as in his single page drawings.<sup>109</sup> At the same time when Sadiqi was illustrating his own manuscript of *Anvār-i Suhaylī*, a manuscript of this text was commissioned by the Mughal emperor, Akbar, in India. A painting in this Mughal manuscript, attributed to Miskin, 1590 (Figure 50), depicts a representation of a Simurgh that closely reflects the visual characteristics of its counterparts in Persian paintings.

After the relocation of the capital from Qazvin to Isfahan, Shah ‘Abbas ordered the addition of four paintings to the Timurid manuscript of ‘Attar’s *Mantiq al-Ṭayr* originally commissioned by either the Timurid Sultan Husayn Bayqara or his vizier, Mir ‘Ali Shir Navai in 1483, with four paintings executed most probably by the master Bihzad. The four additional Safavid paintings highly resemble the four Timurid paintings in style and demonstrate the artists’ attempts to preserve the unity of the illustrations.

The second Safavid addition, *The Conference of the Birds* (Figure 51), strongly resembles the Timurid paintings. This painting marks one of the most remarkable illustrations of this mystical text, delineating a stylistic hybridity in depicting a significant seventeenth-century work by a master painter of Isfahan style, Habibullah, executed in the classical fifteenth century style of Herat.<sup>110</sup> Habibullah was the favorite painter of Shah ‘Abbas and had been at the Shah’s service since the monarch became the governor of Herat. This illustration remains the only painting that delineates the allegory of the birds.<sup>111</sup> Except for a man hiding behind the rocks, the landscape is a beautiful manifestation of flora and fauna in the Timurid manner. The birds are assembled under the direction of the hoopoe, sitting on a rock, while all the other twenty-three birds are facing him. The two couplets inscribed within the margins are taken from the beginning of the book, after the hoopoe welcomes the birds, and they inquire about their search for a

king.<sup>112</sup> This landscape with all its elements, including the mountain with the hidden faces on the rocks and the large tree with its branches extending into the margins, provides a perfect setting for the Simurgh. It would not be unexpected for the fantastic bird to manifest itself from behind a rock or the tree branches. However, no matter how much the viewers search for it, this could not happen since the painting represents an early episode of the text, before the birds begin their search for their king.<sup>113</sup> Yet, another manuscript of this text produced in Shiraz in 1493 comprises a painting of the birds' assembly, including the Simurgh encircled by twenty-one birds.<sup>114</sup>

By the second half of the seventeenth century the availability of European prints and Indian paintings in Iran as well as the contacts between the artists from the three painting traditions of Europe, India, and Iran, brought in elements of both foreign traditions into Safavid painting.<sup>115</sup> At this time, the most prominent pupil of Riza-i 'Abbasi, Mu' in Musavvar, illustrated many copies of the *Shāhnāma*, probably commissioned by wealthy patrons of Isfahan or at his own initiative.<sup>116</sup> One of these *Shāhnāma* manuscripts in two volumes, dated 1654-55, is attributed to the patronage of Shah 'Abbas II (1654-55).<sup>117</sup> None of the episodes including the Simurgh in the two volumes of *Shāhnāma* 1654-55 are illustrated. However, one single page painting by Mu' in Musavvar, depicting the fifth ordeal of Isfandiar killing the evil counterpart of the Simurgh (Figure 53) is suggested to be part of the illustrative program of this manuscript.<sup>118</sup> This painting could have been prepared for one of the many *Shāhnāma* manuscripts Mu' in Musavvar illustrated, since most of them reveal similar characteristic such as four columns of *nasta'liq* text in the plane of the painting and the extension of the paintings to the margins. Yet, based on the same characteristics, this illustration could not have been intended to be a part of the two-volume manuscripts of 1654-55 since the text on the folio is written in a less elegant

*nasta 'līq* script and the chapter heading is written in *nasta 'līq* script rather than *naskh* script as in the 1654-55 copy. In a painting from a dispersed manuscript of *Shāhnāma* (1660s), *The Simurgh Restoring Zal to his Father*, signed by Mu' in Musavvar, the Simurgh is emerging from the left margin and, interestingly, carries Zal in one of her tail spreads (Figure 54).<sup>119</sup>

During the seventeenth century, a new category of wealthy patrons commissioned the works of art, including luxuriously illustrated manuscripts, following the steps of their Safavid monarchs. One such example is the *Shāhnāma* manuscript copied probably in Shiraz in 1614 at the order of Mirza Muhammad Sharifa, with illustrations added later in the twentieth century.<sup>120</sup> Another example of such patrons was the Qarachaghay family, who were among the Armenian slaves, or *ghulāms*. They governed Khurasan during the mid-seventeenth century and turned the city of Mashhad into an active center of art production. A richly illustrated manuscript of *Shāhnāma* dated to 1648, with 148 paintings, was commissioned by the third generation of this family, Khan 'Alishan Qarachaghay.<sup>121</sup> In this manuscript, *The Fifth Ordeal of Isfandiar: The Killing of the Simurgh* (attributed to Muhammad Qasim) is rendered in the general traditional style of this copy, in a refined manner of execution and a rich palette of colors (Figure 55).<sup>122</sup> The Simurgh is represented in contrasting colors of blue and yellow, with a large body, colored delicately in blue. The drawing of its form, its wings and claws, however, is not equally as fine as its coloration. The bird is descending towards Isfandiar's horse and chariot. The hero is still hidden in his chariot; although the nine lines of verse inscribed in a fine *nasta 'līq* narrate the end of the story and the demise of the giant bird. This is not the only representation of the Simurgh in this manuscript. A double-page frontispiece depicts Sulayman and the queen of Sheba, attended by angels, demons, animals, and birds, including the Simurgh (Figure 56 a-b).<sup>123</sup> This double-page painting is signed by Malik Husayn Isfahani, a senior artist whose elegant drawing and less

vibrant coloring technique, compared to the rest of the paintings of this manuscript, reveal his Isfahan style. The Simurgh is flying against the golden sky of the painting and appears superior in size and position to the rest of the birds in the right folio of this double-page frontispiece. Another representation of the Simurgh in *The Simurgh Bids Farewell to Sam's Son* in a manuscript, that appears to be incomplete, prepared possibly as a gift for Shah 'Abbas II by Murtiza Quli Khan in Mashhad in 1651 is attributed by Russian scholars to Afzal-i Husayni and is executed in Isfahan style.<sup>124</sup>

The Persian painting and painters of seventeenth century Isfahan witnessed the circulation of European paintings in various forms of large scale oil paintings, small images, illustrated books and prints made available as gifts at the court or as objects of trade in the public market, the presence that inspired the reshaping of the elements of style in Persian painting from this time on in the hands of some of the most eclectic Persian artists of the time who amalgamated the old and the new styles.<sup>125</sup> The synthesis of traditional and European styles in Persian painting further developed and was encouraged during the reign of Shah Sulayman. The leading seventeenth century Iranian painter practicing in a Europeanizing style was Muhammad Zaman, or Muhammad Zaman ibn Haji Yusuf, sometimes also signing as Sahib al-Zaman. He was certainly highly regarded at the court since the task of completing the two masterpieces of the sixteenth century was assigned to him. His life, faith and the sources of his style have caused disagreements among scholars who, based on his paintings with Christian themes, assumed him to be a Christian. Some others related the presence of Italian and Indian elements in his paintings to his travels and trainings in those countries. While rejecting all these suppositions A. Adamova proposes that Muhammad Zaman might have learned the Europeanized techniques by studying under a European painter who was working in Persia.<sup>126</sup>

On the other hand, his style and his Christian themed paintings might have simply been inspired by the European prints and other visual material vastly available in seventeenth century Iran. Moreover, the subjects of paintings at this time were most likely decided by the patrons and not by the painters' personal interests.<sup>127</sup> In all, his confidence in improving and retouching the works of some of the master painters of the sixteenth century, such as Aqa Mirak and Sadiqi Bek, does not reveal a self-effacing character in him.<sup>128</sup>

Muhammad Zaman added two paintings to the unfinished manuscript presumably prepared for Shah 'Abbas I and retouched two of its sixteenth century paintings. The two additions are *The Head of Iraj Presented to his Brothers Sam and Tur*, that is neither signed nor dated, and *The Simurgh Assisting the Birth of Rustam* (Figure 57) signed and dated by Muhammad Zaman in 1675-76.<sup>129</sup> *The Return from the Flight into Egypt* is one of the paintings with a Christian theme by Muhammad Zaman, comparison of which with *The Simurgh Assisting the Birth of Rustam* demonstrates the painter's eclectic style.<sup>130</sup> The misty landscape in the background of *The Simurgh Assisting the Birth of Rustam* delineates Muhammad Zaman's typical style, best exemplified in his third addition to the Shah Tahmasp's *Khamsa* of 1539-43, *Bahram Gur Slays the Dragon*.<sup>131</sup> The soft blued mountains in the background appear to be flowing down while grey lines of clouds topped by white puffy clouds cover the upper left corner of the paintings. Two building structures on one of the mountaintops are also present in the far background. The closest tree to the foreground has a massive trunk covered by a crocodile skin-like bark that reveals another signature of Muhammad Zaman's hand as well as evidence of European influence. The stippling treatment of the leaves displays Muhammad Zaman's characteristic coloring.

This landscape is separated from the terrace, where the main story is happening, by a plain wooden fence. All the figures are rendered in equal details. The folds of the dresses and the blanket are manifested through the application of the European technique of shading, a device rarely seen in the treatment of drapery in Persian painting before. The scrolls of flowers and lancet leaves on the ochre blanket recall the designs of carpets and textiles of this period represented in other contemporary paintings.<sup>132</sup> In the foreground Zal is sitting in front of a brazier<sup>133</sup> in which a fire is burning, indicating that he had already burnt the feathers to call the magical bird. His large puffy eyes, as well as those of other figures in this scene demonstrate another feature of Muhammad Zaman's style. Zal's attire resembles Bahram Gur's clothing in the painting of *Bahram Gur Killing the Dragon*, executed by this artist in the same year; and his jeweled crown demonstrates his high rank. His hand gestures suggest he is in conversation with the female figure sitting in front of him. This figure is also depicted in full royal clothing and jeweled head scarf, possibly representing Sindukht, Rudaba's mother. However, the four couplets of text inscribed in a fine *nasta 'liq* positioned in boxes in upper right and lower left of the painting narrate the conversation between Zal and the Simurgh after the bird appears; Zal praises the bird while she asks for the reason behind the hero's teary eyes.

Finally, the fantastic bird enters the picture frame coming out of the right margin as though she is entering the world of humans from another realm. The margin drawings of animals and vegetal patterns beautifully enclose the painting. The Simurgh, however, is the same colorful fantastic bird that has been represented in Persian painting for the last three hundred years.<sup>134</sup> Muhammad Zaman's technique in fine lining is mostly manifested in the sharp eyes and open beak of the bird, conveying both her eagerness and wisdom. The primary feathers of her wings are depicted with large round tips in cyan color with darker shades at the middle while the

feathers in the second row are drawn in slimmer forms with sharp tips represented in shades of yellow, white and red. The painter has applied the same crocodile-like texture used to represent the tree bark to depict the giant legs and claws of this animal of prey. Her tail is comprised of one shorter upper tail covert and two twisting bands of longer tails spreading one upwards and the other downwards through the margin. Their light shades of gold, orange and cyan elegantly dissolve the tail swirls within the margin drawings and express the idea of the bird rising from the margins. The inclusion of vegetal patterns in the voids around the tail and body of the bird suggest that the drawings were carried out after the completion of the painting or at least after its initial drawing.

The bird in this painting alone manifests the state of painting in the seventeenth century Iran when the European techniques of shading had been applied to represent one of the most traditional themes of Persian painting, yet remaining loyal to the traditional forms. Certainly, Muhammad Zaman and his contemporaries, who employed foreign elements in their works during the second half of the seventeenth century, redefined the stylistic vocabulary of Iranian painting mostly in their renditions of human figures and landscapes, the style that prevailed in the arts of eighteenth and nineteenth century Iran.<sup>135</sup> Standing three hundred years apart from the 1370s Jalayirid rendition of the fantastic bird in the Istanbul album H.2153, this last royal representation of the Simurgh in Persian painting remains at the verge of the tradition and the future of Iranian painting, yet definitely belongs to the family of the fourteenth century Jalayirid fantastic bird.

The stylistic examination of the images of the Simurgh from the late fourteenth century to the late seventeenth century in Persian royal paintings manifests the formation of an iconographic type for this fantastic bird. This type was inspired by visual representations of the

Chinese phoenix that became vastly available through Chinese objects during the Ilkhanid reign in Iran. It clearly differs from the two types of the composite bird, decorating the pre-Islamic objects, as well as the conventional bird-type representations of the Simurgh appearing on the early Islamic art of Iran, both examined in chapter three. The composite representations of the Simurgh, majorly decorating the Sasanian objects, reflect the features described for that bird in the contemporary written sources. The composite body parts, each borrowed from a different animal, reveal the efforts to depict a creature with no actual counterpart in nature. The early Islamic representations of the Simurgh in Persian art, on the other hand, are varied and do not follow a unique text, definition, or visual model. It is their regionality that shapes their appearances. As examined in the previous chapter, the images of the Simurgh produced in different centers in provinces of Fars and Iraq differ from one another. The shared elements in the depictions of the Simurgh in Persian painting produced shortly before and after the turn of the fourteenth century, though, is their resemblance to a bird in nature. Probably, the composite Sasanian Simurgh with a dog's head and paws seemed too exotic, too remote to portray the fantastic bird of the *Shāhnāma*, a wise bird with supernatural abilities. The variety in forms alludes to the absence of a visual prototype, although it becomes a prototype of its own. In that absence, the Chinese phoenix, introduced through the Ilkhanid art, offered itself as a model. It perfectly matched the visual aesthetics of Persian painting through its classical age, and it looked ornamented enough to represent an incredible idea. Therefore, this third type became deeply established in the Iranian visual vocabulary representing the image of the fantastic Simurgh, the possessor of the divine glory to this day, as will be discussed in chapter five. It is only the visual features of the Chinese phoenix that the Iranian Simurgh adopts. In meaning, she remains the symbol of the Persian notion of kingship.

## The Royal Patronage of the *Shāhnāma* Manuscripts

The Divine Glory, *farr-i īzadī*, had been perceived as the principal element of kingship and legitimacy to rule in Persian culture and political ideology since ancient Persia, thus had been continuously sought for by the rulers of this land and their heirs. The notion of *farr* had been symbolically represented through various visual forms, some of them most generally known and established. The inclusion of the story of Zal and the Simurgh in the illustrative program of the four royal manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* that were examined above, as I argue, make references to the same notion. The presence of the Simurgh, the possessor of *farr*, and her authoritative role in protecting whoever is positioned under her shadow make these illustrations ideologically charged with that perception. Examination of historical and political events of the lives of these four rulers who commissioned these manuscripts would assist the understanding of their type of artistic patronage and involvement with the projects as well as revealing the degree to which they were concerned with the issues of legitimacy, kingship, and royal fortune. While some of the patrons of these manuscripts were more closely involved in the artistic creation of their *Shāhnāmas*, others commissioned their manuscripts of the national epics as part of their kingly gestures and that is where the agency of the leading artists of the projects replaced that of the patrons.

### The Timurid Patrons: the first half of the fifteenth century

Towards the end of the fourteenth century, Iran and Central Asia were ruled by several nomadic groups of Turko-Mongol origin. Timur, a warlord from Transoxiana with brutal military activities and skills, captured Iran. Similar to the Ilkhans, Timur and his successors, who ruled

over Iran during the fifteenth century, encountered the sophisticated and refined Iranian culture in the urban centers of Herat, Tabriz, Shiraz and Isfahan. They soon embraced this culture and amalgamated it with their own nomadic traditions, thus successfully creating a new visual language through the patronage of various art forms. This visual language and its legacy impacted the cultural domains of the following centuries in Iran, Mughal India and Ottoman Turkey. Following the Ilkhanid trend, Timur also established some practices to add legitimacy to his rule.<sup>136</sup> For him, as Golombek defines, architecture in large scale and with splendid decoration was the most effective tool in legitimizing his rule by connecting his lineage to the Ilkhans as well as to the Muslim caliphates of Baghdad: the ideology that he aimed to form and transfer during his rule.<sup>137</sup>

The death of Timur in 1405 and enthronement of his son, Shahrukh, in 1409, after some troubling years for the Timurid princes battling over the throne, marks a shift in the dynasty's orientation from warlords to a class of cultured princely patrons.<sup>138</sup> Architecture remained the most powerful medium in projecting the Timurid ideology but it is the products of the royal workshop, or *kitābkhāna*, in various media and patronized by the princes of the house of Timur that shaped the aesthetic paradigm of the fifteenth century.<sup>139</sup> Under the patronage of one of these princes, Baysunghur, the art of the book became the effective tool in conveying the ideology of the dynasty to a wider audience, gradually replacing architecture.<sup>140</sup> By standardizing the visual vocabulary of the time through the art of book, and expanding it to the other media, the calligraphers and painters of the Timurid *kitābkhāna* affirmed the legitimacy and power of their patrons.<sup>141</sup> This change and the reception of the arts of the book among the members of the court as a tool to mark the royal legitimacy attest to a cultural shift affecting not only the Timurid royalties but also their court environment. This shift reaches its summit at the court of Sultan

Husayn in the second half of the fifteenth century. The intellectual and artistic productions of *kitābkhāna* were discussed at the literary gatherings, or *majlis*, sponsored by the court in which the practitioners of arts of the book, poets, and the elite participated.<sup>142</sup> For the Timurids, artistic patronage was an important tool to publicize the legitimacy of their rule to both their Persian and Turko-Mongol population. The art of the book, though, was mainly aimed to convey this message to the settled Persians who were accustomed to this courtly practice of patronage.<sup>143</sup> The Timurid princes not only individually participated in some artistic projects such as the production of illustrated manuscripts of Persian poetry but also encouraged the creation of other artifacts. These artistic productions generally demonstrate a unified aesthetic vocabulary of forms and patterns that was shaped “on past traditions.”<sup>144</sup>

The art of the illustrated book, and Persian lyrical poetry in particular, engaged the Timurid princes, under whom a new style of painting based on Jalayirid and Muzaffarid styles were shaped by about the 1430s.<sup>145</sup> The production of three illustrated *Shāhnāma* manuscripts is associated with the patronage of the Timurid princes, the three sons of Shahrukh, named Baysunghur, Ibrahim Sultan, and Muhammad Juki, all introduced above. These three bibliophile princes, the patrons of these three *Shāhnāma* manuscripts, most probably spent their early years in the court of Timur in Samarqand, where they received their education on Persian language and culture as well as teachings on Islam.<sup>146</sup> As adults they corresponded on literary matters and possibly discussed the illustrative program of their *Shāhnāmas*.<sup>147</sup> However, except for their similar text, fine illuminations and the indication of the portrait of their patrons, these three manuscripts do not have much in common. Eleanor Sims examines the differences in size and layout, the style of the paintings, and the illustrative program of these copies and observes that illustrations of Baysunghur’s *Shāhnāma* resemble many of the Jalayirid *Shāhnāma* compositions

preserved in the Topkapi album H.2153, and manifest the prince's concern with notions of "legitimacy and the continuity of princely government."<sup>148</sup> The violent battle scenes and peaceful enthronement settings dominate the illustrative program of this manuscript while some popular subjects such as supernatural and mythical events are limited or excluded in the very selective and small number of its illustrations.<sup>149</sup> On the other hand, Ibrahim Sultan's illustrated *Shāhnāma*, that demonstrates the typical style of Shiraz painting with large figures, limited palette, and with images surrounding the text, does not involve issues of legitimacy and princely conducts and instead captures mostly the acts of heroes such as hunting, feasting and battling.<sup>150</sup> Finally, Muhammad Juki's manuscript concerns the endless conflicts between Iran and Turan and the religious life of the Iranians as the illustrated episodes suggest.<sup>151</sup> Out of thirty-one paintings that represent *Shāhnāma* subjects in this manuscript, twenty-two depict scenes of battle, combat and murder. Only three paintings depict supernatural events and creatures that include Akvan-i Div, a dragon slayed by Gushtasp, and the Simurgh. Sims proposes the limited number of illustrations for each of these manuscripts and the variety in their illustrative program, although they were all produced in royal workshops and around the same time, demonstrate that each patron consciously decided to convey a message through the illustrations of his *Shāhnāma* manuscript. These illustrated *Shāhnāma* manuscripts, that presently stand as the only known royal manuscripts of the Persian epics, along with other illustrated or illuminated manuscripts produced in the royal Timurid workshops, were intended to address the political ideologies and ambitions of the Timurid princes in a more private realm; the same purpose that architecture served for them in the public domain. Each of these patrons chose a very limited illustrative program for his manuscript, intending to present himself, his values and ideals through these illustrations, as Sims proposes.<sup>152</sup>

The return of Zal to his father, Sam, by the Simurgh is presented in only one of these three princely manuscripts, that of Muhammad Juki. Unlike his brothers, whose concerns were princely responsibilities and activities, Muhammad Juki seems to have been involved with issues beyond the present, with the past conflicts of the Iranians over political powers and religion.<sup>153</sup> A closer look into his life and his position within his family explains some of his concerns.

Muhammad Juki, the fifth and youngest son of Shahrukh, was born in 1402. One of the key political figures of his time as well in the Timurid history was his mother or possibly stepmother, Gauhar Shad Aqa.<sup>154</sup> The chroniclers of his time state that Shahrukh anticipated high political roles for Muhammad Juki as he enjoyed a princely life and education at the court of Herat.<sup>155</sup> From 1427 he participated in many wars, helping his father and brothers in conflict with neighboring powers.<sup>156</sup> His high skills in archery won him the governorship of Khatlan.<sup>157</sup> Two historians, ‘Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi and Daulatshah record his bravery, excellent war skills, determination, and his father’s favor of him.<sup>158</sup> In one of his campaigns in western Iran, the prince married the daughter of an Aq Qyunlu leader, ‘Ismat, in 1435; the act was certainly approved by Shahrukh later, but at first was decided without his knowledge.<sup>159</sup> In 1440-41, Shahrukh abandoned the consumption of wine and personally supervised the disposal of wine from Muhammad Juki’s household.<sup>160</sup> In 1444, Muhammad Juki was in Balkh supervising an investigation on tax affairs at the order of his father when he heard the news of his father’s severe illness. By the time he reached Herat, Gauhar Shad had convinced Firuzshah, the powerful vizier of the time, to acknowledge Mirza ‘Ala al-Daula as the successor to the throne. Shahrukh survived that illness. However, Gauhar Shad’s preference for her grandsons, Mirza ‘Ala al-Daula and Mirza ‘Abd al-Latif over Muhammad Juki involved those two princes in matters of state while Muhammad Juki had absolutely no access to the council. According to

Samarqandi and Khwand Amir, his frustration over the situation, after all those years of loyal service to his father, caused Muhammad Juki's health to deteriorate and ended in his death in 1445.<sup>161</sup> After Shahrukh's death in 1447, the Timurid princes struggled over the throne and none of Gauhar Shad's favorites survived.

As it appears through historical writings by Samarqandi, prince Juki must have ordered his copy of the *Shāhnāma* during this phase of misery and frustration over being denied any political involvement and prevented access to his own father. His manuscript remained unfinished at his death in 1445. Robinson points out hemistiches on some folios in the last half of the manuscript are written diagonally and some on a paler paper, and that these diagonally written texts appear where the popular episodes for illustrating fall. He identifies the seven possible illustrations that would have been planned to fill these spaces and relates this change of plan to Muhammad Juki's deteriorating health and as a solution to hasten the completion of the manuscript.<sup>162</sup> Later, two paintings were added to this manuscript at the Mughal library in India as it bears the seals of the Mughal emperors from Babur to Aurangzib, except for Akbar's.<sup>163</sup>

In general, the illustrative program of this manuscript proposes the patron's concerns with the past conflicts between Iran and Turan, the two neighboring countries divided between the sons of Faridun, that also parallels the conflicts over power among the Timurid princes during the reign of Shahrukh.<sup>164</sup> The selection of the episode of the return of the abandoned son to his father in Muhammad Juki's manuscript of the *Shāhnāma* is in accordance with the overall intention of this manuscript over the power conflicts. The particular attention that the "displaced or unvalued" princes or sons receive in the illustration program of this manuscript is thought to represent the intention of the work. The depictions of murdering of innocent sons such as Suhrab and Siyavush draws attention to the destiny of the sons abandoned by their fathers. The

illustrations of stories such as *Portrait of the Infant Rustam Shown to Sam*, or *Iskandar Comforting the Dying Dara*, both unprecedented in the contemporary Timurid princely *Shāhnāmas*, reveal an intention behind the programing of this manuscript to point to the father and son relationships. After all, as Brend observes, “this theme may already be present in ‘the Simurgh restores Zal to Sam’” where an abandoned son is reconciled with his father with the help of a supernatural power.<sup>165</sup> Probably, at the time Muhammad Juki selected this episode to be illustrated in his manuscript (a scene that is not represented in his brothers’ copies of the *Shāhnāma*) he was dissociated from his father and had fallen from his favor. Gauhar Shad Aqa was, most likely, an influential figure in creating a distance between the monarch and his son, and preventing prince Juki from having any access to the state. Under these circumstances, the prince –advanced as a speculation– might have wished for a supernatural event to reunite him with his father and bring his fortune back. Considering that, by the time the production of his manuscript was in process, Muhammad Juki was mostly away from the capital, Herat, supervising a taxation mismatch near Balkh, it would be difficult to estimate how personally involved he was with this project. On the other hand, the preference for battle scenes in the illustrative program of this manuscript corresponds with the characteristics and concerns of prince Juki as a warrior who fought many battles, thus pointing to this patron’s involvement in selecting such episodes for illustration to a higher degree. With selecting the return of Zal to his father by the Simurgh, this abandoned prince refers to his desire for the return of divine glory, *farr*, to him. Therefore the representation of the Simurgh in this painting signifies the presence of the divine glory. In the eyes of the targeted viewer, the patron of the manuscript, the representation of the Simurgh becomes present and transforms this painting into a powerful image.

### The Timurid Patrons: the second half of the fifteenth Century

During the second half of the fifteenth century a major shift occurred in the intellectual atmosphere of the Timurid Herat in which lyrical poetry and visual arts became the essential vehicles in transferring the Timurid ideology and concerns over legitimacy. At this time the Sufi leaders, with both Sunni and Shi'i tendencies, were closely associated with the court of Sultan Husayn (r. 1470-1506) who was able to maintain a unity over the Timurid rule after the troubling years following Shahrukh's death in 1447; his rule, however, was limited to the eastern lands of Khurasan and Transoxiana. At his court, he was encircled by learned men such as his friend and advisor, Mir 'Ali Shir Navai<sup>166</sup> and the mystic poet and scholar, Jami.<sup>167</sup> These men led the official court gatherings or *majlis* that acted as a supervisory council over the intellectual productions of the time.<sup>168</sup> At Sultan Husayn's court, the interest in publicly noticeable representations of royal power, such as architecture in grand size and lavish decorations, was replaced with a private portrayal of power accessible only to the intellectuals.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, an obsession with mysticism and piety, or in other words "the new conjunction of Sufism with aristocracy,"<sup>170</sup> directed the attention of the royal patronage away from an epic text such as the *Shāhnāma* that centered on heroic battles, feasting and enthronement scenes and instead produced texts with mystical themes. Therefore, no royal *Shāhnāma* manuscript is known to have been commissioned during the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>171</sup> Sultan Husayn's inclination towards Shi'ism was geared towards mysticism under the influence of Mir 'Ali Shir. Above all, under the care and prosperity provided during the reign of Sultan Husayn, the eminent figures of the court, including Mir 'Ali Shir and Jami, could have been influential in raising an interest in mystic literature at the court and consequently in the production of illustrated

manuscripts of mystical poetry.<sup>172</sup> The popularity of mystic trends shaped a culture of mysticism at the court of Sultan Husayn, where the notion of royalty was invalidated and pre-empted by spirituality.<sup>173</sup> Following this trend, the manuscripts of Persian mystical and moral poetry were produced in which scenes of daily life with specific subjects replaced the heroic and courtly scenes of Persian painting. The popular accounts were the *Khamsa* of Nizami or of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi, the *Būstān* and *Gulistān* of Sa‘di, and the mystic allegories of ‘Attar and Jami. Depiction of drunken dervishes, wandering beggars, mourning and death scenes, and symbolic details referring to mystical themes came to be the norm in the Persian painting of the late fifteenth century. During this era of mystical eminence, six copies of ‘Attar’s *Mantiq al-Ṭayr* are known to have been produced, of which only one (introduced above) is associated with the court of Sultan Husayn in Herat.<sup>174</sup> Although it is not known whether Shah Sultan Husayn or one of the influential members of his court commissioned this manuscript, it certainly was produced at the Timurid royal workshop, and thus could be studied as a royal manuscript. Swietochowski, who examined the manuscript, attributes its commission to Mir ‘Ali Shir and regards it as a possible inspiration for the vizier to compose his own mystical allegory, *Lisān al-Ṭayr*.<sup>175</sup>

The absence of any representation of the Simurgh in the fifteenth-century royal manuscript of the *Mantiq al-Ṭayr* raises the question of why the fifteenth-century programmer of this manuscript chose the only representation of the allegory to be of an earlier part of the text and not the climax of the story when the birds unite with their king and reach annihilation. The numerous representations of a supernatural bird like the Simurgh, represented in manuscripts of both secular texts such as the *Shāhnāma* as well as mystical texts including other manuscripts of *Mantiq al-Ṭayr* attest to the familiarity of the painters to deal with fantastic subjects. Therefore, the reason for not depicting the Simurgh in this royal manuscript could most possibly be related

to the subjectivity of the director of the project or its patron. The high mystical inclinations at the court of Sultan Husayn and among all its members in Herat during the last decades of the fifteenth century are clearly established. The production of this Timurid royal manuscript of *Mantiq al-Tayr* most probably occurred under the eyes of the learned men such as Mir 'Ali Shir. The absence of the representation of any mystical allegories might provide some links to the beliefs of these mystic figures regarding the representation of their faith. Moreover, the avoidance of representing the king of birds in a manuscript, the production of which must have been consulted by the greatest mystics of the time or at least would have been seen by them makes the links between the mystical Simurgh and what it symbolizes, the Divine, even stronger, as the ultimate Divine and creator is never to be presented in any form in Islamic thought and culture. The fact that the mystical Simurgh has been represented in a manuscript of this text, produced in Shiraz<sup>176</sup> around the same time as the royal manuscript of *Mantiq al-Tayr* was produced, reveals that the programming of these two manuscripts had been informed by varying mystical ideologies, including one in which it was acceptable to depict the metaphor of God.

#### The Safavid Patrons of the *Shāhnāma*: sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

While mystical and lyrical poetry attracted the attention of highly intellectual patrons of the Timurid court in Herat during the second half of the fifteenth century, with the turn of power to the Safavid dynasty in the beginning of the sixteenth century, the *Shāhnāma* regained its attraction among the royal patrons who, for their own part, had to deal with issues of the legitimacy of their rule.

The Safavid dynasty had its roots in a mystical order founded by Shaykh Safi al-Din (1252-1334) in Ardabil, that continued to exist during the Timurid rule, and was empowered by

the aid of the Turkmen tribal groups or Qizilbashes during the second half of the fifteenth century under the leadership of Shaykh Safi's descendants. This movement that functioned based on the mystic relationships between its leaders and disciples with some Shi'i inclinations was changed into a political and militaristic force under the leadership of Isma'il I (r. 1501-24) who established the militant Shi'i state of the Safavid in 1501 in Tabriz by defeating the Aq-Quyunlu's rule in western Iran. Later, in 1510, he captured the eastern lands of Herat and Marv ruled at that time by the Uzbeks. From its formation, Isma'il announced Twelver Shi'ism as the state religion that dictated the suppression of both Sunni and Sufi orders and practices. Based on this religious policy, Isma'il I and his descendants proclaimed their rule on behalf of the Hidden Imam and themselves as the lineage of the Imams. Therefore, their rule gained extensive legitimacy, facilitated by the Shi'i theologians, and secured great charisma among their followers.<sup>177</sup>

Both Isma'il I and his successor, Tahmasp (r. 1524-76), were challenged by the continuous Ottoman attacks on Persia from the west so that Shah Tahmasp shifted his capital from Tabriz to Qazvin in 1548. It was in 1554-55 that the two dynasties signed the peace treaty of Amasya and eased the enmity for a while. Shah Tahmasp also recruited Christian Georgian slave soldiers to balance the Qizilbash power at his court. Tahmasp was succeeded by his son, Isma'il II (r. 1576-78), whom he had imprisoned considering him a threat to his rule. This was possibly the reason behind Isma'il II's cruelty and killing of the Safavid princes during his short reign. During the rule of Muhammad Khudabanda (r. 1578-87), the Safavid state remained as a battlefield of the Qizilbash and Tajik groups over power; these struggles along with the uprising Ottoman threats could be managed only by the next great Safavid ruler, Shah 'Abbas I (r. 1587-1629).<sup>178</sup>

As was discussed earlier, there are no known manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* connected to the patronage of the Timurid royalties dating from the second half of the fifteenth century. However, under the Aq Quyunlu rule in western Iran<sup>179</sup> many illustrated manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*, in particular what are now categorized as commercial manuscripts were produced in the cities of Shiraz, Tabriz and Baghdad.<sup>180</sup> In 1493-94, the local ruler of Gilan, Sultan ‘Ali Mirza Karkia, commissioned a two-volume heavily illustrated manuscript of the *Shāhnāma* at his court in Lahijan.<sup>181</sup> In the same year, the seven-year-old Isma‘il, the future founder of the Safavid dynasty, was spending time at this local court as a refugee. The sight of this manuscript most likely inspired the young Isma‘il to the extent that he ordered his own manuscript of *Shāhnāma* after he established his dynasty in Tabriz.<sup>182</sup> The *Shāhnāma* contents and its emphasis on the notion of kingship and *farr* might have attracted Isma‘il, who believed in his own divine role as the Shi‘i leader of the Safavid state.<sup>183</sup> His manuscript, started in 1515, was never finished and has survived with four illustrations that delineate the Turkmen style and were probably executed by Sultan Muhammad.<sup>184</sup>

The creation of the greatest known *Shāhnāma* manuscript, as was discussed, is associated with the patronage of Isma‘il’s son, Tahmasp, whose taste was shaped in Herat and influenced by the remainder of the Timurid refined culture and the few surviving figures including, the artist Bihzad.<sup>185</sup> Upon his return to Tabriz in 1522, Tahmasp received training in painting from Sultan Muhammad, the leading artist in the Turkmen style of Tabriz. In 1524 when the young Tahmasp was enthroned after his father’s death, the Qizilbash leaders acted as his guardians and ruled the state. At this time Tahmasp presumably commissioned his own *Shāhnāma*, or took over the production of the *Shāhnāma* manuscript already ordered by his father.<sup>186</sup> Regardless, the patronage of this magnificent manuscript is affiliated with Tahmasp

since it was produced during his reign. An inscription in a rosette on the dedicatory page near the beginning of the book indicates the commission of the manuscript for Shah Tahmasp's library.<sup>187</sup>

Tahmasp, himself an admirer and practitioner of art,<sup>188</sup> was fully engaged in the production of his copy of the national epic in which the variable structure of its paintings could be perceived as a visual account of the events of his life.<sup>189</sup> However, the same ruler who found pleasure and satisfaction in the art of painting and the company of artists during the first twenty years of his rule turned his back on the arts from 1550s onward and engaged himself with matters of state.<sup>190</sup> This shift in Tahmasp's taste, inspired by either his religious beliefs or political concerns, led many of his artists to look for patronage in other centers of art production, and caused dispersal of his atelier. Motivated on political grounds, Shah Tahmasp sent his magnificent manuscript as a gift to the Ottoman Sultan Selim II in 1568.<sup>191</sup>

As the iconographic program and layout of the *Shāhnāma* of Shah Tahmasp suggest it was meant to serve a propagandistic purpose for its patron. Similar to the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma* and the possible role it played for the Ilkhans two hundred years earlier, the *Shāhnāma* of Shah Tahmasp was intended to publicize the legitimacy and stability of Tahmasp's rule. It could also have operated as an instrument to reflect upon the contemporary history.<sup>192</sup> The thematic categorization of the 258 illustrations of this manuscript, with the majority of its paintings dealing with various aspects of war and royal authority, reveals an agreement with the major theme of the *Shāhnāma* being the conflict between Iran and Turan.<sup>193</sup> As Hillenbrand observes, about one third of the total number of illustrations, seventy-nine paintings, are unique to this manuscript. This puts this copy out of the usual predictable *Shāhnāma* illustrative program practiced for the previous two hundred years prior to its creation. In addition, unique to this manuscript is the representation of the story of Zal raised by the Simurgh and his return to

his father in three paintings instead of the conventional one painting. That might be explained by the emphasis laid by the project director(s) on the first part of the *Shāhnāma* text, dealing with the foundation of Iranian history. This is demonstrated through the high proportion of illustrations, with almost one painting for every single page.<sup>194</sup> The abundance of resources in terms of material, artists, and time at the beginning of the project might also explain the generosity of the director(s) allocating three paintings to one story. Yet I believe that the content of this particular story and the presence of the Simurgh, as a symbol of *farr*, could have influenced the decision of the programmer of this manuscript, be it either the patron, Tahmasp, or the director, Sultan Muhammad. While the first two paintings of this trio make references to Tahmasp's upbringing away from his father in Herat, the third illustration visualizes his return to his hometown celebrated by his people; thus all commenting on the contemporary history of Tahmasp's life. The three renditions of the Simurgh could be references to the patron's concerns for protection. At this stage of his rule, he was young and inexperienced; therefore his government was ruled mainly by his guardians. The continuous Ottoman threats might have caused anxiety over the stability of his kingdom for Tahmasp, who engaged himself with his royal workshop more than with his official duties at the beginning of his reign. On the other hand, the presence of the Simurgh might have been a reference to Tahmasp's divine glory, already acclaimed through his lineage and present with him from the time of his ascension. He was claimed to be the descendant of the holy Imams, and the most legitimate person to rule the country after his father's death.<sup>195</sup> Therefore, the presence of the Simurgh in these illustrations, signifying the notion of royal glory, could be shaped by concerns over protection and stability or represent the patron's legitimate kingship. In either case they signify the notion of the divine glory, whether desired or acclaimed by the patron.

With Tahmasp's death in 1576, his second son, Isma'īl Mirza (r. 1576-77), ascended to the throne. Isma'īl, who bravely defended the country as an army leader against the Ottomans, was unhappy with his father's decision to make a peace treaty with this neighboring country. Even after being appointed as the governor of Khurasan in acknowledgment of his bravery, he was collaborating with the Qizilbash leaders to form an attack against the Ottomans. These attempts against his father's wish, however, caused his imprisonment in the fortress of *Qahqaha* near Qazvin, where he was held for nineteen years, six months and twenty-one days.<sup>196</sup> Isma'īl II, who was a popular figure among the Qizilbash groups, with the assistance of his sister, Pari Khan Khanum, a key figure in plotting the death of his brother and rival, Haydar Mirza, succeeded to the throne. Although he promised protection and security to the royalties who turned to him in the early days of his rule, he soon ordered brutal murders of the members of his family, royalties, and even citizens.<sup>197</sup> Isma'īl II's debates with the Shi'i theologians made him notorious for having tendencies towards Sunnism, a speculation that he opposed.<sup>198</sup> His short reign was ended by his death, caused by poisoning or excessive drug abuse.<sup>199</sup>

Contrary to his cruel actions in the realm of politics, that could be explained by his long years of imprisonment, Shah Isma'īl II was, or at least intended to be, a great patron of the arts as his father was in the early decades of his rule. This is demonstrated by his forming of a new *kitābkhāna* and gathering all the talents dispersed because of his father's neglect. Following the tradition of his predecessors, he ordered a manuscript of the *Shāhnāma*. This commission however, could be explained as fulfilling a kingly responsibility rather than as a personal passion for the arts of the book. Moreover, the presence of his cousin, Ibrahim Mirza, who was a philanthropist as well as a skilled artist and poet himself,<sup>200</sup> could have influenced Shah Isma'īl's artistic patronage.<sup>201</sup> During the first few months of Isma'īl's rule, before he ordered the murder

of his cousin, the two men were close companions.<sup>202</sup> Many of the painters and calligraphers of Ibrahim Mirza's atelier in Mashhad joined the Shah Isma' il's royal library in Qazvin.<sup>203</sup> To maintain his peace treaty with the Ottomans, Shah Isma' il ordered the dispatch of fifty unparalleled illustrated manuscripts, along with other gifts, to the court of the Ottoman sultan. When his decision was objected to by Ibrahim Mirza, based on the value of these manuscripts and the Ottoman's inability to appreciate them, he responded "I need peace and security, not books and manuscripts that I never see or read," as recorded by his contemporary historian, Budaq-i Qazvini.<sup>204</sup>

Shah Isma' il II's brief and troubled reign did not allow him to get personally involved with the production of his *Shāhnāma* manuscript, as his father had done. This situation, however, provided an ambitious artist such as Sadiqi with the opportunity to lead the production of this manuscript. Sadiqi could perhaps be known as the first painter whose character and career are well recorded, on account of his own writings. He was a competent military man from the Qizilbash origin of the Afshar tribe, who left the army to pursue his art, but returned to it intermittently as his career dictated. He certainly belonged to a family with established courtly connections, since he was always received well by the courtiers and nobles throughout his many travels across the country and over the borders in the Ottoman Empire. Rather late in his life, at age thirty-five, he took up the art of painting, a profession traditionally pursued by Persians (Tajiks), but not by the Qizilbashes, who were known for their military skills. According to his *Qānūn al-Šuvar*, a technical manual on painting, he sought for a master in Bihzad's style and became a pupil of Muzaffar 'Ali, Bihzad's nephew, in Qazvin in 1568.<sup>205</sup> Years later, he was awarded the position of the head of the *kitābkhāna* (or *kitābdār*) by Shah ' Abbas, who probably recognized his artistic skills as well as his political intelligence.<sup>206</sup> Among Sadiqi's literary

works, his *Majma' al-Khawāṣ* reveals his bitter and unforgiving personality towards the people he knew and worked with, who were mostly the Safavid courtiers.<sup>207</sup> Sadiqi's bitter tone vastly moderates when he writes about Shah Isma' il II, whose brutal decisions are otherwise widely recorded by other historians. He writes of the king's noble and magnificent personality, and that he had a gentle soul, contrary to his fearful appearance. He also praises the hand of Shah 'Abbas, his next patron, in painting and poetry.<sup>208</sup> This unusual positive tone suggests a special connection between the two unpopular figures of the patron, Shah Isma' il II, and the artist, Sadiqi. It may also indicate the king's favor for the artist. It is known that after Shah Isma' il II's death, Sadiqi left the court and his career as a painter and pursued a mystic life wandering as a dervish for a while in western Iran.<sup>209</sup>

Sadiqi was a man of great pride and willfulness. In his memoirs of the Safavid poets, Mirza Tahir Nasrabadi gives a report that when the poet Mulla Ghururi recited his poem in praise of Sadiqi in a coffeehouse, Sadiqi could not bear it, took the page, and left impatiently. Shortly after, he came back and awarded the poet with some money (five *tumans*) and ten (or two) of his drawings. He warned the poet not to sell his drawings for cheap since many dealers buy them for a good prize (three *tumans* each) to sell in India.<sup>210</sup> This alludes not only to the high price of Sadiqi's works during his lifetime but also to his view of himself as a patron in relation to his colleagues. Anthony Welch proposes that in the absence of any other master painter and the death of the master Muzaffar 'Ali (d. 1576), his pupil Sadiqi was assigned the role of project director for the production of Shah Isma' il II's *Shāhnāma* of 1576-77.<sup>211</sup> This project was accomplished in less than two years with a high number of paintings, about fifty, and with a limited number of painters involved (nine in total) with the majority of the paintings rendered by a young artist, Siyavush. The number of supernatural creatures in this manuscript is as low as

five, including the Divs killed by Tahmuras, the two dragons killed by Rustam and Isfandiar in their ordeals, and the two Simurghs. Although the great *Shāhnāma* of Shah Tahmasp had been given away by the patron-monarch during his reign and was no longer at the Safavid library in Qazvin, the illustrative program of Shah Isma‘il II’s copy of the national epics follows that great manuscript closely. While thirty-one illustrations depict common subjects in these two manuscripts, many of the remaining paintings in the Shah Isma‘il II’s copy, nineteen, illustrate the same stories as in the earlier model but portray a different moment of the same story. The majority of the common scenes of the two manuscripts depict similar arrangements in compositions, while the element differentiating these illustrations is the quality of execution and the attention to details. These facts reveal that Sadiqi and the group of artists who worked with him were still inspired by the legacy of Tahmasp’s *Shāhnāma*, a project that many of them were engaged in as minor artists.<sup>212</sup> Sadiqi, as the possible director of this project, could have learned about the illustrative program of Shah Tahmasp’s great *Shāhnāma* and its depiction of the story of Zal and the Simurgh in three sequential paintings through his master, Muzaffar ‘Ali. Although he decided to represent a different moment of the story, not depicted in the Shah Tahmasp’s copy, he probably perceived the presence of the Simurgh as the indicator of kingship, thus including the fantastic bird among the fifty paintings of this manuscript.

The next great Safavid patron of the arts, Shah ‘Abbas, succeeded his impotent and almost blind father, Muhammad Khudabanda, the elder brother of Isma‘il II, in October 1588 in the capital city of Qazvin. His arduous climb to the throne was assisted by the Turkmen chief, Murshid Quli Khan Ustajlu, who attracted the support of the Qizilbash amirs for the young ‘Abbas to replace his father in competition with his own brothers, Hamza Mirza, Tahmasp, and Abu Talib.<sup>213</sup> Similar to his grandfather, Shah Tahmasp after his repentance, Shah ‘Abbas was a

pious king who facilitated “the superiority of religion over earthly kingship,” though with no impact on his political power.<sup>214</sup> Upon his enthronement, Shah ‘Abbas appointed Murshid Quli Khan to the post of deputy of the court, a position that provided this Qizilbash amir with unlimited powers. Early in his rule, the young Shah recognized the power these Qizilbash amirs wielded at the Safavid court and army and determined to control their authority by introducing an army comprising Georgian, Armenian, and Circassian Christian slaves, who were converted to Islam and trained at the court. This army of slaves or royal *ghulāms* was loyal to the king to undercut the Qizilbash authority whenever required.<sup>215</sup> Other major changes introduced by the pragmatic ‘Abbas I were the centralization of the administration and increased separation of religious and political institutions. While religious clerics, or *mujtahids*, gained more power at the court, the Sufis who traditionally enjoyed authority at the Safavid court were weakened by the new king, who disliked being challenged by them. In general, the administrative and military reforms introduced early in his reign by Shah ‘Abbas created a strong foundation for him to rule for forty-two years.<sup>216</sup> To top these political and administrative reforms, in 1598 Shah ‘Abbas moved his capital from Qazvin to Isfahan. A decade earlier he had started converting Isfahan into a capital, based on a “master plan of imperial intentions” as Sussan Babaie argues, and “in the context of the unique Safavid discourse of kingship that determined it.”<sup>217</sup>

However, immediately after his enthronement the seventeen-year-old king recognized himself as a patron of painting as all his predecessors, except for his own father, did. Following the royal tradition, he ordered the reestablishment of the royal *kitābkhāna* that had been ignored for a decade during Muhammad Khudabanda’s rule, and presumably commissioned a copy of the *Shāhnāma*.<sup>218</sup> Although there are references to Shah ‘Abbas’s admiration for painters and paintings starting from an early age,<sup>219</sup> his commitment to the patronage of this art form never

exceeded his grandfather's devotion in the beginning of his reign. Instead, he devoted his energy and intelligence to political and administrative changes of his state, while in terms of patronage of the arts he dedicated his resources to building his new capital, Isfahan, in conformity with his political aspirations. This, however, does not indicate his total absence from the realm of painting and its patronage,<sup>220</sup> as the *Shāhnāma* of 1587-97 attests. This manuscript was made at the royal *kitābkhāna* in Qazvin, the workshop that was reassembled immediately after the king's coronation and under the directorship of the then mature master of painting, Sadiqi Bek.

During the production of this manuscript between the years 1587-97, Sadiqi was at the high point of his artistic flair as well as of royal favor. Thus Sadiqi was the only influential figure in selecting the illustrative program of this royal manuscript. He was fifty-four years old when he was appointed as the head of the Shah 'Abbas's *kitābkhāna*, which he had to establish from the beginning, considering the absence of royal attention and patronage for artists during the ten-year rule of Muhammad Khudabanda. As known through the historical writings of Iskandar Bek as well as judging from Sadiqi's own writings, his "hypercritical and supercilious" character certainly made it difficult for others to work under his directorship.<sup>221</sup> Yet his merciless leadership of his minor artists assured the high quality of the outcome of this project, while pleasing the Shah-patron. He lost this long-sought position due to his short temper and misbehavior with his colleagues, as Iskandar Bek-i Munshi records. His fall from the monarch's favor was also assisted by conspiracies planned by 'Ali Riza 'Abbasi, the court calligrapher of the time, who also sought the position of the head of the court library.<sup>222</sup> It seems Sadiqi, in programming Shah 'Abbas's *Shāhnāma*, looked up to Shah Tahmasp's *Shāhnāma* more than the copy he, himself, planned for Isma'il II. There are eight shared scenes in the two manuscripts while there are only four illustrations common between the 1576-77 and 1587-97 *Shāhnāmas*.

The story of Zal and the Simurgh, however, is one of them. The Simurgh and the Divs fighting with Tahmuras are the only wondrous creatures of Shah ‘Abbas’s manuscript. The low number of illustrations (fourteen) executed in a period of ten years for Shah ‘Abbas’s copy of *Shāhnāma*, and its unfinished status, might be related to the scarcity of master painters, the high quality of these paintings, or to the pre-occupation of the project director with the rendition of the paintings for his own manuscript of *Anvār-i Suhaylī*. The last point highlights the control Sadiqi had over this project, thus confirming his active agency. After all, in the production of 1576-77 *Shāhnāma* of Shah Isma‘il II, Sadiqi was able to manage the execution of fifty illustrations in a period of less than two years with a team of less skilled artists. As might be expected though, the quality of the paintings in the earlier copy does not measure up to the ones in Shah ‘Abbas’s *Shāhnāma*. Sadiqi had stressed the courtly lives of Iranian kings and their enemies by devoting the majority of illustrations in 1587-97’s copy of the national epics to their events while, only four paintings depict the heroes’ lives, including only Zal and Rustam.

In shaping the two representations of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* manuscripts of Isma‘il II and Shah ‘Abbas I, the patrons’ agencies in selecting the illustrative program of their manuscripts are replaced with the agency of the artist-director of these projects, in both cases carried out by Sadiqi Bek. Shah Isma‘il II and Sadiqi Bek had similar personalities. They were both unpopular characters whose harsh tempers and aggressive behaviors towards their subordinates are recorded in historical writings. Shah ‘Abbas, on the other hand, must have recognized Sadiqi as someone who had widely travelled across the courts and knew people, and thus could be a powerful force in shaping his *kitābkhāna* and advancing its projects. Because they had to confront political opposition and experienced uneasy access to the throne, both rulers had concerns for the legitimacy of their rule and its consistency. The notion of kingship and the

possession of royal fortune had certainly been their concerns. These concerns were thoroughly understood by Sadiqi Bek who was himself a military figure, and probably shared some of their aspirations, imagining a high-ranking position for himself. Sadiqi had a self-seeking and proud character. He awarded a poet, who praised him, with money and his drawings. His commission of the first illustrated manuscript by an artist solely for himself in the history of Persian painting reveals the image he had of himself and his position. Therefore, the reference to the notion of royal fortune represented by the Simurgh is shaped and received equally by the artist and the patrons of these two illustrations. After all, according to pre-Islamic sources, as well as in the mystical philosophy of Iran, (as Suhrawardi synthesizes in his philosophy of Light, discussed in chapter two), “in every seeking soul there is a portion of the light of God, be it abundant or little.”<sup>223</sup> In that context, any being, especially the men of knowledge, can become the recipient of the divine glory, *farr*, in varying degrees. Sadiqi, a poet, writer, and painter, perceived his character worthy of such reception. He was nothing short of a Safavid patron. He fought bravely in the battlefields, he wrote well, and his paintings and drawings fetched high prices in the market. The position that Sadiqi desired earlier in his artistic career, when he created *the Simurgh Restores Zal to his Father* in Shah Isma‘il II’s *Shāhnāma* (1576-77), was certainly achieved when he rendered the same story in Shah ‘Abbas’s copy of the epics (1587-97). The second Simurgh portrayed by Sadiqi is glorious as the days of its artist and patron, Shah ‘Abbas, were in the last decade of the sixteenth century. The Simurgh in the earlier manuscript represents a longing for royal fortune created in an atmosphere of fear and terror.

None of Shah ‘Abbas’s successors could surpass him either in politics or in the patronage of arts and architecture, simply because he implemented many changes in the state and achieved many highlights that made it hard to excel. Besides, the upbringing of his successors in

harem, a practice initiated by Shah 'Abbas himself against the convention of princes being raised under the guidance of a wise advisor while being trained to govern, might have caused their inadequacy to achieve as much as he did. Shah 'Abbas was succeeded by his grandson Safi I (r. 1629-42), since he either executed or blinded his sons, fearing their greed for the throne. The system of patronage of architecture as well as the royal workshop established by Shah 'Abbas continued to function under Safi I who personally did not have much interest in any of these areas.<sup>224</sup> Shah 'Abbas II (r. 1642-66), however, who replaced his father Safi I, had a different approach towards the patronage of art and architecture. He was enthroned at the age of eight and left the harem at this early age. Thus, he received an education suitable for a ruler, including the skills of statecraft, and later, lessons in painting given by both Persian and European artists.<sup>225</sup> Shah 'Abbas II's taste for foreign elements could be contemplated foremost from the wall paintings of the Chihil Sutun palace in Isfahan. Shah Sulayman's typical upbringing in harem made him an unfit candidate to deal with the daily matters of state that were mainly left to his vizier, Shaykh 'Ali Khan. The reigns of Shah Sulayman and his successor Shah Sultan Husayn (r. 1694-1722) witnessed the decline of the Safavid state in terms of administration, military and economics. Neither of these two last Safavid monarchs was interested in engaging in government of the country or leaving their intimate environments and companies.<sup>226</sup> Unlike his lack of interest in government affairs, Shah Sulayman appeared to have had a refined taste in painting, since he supported the master painters of the time, such as Mu'in Musavvar, 'Ali Quli Jabbadar and Muhammad Zaman, practicing in both traditional and European styles. He also ordered Muhammad Zaman to add to and improve the two splendid royal manuscripts of the sixteenth century, a *Khamsa* of Nizami made for Shah Tahmasp in 1539-43, and the *Shāhnāma* manuscript prepared for Shah 'Abbas I in 1587-98.<sup>227</sup>

As a result of a change in the system of patronage, several manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* were produced at this time, none of which is associated with patronage of the monarch, but with the patronage of his slaves. The master-slave system introduced by Shah ‘Abbas I allowed the newly converted slaves (*ghulāms*) to take on critical positions in military and court in return for their absolute loyalty to the Shah replacing the Qizilbash elite.<sup>228</sup> These *ghulāms* gradually gained more power and consequently wealth, and became patrons of the arts, who commissioned works of art and architecture on behalf of the Shah.<sup>229</sup> Some of the most prominent *ghulāms* governed from the major provincial cities such as Mazandaran, Fars, Kirman, and Mashhad, where they also commissioned works of art and architecture. Examining the works that these surrogate-patrons created on behalf of their monarch attests to the formation of a new system of patronage masterminded by Shah ‘Abbas I and continued under his successors.<sup>230</sup> An example is a luxurious copy of the *Shāhnāma*, commissioned by Qarachaḡay Khan II in 1548 after his reappointment to his family position as the governor of Mashhad by Shah ‘Abbas II.<sup>231</sup> Babaie et al. propose that this commission might have been motivated by Murtiza Quli Khan’s commission of a *Shāhnāma* manuscript to be presented to Shah ‘Abbas II as a gift upon his accession to the throne.<sup>232</sup> Engaging in such grand projects as the production of these two *Shāhnāma* manuscripts by a *ghulām* and a Qizilbash amir indicates both the significance of the illustrated books as emblems of status as well as the rivalry among the Qizilbashes and *ghulāms* in patronizing the arts and gaining the monarch’s approval.<sup>233</sup> For both these patrons, the *Shāhnāma* played the role of a vehicle to demonstrate their faithfulness to their monarch. Thus, the art patronage of the *ghulāms* in the provinces was in conformity with royal taste and style, was well informed of the Persian cultural traditions, and contributed to the formation of the new Safavid visual language.

However, by the death of Shah ‘Abbas II in 1666, the power of the *ghulāms* and consequently their art patronage began to deteriorate.<sup>234</sup>

### Conclusion

The pattern of inclusion of the story of the Simurgh raising the infant Zal and returning him to his father into the illustrative program of four royal *Shāhnāma* manuscripts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as the stylistic characteristics of each, were examined in this chapter. Further, the historical and political issues around the lives of the patrons of each of these manuscripts were explored, to unearth the reasons behind the selection of this episode for illustration and the possible purpose this episode was meant to serve. As was examined in chapter one, the first references to the notion of kingship, Avestan *xvarənah* and Pahlavi *farr* in Persian culture appear in the Avestan *Yašts*. This fortune can be bestowed upon whoever acts rightly. The royal fortune is the requirement of kingship and a man has to be elevated to this divine status of possessing this fortune to become a ruler. However, the royal fortune would leave its possessor upon any wrongdoing. The founders of the Parthian and Sasanian dynasties, Arshak and Ardashir, are both recorded to have owned *farr*. In pre-Islamic ideology, the king as the representative of God on earth is honored by this royal fortune. Thus the Sasanian kings understood their positions as gods on earth. It is the Sasanian idea of kingship that entered the Islamic political ideology of the early Islamic rulers of Iran and, as Amir Arjomand states, “by the second half of the eleventh/fifth century, the tradition of seeing the ruler as the ‘Shadow of God on Earth’ became firmly established.”<sup>235</sup> As Soudavar indicates, the concept of the divine glory, or *farr-i īzadī*, was transposed from pre-Islamic Iran, the Sasanian dynasty in particular, to the early Islamic rule of the caliphs and later to the Mongol empire, and finally to the Safavids.

Justified by Islamic theologians, this God-given light, the requirement of kingship, could also be bestowed on non-Persian rulers who belonged to the lineage of the prophet Muhammad, or later, in case of the Turko-Mongol rulers, were the descendants of Chingiz Khan. The Safavid rulers obviously excelled in legitimacy by having the bloodlines of both.<sup>236</sup> The principle of legitimacy to rule among the Turko-Mongol dynasties of the Ilkhanid, Jalayirid, and Timurids in Iran remained with the male members of the family of the khan while the Safavid supremacy brought the charisma of kingship back to the rulers through their lineage with the holy Imams.

Similarly, the image of the Simurgh, as the possessor of *farr* according to written sources and as the symbol of the royal fortune in visual culture, experienced the same shift. The image of the fantastic bird remains as the symbol of royal glory as in case of its Sasanian counterparts, and its representations in the royal *Shāhnāma* manuscripts are informed of that symbolism. The Timurid prince, Muhammad Juki, ordered his manuscript of the *Shāhnāma* at the height of his disappointment that he would never ascend to the Persian throne. He needed the element of kingship to be bestowed upon him to acquire that position. The return of the abandoned Zal represents not only Muhammad Juki's desire for reconciliation with his father, but also his longing for the accompaniment of the *farr*, the Simurgh, with him in this return to his father and the Persian throne. In both prince Juki's and Shah Isma' il II's copies of the *Shāhnāma*, the exact moment of the story of Zal and the Simurgh was chosen to be depicted. The young Zal is fully protected by the fantastic bird. The troubled accession and heavily opposed rule of Shah Isma' il II equally concerned him and his artist in charge of this manuscript for the presence of the royal fortune, manifested in this illustration. Shah Tahmasp, on the other hand, received not only a stable kingdom from his father but also a fully proclaimed legitimized rule as a descendant of the holy Imams and the grace of God on earth.<sup>237</sup> He did not doubt his possession

of *farr-i īzadī*. In the first two illustrations of this story in his manuscript, Zal is sitting at the Simurgh's nest. They belong to the same world; *farr* is with him. Although the young king was under constant threat by the Ottomans, the three representations of the Simurgh in this trilogy do not transfer the anxiety over the notions of kingship and legitimacy but confirm the actuality and the presence of those elements in the life and character of the patron-ruler. While the last of these three scenes might refer to the celebrated event of the return of Tahmasp to the capital, Tabriz, the first two remain as ideologically charged images depicting the signifier of the *farr-i īzadī*. Equally, Shah 'Abbas, though he did not experience an easy access to the throne, with the support of his guardian and his own determined character, started a secure reign. Like his grandfather, Shah 'Abbas practiced and encouraged great piety that assured his great power. This stability was certainly perceived by Sadiqi, who depicted the moment of the story where Zal was chosen to live under the shadow and protection of the Simurgh, being carried to the safety and stability of her nest. In this painting, too, the divine grace is present and perceived.

The association of kingship with light and splendor later shaped the symbols of the luminous halo that adorned the heads of the kings. The second half of the sixteenth century coincides with the rule of the great Mughal emperor Akbar (r.1556-1605) in India and the formation of a universal religion, *Dīn-i Ilāhī*, by his vizier and confidant, Abu'l Fazl-i 'Alami. In his writings, that encompass both Zoroastrian elements and the Suhrawardi's philosophy of light regarding the concept of the divine glory, Abu'l Fazl describes kingship or *farr-i īzadī* as a light bestowed by God to the ruler, that also affects the men in its presence.<sup>238</sup> The similarity of this divine light to the sun and its rays shaped the symbolism of a sunburst, *shamsa*, surrounding the heads of the rulers in numerous examples in Mughal painting. The appearance of illuminated *shamsas* in the beginning of royal manuscripts is charged with the same symbolic meanings. An

opening folio from an album made for Shah Jahan (r. 1627-1658) depicts a highly decorative *shamsa* with the patron's name and titles inscribed at its central medallion.<sup>239</sup> The four corners of the page are decorated with four soaring Simurghs (Figure 58) that along with the illuminated *shamsa* reinforce the presence of the divine glory for this Mughal ruler. These representations, although belonging to the genre of decorative motifs, reveal the symbolic connotations of the fantastic bird as the possessor of *farr*; thus they demonstrate the relocation of a symbolic form.

The argument that the representations of the Simurgh in the royal *Shāhnāma* manuscripts examined above signify the presence of *farr-i īzādī*, and are consciously selected by the programmer of the discussed manuscripts to be included in their illustrative program, is justified by the perception of patrons of their divine status. The royal connotation that the Simurgh imagery carried and the type of response it provoked since Persia's historical past charges these representations of the Simurgh with a presence, a presence that equally evokes response and recalls the notion of kingship.

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<sup>1</sup> While the luxury manuscripts of *Qur'an* reflect the Ilkhanid attempt to declare their new religion as the new converts to Islam, the history books, including the *Shāhnāma*, reveal their commitment to rebuild the Persian past. See Robert Hillenbrand, "The Arts of the Book in Ilkhanid Iran," in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353*, eds. Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002), pp. 134-167, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shahnama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Abolala Soudavar, "The Saga of Abu-Sa'id Bahādor Khān: The Abu-Sa'idnāmé," in *The Court of Ilkhans: 1290-1340*, ed. Julian Raby and Teresa Fitzherbert, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art 12 (Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 95-218 (I retrieved the article from Mr. Soudavar's website: [www.soudavar.com](http://www.soudavar.com), pp. 1-97), p. 1.

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<sup>4</sup> Soudavar suggests this. See “The Saga of Abu-Sa‘id Bahādor Khān,” p. 1. Dūst Muḥammad’s reference to *Abū Sa‘īdnāma* appears on his preface to Bahram Mirza’s album, Topkapi Saray Library, Istanbul, H. 2154. See Wheeler M. Thackston, *Album Prefaces and Other Documents on the History of Calligraphers and Painters*, Studies and Sources in Islamic Art and Architecture 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> The Jalāyirīds were a Mongol dynasty that ruled from Baghdad over Iraq and western Persia after the fall of the Ilkhans in 1336 until the rise of the Timurid dynasty at the turn of the century. They were fully removed from power in 1432. Two of the Jalayirid rulers are known as patrons of the art: Sultan Uways and his son, Sultan Ahmad. Both ruled from Tabriz. In 1386, upon Timur’s capture of Tabriz, Sultan Ahmad along with his library staff left Tabriz for Baghdad where he established an active center for manuscript production. See Filiz Çağman and Zeren Tanindi, *The Topkapi Saray Museum: The Albums and Illustrated Manuscripts*, trans. and ed. J.M. Rogers from original Turkish (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1986), pp.67-68.

<sup>6</sup> This is a paraphrase from the Persian text. For both Persian text and its English translation see Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 13. Schroeder suggested a *Shāhnāma* of grand size and quality was made for Sultan Uways. See Eric Schroeder, “Ahmad Musa and Shams al-Dīn: A Review of Fourteenth Century Painting,” *Ars Islamica* 6, no.2 (1939): 113-142, p. 131. Basil Gray attributes the illustration of *The Simurgh Carrying Zal to her Nest* (folio 23a in album H. 2153) and two other paintings to the school of Shams al-Din prepared for Sultan Uways between 1360 and 1370. See Basil Gray, *Persian Painting* (New York: Skira, 1961), 40-44. Atasoy proposes a longer time span, of 1330-1370, for these *Shāhnāma* fragments in the Istanbul albums. See Nurhan Atasoy, “Four Istanbul Albums and Some Fragments from Fourteenth-Century Shah-Names,” *Ars Orientalis* 8 (1970): 19-48, p. 32. Finally, Çağman and Tanindi attribute a group of four paintings including *The Simurgh Carrying Zal to her Nest*, to possibly Shams al-Din in Tabriz, c.1370. See Çağman and Tanindi, *The Topkapi Saray Museum*, p.71.

<sup>7</sup> The folios measure 33.6 x 22.9, with text written in four columns.

<sup>8</sup> Folio 278r, and folio 296a, respectively. The appearance of Muhammad Juki’s name, once on the castle gate owned by a Turanian king soon to be killed by the Iranian Prince, and in another occasion on the army banner of the Iranian hero soon killing an Iranian prince seems confusing. Had the appearance of the names been the patron’s choice, it remains unclear who he

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meant to identify with, the victorious or the defeated. Concerns for his political future might have caused him moments of hope and pessimism.

<sup>9</sup> The folios measure 38 x 26 cm, written in six columns of text, with 21 paintings many of them as full-page paintings.

<sup>10</sup> The folios measure 28.8 x 19.8 cm, in four columns of text, with 47 illustrations. Robinson proposed that this manuscript was a response to Baysunghur's magnificent *Shāhnāma*. B. W. Robinson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Painting in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p.16. The earlier date of the 1420s is proposed by Firuza Abdullaeva and Charles Melville in *The Persian Book of Kings: Ibrahim Sultan's Shahnama* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2008), p 125. Elaine Wright supports the late 1420s or early 1430s as the date of production. See Elaine Wright, *The Look of the Book: Manuscript Production in Shiraz, 1303-1452* (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 2012), p. 191.

<sup>11</sup> Folios measure 47 x 31.8 cm. All the illustrations of this magnificent copy are reproduced in Martin Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch, *The Houghton Shahnama: The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp Safavi*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), and Sheila Canby, *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp: The Persian Book of Kings* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Welch, *Artists for the Shah: Late Sixteenth Century Painting at the Imperial Court of Iran* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 20. Its large folios measure about 43 x 30 cm. The manuscript was dispersed by the French dealer, Demotte, after he exhibited it in Paris in 1912. Before that it was kept at the Qajar Royal Library. Robinson recorded 49 known paintings for this manuscript in B.W. Robinson "Ismā'īl's Copy of the *Shāhnāma*," *Iran* 14 (1976): 1-8, p. 1. The whereabouts of thirty-one illustrations of this manuscript are identified by the *Shāhnāma* project that indicates twelve images held at the Riza 'Abbasi Museum in Tehran. In my recent visit to the museum in March 2015, only eight of the illustrations were on exhibit. The next large number of illustrations, nine, belongs to the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.

<sup>13</sup> Robinson, "Ismā'īl's Copy of the *Shāhnāma*," p. 5. Either lost or never produced, the manuscript has no colophon.

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<sup>14</sup> For these seven paintings see Robinson, “Ismā‘īl’s Copy of the *Shāhnāma*,” p. 6. Most of these attributions are based on the contemporary writings of the names of the artists in *nasta‘līq* script either within or without the margin. Anthony Welch identifies six paintings as Sadiqi’s contribution to this manuscript. The museum entry also mentions the attribution to Sadiqi but the source is not identified. I could not locate an artist’s name on the painting of *The Simurgh Returning Zal to his Father*.

<sup>15</sup> It remains in 21 folios scribed in *nasta‘līq* in four columns, with page size 407 x 261 mm. The fragments lack any reference to date, place, or patron.

<sup>16</sup> A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, pp. 100 and 106. The manuscript was probably left unfinished due to the shifting of the capital to Isfahan.

<sup>17</sup> A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, p. 108. Also discussed by the same author in “Painting and Patronage under the Shah ‘Abbas I,” *Iranian Studies* VII, Studies on Isfahan: Proceedings of the Isfahan Colloquium, Part I, ed. Renata Holod (Fogg Art Museum, 1974), p. 474.

<sup>18</sup> These are folios 4 verso, 11 recto, 18 recto, and 22 verso.

<sup>19</sup> The four fifteenth-century paintings are *the Beggar before the King for Whom He Professed* (63.210.28), *Funeral Procession and Burial Preparation* (63.210.35), *The Anecdote of the Bearded Man Who Fell into the Water* (63.2140.44), *Shaykh Mahneh and the Villager* (63.210.49); and the four seventeenth-century paintings are *an Execution Scene* (63.210.4), *the Concourse of the Birds* (63.210.11), *Shaykh San‘an Beneath the Window of the Christian Maiden* (63.210.18), *Shaykh San‘an with the Repentant and Dying Christian Maiden* (63.210.22), all reproduced in Marie Lukens Swietochowski, “The Historical Background and Illustrative Character of the Metropolitan Museum’s *Mantiq al-Tayr* of 1483,” in *Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, ed. Richard Ettinghausen (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1972), pp. 39-72.

<sup>20</sup> Ernst J. Grube, “The Seventeenth-Century Miniatures,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 25, no.9, The Language of the Birds (May 1976): 339-52, p. 339.

<sup>21</sup> Swietochowski, “The Historical Background and Illustrative Character of the Metropolitan Museum’s *Mantiq al-Tayr* of 1483,” p. 42.

<sup>22</sup> One illustration, *Kay Kavus Killing the Demons of Mazandaran*, was destroyed in a fire in 1937. See Grabar and Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History*, p. 88.

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<sup>23</sup> In the *Shāhnāma*, the events of Zal's birth, his upbringing by the Simurgh, his return to Zabulistan, his marriage to Rudaba, and the birth of his son, Rustam, happen during the reign of Manuchihr. These five illustrations are *Zal Climbing to Rudaba* (Private Collection, Lyons), *Zal Approaching Shah Manuchihr* (Pers. MS. 111, Chester Beatty Library, Dublin), *The Mubids Interrogating Zal* (31.436, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), *The Reign of Shah Zav, Son of Tahmasp, Was Five Years* (S86.0107, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution), and *Bahman, Son of Isfandiar, Meeting Zal* (1971-107/2a, Collection Musee d'art et d'histoire, Geneva). For images see Grabar and Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History*, pp. 75, 70, 81, 85, and 93. In his comparative study of these illustrations and the history of the Ilkhanid dynasty, and in accordance with his hypothesis, Abolala Soudavar relates each of these illustrations to an actual event. In each of the paintings the figure of Zal represents a contemporary character of the Ilkhanid court. See Soudavar, "The Saga of Abu-Sa'id Bahādor Khān," pp. 18, 22, 40-41.

<sup>24</sup> Grabar and Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History*, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> These are *Faridun Testing his Sons* depicting a dragon who was the disguised Faridun (fig. 5 in Grabar and Blair), *Kay Kavus Killing the Demons of Mazandaran* depicting demons (now destroyed, fig. 16 in Grabar and Blair), *Alexander Fights the Habash Monster* showing a composite wolf-like animal with a long horn and wings (fig. 33 in Grabar and Blair), *Alexander and his Warriors Fighting a Dragon* depicting a snake-like monster (fig. 34 in Grabar and Blair), *Bahram Gur Killing a Dragon* (fig. 49 in Grabar and Blair), and *Bahram Gur Fighting a Wolf and Cutting off his Head* (fig. 53 in Grabar and Blair). In all these instances, that could also fall under the battle and hunting scenes, the emphasis is clearly on either a hero, or a king/prince, and his daring actions, with his figure usually located at the center of the painting facing the monster, while having his men behind him.

<sup>26</sup> Four albums in Istanbul are Topkapi Saray Hazine 2153, 2154, 2160, and University Library F1422, and the Diez Album is at Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

<sup>27</sup> Grabar and Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History*, pp. 39-40. Twenty-eight illustrations with the theme of the *Shāhnāma* representing the fourteenth-century style of painting are found in albums H. 2153 and H. 2160. See Atasoy, "Four Istanbul Albums," p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Atasoy, "Four Istanbul Albums," p. 25.

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<sup>29</sup> Acc. No. 43.658, The Cleveland Museum of Art. See Grabar and Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History*, fig. 49, p.155.

<sup>30</sup> The hypothesis that these *Shāhnāma* fragments were ordered to be added to the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma* is not generally accepted. See Atasoy, “Four Istanbul Albums,” p.32

<sup>31</sup> Another illustration in the same album depicts the moment after this scene when Sam is at the foot of the mountain asking for his son’s return. Atasoy categorized this illustration with the same group as *The Simurgh Carrying Zal to her Nest*, discussed above, and proposes that they are the works of the same artist. See Atasoy, “Four Istanbul Albums,” p. 25, and fig. 5. I have not encountered any other reproduction or discussion of this illustration. The image I have is in poor condition.

<sup>32</sup>With the change of dynasties in Iran and consequently the capital cities, the royal libraries, their contents and staff were also moved. Books and paintings were received as the symbols of wealth, and their possession signified the status of a dynasty or a ruler.

<sup>33</sup> Çağman and Tanindi, *The Topkapi Saray Museum*, p. 71. Basil Gray suggests that after being returned to Tabriz, these pages remained there till 1548, when they were taken away by the Ottomans as war booty, contrary to the early date of 1514 as their removal by the Ottomans. See Basil Gray, “History of Miniature Painting: The Fourteenth Century,” in *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia: 14<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, eds. Basil Gray and Oleg F. Akimushkin (Paris: UNESCO, 1979) p. 108.

<sup>34</sup> Hillenbrand identifies the fifty years of the Ilkhanid rule during the late thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth centuries as the “formative period” of Persian painting. See Hillenbrand, “The Arts of the Book in Ilkhanid Iran,” p. 167.

<sup>35</sup> Textiles were desirable objects of trade for the Mongols, who appreciated their portability and rarity. Silk textiles became the symbol of power and wealth among them. The Mongols not only acquired these textiles through the silk trade with China but also established textile workshops by relocating the Chinese and Persian textile workers to transfer those techniques. As a result of this transformation and the availability of these Chinese and Central Asian textiles, their decorative motifs and patterns entered the visual vocabulary of Persian art in various media. See Komaroff, “The Transmission and Dissemination of a New Visual Language,” in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan*, pp. 168-195, p. 184. The surviving drawings in the Istanbul and Diez

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albums from the fourteenth century reveal that drawings on paper were important tools in formulating and transferring the motifs during the Ilkhanid period, a method that reached its zenith in Timurid workshops in the next century. Same source, pp. 192-93.

<sup>36</sup> Acc. No. T-0292, Textile Traces Collection, Los Angeles. See Komaroff, “The Transmission and Dissemination of a New Visual Language,” p. 174, fig. 203, cat. No. 187.

<sup>37</sup> The flight of the Simurgh in this fourteenth-century illustration as well as in the fifteenth century depiction of the Simurgh in Muhammad Juki’s *Shāhnāma*, as will be discussed below, inevitably recalls the flying phoenixes decorating two fourteenth century plates in the Chinese porcelain collection at the Ardibil shrine (Figures 35 a-b). These are Acc. No. 29.122 and Acc. No. 29.128, both about 7 x 45 cm. The first plate is decorated with a downward flying and the second one with an upward flying phoenix, both in the midst of Chinese landscape elements of banana, bamboo, and lotus plants. For reproductions see John Alexander Pope, *Chinese Porcelains from the Ardebil Shrine* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1981), plates 14 and 22.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (Washington: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 1989), p. 52. Timur enjoyed listening to the histories and narratives being read to him. See John Woods, “The Rise of Timurid Historiography,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46, no.2 (April 1987): 81-108, p. 82.

<sup>39</sup> A collection of five Persian epics in two volumes including the *Shāhnāma* with five illustrations in volume one, produced in Shiraz, 1397-98, now at The Chester Beatty Library (CBL Per 114) and the British Library (Or. 2780), was produced at the time of Timur’s grandson, Pir Muhammad, the governor of Shiraz. But the illustrations were added later between 1410 and 1414 when Iskandar Sultan, Pir Muhammad’s brother, assumed this position. See Elaine Wright, “Firdausi and More: A Timurid Anthology of Epic Tales,” in *Shahnama: The Visual Language of the Persian Book of Kings*, ed. Robert Hillenbrand (England: Ashgate, 2004), pp.65- 84. See also Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, cat. 16 A and B, p. 331, and p. 56.

<sup>40</sup> Folio 48a in album H.2152, at the Topkapi Saray Museum. Attributed to Iran or Central Asia, c. 1400 by Lentz and Lowry. For a black and white reproduction see *Timur and the Princely Vision*, fig.23, p.63.

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<sup>41</sup> Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, p.60. Timur's interest in large size manuscripts and buildings is known. He also assigned many of his relocated artists to paint murals. Those murals might have inspired the large scale of these paintings. See Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, "A Sufi Theme in Persian Painting: the Diwan of Sultan Ahmad Gala'ir in the Free(?) Gallery of Art, Washington DC," *Kunst des Orients*, Vol. 11, issue 1/2 (1976): 45-84, p. 79.

<sup>42</sup> According to the *Shāhnāma* text, Zavara, Rustam's brother, Faramarz, his son, Rudaba, and Zal were the group who received the wounded Rustam and Rakhsh after the battle with Isfandiar.

<sup>43</sup> The illustration was discussed in chapter three. As proposed the illustrations are added at a later time to the manuscript, and probably in Shiraz.

<sup>44</sup> A pupil of Shams al-Din, 'Abd al-Hayy was in service of the Jalayirid rulers in Tabriz and Baghdad but was taken to Samarqand by Timur in 1401.

<sup>45</sup> Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, pp. 115-16.

<sup>46</sup> These four are *Firdausi and the Poets of Ghazna*, *Rustam Slays the White Div*, *The Murder of Siyavush*, and *Rustam Pulls the Khaqan of China from his Elephant*.

<sup>47</sup> There are forty-seven illustrated *Shāhnāmas* preserved from fifteenth-century Iran under the Timurid dynasty with no known royal affiliation, most of them produced in Shiraz and Herat, with a few examples from Samarqand, Qazvin and the Sultanate India. Based on the *Shāhnāma* website, there are eleven representations of the first episode of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* excluding the scene appearing on Muhammad Juki's copy (These are: *The Simurgh Carries Zal to her Nest*: 1 image; *Sam Recognizes his son, Zal*: 1 image; *The Simurgh Bids Farewell to Zal*: 8 images; *The Simurgh brings Zal to Sam*: 1 image). Twenty-one paintings of *The Birth of Rustam* are recorded on the *Shāhnāma* website. The few for which an image is provided on the website do not include a representation of the Simurgh. *The Fifth Ordeal of Isfandiar: Killing of the Simurgh* has been represented in 16 manuscripts, excluding Ibrahim Sultan's *Shāhnāma*. The last appearance of the Simurgh in the Persian epics, the Simurgh healing Rustam and his horse, Rakhsh has been illustrated five times (These are: *Zal Summons the Simurgh to Restore Rakhsh and Rustam to Health*: 1 image; *The Simurgh Heals Rustam's Wounds*: 3 images; and *The Simurgh Heals Rakhsh's Wounds*: 1 image).

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<sup>48</sup> This manuscript has been heavily damaged, restored and repainted. See Eleanor Sims, “The Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausī’s ‘*Shāhnāma*’ Commissioned by the Princes of the House of Tīmūr,” *Ars Orientalis* 22 (1992): 43-68, p. 46. Robinson mentions that Isfandiar’s face in this painting has been repainted but he does not refer to any other parts being repainted. See B.W. Robinson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Painting in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 21.

<sup>49</sup> For example, see the illustration of *Isfandiar’s Fifth Labor* in the Inju *Shāhnāma* of 1330, at the Topkapi Saray Museum (Ms. H.1479, Fol. 145a). Also, our figure 30, discussed in chapter three.

<sup>50</sup> Robinson, *Persian Painting in the Bodleian Library*, p. 15.

<sup>51</sup> Folios 2r-3v and 6r-7v. There are three frontispieces, one depicting an enthronement scene.

<sup>52</sup> The other four drawings are folio 2v: drawing of a lion in landscape, folio 3r: landscape with animals and birds, folio 4v: a man carrying a dragon-headed wand riding on a phoenix, and folio 6v: a man riding a lion.

<sup>53</sup> Elaine Wright, *The Look of the Book*, p. 194.

<sup>54</sup> David Roxburgh, “Persian Drawing, CA. 1400-1450: Materials and Creative Procedures,” *Muqarnas* 19 (2002): 44-77.

<sup>55</sup> Album H.2152, fol. 86a, page of drawings, Iran or central Asia, 1400-1450, inks on paper, 68 x 50 cm, reproduced in Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, fig.53, p.164.

<sup>56</sup> Roxburgh, “Persian Drawing, CA. 1400-1450,” p. 61.

<sup>57</sup> f. 73. S.49, #1 and S.73. S.63#2, Iran, ca. 1400-1450, Ink on paper, Diez Album, Berlin, reproduced in Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, catalogues number 91 and 93, pp.192-93.

<sup>58</sup> Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, p. 166. The other two categories are ‘pictorial’ and ‘illustrative’ as suggested by these authors.

<sup>59</sup> For example, in *Isfandiar Kills Arjasp at the Brazen Hold* the third soldier guarding Isfandiar, while he is killing Arjasp in his throne, carries a quiver decorated by images of two Simurghs. Isfandiar’s quiver seems to be ornamented with the design of a dragon. In the scene of *Rustam Killing the White Div* the large quiver of Rustam hanging from a tree trunk on the upper right corner of the painting is also decorated with one elaborate Simurgh. For reproductions and

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detailed images see Mohammad-Hasan Semsar, *Kākh-i Gulistān: Guzīna-yī az Shāhkārha-yi Nigārgarī va Khushnivīsī* [Gulistan Palace Library: Portfolio of Miniature Paintings and Calligraphy] (Tehran: Zarrin va Simmin, 1379/2000), pp. 94-95 and 99-100.

<sup>60</sup> Elaine Wright states that the three frontispieces were added later, and certainly after 1429. See Wright, *The Look of the Book*, p. 195.

<sup>61</sup> As suggested by Elaine Wright, in *The Look of the Book*, p. 194.

<sup>62</sup> The first lacuna appears between folios 7 and 8 containing about 1600 couplets, and probably 24 folios; the second lacuna is between folios 41 and 42, about 1000 couplets in 8 folios. See B.W. Robinson, “The *Shāhnāma* of Muhammad Jūkī: RAS. MS 239,” in *The Royal Asiatic Society: Its History and Treasures*, ed. Stuart Simmonds and Simon Digby (London: Brill, 1979), pp. 83-102, p. 93.

<sup>63</sup> Suggested by Robinson, “The *Shāhnāma* of Muhammad Jūkī,” p. 93.

<sup>64</sup> Suggested by Barbara Brend, *Muhammad Juki’s Shahnama of Firdausi* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 2010), pp. 42-43 and Appendix B, p.184. She argues that since *Jamshid Teaches the Craft* and *Zahhak Nailed to Mount Damavand* are the scenes illustrated in both manuscripts of Ibrahim Sultan and Baysunghur, they were probably illustrated in Muhammad Juki’s manuscripts as well. This remains a hypothesis.

<sup>65</sup> For example, in the Great Ilkhanid *Shāhnāma* and Baysunghur’s *Shāhnāma*, *Zahhak Enthroned*, in Ibrahim Sultan’s and Shah Tahmasp’s copies, *The Court of Gayumars*, in Shah Isma‘il’s copy, *Tahmuras Conquering the Demons*, and in Shah ‘Abbas’s manuscript, *Faridun’s court with his Sons and the Daughters of the King of Yemen* make the first illustrations of the epics.

<sup>66</sup> Robinson, “The *Shāhnāma* of Muhammad Jūkī,” p. 96.

<sup>67</sup> Dorn 329, Russian National Library.

<sup>68</sup> Hillenbrand observes this as one of the spatial values practiced in Timurid painting. See Robert Hillenbrand, “The Uses of Space in Timūrid Painting,” in *Studies in the Islamic Arts of the Book* (London: The Pindar Press, 2012), pp.1-50, p. 18.

<sup>69</sup> Brend notes that the pattern of triple dots on the attendant’s sleeve resembles late fourteenth and early fifteenth-century paintings. See Brend, *Muhammad Juki’s Shahnamah of Firdausi*, p. 54.

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<sup>70</sup> Brend suggests these rocks as the origins of rocks in the late fifteenth-century commercial Turkmen painting. See Brend, *Muhammad Juki's Shahnamah of Firdausi*, p. 54.

<sup>71</sup> Brend, *Muhammad Juki's Shahnamah of Firdausi*, p. 141. The other two paintings by the same artist are *Rustam Attacks Bazur, the Sorcerer* and *Iskandar Comforts the Dying Dara*. Brend acknowledges that these attributions remain as hypotheses. I can compare the rocks in this painting with the rocks in *Rustam Slays the White Div* in Baysunghur's *Shāhnāma*, though I am not certain if the same hand executed them. For reproduction see Semsar, *Kākh-i Gulistān*, p.95.

<sup>72</sup> Brend observes that in this manuscript, the trees are applied either for emphasis or for balance. See Brend, *Muhammad Juki's Shahnamah of Firdausi*, p. 140. In this example, the single rather large tree on the right generates a balance in with the multicolored massive rocks on the left of the painting.

<sup>73</sup> For some examples in Muhammad Juki's manuscript see *Rustam Slays the White Div* (fol. 44a), *Suhrab Slain by Rustam* (fol. 67b), *Ruham Attacks Barzu* (fol. 135a), and *The Akvan-i Div Lifts the Sleeping Rustam* (fol. 165b). The cypress tree is a native tree to Iran and present Afghanistan and has gained significant symbolism in Persian poetry. See Hūšang A'lam, "Cypress," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 1993 <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/cypress-sarv-cupressus-tourn> (accessed September 12, 2014).

<sup>74</sup> These four illustrations are *the Simurgh Restores Zal to Sam* (fol. 16b), *Rustam Slays the White Div* (44a), *Akvan-i Div Lifts the Sleeping Rustam* (fol. 165b), and *Gushtasp Slays the Dragon* (fol. 250b). The icy white rocks represent the dwelling of the White Div, while pink and blue rocks distinguish the two worlds that the dragon and Gushtasp belong to. Similarly in the battle between the Iranian hero, Ruham, and the Turanian sorcerer, Barzu, (fol. 135a) the pink and blue rocks portray the landscape elements of the conflict between the hero and the supernatural power of magic.

<sup>75</sup> Stuart Cary Welch, *A King's Book of Kings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum, 1972), p. 54; Canby, *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp*, p. 16. Another key figure in formation of Safavid synthesis is their patron, Shah Tahmasp, aptly noted by Sheila Canby in "Safavid Painting," in *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of the Safavid Iran 1501-1576*, ed. Jon Thompson and Sheila Canby (New York: Asia Society Museum, 2003), p. 80. Welch and Dickson trace the origins of

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Safavid art in Timurid and Turkmen paintings. See Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnama*, Vol. 1, pp. 15-26.

<sup>76</sup> Qāzī Aḥmad Munshī Qumī, *Gulistān-i Hunar*, ed. Ahmad Suhayli Khawnsari (Tehran: Manuchihri, 1383/2004), p. 137. After Bihzad joined the Tabriz workshop, Sultan Muhammad, Bihzad and Aqa Mirak became close companions. Sultan Muhammad also taught painting to the young Tahmasp after the prince's return from Herat to Tabriz. See same source, p. 137, footnote 1 by the editor.

<sup>77</sup> Thackston, *Album Prefaces and other Documents on the History of Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 16. Dust Muhammad's preface to Bahram Mirza's album was one of the sources that Qazi Ahmad used in collecting the information about painters and calligraphers, yet his entry on Sultan Muhammad is brief and devoid of Dust Muhammad's ornate vocabulary.

<sup>78</sup> Soucek, Priscilla, "Sultan Muhammad Tabrizi: Painter at the Safavid Court," in *Persian Masters: Five Centuries of Persian Painting*, ed. Sheila Canby (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1990), pp. 55-70, p. 55.

<sup>79</sup> Qazi Ahmad, *Gulistān-i Hunar*, p. 140-141. He also narrates the notorious story of 'Abd al-'Aziz and Maulana 'Ali Asghar, Aqa Riza's father, who secretly copied Shah Tahmasp's seal and when caught, were sentenced to have their noses and ears cut off. See same page. This incident occurred in 1530s. However, 'Abd al-'Aziz, who had a talent and training in other crafts, fabricated a refined wooden nose for himself. He later was forgiven, returned to the royal atelier, gained respect, and contributed to the illustrated *Fālnāma* manuscript of Shah Tahmasp in 1550s. Sheila Canby, following Dickson and Welch, states "he became the Shah's painting instructor after Bihzad's death in 1536-37." See Canby, "Safavid Painting" in *Hunt for Paradise*, p. 124, while both Qazi Ahmad and Budāq-i Qazvīnī record him as a pupil of Shah Tahmasp. See Abolala Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts: Selections for the Art and History Trust Collection* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), p. 186. It is probable that their source was the Ottoman chronicler, 'Ali's reference to 'Abd al-'Aziz. See Mustafa 'Āli Efendi, *Manākib-i Hunerverān* [the Merits of the Artists], trans. from Turkish to Persian by Tufiq Subhani (Tehran: Surush, 1991), pp. 105-106. While the young 'Abd al-'Aziz might have received training in painting from Bihzad, Shah Tahmasp, and even his own father, 'Abd al-Vahhab, in the 1520s, he could have reached the mastery to teach the monarch in the late 1530s after the death of Bihzad. In that

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case, the two paintings of the Simurgh attributed to him, folios 62v and 63v, were executed while he was still receiving training, and therefore his role could not have been more than an assistant to Sultan Muhammad. Folio 63v in particular demonstrates a skillful hand in depicting the details of outlines.

<sup>80</sup> Stuart Cary Welch, *Wonders of the Age: Masterpieces of Early Safavid Painting, 1501-1576* (Cambridge: Fogg Art Museum/ Harvard University, 1979), p. 66.

<sup>81</sup> Preserved in album H. 2153, Topkapi Saray Museum, attributed to the Jalayirid master Shams al-Din, formerly discussed.

<sup>82</sup> Thanks to Dr. Ute Franke at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin, with previous arrangements, I was able to examine this illustration closely in August 2014.

<sup>83</sup> Dickson and Welch describe Sultan Muhammad's rendition of nature as pantheistic in which rocks are alive with men, beasts and demons. See Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnama*, vol. 1, p. 81. The treatment of rocks in *The Death of Zakhak* (folio 37v) by Sultan Muhammad reveals a paler and more limited palette where the edges of rocks are outlined with sharper and darker lines compared to the colorful misty rock juts in *The Court of Gayumars* (folio 20v).

<sup>84</sup> S.C. Welch briefly points out "Sultan Muhammad's deep involvement" in the creation of the folio 62v, *Zal Is Sighted by a Caravan*, without which this painting "could not have come into being." See S.C. Welch, *Wonders of the Age*, p. 66. Cat. 16. On the other hand, according to Dickson and Welch, 'Abd al-'Aziz who was closely observed by the master, Sultan Muhammad, and was heavily inspired by *The Court of Gayumars* in fact carried out some work on *The Court of Gayumars* and some other paintings by the master. (The authors, in particular, find his dynamic brushwork on vegetation and rock formations). See *The Houghton Shahnama*, p. 219.

<sup>85</sup> Sheila Canby in *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp*, pp. 47-48, examines the costumes and textiles in this manuscript.

<sup>86</sup> For a detailed study of this artist's contribution to Tahmasp's *Shāhnāma* See Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnama*, pp. 216-228, where the authors have written at length about 'Abd al-'Aziz and that he was inspired by Sultan Muhammad but lacked his mastery. He, unlike his father, had an emotional and restless personality, which transferred to his art. The incident of robbery that would end his life, mentioned earlier, attests to his unpredictable character.

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<sup>87</sup> *Jāma-i khusrau ārāy* or *pahlivānī qubāy*, جامه خسرو آرای or پهلوانی قباى as referred to in the text as well as in the lines inscribed on this folio.

<sup>88</sup> Ox-headed mace or *gurz-i gāv sar*, according to the *Shāhnāma*, was first made for Faridun and at his order to blacksmiths when he was enthroned. It became the symbol of heroism and distributing justice and always remained in the family of heroes. Sam's *gurz* was inherited by Zal, and then by Rustam, who used it in his important battles. The ox head might be a reference to *farr* that left Jamshid and was received by Mithra, Garshaspand, and Faridun in *Avesta* (yt. 10. 34. 38). See Doostkhah, Jalil, "Gorz," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2002 <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gorz> (accessed October 17, 2014). There is no mention in the *Shāhnāma* that the ox-headed *gurz* was given to Zal at this point. It would have been the choice of the creators of this illustration to represent Zal with the ox-headed *gurz*, probably to connect him more strongly to the family of Iranian heroes. The scene could have been inspired by Tahmasp's return from Herat to Tabriz as a young boy, and the celebrations associated with that.

<sup>89</sup> While the artist has tried to depict some grotesque faces, he does not get even close to the mastery that depicted such faces on folio 63v. However, one piece of rock under the cypress tree in the middle of the two rocky clusters drawn in pale shades of orange highly resembles the shape of a man in bust turning his head towards the mountain, as though he is in hiding. Some later contributions of Qadimi to this manuscript, for example folio 229v, *Farud Confronts the Iranians*, c. 1530-35, display a different style in depicting the rocks; clear black outlines and sharp edges of rocks evidently vary from the rocks in folio 64v, being discussed here.

<sup>90</sup> Qazi Ahmad, *Gulistān-i Hunar*, p. 140. He records Qadimi as *mard-i abdāl šifat*, a man of god, or as Minorsky interprets "a man with the character of a dervish." See Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 185. Sam Mirza, Tahmasp's younger brother, in his treatise on the poets records him as "a good painter from Gilan who knew himself as a poet no lesser than others." See Sām Mīrzā Šafavī, *Tadhkira-yi Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*, ed. Rukn al-Din Humayun Farrukh (Tehran: Asatir, 1384/2005), p. 251. Like his brother, Sam Mirza also received a fine education in statecraft and the arts. He had a humble and wise personality and was interested in writing and poetry. He was murdered at the order of Shah Isma'īl II along with other Safavid princes. See the same source, introduction by the editor, pp. one to thirty-two.

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<sup>91</sup> Thackston, *Album Prefaces and Other Documents*, p. 16.

<sup>92</sup> Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnama*, p. 204.

<sup>93</sup> Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnama*, p. 204. The Aq Quyunlu style of painting was practiced in Gilan long after the collapse of the dynasty in Tabriz.

<sup>94</sup> Folio 436 v. attributed to ‘Abd al-Vahhab, under the supervision of Aqa Mirak, The David Collection, Copenhagen (32.1988). Also published in Kjeld von Folsach, *Art of the World of Islam in The David Collection* (Copenhagen, 2001), no. 34.

<sup>95</sup> Sunil Sharma, “The Productions of Mughal *Shāhnāmas*: Imperial, Sub-Imperial and Provincial Manuscripts,” in *Ferdowsi’s Shāhnāma: Millennial Perspectives*, ed. Olga Davidson and Marianna Shreve Simpson (Boston: Ilex Foundation, 2013), pp. 86-107.

<sup>96</sup> Stuart Cary Welch, “Zal in the Simurgh’s Nest: A Painting by Mir Sayyid ‘Ali for a *Shahnama* Illustrated for Emperor Humayun,” in *Arts of Mughal India: Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton*, ed. Rosemary Crill, Susan Stronge, and Andrew Topsfield (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2004), pp. 36-41.

<sup>97</sup> These two paintings are *Rustam and Seven Champions of Iran Hunt in Turan*, folio 135v, at The Nassir D. Khalili Foundation (MSS. 1030), and *Bahram Gur Pins the Coupling Onagers*, folio 568r, at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1970.301.62).

<sup>98</sup> The examination of oral traditions and narratives regarding the Simurgh in eastern Iran and Afghanistan might lead to a version of the story this painting depicts.

<sup>99</sup> Acc. No. 615, The Riza ‘Abbasi Museum, Tehran. I am thankful to Ms. Nazi Fatemi at the Riza ‘Abbasi Museum, who facilitated my examination of this folio and provided me with a high quality image of the illustration in March 2015, Tehran.

<sup>100</sup> Acc. No. Ir. M. 69/D, at the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, measuring 39 x 30 cm. Siyavush contributed at least thirteen paintings to this manuscript. See Anthony Welch, *Collection of Islamic Art*. 4 Vols. (Geneva: Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Chateau de Bellerive, 1972-1978), vol. 3, p. 94. Siyavush was a Georgian page at the court of Shah Tahmasp, who identified the boy’s talent and sent him to the court atelier to be trained. Siyavush proved to be a master painter who served four monarchs including Tahmasp. His life is recorded by Qazi Ahmad, p. 148, and Iskandar Bek Munshi, p. 176. For a detailed study of his life and career see A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, pp. 17-40.

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<sup>101</sup> This twisting tree resembles the tree painted by Siyavush's master, Muzaffar 'Ali, and therefore has been interpreted as an homage to the latter's work. See A. Welch, *Collection of Islamic Art*, p. 94.

<sup>102</sup> For reproductions see A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, fig. 2, p. 24, and Anthony Welch and Stuart Cary Welch, *Arts of the Islamic Book: The Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan* (London: The Asia Society, 1982) cat. 29B, p. 92, as well as in color.

<sup>103</sup> Folio 12r with accession number Per 277.12a, measuring 31x 23.5 cm is preserved at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ireland, along with the rest of the surviving folios of this manuscript. The other two paintings attributed to Sadiqi are: folio 5v, *Faridun's Sons with the Daughters of the Kings of Yemen*, and folio 11r, *Rudaba Lets Her Hair Down for Zal to Climb Up*. Considering the magnitude of the responsibility laid on Sadiqi by Shah 'Abbas in shaping a new atelier at a time when most of the artists were either dispersed among the provincial or foreign courts or had passed away, it seems reasonable that Sadiqi had to reach out to younger artists for carrying out the majority of the paintings, while he could only contribute three illustrations to this grand manuscript.

<sup>104</sup> I assume that as the head of the library and the director of the project, as well as in absence of any other mature artist, Sadiqi had the final say in making such decisions regarding the production of this manuscript. Riza was very young and at the beginning of his career. Habibullah of Sava must also have been younger than Sadiqi, although he was already a favorite of the Shah. Siyavush and Shaykh Zada were still active at the royal library that Sadiqi formed but must have been aged by then.

<sup>105</sup> A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, p. 120.

<sup>106</sup> "A blossoming tree, a mature summer shrub, an autumnal tree, and leafless wintry stumps" represent the four seasons in this painting. See A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, p. 122.

<sup>107</sup> *Artists for the Shah*, p. 122.

<sup>108</sup> I have seen only a black and white image of this painting. Anthony Welch describes this bird with "strong decorative power," yet not the "same unique" bird that Sadiqi depicted in Shah 'Abbas's copy of *Shāhnāma*. See A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, p. 132, for a reproduction see the same source, figure 50. The manuscript is dated to 1593, with all paintings proved to be the work of Sadiqi, himself. It is published by B.W. Robinson, "Two Persian Manuscripts in the

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Library of the Marquess of Bute: part II: *Anwar-i Suhayli* (Bute MS 347),” *Oriental Art* 18, no.1 (Spring 1972): 50-56. Robinson lists the illustrated folios and records this illustration as folio 91a. *The Phoenix and Other Birds Flying over the Sea*. See the same source, p. 55. The manuscript is preserved at Aga Khan Museum, Toronto (Ms. AKM 289).

<sup>109</sup> This manifests the change in effectiveness of royal patronage by the turn of the seventeenth century, thus the change of Persian painting from book illustration to single page painting and drawing affordable by a wider range of patrons. See A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, pp. 147-49.

<sup>110</sup> The artist’s name is inscribed on a rock along the spring surrounded by three birds.

<sup>111</sup> The remaining seven paintings depict the stories narrated by Hoopoe to advise the birds.

<sup>112</sup> English translation by Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis in ‘Attār, *The Canticle of the Birds: Illustrated Through Persian and Eastern Islamic Art*, with commentaries on the iconography by Michael Barry (Paris: Diane de Selliers, 2013), p. 103:

“Discerning, righteous and intelligent,  
He spoke, ‘My purposes are heaven-sent;  
I keep God’s secrets, mundane and divine,  
In proof of which behold the holy sign”

<sup>113</sup> For a symbolic interpretation of this painting and its elements see Barry, *The Canticle of the Birds*, p. 104, where he deciphers the hidden faces, the hunter, and the snake on the tree as the representations of Devil surrounding the soul-birds. The tree is the tree of life bowing in front of Hoopoe, the Solomon’s messenger, in high respect.

<sup>114</sup> Ms. Elliot 246. Fol. 25 verso, now at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The manuscript has seven paintings in Turkmen style of Shiraz. For an image see Swietochowski, “The Historical Background,” p. 47. Figure 5. Michael Barry records a scene of the birds surrounding the Simurgh from a Herat Manuscript of *Canticle of the Birds*, (Add. 18579, fol. 104) from c. 1490-1500 at the British Library, London, where a Simurgh with elaborate long tails spreading around her body dominates the painting. See Michael Barry, *The Canticle of the Birds*, p. 21 (our Figure 52). The five lines of text appearing in the bottom of this painting are in prose and definitely do not belong to *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*. In fact, this painting belongs to a manuscript of *Anvār-i Suhaylī*, (Add. 18579, fol. 104) at the British Library illustrating *The Sandpipers on their Nest on the*

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*Water while the Simurgh Leads the Army of Birds to their Rescue* available at

[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add\\_ms\\_18579\\_fs001r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_18579_fs001r)

<sup>115</sup> H. R. Roemer, “The Safavid Period,” in *Cambridge History of Iran: Timurid and Safavid Periods*, Vol. 6, edited by Peter Jackson and Lawrence Lockhart, pp. 189-350 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 304. Online publication 2008, <http://universitypublishingonline.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/cambridg> (accessed June 10, 2015). The French traveler, Tavernier, reports the presence of two European painters at the court of Shah ‘Abbas II to teach painting to the king, who admired European techniques. See A. Welch, *Shah ‘Abbas and the Arts of Isfahan*, p. 85.

<sup>116</sup> The list of the *Shāhnāmas* that Mu‘in fully illustrated, or partly contributed to, is long and includes: i) MS. I.O. Islamic 1256, c. 1630-40, India Office Library, The British Library with some paintings attributed to Mu‘in Musavvar by B.W. Robinson that include no representation of the Simurgh; ii) a *Shāhnāma* dated 1649, now dispersed, with marginal diagonal text columns; iii) the two volumes: MS. 22, dated 1654, at the Aga Khan Collection, and Ms. 270, dated 1655, at the Chester Beatty collection; iv) MS. PNS 381, c. 1650-60, at the National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg, with fifty illustrations including a painting of *Sam Asks the Simurgh to Return Zal* attributed to Riza-yi Musavvar; v) Cochran *Shāhnāma* MS. 13.228.17, dated 1663-69, at the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, with forty-two paintings by various artists including Mu‘in Musavvar; vi) MS. 1974.290.43, from 1660s, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. See Massumeh Farhad, “The Art of Mu‘in Musavvir: A Mirror of his Times,” in *Persian Masters: Five Centuries of Painting*, ed. Sheila Canby (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1990), pp. 113-128,” endnote 10, pp. 126-27. The information has been compared and completed by the *Shāhnāma* project website.

<sup>117</sup> A. Welch, *Shah ‘Abbas and the Arts of Isfahan*, p. 99, catalogue 56. Massumeh Farhad opposes this view based on the effectiveness of non-royal patronage in the production of luxurious manuscripts commissioned during the seventeenth century. She concludes the high quality of the manuscripts at this time does not necessitate their royal affiliation. See Farhad, “The Art of Mu‘in Musavvir,” p. 114.

<sup>118</sup> A. Welch, *Shah ‘Abbas and the Arts of Isfahan*, p. 99. The painting belongs to a private collection. For a black and white reproduction see the same source, cat. 56, p. 86.

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<sup>119</sup> MSS 1070r, at the Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, attributed to the 1660s. For a reproduction see Barbara Brend and Charles Melville, *Epic of the Persian Kings: The Art of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh* (London: Tauris, 2011), cat. 83, p. 200.

<sup>120</sup> Preserved at the Spencer Collection, New York Public Library (Spencer Pers. Ms. 2). The illustrations will be discussed in chapter five.

<sup>121</sup> This manuscript is now at the collection of the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, England (MS Holmes 151 A/6), in complete status containing 159 illustrations of which 143 paintings depict scenes of the *Shāhnāma* while 13 paintings belong to *Burzūnāma*.

<sup>122</sup> Ms. Holmes. 151. Folio 439 a, the Windsor Castle, reproduced in B. W. Robinson and Eleanor Sims, with contributions by Manijeh Bayani, *The Windsor Shahnama of 1648* (UK: Azimuth, 2007), plate 95.

<sup>123</sup> Ms. Homes 151, folios 5b and 6a.

<sup>124</sup> Folio 156v, Dorn 333, National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg. I have retrieved this information from the *Shāhnāma* project website (June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015). The quality of image does not allow much speculation.

<sup>125</sup> Eleanor Sims, "Towards a Monograph on the 17-Century Iranian Painter Muḥammad Zamān Ibn Ḥāji Yūsuf," *Islamic Art: Studies on the Art and Culture of the Muslim World V* (New York: the East-west Foundation, 2001), pp. 183-199, p. 183.

<sup>126</sup> A. Adamova, "The Life of Muḥammad Zamān: A Reconsideration," *Iran* 17 (1979): 65-70, p. 70. The author reviews the scholarship regarding this painter. It is now almost certain that he neither traveled to any of those countries nor was a Christian.

<sup>127</sup> A. Welch, *Shah 'Abbas and the Arts of Isfahan*, p. 148.

<sup>128</sup> A. Welch, *Shah 'Abbas and the Arts of Isfahan*, p. 148. Muhammad Zaman continued to work till the beginning years of the eighteenth century and under the patronage of the last king of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Sultan Husayn.

<sup>129</sup> Acc. No. Per. 277. 003. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

<sup>130</sup> Muhammad Zaman executed this painting after a print by Lucas Vosterman after a painting by Peter Paul Rubens. The painting is dated 1689 in Isfahan by Muhammad Zaman and was probably produced for a Christian patron of the Armenian community in Isfahan. It is now preserved at Harvard University Art Museum, Cambridge (1966.6). See A. Welch, *Shah 'Abbas*

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*and the Arts of Isfahan*, p. 117, Cat. 72. The line of signature by the painter indicates its execution and completion at the court. For a color reproduction see Eleanor Sims, Boris I. Marshak and Ernst Grube, *Peerless Images: Persian Painting and Its Sources* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 301, cat. 220.

<sup>131</sup> Acc. No. Or. 2265, fol. 203v, The British Library, London. For a color reproduction see Sims, *Peerless Images*, p. 311, cat. 232. The other painting of these three additions, *Bahram Gur and the Indian Princess* (same manuscript, fol. 221v) added to *Khamsa* of 1539-43, indicates the city of Ashraf as the place of its execution in the same year that *The Simurgh Assisting the Birth of Rustam* was painted. It is probable that the two paintings added to Shah 'Abbas's *Shāhnāma* were also painted in Ashraf, the summer dwelling of the Safavids in Mazandaran.

<sup>132</sup> For example, a painting signed by 'Ali Quli Jabbadar, *Shah Sulayman and his Courtiers*, Isfahan, 1670, now at the Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg, Album E.14, fol.98r shows a similarly patterned carpet that could be the production of either Isfahan or Herat. For a reproduction see Sheila Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art: 1501-1722* (London: The British Museum, 1999), fig. 144, p. 153.

<sup>133</sup> The other objects in the scene, located between the figures, are a tray of fruits and a tray with a wine bottle and a bowl with lid on it; they all seem to be of plain metal, either gold or copper. Most of the metalworks surviving from seventeenth-century Iran, however, are heavily decorated in low relief with ornaments, animal and human figures, as well as inscriptions. The absence of such decorations might be a reference to the archaic time setting of the story.

<sup>134</sup> By now, it is relevant to conclude that this bird is originated from the Jalayirid Simurgh of 1370s preserved in album H. 2153 at the Topkapi Saray Museum, formerly discussed.

<sup>135</sup> This synthesis of traditional and foreign elements transforms only the style of Persian painting; in its content Persian painting remains unchanged until the last decades of the nineteenth century and the rule of Nasir al-Din Shah. This "Iranizing" of foreign elements, as Sims words it, had long been one of the characteristics and flexibilities of Iranian art. See Sims, "Toward a Monograph on the 17-Century Iranian Painter Muhammad Zamān," p. 185.

<sup>136</sup> He enforced his connections with the lineage of 'Ali and the Ilkhans to highlight his power and legitimacy. See Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, pp. 27 and 33.

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<sup>137</sup> Lisa Golombek, “Discourses of an Imaginary Art Council in fifteenth-Century Iran,” in *Timurid Art and Culture: Iran and Central Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture VI, ed. Lisa Golombek and Maria Subtelny (New York: Brill, 1992), p. 2.

<sup>138</sup> Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, p. 74.

<sup>139</sup> Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, pp. 84 and 50. *Kitābkhāna* and the production of books have always played a significant role in Islamic culture and the Persianate world long before Timur. An influential example could be the *kitābkhāna* at Rashidiyya complex in Tabriz, established by the Ilkhanid vizier, Rashid al-Din, in the early fourteenth century. The *kitābkhānas* were usually located in close proximity to the courts. Calligraphers, painters, illuminators, paper-makers, and practitioners of other related crafts made the staff of a *kitābkhāna*. These establishments were directed by the head of the library, a position generally occupied by a calligrapher or a master-painter. The progress reports of the projects were prepared by the head of the library who also facilitated the contact between the patron and his library. The royal patrons had various degrees of involvement with their libraries and their productions. In this study, the terms such as *kitābkhāna*, royal library, royal workshop, and later in Qajar era, *naqqāsh-khāna*, all refer to the same institution.

<sup>140</sup> Golombek, “Discourses of an Imaginary Art Council,” p. 9. David Roxburgh speculates that Baysunghur had an administrative position overseeing the *kitābkhāna* in Herat during the mid 1420s. See David Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400-1600: From Dispersed to Collection* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 41.

<sup>141</sup> Lentz and Lowry describe the process of standardization and articulation of the Timurid aesthetics. See Lentz and Lowry, “The Kitabkhana and the Dissemination of the Timurid Vision,” in *Timur and the Princely Vision*, pp. 159-236.

<sup>142</sup> At these gatherings, the artists, musicians, and poets shared their work, were praised by the patrons, or were criticized. However, the main focus of these literary gatherings was poetry and the discussions around it. See Maria E. Subtelny, “Scenes from the Literary Life of Tīmūrīd Herāt,” in *Logos Islamikos: Studia Islamica in honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens*, ed. Roger M. Savoy and Dionisius A. Agius (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984), pp. 137-155 (144-46).

<sup>143</sup> Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400-1600*, pp. 27-28.

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<sup>144</sup> Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, p. 114.

<sup>145</sup> These works of poetry include, but are not limited to many Persian anthologies, *Khamsa* of Nizami, *Gulistān* of Sa‘di, and *Humāy and Humāyūn* of Khawju-yi Kirmani.

<sup>146</sup> Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, p. 160.

<sup>147</sup> Sims, “The Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausī’s *Shāhnāma* Commissioned by the Princes of the House of Timur,” p. 44.

<sup>148</sup> Sims, “The Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausī’s *Shāhnāma* Commissioned by the Princes of the House of Timur,” p. 45.

<sup>149</sup> Robert Hillenbrand, “Exploring a Neglected Masterpiece: The Gulistan *Shahnama* of Baysunghur,” *Iranian Studies* 43, no. 1 (2010): 97-126, p. 111.

<sup>150</sup> Sims, “The Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausī’s *Shāhnāma*,” p. 47. Also see Abdullaeva and Melville, *The Persian Book of Kings: Ibrahim Sultan’s Shahnama*, p. 123. Elaine Wright lays more emphasis on Ibrahim Sultan’s political agenda in shaping this production. See Wright, *The Look of the Book*, p.195.

<sup>151</sup> Sims, “The Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausī’s *Shāhnāma*,” p. 49.

<sup>152</sup> Sims, “The Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausī’s *Shāhnāma*,” pp. 49 and 55.

<sup>153</sup> Sims, “The Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausī’s *Shāhnāma*,” p. 49. Sims makes a brief reference to this.

<sup>154</sup> The historical sources vary regarding this issue. ‘Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi records Gauhar Shad Aqa as Muhammad Juki’s mother: “The great lady, Gauhar Shād, who was his mother.” See Brend, *Muhammad Juki’s Shahnamah of Firdausi*, p. 34, quoting from Samarqandi, *Maṭla‘-i Sa‘dayn va Majma‘-i Bahrayn* II/1, pp. 851-53. In some sources, Gauhar Shad appears to be Muhammad Juki’s stepmother, who shared only Ulugh Beg and Baysunghur with Shahrukh. Robinson mentions Gauhar Shad Aqa as his stepmother. See Robinson, “The *Shāhnāma* of Muhammad Jūkī: RAS. MS 239,” p.94. For references to Muhammad Juki and Gauhar Shad’s hostile position towards him see Khawnd Amīr, *Tārikh-i Habīb al-Siyar fi Akhbār-i Afrād-i Bashār*, Vol. 3 (Tehran: Khayyam, 1333/1954), p. 634; also in Wheeler M. Thackston, *Classical Writings of the Medieval Islamic World: Persian Histories of the Mongol Dynasties*, 3 vols. (London: Tauris, 2012), Vol. II, p. 348. Hāfiz-i Abrū, who records the details of Shahrukh’s time, mentions that Gauhar Shad Aqa organized a majestic celebration for the

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wedding of prince Juki and Mehrnegar Aqa, the daughter of the king of Mughulistan in 822 H/1412. See Hāfiz-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-Tavārīkh*, 2 vols. ed. Sayyid Kamal Haj Sayyid Javadi (Tehran: Nay, 1372/2003). Vol. 2, p. 701. Had Gauhar Shad Aqa been Muhammad Juki's stepmother, all her efforts in distancing him from the state and power would be defined.

Daulatshah records that Gauhar Shad had a strong influence on Shahrukh and the decisions he made. See Daulatshāh-i Samarqandī, *Tadhkirat al-Shu'arā* [Memoirs of the Poets], ed. Edward Brown (Tehran: Asatir, 1382/2003), pp. 339, 371, 405-406.

<sup>155</sup> Until he was three, he probably lived at the court of Timur in Samarqand.

<sup>156</sup> Two of his brothers were already governing Timurid cities: Ulugh Beg in Samarqand and Ibrahim Sultan in Fars. Baysunghur governed Herat in his father's long absences from the capital.

<sup>157</sup> Daulatshah-i Samarqandī, *Tadhkirat al-Shu'arā*, pp. 395-96.

<sup>158</sup> Daulatshah records that Shahrukh secretly considered prince Juki as his heir to the throne but did not find it wise to announce the news. Daulatshah-i Samarqandī, *Tadhkirat al-Shu'arā*, pp. 394-95.

<sup>159</sup> Brend, *Muhammad Juki's Shahnamah of Firdausi*, p.33. 'Ismat al-Dunya is the patroness of the famous Nizami's *Khamsa*, 1445-46.

<sup>160</sup> Brend, *Muhammad Juki's Shahnamah of Firdausi*, p. 33, cited from Samarqandī, II/1, p. 684. Similar measures were taken about 'Ala al-Daula, Baysunghur's son. By this time, Shahrukh had already lost two of his sons, Ibrahim Sultan and Baysunghur, due to excessive use of wine.

<sup>161</sup> Brend, *Muhammad Juki's Shahnamah of Firdausi*, p. 34 referring to Samarqandī, pp. 851-53. Also see Khawnd Amīr, *Tarīkh-i Habīb al-Siyar*, p. 634. Daulatshah, however, does not clearly mention the prince's frustrations as the cause of his illness but blames the 'brutality of the ill-fate and cruelty of the time that brought down this felicitous prince with some chronic disease.' See Daulatshah, *Tadhkirat al-Shu'arā*, p.396.

<sup>162</sup> Robinson, "The *Shāhnāma* of Muhammad Jūkī, RAS. MS 239," p. 93. Brend adds two more possible scenes to the seven suggested themes by Robinson. See Brend, *Muhammad Juki's Shahnamah of Firdausi*, p. 46.

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<sup>163</sup> Sims, “The Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausī’s *Shāhnāma*,” p. 48. Brend examines the signs, seals, and notes added to this manuscript at the Mughal court. It is probable that Babur acquired the manuscript in his capture of Samarqand in 1500-1501 or in Herat in 1506, when he arrived to support his cousin, Husayn Bayqara, against the Uzbeks. Brend, *Muhammad Juki’s Shahnamah of Firdausi*, p. 148.

<sup>164</sup> According to Firdausi, the king of the world, Faridun, divided his kingdom among his three sons, assigning Rum and the west to his eldest son, Salm; he gave China and Turan to his second son, Tur; and he entrusted the rule over Iran and Arabia to his youngest son, Iraj. In their envy, Salm and Tur plotted against their younger brother, and Tur murdered Iraj. Iran, however, remained in the hands of Iraj’s descendants, but the conflict between Iran and Turan expanded over generations and involved many kings and heroes, as narrated by Firdausi.

<sup>165</sup> The princes in exile, Siyavush, Gushtasp, Qubad, and even Isfandiar, the prince who courageously defended the country in the promise of his enthronement by his father but died a prince. The story of Isfandiar identifies with Muhammad Juki’s and his loyal and brave service to his father. See Brend, *Muhammad Juki’s Shahnamah of Firdausi*, p. 138.

<sup>166</sup> Mir ‘Ali Shir Navai (1441-1501) was himself a poet who wrote in the Chaghatay Turkish (or eastern Turkish) language and intended to raise Turkish language and poetry to the place of Persian language, believing in the superiority of the former. He dedicated an adaptation of the ‘Attar’s *Mantiq al-Ṭayr* in Chaghatay Turkish, titled *Lisān al-Ṭayr*, rendered in 1498-99, to Sultan Husayn. Illustrated copies of this account were produced during the sixteenth century, mostly in Bukhara. He was also a patron of the arts, architecture, and artists including the painter, Bihzad, the calligrapher Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, and historians Mirkhawnd and Khawnd Amir. See Swietochowski, “The Historical Background,” pp. 39-72, p. 42.

<sup>167</sup> Nūr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān-i Jāmī (1414-1492) was a religious scholar who turned to the path of Sufism, the order of Naqshbandi. He was introduced to and since then associated with the court of Timurids in the 1450s. He was a respected spiritual teacher and the representative of Naqshbandi order in Herat when Sultan Husayn was enthroned in 1470. His writings range from poetical and mystical to theoretical accounts. See Paul Losensky, “Jāmi: Life and Works,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2012, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jami-i> (accessed March 9, 2014).

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<sup>168</sup> As a result, written historical, poetical and religious sources from the late fifteenth century Herat are in abundance. See Maria E. Subtelny, “Scenes from the Literary Life of Tīmūrid Herāt” in *Logos Islamikos: Studia Islamica in Honorem Geori i Michaelis Wickens*, ed. Roger M. Savoy and Dionisius A. Agius, Papers in Medieval Studies 6 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984), pp. 137-155, where she provides some examples of writings describing the *majlis*.

<sup>169</sup> The artists and painters were included in that circle and for the first time they were recognized by their names and skills in writings. See Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, p. 297.

<sup>170</sup> Swietochowski, “The Historical Background and Illustrative Character of the Metropolitan Museum’s *Mantiq al-Tayr* of 1483,” p. 42.

<sup>171</sup> Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, p. 296. Similarly, the Timurid court showed no interest in actual battlefields. That and the growing power of the mystic leaders brought the Timurid rule to its end in 1507 by a leader of Safavid order. See same source, p. 299.

<sup>172</sup> Both these figures had either mystic interests, in the case of Jami, or affiliations, in the case of Mir ‘Ali Shir, with the dervish order of Naqshbandi. See Swietochowski, “The Historical Background and Illustrative Character of the Metropolitan Museum’s *Mantiq al-Tayr*,” p. 41.

<sup>173</sup> R. Milstein, “Sufi Elements in the Late Fifteenth Century Paintings of Herāt,” in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem: Institute of Asian and African Studies, The University of Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 357-369, p. 358.

<sup>174</sup> The other manuscripts of this text are: the Herat style manuscript of 1456 (Ms.or.oct.268) at Staatsbibliothek, Berlin with thirteen paintings; a copy at the Kevorkian Collection, New York, dated 1487, Shiraz, with five paintings; Ms. Elliot 246 at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, dated 1493, Shiraz, with seven paintings; Ms. 3885 at Czartoryski Museum, Cracow, dated 1494, Shiraz, with nine paintings; a copy at the Kevorkian Collection, New York, ca. 1500, Shiraz, with seven miniatures; and finally Ms. Add 7735, at the British Museum, London, in Herat style, ca. 1490-1500, with nine miniatures. See Swietochowski, “The Historical Background,” pp. 40-41.

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<sup>175</sup> Swietochowski, “The Historical Background,” p. 42. She relates not only the commissioning of this manuscript but also the reemergence of interest in ‘Attar’s works to Mir ‘Ali Shir.

<sup>176</sup> Ms. Elliot 246. fol. 25 verso, now at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. For an image see Swietochowski, “The Historical Background,” p. 47. Figure 5.

<sup>177</sup> For the formation of Safavid Shi‘ism as the state religious policy see Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi‘ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

<sup>178</sup> Rudi Mathee, “The Safavid Dynasty,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2008, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/safavids> (accessed July 15, 2014). The Safavid dynastic lineage was continued by Shah Safi I (r. 1629-42), Shah ‘Abbas II (r. 1642-66), Shah Sulayman (r. 1666-94) and Shah Sultan-Husayn (r. 1694-1722). Qizilbashes were from the Turkmen tribes who spoke Turkish, while Tajiks were the Persian-speaking people.

<sup>179</sup> Aq Quyunlu or ‘white sheep’ was a confederation of Turkmen tribes in Central Asia and western Iran who became powerful under the leadership of Uzun Hasan in mid-fifteenth century. They built up a good relationship with the Timurid rulers. See R. Coiring-Zoche, “Aq Qoyunlū,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 1986, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/aq-qoyunlu-confederation>.

<sup>180</sup> Mariana Shreve Simpson, “Šāh-Nāma iv. Illustrations,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2009 <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sah-nama-iv-illustrations> (accessed February 7, 2013).

<sup>181</sup> The manuscript contains over 310 illustrations, now dispersed. It is also known as ‘Big-Head *Shāhnāma*’ due to the remarkably large size of its characters’ heads. See Simpson, “Šāh-Nāma iv. Illustrations.”

<sup>182</sup> Canby, *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp*, p. 14. The author states that Isma‘il “most likely studied and enjoyed” this manuscript and its illustrations. Also see Sheila Canby, “The World of the Early Safavids,” in *Hunt for Paradise*, p. 4, where the education Isma‘il received during his four-year stay at the court of Lahijan and its intellectual impact on him are mentioned.

<sup>183</sup> Sheila Canby states that Sultan ‘Ali Karkia’s *Shāhnāma* might have been intended as a gift for the young Isma‘il. See Canby, *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp*, p. 14.

<sup>184</sup> This manuscript is proposed to have been commissioned to celebrate the birth of Tahmasp in 1514; a project that was ceased because of Tahmasp’s transfer to Herat, or Shah Isma‘il

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neglect due to his return to drinking and hunting. See Canby, *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp*, p. 15. Dickson and Welch believe the project started later in 1520 as a gift for the young Tahmasp, who rejected it since the paintings were very different to his taste, accustomed to the Herat court style. See *The Houghton Shahnama*, Vol. 1, p. 34. The best known of these illustrations is *The Sleeping Rostam*, now at the British Museum (Acc. No. 1948-12-11-023). Two of the paintings were possibly destroyed in Leipzig in World War II, and the fourth was last seen in 1914 (Dickson and Welch, same page). Shah Isma‘il’s self-image as a ruler with the charisma of kingship, *farr-i Īzadī*, revealed through his poetry, increases the possibility of the Simurgh being represented in this manuscript, if the project was continued. For his poetry see Canby, *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp*, p. 14.

<sup>185</sup> With the fall of the Timurids, Bihzad remained in Herat and later in 1522 joined the Safavid royal workshop in Tabriz, where he acted as the head of *kitābkhāna* at the order of Shah Isma‘il. See Qazi Ahmad, *Gulistān-i Hunar*, p. 134. The editor of this source reproduces Shah Isma‘il’s decree on this appointment, pp. 135-36. Qazi Ahmad was the son of Mir Munshi, the respected secretary of Tahmasp, and later the appointed counselor of Ibrahim Sultan’s court in Khurasan. He was assigned by Shah Isma‘il II to compose the *Khulāṣat al-Tavārīkh* [The Concise Histories]. He wrote *Gulistān-i Hunar* while serving at the court of Shah ‘Abbas during the last years of the sixteenth century and reedited his text in 1606. See Massumeh Farhad and Marianna Shreve Simpson, “Sources for the Study of Safavid Painting and Patronage,” *Muqarnas* 10, Essays in Honor of Oleg Grabar (1992): 286-91, endnote 1, p. 289.

<sup>186</sup> Stuart Cary Welch associates the commission of the manuscript to Shah Isma‘il in the year 1522 for his nine-year-old son, Tahmasp, on the occasion of his return from Herat to Tabriz. See S. C. Welch, *A King’s Book of Kings*, p. 16. Another *Shāhnāma* made in Tabriz, dated to 1524, finished five months after the death of Shah Isma‘il I, and now preserved at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, St. Petersburg (D 184), is also attributed to Shah Isma‘il’s patronage. Its 27 paintings in Turkmen style reveal the hand of Sultan Muhammad and his workshop before the arrival of Bihzadian style in Tabriz. The pages are of similar quality to Shah Tahmasp’s *Shāhnāma*. See Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnama*, p. 35 and endnote 19. There are no representations of the Simurgh in this manuscript, according to the information listed on the *Shāhnāma* project website.

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<sup>187</sup> Folio 16 r, reproduced in S.C. Welch, *A King's Book of Kings*, p. 78. The other royal manuscripts associated with the patronage of Shah Tahmasp could be listed as a *Khamsa* of Nizami, dated 1539-43, with fourteen illustrations, now at the British Library; a *Fālnāma* [the Book of Divination] of Ja'far Sadiqi, between late 1540s and early 1550s, with fifteenth remaining illustrations; and possibly a *Garshāspnāma*, dated to 1573, Qazvin. See Canby, "Safavid Painting," in *Hunt for Paradise*, pp. 83 and 122-23.

<sup>188</sup> Tahmasp's interests and skills in painting and calligraphy are recorded by Qazi Ahmad, who praises his majesty for his perfected hand in drawing and painting that surpassed many painters. At his time the calligraphers and painters were well-received at the court of Qazvin. See Qazi Ahmad, *Gulistān-i Hunar*, pp.137-38. For English translation see *Calligraphers and Painters: A Treatise by Qadi Ahmad, Son of Mīr-Munshī (ca. AD. 1606)*, trans. V. Minorsky (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers, No. 2, 1959), pp. 181-82.

<sup>189</sup> S.C. Welch, *A King's Book of Kings*, p. 62.

<sup>190</sup> Shah Tahmasp went through a transformation, practiced severe piety and abandoned all the pleasures he enjoyed during his early years, including the art of painting and the companionship of painters and poets. Most of the painters who were released from his service sought patronage elsewhere within or outside his kingdom. Sadiqi, the painter and chronicler, records Shah Tahmasp as 'a pious man who engaged in no sin of any sort for over forty years' in his *Majma' al-Khawāṣ*. Finishing in the first decade of the seventeenth century, Sadiqi composed this account about the leading figures of the sixteenth-century Safavid court including poets, patrons, and artists in Chaghatay Turkish language. For Persian translation and original Turkish see Sadiqi-i Kitabdar, *Majma' al-Khawāṣ*, translated from Turkish to Persian by 'Abd al-Rassul Khayyampur (Tehran, 1327/1948), pp. 8-9. For English translation of parts of this reference see A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, p. 4-5. Writing in 1616, Shah 'Abbas' chronicler, Iskandar-i Munshi, associates Shah Tahmasp's neglect of the artists to his extreme involvement in government that left him no free time to pay equal attention to his artists, as before. See Iskandar Bek-i Turkmen, *Tārīkh-i 'Ālam Ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, 2 vols., ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1387/2008), vol. 1, p. 174. According to his memoir, Tahmasp's repentance occurred in 1534. See Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, p. 189.

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<sup>191</sup> The manuscript remained in the Ottoman court library till about 1903 when it appeared in Paris. Then it was purchased by Baron Rothschild and later in 1959 was sold to Arthur A. Houghton Jr. who is responsible for the dispersal of this manuscript in 1970. At this time seventy-eight illustrations were presented to the Metropolitan Museum of Art while some folios were sold to art dealers and collections. After Houghton's death in 1990, his heirs exchanged one hundred and eighteen illustrations, text, and binding of the manuscript with the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art for a painting by Willem de Kooning. The illustrations were temporarily exhibited at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art upon their return to their homeland and since then have been stored. See Canby, *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp*, p. 18; and S. C. Welch, *A King's Book of Kings*, p. 17.

<sup>192</sup> Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, "Epic Images and Contemporary History: The legacy of the Great Mongol Shāh-nāma," in *Islamic Art: Studies on the Art and Culture of the Muslim World V*, ed. Ernst Grube (Oxford University Press, 2001), 41-48, p. 45. The authors state that the rediscovery of the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma* at the Safavid court of Tabriz in the beginning of the sixteenth century had inspired the large size and heavily illustrated program of Shah Tahmasp's *Shāhnāma*.

<sup>193</sup> Hillenbrand suggests this categorization: 81 paintings of battle scenes, 48 enthronement paintings or scenes revealing the royal authority, 30 paintings illustrating the negotiations and councils of war, 20 images of execution and murder, 19 monster-slaying scenes, and finally 60 paintings that do not fall under any of these categorizations. See Robert Hillenbrand, "The Iconography of Shāh-nāma-yi Shāhi," in *Safavid Persia*, ed. Charles Melville (London: Tauris, 1996), 53-78, pp.63-64.

<sup>194</sup> Hillenbrand, "The iconography of Shāh-nāma-yi Shāhi," p. 61.

<sup>195</sup> Safavid kings, including Tahmasp till 'Abbas I, were venerated by their subjects through the act of *sajda*. Some of his tribal followers revered him as the Mahdi. See Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, pp. 179-180

<sup>196</sup> Iskandar Bek-i Turkmen (known as Munshi), the chronicler of Shah 'Abbas who records the events of the Safavid dynasty from the beginning till the end of his patron's life in 1629 relates Tahmasp's decision for keeping Isma'il II away from the capital, as the governor in Khurasan, and later his imprisonment, to Isma'il's immature and inappropriate behavior,

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including his involvement with Qizilbash leaders. See Iskandar Bek-i Turkmen, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam Ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, vol. 1, p. 199.

<sup>197</sup> Iskandar Bek-i Munshi records these violent actions in details. See Iskandar Bek-i Turkmen, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam Ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, pp. 208-212.

<sup>198</sup> Iskandar Bek Turkmen, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam Ārā*, Vol. 1, p. 216.

<sup>199</sup> Hasan Bek-i Halvachi, who was in Isma‘il’s company at the night of his death and in charge of preparing the king’s portion of *falūnīyā*, a mixture of several narcotics, reported his seal on the king’s opium pipe to be broken at that night. He warned Isma‘il of this defect but was ignored by the king. Some believed that it could have been a plot by Pari Khan Khanum who was disdained by the king. See Iskandar Bek-i Turkmen, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam Ārā*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>200</sup> Sultan Ibrahim Mirza (1540-77) was a great patron of arts, especially book paintings, whose library in Mashhad was at a time the greatest library in Persian empire. According to Qazi Ahmad, his library contained about four thousands manuscripts. Qazi Ahmad praises the artistic taste, flawless personality, and peerless model of connoisseurship of this Safavid prince in great length. He was both a practitioner and collector of arts. See Qazi Ahmad Munshi Qumi, *Gulistān-i Hunar*, pp. 106-112.

<sup>201</sup> Sheila Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722* (London: the British Museum, 1999), p. 84.

<sup>202</sup> Iskandar Bek-i Turkmen, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam Ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, vol. 1. p. 206.

<sup>203</sup> A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, p. 162.

<sup>204</sup> Abolala Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts: Selections from the Art and History Trust Collection* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), p. 250, quotes from Budāq-i Munshī-yi Qazvīnī, *Javāhir al-Akhhār* [Jewel of the Chronicles], p. 134, from a photocopy of the manuscript (Dorn 288) from the State Public Library, St. Petersburg. Budaq records the events of the third quarter of the sixteenth-century Safavid court, with a section on painters and calligraphers, and dedicated this work to Shah Isma‘il II in 1576 immediately before the king’s death. See same source, p. 200, footnote 56.

<sup>205</sup> *Qānūn al-Šuvar* is a versified treatise on preparing the painting tools and the seven decorative elements in Persian painting, composed in the Persian language and one of a very few in its genre. See Yves Porter, *Painters, Paintings and Books: An Essay on Indo-Persian*

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*Technical Literature 12-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (New Delhi: Monaher, 1994), pp. 202-211. Also published as a footnote to Sadiqi's entry in Qazi Ahmad, *Gulistān-in Hunar*, ed. Suhayli Khawnsari, pp. 153-164.

<sup>206</sup> A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, p. 66.

<sup>207</sup> At least, ten of his works, written in Persian and Turkish, survive today. For a list see Tourkhan Gandjei, "Notes on the Life and Work of Šādiqī: A Poet and Painter of Šafavid Times," *Der Islam* 52 (Jan. 1975): 112-118, p. 114.

<sup>208</sup> Sadiqi Bek, *Majma' al-Khawāṣ*, p. 11. For an English translation of this passage see A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, p. 57.

<sup>209</sup> Iskandar Bek-i Turkmen, *Tārīkh-i 'Ālam Ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, p. 175.

<sup>210</sup> Mirza Ṭāhir Naṣrābādī, *Tadhkara-yi Naṣrābādī* (Tehran: Armaghan, 1317), pp. 39-40. Accessed on <http://archive.org>. Gandjei states that it has been two pages, and not ten, of drawings that Sadiqi awarded the poet with. See Gandjei, "Notes on the Life and Work of Šādiqī," p. 117.

<sup>211</sup> A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, pp. 57 and 79.

<sup>212</sup> For example, compare *The Fire Ordeal of Siyavush*, and *Kay Khusrau, Farangis and Giv Cross the River Jiyhun*, or *Isfandiar Slays the Dragon* from Shah Tahmasp's copy of the *Shāhnāma* (folios 166r, 216v and 434v) with the same scenes in Shah Isma'īl II's copy of the epics (on folios preserved at Riza 'Abbasi Museum. Tehran, Acc. Nos. 122-612, 613, and 127-614).

<sup>213</sup> Earlier in 1581, 'Abbas was appointed as the king by his guardian 'Ali Quli Khan Shamlu in Herat where he had already been the governor, but the young 'Abbas was soon captured by Murshid Quli Khan Ustajlu, another Qizilbash amir who later facilitated his accession to the throne. See A. Welch, *Artists for Shah*, p. 179.

<sup>214</sup> Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, p. 172.

<sup>215</sup> One of these *ghulāms*, Allah Viridi Khan, helped Shah 'Abbas with the assassination of the Murshid Quli Khan Ustajlu, whose power was outgrown. Thus he, Allah Viridi Khan, became one of the most powerful figures of the 'Abbas's entourage. The *ghulāms*, however, lacked the military skills of the Qizilbashes and this fact, in the long term, weakened the Safavid state. See

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R. M. Savory, “‘Abbas (I),” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abbas-I> (accessed May 4, 2015).

<sup>216</sup> R. M. Savory, “‘Abbas (I),” *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

<sup>217</sup> Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces: Statecraft, Shi‘ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 82-83. The unique Safavid practice of kingship originated from two long established cultural principles: the ancient Persian concept of kingship with kings’ splendor or *farr* at its core, and the Imami Shi‘i tradition legalizing the legitimacy or authority over the others. See same source, p. 258-59. Babaie adds that besides the need for security and better trade routes, as generally accepted, the transfer of the capital to Isfahan could provide the new Shah with a platform devoid of Qizilbash authority where he could shape his own. See same source, p. 88.

<sup>218</sup> Ms. Per. 277 at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

<sup>219</sup> For example, at the age of seven ‘Abbas was very pleased by the works of a painter from the royal workshop, Habibullah of Sava. The painter arrived at the court of Herat, where the young ‘Abbas was the governor, as a staff member of the noble Husayn Khan Shamlu, the governor of Qum. With no concern for the painter’s employer, the young ‘Abbas hired the painter. See Qazi Ahmad, *Gulistān-i Hunar*, pp. 151-52. Also see A. Welch, *Shah ‘Abbas and the Arts of Isfahan*, p. 17; see also from the same author *Artists for the Shah*, p. 179. ‘Abbas grew up to be a connoisseur of the art of painting. In his entry on Riza ‘Abbasi, the prominent painter of Shah ‘Abbas’s age, Qazi Ahmad states that the king praised this artist’s work greatly; based on another version of this text the king kissed the hand of the painter. See *Calligraphers and Painters*, trans. Minorsky, p. 192. In a recent publication of Qazi Ahmad’s text in Persian that is based on a nineteenth century copy of the text there is no mention to the monarch, and the text read, “if Mani and Bihzad were alive, one day they would have praised him (Riza) and the other day they would have kissed his hand.” See *Gulistān-i Hunar*, pp.149-150. In his introduction, the editor of this text mentions the erroneous quality of the nineteenth century text he has used. See same source, p. fifty-six (in letters). The other reference is to the king’s admiration for his calligrapher ‘Ali Riza, for whom he used to hold a candle while the man was at work. See A. Welch, “Painting and Patronage under the Shah ‘Abbas I,” pp. 458- 507, p. 484.

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<sup>220</sup> Some scholars developed the idea that, based on his personal preference, shaped by either his political strategies or changes of taste, Shah ‘Abbas guided mainstream Safavid painting towards the reapplication of Timurid elements. Anthony Welch relates this “abrupt change of taste” to possibly the influence of Hatim Bek Urdubadi, Shah ‘Abbas’s vizier, on the king and his aesthetic policies. See A. Welch, *Artists for The Shah*, p. 183. According to Iskandar Bek, Shah ‘Abbas elevated Hatim Bek to the position of grand vizier, I‘timad al-Daula, at the beginning of the fifth year of his reign. Prior to that he was the *mustūft al-mamālik*, the highest financial official at the court of Shah ‘Abbas. See Iskandar Bek, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam Ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, pp. 437 and 439.

<sup>221</sup> A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, p. 107. Sadiqi’s rival for the position of the head of the library was ‘Ali Riza, a court calligrapher who believed this job worthy only for a calligrapher. He finally won the Shah’s favor and replaced Sadiqi in 1597. Iskandar Bek relates Sadiqi’s fall from royal favor to his difficult and discourteous character. Yet Sadiqi continued to receive his salary from the court till the end of his life, a point that indicates the Shah ‘Abbas’s nature as a permissive patron. See Iskandar Bek, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam Ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, p. 175. Qazi Ahmad is brief with regards to Sadiqi’s character. See Qazi Ahmad, *Gulistān-i Hunar*, p. 152.

<sup>222</sup> Iskandar Bek-i Turkmen, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam Ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, p. 175. For English translation of the section on Sadiqi, see Thomas Arnold, *Painting in Islam: A Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture* (New York: Dover, 1965), p. 142. Qazi Ahmad also praises Sadiqi’s coloring and portraiture as well as his skill in various types of poetry and restricts his comments regarding Sadiqi’s personality to the artist’s regard for himself as a brave warrior. See Qazi Ahmad, *Gulistān-i Hunar*, p. 152. For a detailed study on Sadiqi’s life and work see A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, pp. 41-100.

<sup>223</sup> Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, p. 415.

<sup>224</sup> A. Welch, *Shah ‘Abbas and the Arts of Isfahan*, p. 73. Painting was less affected by the ineffectiveness of the king since single page drawings were sold on public market and enjoyed a wider range of wealthy patrons. Moreover, Riza ‘Abbasi was still active until his death in 1635, and was followed by many students including his son, Shafi‘, and the painter, Mu‘in Musavvar, who together shaped Persian painting in the seventeenth century. See Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art*, pp. 122-23.

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<sup>225</sup> At this point the matters of state were left to the grand vizier Mirza Muhammad Saru Taqi who also facilitated the enthronement of this young king. Saru Taqi's passion for architecture is well known and possibly was transferred to the young king.

<sup>226</sup> Rudi Mathee, "Safavid Dynasty," *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

<sup>227</sup> A. Welch, *Shah 'Abbas and the Arts of Isfahan*, p. 103. Anthony Welch relates the duality of Shah Sulayman's taste for both traditional and Europeanized art as indicative of a "precarious balance between old and new in late seventeenth century painting." All three paintings added to *Khamsa* of 1539-43 were signed by Muhammad Zaman, in 1675, in Mazandaran. For reproduction of two of them see Sims et al., *Peerless Images*, p. 64 and catalogues 118 and 232.

<sup>228</sup> In return of their service Qizilbash amirs were traditionally granted lands that each could rule from. By replacing these amirs with *ghulāms* and collecting revenues from these lands Shah 'Abbas created a centralized government with the king as the most powerful figure. See Sussan Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran* (New York: Tauris, 2004), pp. 6-9.

<sup>229</sup> The term 'surrogate' patronage is applied by Babaie et al in *Slaves of the Shah*, pp. 19 and 81. The reigns of Safi I and Shah 'Abbas II coincide with the dominance of *ghulāms* when they held all the critical posts at the court and military. For most part, Saru Taqi, himself an upraised *ghulām*, held the position of grand vizier (1634-45) and extensively patronized works of architecture. See Babaie et al, *Slaves of the Shah*, p. 11. For his life and patronage see the same source, pp. 40-48 and 96-108.

<sup>230</sup> Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, p. 113.

<sup>231</sup> Qarachaqay Khan II, the grandson of Qarachaqay Khan I, was removed from his post between 1643 till 1645 by the ruling monarch and was replaced by Murtiza Quli Khan, a Turkmen Qizilbash amir, former governor of Marv. He was the last member of this family to govern a Safavid state. Before this, Qarachaqay Khan II's father, Manuchihr Khan, proved his great taste by commissioning a Persian translation of al-Şūfi's *Şuvar al-Kavākib*, now at the Spencer collection, New York Public Library (Pers. Ms. 6). See Babaie et al., *Slaves for the Shah*, p. 127-28. These two manuscripts compete with the works of royal patronage in size and splendor. See same source, p. 134.

<sup>232</sup> This manuscript (Murtiza Quli Khan's copy), was started in 1642 and finished in 1651, includes the *Shāhnāma* and other epics including *Garshāspnāma* and *Burzūnāma*, and is now

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preserved at the National Library of Russia, Dorn 333, with 192 illustrations, including 144 *Shāhnāma* illustrations. Folio 156v, *The Simurgh Bids Farewell to Zal*, is attributed to Afzal-al-Husayni, a close follower of Riza's style, executed in 1642. For an image in black and white see the *Shāhnāma* project website:

<http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk/new/jnama/imagepage/ceillustration:1025950214>. The illustrations of this manuscript generally suggest the Isfahan style though the origin of the manuscript is attributed to Mashhad by Firuza Abdullaeva in the *Shāhnāma* project website. The scribe of the manuscript is Muhammad Shafi' ibn 'Abd al-Jabbar. Other artists who contributed to this manuscript are Muhammad 'Ali, Muhammad Qasim, and Muhammad Yusuf. The manuscript is discussed in M.M. Ashrafi, *Persian Tajik Poetry in XVI-XVII Centuries Miniatures* (Dushanbe: Academy of Science, 1974). I could not access this source.

<sup>233</sup> Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, p. 133.

<sup>234</sup> Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, pp. 135-37.

<sup>235</sup> Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, p. 94. The Sasanian writings were translated and became influential in this formation.

<sup>236</sup> Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, pp. 412-13.

<sup>237</sup> He is recorded to be "the aider of the Lord of the Age" and in charge of preparing the world for the last Imam's return, by the author of *Takmilat al-Akhhār* (Zayn al-Dīn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Mu'min, 1571). See Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, p. 182.

<sup>238</sup> Abolala Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2003), p. 7, and quotes from Abu'l Fazl 'Ālamī, *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, ed. Blochman (Osnabruck, 1985), I: 2-3.

<sup>239</sup> Acc. No. 55.121.10.39 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. ca.1640. 36.5 x 26.5 cm. The title at the center reads "His Majesty Shihabuddin Muhammad Shahjahan, the King, Warrior of the Faith, may God perpetuate his kingdom and sovereignty." See the Museum Website: <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451286>. It is also reproduced in Stuart Cary Welch, *Imperial Mughal Painting* (New York: Braziller, 1978), plate 30.

## Chapter Five:

### The Simurgh in Persian Painting from the Fall of the Safavids to the Present

The glorious age of illustrated manuscript production in Iran truly ends with the advent of the eighteenth century and the transition of the country into its modern phase. Iran remained a monarchy until the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century and its kings continued to patronize the arts. Royal glory and kingship remained as desirable notions among the rulers of Iran. This chapter is aimed to examine whether the images of the Simurgh persisted to signify the possession of royal and divine glory at this time as they did in the past, and as was argued in former chapters. In shifting away from its idealistic phase into a realistic one, Iranian painting displayed the theme of royal splendor through the images of the kings. The modern representations of the Simurgh in the illustrated *Shāhnāma* manuscripts manifest the typical visual characteristics for the bird. The book painters of the classical age of Persian painting definitely handed an established tradition of the Simurgh imagery down to their successors. This chapter continues with examining the depictions of the fantastic bird in the works of the modern and contemporary artists of Iran. These artists practiced their art independent from any form of sponsorship and their work, and thus the images of the Simurgh they create, is informed by their personal perceptions and concerns, shaped by the political and social milieu of the time. The examination of these works allows this study to assess both the resilience of the visual tradition of the Simurgh imagery as well as the genuineness in the works of these modern artists.<sup>1</sup> The inclusion of such works leads to the notion of Iranian glory, *farr-i Īrānī*. As I argue, in their absorption of the Iranian cultural and artistic identity shaped by its past, the contemporary Iranian artists search for and manifest their national identity in their renditions of the fantastic

Simurgh. By synthesizing traditional and modern elements, some of these artists successfully offer new narrations in terms of visual representations of the birds, while some persist in creating their work within the traditional framework. Some others deliberately recreate the earlier works to recollect and to educate. A group of these recreations or imitations were in fact intended to satisfy the market created by European art dealers and collectors in search for Timurid and Safavid art works in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the recent advancement of scientific analysis, these examples have been distinguished and categorized as modern imitations. The search for the representations of the Simurgh has led this study to include some of these modern forgeries in paintings, and two examples of textiles that were formerly accepted as older works of art. These images of the Simurgh, although they might have been chosen for reproduction because of the associated notion of glory, the motives behind their selection and the intentions of their artists are beyond the scope of this study. This chapter examines the representations of the Simurgh produced in various styles and media. Therefore, the visual analysis of each example appears after its brief historical background, followed immediately by ideological and political interpretations of each work.

With the fall of the Safavid dynasty in 1722, illustrating the text of the *Shāhnāma* in the form of manuscripts lost its popularity or possibly its functionality as a presentation of power and stability among the rulers of Iran. Therefore, there are no illustrated manuscripts of this text that could be affiliated with the rulers' patronage during the past three hundred years. Instead, new forms of painting, more in accordance with the royal taste and politics, were shaped. Instead of small-sized book illustrations being perceived by only a limited group of royal nobles and officials at the court, life-sized portraits of the rulers were created aiming to convey the message of royal splendor to a larger public beyond the borders of the court and the country.

The tradition of life-sized painting preserved through the Sasanian and Seljuq mural paintings and reliefs was revived under the founder of the Zand dynasty, Karim Khan (r. 1750-79).<sup>2</sup> This style of painting dominated the artistic productions of the court during the reign of Fath 'Ali Shah (r. 1797-1834), the first notable Qajar patron of the arts. Fath 'Ali Shah had a clear vision of his royal status and of himself as the King of Kings.<sup>3</sup> The numerous life-sized portraits of him produced during his reign were meant to convey the concept of royal glory. Through these paintings, the image of the Shah became the image of power and transferred the desired sense of authority (Figure 59).<sup>4</sup> With this shift in royal attention, the manuscript illustration was pushed back to the second or even third position after the large-sized paintings and lacquer work.<sup>5</sup> Further, the introduction of modern technologies such as lithography, along with the idea of European modernity promoted by Nasir al-Din Shah (r.1848-96) and his viziers, were effective in the demise of manuscript production.<sup>6</sup> The leading painter or *naqqāshbāshī*<sup>7</sup> of the court, Kamal al-Mulk (ca.1859-1940), also played a key role in replacing the traditional painting of Iran with the European naturalistic style.<sup>8</sup>

Fath 'Ali Shah's image as an established image of power portrayed the heroes and the kings of the great epics even after his death.<sup>9</sup> An illustrated copy of the *Shāhnāma* with one hundred and nineteen paintings is attributed to a royal or princely patronage of his time. The scene of Zal summoning the Simurgh to restore Rustam and his horse, Rakhsh, is illustrated in this manuscript (Figure 60). The figure of Rustam, with its long black beard, narrow waist, Qajar outfit, and decorated belt and sword, resembles the many images of Fath 'Ali Shah depicted in life-sized paintings of him (e.g. Figure 59). Simsar notes that the artist of this manuscript used the images of this ruler and his son as models to render the images of the heroes in this manuscript.<sup>10</sup> The focus of this painting and of its artist is clearly meant to be on the two figures

of the hero and Rudaba standing in the foreground. The pale-orange body of the Simurgh, flying above them towards Zal, does not show any of those details. Except for her long multi-colored tail twists, there are no signs of the visual grandeur formerly used to depict this bird.

After the fall of manuscript illustration from royal attention, many book painters kept illustrating the blank pages of the unfinished Safavid manuscripts. The demand for these luxury objects by western dealers and collectors also functioned as an impetus in emulating the works of Timurid and Safavid masters.<sup>11</sup> These meticulously executed reproductions, though might be categorized as fakes or forgeries and were possibly solely aimed for financial gain, were certainly effective in preserving the conventions of Persian painting. One un-illustrated Safavid manuscript embellished with paintings in the first quarter of the twentieth century belongs to the Spencer Collection, at the New York Public Library.<sup>12</sup> Earlier, the patronage of the manuscript was related to Shah 'Abbas I, and the presence of the Timurid elements in its paintings were assumed by modern scholars to be evidence for a Timurid revival in the Safavid paintings. However, based on chemical analysis of the paintings, Barbara Schmitz concludes that the miniatures were added later to the text. This would have occurred after 1825, and probably ca. 1900-1925. The paintings were probably done in Tehran. Among its illustrations there exists a painting of *Zal Asking the Simurgh to Heal Rustam and Rakhsh* from the story of the battle of Rustam and Isfandiar (Figure 61).<sup>13</sup> The representation of the Simurgh in this painting creates an innovative rendition of the fantastic bird in its form with a strange twist in her body. Her body and claws are positioned above her head, between the two spreading tails, as though she is being pushed to the right of the picture.<sup>14</sup>

Another representation of the Simurgh is among the nineteenth-century paintings (or possibly later) that illustrate the blank spaces of a seventeenth-century manuscript of the

*Shāhnāma*.<sup>15</sup> In *The Birth of Rustam*, the body of the Simurgh appears large compared to the many buildings and figures that crowd the scene (Figure 62). The location of the Simurgh on top of the highest building of the composition, and the details in rendition of her body feathers and colors attest to her supernatural essence. The elements of the late-Safavid style are applied on the rendition of the bird's body and the application of perspective. Finally, the last extant illustrated manuscript of the *Shāhnāma* in the traditional style, with no association with the Qajar house, was produced by a member of Visal family in Shiraz, in 1855, and includes no images of the Simurgh.<sup>16</sup> In her examination of modern imitations of the works of Timurid and Safavid masters by a twentieth-century artist, Turabi bek Khurasani, Marianna Shreve Simpson identifies the images of the Simurgh as one of the compositional devices added by the artist to his paintings to evade absolute copying.<sup>17</sup> These representations of the Simurgh are significant for they demonstrate that the image of the fantastic bird was not fully erased from Persian painting of the twentieth century but was a popular form, repeatedly depicted by some artists and workshops, even though merely as a pictorial element.<sup>18</sup> Although represented on imitations, these images reveal the artist's attempt in distancing his work from the original models.

These modern imitations are by no means limited to paintings. Recent examination of the epigraphic evidence and radiocarbon analysis on a group of silk textiles uncovered at the medieval city of Rayy, formerly attributed to the eleventh century and the patronage of the Buyid dynasty,<sup>19</sup> prove that the large majority of these textiles are early-modern or modern productions.<sup>20</sup> In more than one example a double-headed bird is reproduced. In one of these silk cloths, now at the Cleveland Museum of Art,<sup>21</sup> the double-headed bird is holding or carrying a human figure surrounded by its wings, while the tail of the bird is spread below its body (Figure 63a). Henry Corbin identifies this image as representing the theme of the ascent to heaven as

appears in the *Avesta* and later Persian mystical epics, and distinguishes the two-headed bird as the Simurgh or *'Anqā*. He also relates it to the story of Zal and his upbringing by the Simurgh, and the spiritual meaning of this episode as defined by Suhrawardi.<sup>22</sup> Another fragment of these silk textiles, also at the Cleveland Museum of Art, that is categorized in the group of the silks produced between the early sixteenth century and present, depicts the similar two-headed bird, but without the human figure (similar to Figure 63b).<sup>23</sup> These stylized renditions of the bird resemble the same theme on the Sasanian metal wares, discussed in chapter three, but probably imitate some later models.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, several manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* were copied and illustrated in the Indian city of Kashmir, and at the Mughal court of India.<sup>24</sup> The representations of the Simurgh in these manuscripts display a bird that, except for its elaborate tail, looks like any regular bird.<sup>25</sup> In most of these examples that resemble each other in arrangement of composition and style the Simurgh is depicted with a white body, rendered in profile, with red or orange tails and head. She sits close to the people she is talking to. In all, these images do not convey the sense of grandeur that the guardian of Zal does in the royal Persian manuscripts (Figures 64-66).

With the changes in the mainstream of Qajar painting, the development of the Simurgh imagery can no longer be examined under the book illustration, nor under a unified visual vocabulary shaped and directed by the court artists and patrons. During the Pahlavi era (1925-79) in Iran, artists practiced in different styles and media and dealt with their own subjects of interest. As a result, four styles of painting were simultaneously practiced: academic, traditional, *Qahva-khāna*, and modern.<sup>26</sup> While the art of painting in the first half of the twentieth century Iran was dominated by Kamal al-Mulk's naturalistic and academic style, traditional painting was

practiced as the natural continuation of classical painting.<sup>27</sup> The *Qahva-khāna* or coffeehouse style, established during the Qajar era, was used in depicting the scenes, or *pardas*, of the popular episodes of the *Shāhnāma*.<sup>28</sup> However, the most dominant style of painting, that was initiated rather late, in 1960s and 1970s, and still presides over the artistic domain of contemporary Iran, is modern art. In order to distinguish their art from the works of their Western counterparts and to assimilate Iranian characteristics into their work, a group of Iranian modern painters incorporated the traditional Iranian motifs and elements taken from the vast collection of manuscript illustrations, calligraphy, and decorated objects and reliefs into their modern compositions. These artists<sup>29</sup> became known as the *Saqqā-khāna* artists or the neo-traditionalists.<sup>30</sup>

The search for a representation of the Simurgh in the twentieth century leads to the works of one of the leading figures of this movement, Parviz Tanavoli (b. 1937).<sup>31</sup> In his sculptures and paintings, Tanavoli deals with themes and motifs of the Persian past as well as the classical literature. Amongst his earlier works, created in 1967, sits a ceramic rendition of the Simurgh as it appeared in the *Shāhnāma* (Figure 67).<sup>32</sup> This white, three-dimensional interpretation of the fantastic bird, in accordance with this artist's style, synthesizes the abstract elements of modern art with the stylized forms of Persian traditions as applied to objects. Tanavoli's Simurgh does not resemble the colorful birds of the manuscript illustrations, with long and elaborate wings and tails. Instead, those features are minimal and somehow understated. The stress, however, is on the claws of this bird, pointing to the bird's hunting capability, and to its head resembling an owl's head. The head is turned to the right and is dominated by two large black eyes, transferring the wisdom of this fantastic bird. These features had appeared on the earlier works of the artist as the feet of his metal figures in *Poet* (1961), and *Prophet* (1962). The

head of the bird in *Poet and Nightingale Cage* (1970) displays the similar forms as the head of the Simurgh (all three works in Figure 68).

In his art, Tanavoli looks into Iranian objects and material culture as sources of inspiration. He is equally inspired by the stylized elements of the Iranian traditional decorative art as well as the allegorical imagery of classical Persian literature. His nightingale birds and *Heech* sculptors that were created around the same time as his *Simurgh* also reflect his preoccupation with certain themes in Persian literature. Tanavoli's *Simurgh* emerging from the popular literary culture approximates the popular visual culture in appearance. Each element in his work resembles an object from the past. None of these similarities, though, devalue the element of innovation in the work of this contemporary Iranian master of sculpture. Tanavoli's *Simurgh* represents the twentieth-century portrayal of a mythical bird informed by the elements of its past traditions as well as by the Iranian variant of modern art.

The *Simurgh* created by this *Saqqā-khāna* artist assimilates the elements of the Persian past in term of its popular visual culture, just as the work of this group was considered as the true offspring of Iranian craftsmen of the past.<sup>33</sup> Although the school has been criticized for being provincial, nostalgic towards the past, and too sentimental, in its wholesomeness it reflects the responses of its creative members to the fast changing society of otherwise traditional Iran towards modernism. The Tanavoli's *Simurgh* and the rest of the works of the short-lived school of *Saqqā-khāna* strived to make a connection between the old and the new, the traditionalism of Iran's pictorial heritage and the modernism of contemporary Iran. In the works of this school the search for "national artistic identity" is amalgamated with and expressed through the modern language of visual art.<sup>34</sup> The white ceramic *Simurgh* is a successful result of that amalgamation.

The triumph of the Islamic revolution in 1979, followed by almost a decade of war with Iraq (1980-88) profoundly changed the cultural scene of Iran. The strict censorship of Western values enforced by the new Islamic government and its criticism of modern art and the Pahlavi policies suddenly stopped the activities of art circles and artists. Instead, the new government promoted revolutionary and Islamic ideology and limited the presence of art to revolutionary posters and murals across the city. Meanwhile, classical or traditional painting, now called *nigār-garī* to avoid the foreign word ‘miniature,’ regained its popularity during 1980s due to its association with the Islamic past and its purity from the cultural aggregation of the West.<sup>35</sup>

Among the practitioners of traditional painting, Majid Mehregan (b. 1945) portrays the Simurgh in *The Simurgh and the Ezhdiḥā*, 1984 (Figure 69).<sup>36</sup> While following the conventions of Persian painting, Mehregan produces innovative works dealing with popular themes of Persian classical poetry and epics. The bright colors used by Mehregan in his rendition of the Simurgh appear unorthodox among the conventions of Persian painting. Otherwise, the two giant animals, engaged in a fight, are fully depicted in traditional techniques. The Simurgh’s massive body turns around the dragon. It is at the focal point of the painting that the Simurgh grabs the neck of the giant in her beak. The outlines are sharp and vital as the eyes of the bird. Together, they create a cinematic effect. The painting successfully depicts the intensity of the fight, yet remains unsuccessful in delivering a charming scene as the Persian paintings always did in the past, regardless of the subject matter.

Mehregan’s choice of colors and shades was more refined in his depiction of another mystical bird in *The Quqnūs* 1979 (Figure 70) where he applied a palette of warmer colors with less contrast. The *Quqnūs* represented in this painting is described by ‘Attar in his *Mantiq al-Ṭayr* as the Hoopoe’s response to a bird’s fear of death. He describes *Quqnūs* as a bird with no

mate that lives for one thousand years. She has a very long beak containing hundreds of holes, each creating a distinct song. When the time of her death comes, she prepares for a fire, gathers wood, sits on the sticks, and sings the most sorrowful songs. Attracted by her songs, other birds gather around her but cannot stand the deep sadness in her songs. By flapping her wings, she generates a fire in which she burns. After both the bird and the fire are turned into ashes, a new *Quqnūs* comes into life.<sup>37</sup> The only physical characteristic provided by the mystic poet of these lines remains to be the very long flute-like beak of the bird.

Mehregan preserves this physical feature. The composition in *The Quqnūs* is similar to *The Simurgh and the Ezhdiḥā*. But this time, the *Quqnūs* dominates the picture, turning around a fairly small dragon lifted by two pale hands emerging from behind. The fingernails reveal the demonic essence of the owner of the hands. The monster is cutting its own throat as well as the arm holding it with a sword in its hand. Mehregan has saved all the satanic features for the monster's head that is portrayed with rumped big teeth and a diabolical look in the eye. To stress the concept of death, a vulture is sitting on the dragon's back. The rest of the characters of this painting include the eight revolutionary men of all ages, dispersed in the foreground. The head of the *Quqnūs* with a very long beak and numerous holes cuts through this crowd.

Surprisingly, the Simurgh did not engage the modern artists of Iran as much as one might expect. Instead, the political atmosphere of the country before and after the revolution gave rise to the popularity of the *Quqnūs*. The sacrificial attributes of this bird matched the revolutionary ideology of the time. The *Quqnūs* became a popular subject in modern and contemporary literature of Iran, and consequently, its art. Nima Yushij (1895-1960), the founder of Persian modern poetry, *shī'r-i nu*, revisited the story of the *Quqnūs* by 'Attar and recounted the anecdote in the style of new poetry, free from poetic meters, and published it in 1938. Since

then, many other literary figures took up the subject of this bird and her pain. Evidently the pain and sacrifice of the bird for rebirth well suited the intellectual atmosphere of mid-twentieth century Iran, a society that experienced the outcry of the different political attitudes steering towards a fundamental change.<sup>38</sup>

The arts of Iran, during and in the immediate decade after the revolution, were politically informed and at the service of the revolutionary goals. Mehregan's rendition of the *Quqnūs* clearly relates to those goals. His painting of the *Quqnūs* is a manifestation of the changing significance of this bird from the singing and dying bird into the symbol of hope and rebirth, the symbol that a country amidst revolution needed. The overall mood of the Mehregan's *Quqnūs* transforms the general atmosphere of the country in 1979, the year of the revolution and the clash between the devil, as any foreign influence, and the mass of people.<sup>39</sup> Certainly a magnificent bird with royal associations such as the Simurgh could not have gained the same popularity as the sacrificial *Quqnūs* did in the visual culture and language of the revolution. Yet in the visual vocabulary of Iran after the Islamic revolution and in the works of the traditional artists, the representations of the *Quqnūs* are heavily inspired by the visual features of the Simurgh, repeatedly illustrated during the past glorious years of Persian book painting.

The most renowned contemporary painter of the traditional style, Mahmud Farshchian (b.1930) also portrays the burning bird in *The Last Breath of Phoenix*, 1999 (Figure 71).<sup>40</sup> The head of a phoenix staring at her egg occupies the center of this composition. The rest of the large surface is filled with the numerous colorful feathers of her wings and tails. In depicting the phoenix, Farshchian ignores the visual characteristic of this bird's having a long beak, and follows the visual features of the Simurgh as illustrated in classical Persian painting. Further, his phoenix passes beyond the stylized and controlled manner of those classical birds, and develops

into an elaborate Chinese phoenix performed with an informed touch of European naturalism. Many of the birds created by this master reveal the visual characteristics of the Simurgh in the classical age of Persian painting (e.g. *Dissimulation* 1977, Figure 72).<sup>41</sup> The *Quqnūs* had attracted little attention of the Persian painters of the classical age. One illustration in a 1456 Herat manuscript delineates the bird with its plain swan-like head, long beak, colorful wings, and long tails located amongst the uprising flames of a fire (Figure 73).<sup>42</sup>

After the election of the reformist president Muhammad Khatami in 1997, modern painting enjoyed a relatively relaxed environment. Another group of Iranian painters, called neo-traditionalists, shaped the mainstream of Iranian painting during 1980s and 1990s. They also borrowed elements from the Persian traditional painting but more in terms of content rather than forms.<sup>43</sup> During these decades, artists from both trends of modern art and neo-traditionalism experienced a crisis of cultural and artistic identity and strived to define the visual language of post-revolutionary Iran and its appropriate framework.

Some of the neo-traditional artists created delightful representations of the Simurgh, manifesting their skill and knowledge of the tradition. In fact, in terms of style, color, and general features, these artists greatly rely on the past representations of the Simurgh to the extent that the element of innovation is lost. The Simurgh in these works has become devoid of her character as a wise savior, reduced to simply an ornament decorating the space of the painting. One example is *The Simurgh* (1989) executed by Farah Ossouli (b. 1953) that imitates the Simurghs on the monochromatic drawings from the Timurid and Safavid examples (Figure 74). The graphic artist who created the logo and design of the award for the Fajr International Film Festival, called the Crystal Simurgh, also remained loyal to the conventions of depicting this fantastic bird.<sup>44</sup>

The works of the younger generation of contemporary artists clearly varies from the works of the older generation of modern artists who have been practicing from the mid-twenties until now. The first generation of true modernists, such as Tanavoli, were comparatively certain of their positions within the artistic realm of Iran and fully assimilated their modern position. Even when carefully integrating the elements of Iran's cultural past, in the case of the *Saqqā-khāna* school, they were not ambiguous regarding their being modern artists of Iranian modernity. The new generation, however, experiences the deficiency of modernity in a society that is struggling to find its stance after structural cultural and social changes. These artists are deeply preoccupied with the question of identity at both personal and cultural levels, and question the accuracy and origins of knowledge passed down to them, dealing with "the crisis of identity."<sup>45</sup>

Towards the end of the 1990s, many new trends and forms of artistic expression were developed. Artists became more engaged in their personal experiences, perceptions, and criticism of the society.<sup>46</sup> Some of these artists incorporated calligraphic or textual forms into their photographic works. The combination of word and image in their works bears a resemblance of such fusion in the illustrated manuscripts of Persian painting.

An artist who employed the combination of word and image to reflect on his engagement with the issue of identity is the photographer, Sadiq Tirafkan (1965-2013). He posed for his photographs, revealing his identity but perplexing the viewer either by turning his face away from the camera or by covering it.<sup>47</sup> It is for the viewer to resolve the mystery of identity, as it remains a dilemma for the artist. In *body signs, body curves* (2001-2), a photographic series in black and white, the artist decorated his naked upper body with hand-written words or letters of Persian calligraphy and/or with stamps resembling body tattoos. In these works, the artist has

chosen his body as the stage from which he engages his viewer. In two photographs of the same pose, Tirafkan plays with the word 'Simurgh' (Figure 75). In one, the word appears in large script as a tattoo covering his arm and chest while in the other the word 'Simurgh' is repeated six times in various font sizes of broken *nasta 'liq*. Only one of these six words is imprinted on his upper arm, forming a body decoration. The rest fill the blank space around the torso. Three of the variations of the word appear in two-word format of the word suggesting the thirty birds of the mystical journey, while the other three are in one word, most probably referring to the fantastic bird. In all his works, Tirafkan displays his absorption with and regard for the Iranian heritage of culture and history as well as his consciousness of his masculine identity. In his words, "flesh is the canvas branded by culture,"<sup>48</sup> and here he chooses to stamp his body with the written form of the name of the mystical bird, suggesting the ambiguity regarding the essence of the unseen bird as well as the artist's self-identity. It is as though the artist identifies with the Simurgh and at the same time doubts the essence of our knowledge about it. Tirafkan successfully transforms a mystical meaning to the Simurgh through his employment of the powerful image of word. He considered the written word as the high form of art, as it has always been in Muslim cultures. The fearlessness of the artist in inscribing words on his naked body and to apply the Simurgh, in writing, to represent the crisis of identity, remains unique to this contemporary artist. The two photographs in *body signs, body curves* manifest the latest approach of Iranian art to the deep-rooted cultural concepts in its most modern, as well as mystical, way. In other words, the photographic works of Sadiq Tirafkan offer a new narration of the Simurgh.

The representations of the Simurgh by an Iranian artist in diaspora,<sup>49</sup> Ala Ebtekar (b. 1978), also point to the question of identity. Ebtekar brings some elements of Persian painting into his originally graffiti works.<sup>50</sup> In a series of works, he has chosen the Persian manuscript

pages as the platform for his drawings and paintings. His work combines motifs and iconography drawn from Persian painting, illumination, and coffeehouse painting with elements of the present day visual vocabulary. He describes his art as “a synthetic epic” where the notions of the past and the present, history and mythology, and time and space meet, clash, and rebuild.<sup>51</sup> His work, *Zīr-i Gunbad-i Kabūd* (Under the Indigo Dome), 2009, consists of large triptych frames in which the artist’s drawings of airplanes and of the Simurgh fly over rows of pages from Persian manuscripts (Figure 76 a,b,c). The planes are inspired by this artist’s background in graffiti and pop art. The Simurghs, which are elegantly executed, however, are directly adapted from the drawings decorating the margins of pages in Persian manuscripts.<sup>52</sup> The rendition of smoke behind the planes also is derived from this tradition and the presentation of clouds. The synthesis of past and present and the confrontation of the two visual traditions have successfully occurred in these two works. In *Zīr-i Gunbad-i Kabūd II* (Under the Indigo Dome), the angry, fearful Simurgh appears to be lost in a surrounding unknown to her; the familiar manuscript pages do not sooth her anxiety, as expressed through her gaze. The artist might identify with the loneliness of this bird, removed and away from its heritage.<sup>53</sup> The fantastic bird and the Persian manuscript background might be the visual elements through which the artist communicates his nostalgia for the past, or his absorption in the crisis of identity.

Lastly, Hamid Rahmanian, a New York based Iranian graphic artist and filmmaker, undertook the illustration of an English translation of the *Shāhnāma* in prose (2013). By excerpting figures and elements from thousands of pages of the *Shāhnāma* manuscript illustrations and rearranging them to create new but familiar compositions, Rahmanian introduces the reader not only to the narrative of the national epics but also to the visual language that developed through the many reproductions of this text. The stylization and careful treatment

of details in the manuscript illustrations remain intact but the compositions and colors are enhanced to make this work “a *Shahnameh* for the digital age,” as Sheila Canby describes.<sup>54</sup> Rahmanian compares his work with Firdausi’s task in collecting and preserving the stories of Iranian history and mythology and creating a new narration. He has taken the same approach in preserving the Persian paintings and making them available to a wider public.<sup>55</sup> In this book, the Simurgh is pictured nine times in total (Figures 77 and 78). The images of the bird used here are mostly taken from the great examples of the Safavid *Shāhnāma* manuscripts. Yet in some pages, two or more representations of the bird in various styles are combined in order to create the desired form; sometimes the body of the bird is taken from one painting while the rendition of its tail belongs to another, as the artist explains.<sup>56</sup> The artist interprets the Simurgh as the manifestation of “mother-nature,” whose “wisdom, sacredness, and capability of saving the heroes relate to her essence as the nature.” Rahmanian defines the representation of the Simurgh above the head of Gayumarth “as a signifier of the king’s *farr*, and the divine presence of nature in both Gayumarth and the Simurgh.”<sup>57</sup>

Hamid Rahmanian does not recognize himself as an artist in the diaspora. Like the first generation of Iranian artists, he applies the elements of Persian painting of the past with confidence and authority. In his words, Rahmanian offers the most contemporary interpretation for a mythical bird: Mother Nature. In his work, each image of the Simurgh, though shaped through the combined visual elements of its forerunners, still follows the established pattern for the image of this bird, and thus it points to the artist’s success in delivering his goal.

Rahmanian’s illustrated *Shāhnāma* is certainly visually appealing and successful in translating the text to an unfamiliar reader, and pays homage to the centuries-old tradition of illustrating the *Shāhnāma*.

## Conclusion

The decline in the production of illustrated manuscripts as manifestations of power and stability by the rulers of Iran limits the number of the surviving royal manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*, and consequently the images of the Simurgh associated with royal glory. The life-sized portraits of the rulers as the symbols of the royal authority and power successfully transferred the concept of royal glory, *farr-i īzadī*. As Iranian society entered its modern age, aspiration for naturalistic and realistic forms of imagery limited the opportunity for the portrayal of a super-natural bird. Although lithographed copies of the *Shāhnāma* were produced, the image of the Simurgh remained absent from the illustrated pages. This absence points to the notion that the royal glory associated with the bird is now delivered through another conveyance, the image of the ruler. Nonetheless, the representations of the Simurgh often appear on modern imitations of the Safavid paintings, sometimes with no parallel in the original work, probably distinguishing the Simurgh imagery as an element associated with the flourishing days of Persian painting.

Modern and contemporary representations of the Simurgh certainly do not refer to the notion of royal Glory, *farr-i Kīānī*. Nevertheless, each of the artists engaging with the theme of the Simurgh sought for the element of *farr-i Īrānī* (Iranian Glory) in recreating the bird. This Iranian element and the passion for it are strongly displayed through the works of Tanavoli, Tirafkan, and Rahmanian. In their search for a national artistic identity, these artists triumph in combining the elements of the past and the present, the old and the new, and mythology and history in their engagements with the Simurgh. None of the contemporary traditional artists offered a modern visual definition of the carrier of the divine glory, and the guardian of the Persian kings and heroes. The visual representation of the Simurgh and what this fantastic bird represents, formulated by the masters of Persian painting, such as Shams al-Din, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz,

Qadimi, Sadiqi Bek, Muhammad Zaman, and their unknown predecessors, has been so compelling and dominant that it still overrides the artists' minds of today.

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<sup>1</sup> I exclude the representations of the Simurgh in modern forgeries of old paintings from this argument.

<sup>2</sup> Layla S. Diba, "Zand Period (1750-79)," in *Royal Persian Painting: The Qajar Epoch, 1785-1925*, eds. Layla S. Diba and Maryam Ekhtiar (New York: Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1998), pp. 147-48.

<sup>3</sup> To establish his power as the successor of the Persian Kingdom he initiated splendid court ceremonies and restored palaces and shrines of the past, in particular the Safavid structures. See Diba, "Images of Power and Power of Images," in *Royal Persian Painting*, p. 35-36.

<sup>4</sup> Diba, "Images of Power and Power of Images," p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> With the decline in manuscript production, Persian painting in its traditional style decorated the surface of lacquer pencil-cases or *qalamdāns*. Being originally the objects of use, *qalamdāns* became a platform for small-sized painting of the Qajar period.

<sup>6</sup> Many lithographed copies of the *Shāhnāma* were produced both in Iran and India. The first copy with 57 paintings illustrated by Mirza 'Ali Quli Khu'i was published in 1850. See Hajar Samadi, *Taşāvīr-i Shāhnāma-i Firdausī be rivāyat-i Mīrzā 'Alī Qulī Khu'ī* [Illustrations of the Firdausi's *Shāhnāma* Rendered by Mirza 'Ali Quli Khu'i], (Tehran: Farhangistan-i Hunar, 1388/2009), p.13. From 1848 till 1904, five illustrated editions of the *Shāhnāma* were produced in Iran, while 25 illustrated copies were made in India. See Ulrich Marzolp, *Narrative Illustration in Persian Lithographed Books* (Boston: Brill, 2001), pp. 56-57, and 23-24.

<sup>7</sup> During the Qajar period, court artists working at the *naqqāsh-khāna* or *karkhāna-yi naqqāshī*, formerly known as *kitābkhāna*, and usually located next to the court, were supervised by *naqqāshbāshī* (chief painter) assigned by the monarch. W. Floor lists the twelve *naqqāshbāshīs* of the nineteenth-century Qajar era. See Willem Floor, "Art (Naqqashi) and Artists (Naqqash) in Qajar Iran," *Muqarnas* 16 (1999): 125-154, p. 128.

<sup>8</sup> A. Ashraf and Layla Diba, "Kamāl-al-Molk," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2010. Also see Hamid Keshmirshekan, *Contemporary Iranian Art: New Perspectives* (London: Christie's, 2013), p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> One example is his image, with his typical long beard representing Rustam, fighting with the White Dīv in the tile program of the city gate of Simnan, 1888. See Jennifer Scarce, "Ancestral

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Themes in the Art of the Qajar Iran (1785-1925),” in *Islamic Art in the Nineteenth Century: Tradition, Innovation and Eclecticism*, ed. Doris Behrens Abouseif and Stephen Vernoit (Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 231-256, p. 238. Footnote 22.

<sup>10</sup> Ms. Lewis 0.58 folio 322r., at The Free Library of Philadelphia. See Simsar, *Oriental Manuscripts of the John Fredrick Lewis Collection in the Free Library of Philadelphia: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Philadelphia, 1937), pp. 90-9. The royal affiliation of the manuscript is pointed out on the *Shāhnāma* project website.

<sup>11</sup> Marianna Shreve Simpson, “Mostly Modern Miniatures: Classical Persian Painting in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 359-395. I am thankful to Professor Sheila Blair for bringing this article and the issue of modern forgeries in Persian painting to my attention.

<sup>12</sup> Ms. Pers. 2. at the Spencer Collection, New York Public Library. It was copied at the order of Mirza Muhammad Sharifa, possibly in Shiraz, in 1614. See Barbara Schmitz, *Islamic Manuscript in the New York Public Library* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University press and New York Public Library, 1992), pp. 105-111.

<sup>13</sup> Folio 367v, measuring 35.3 x 19 cm. See Schmitz, *Islamic Manuscripts in the New York Public Library*, p. 110. The author lists this painting as well as the scene of *the Birth of Rustam*, (folio 41verso) that does not include a representation of the Simurgh.

<sup>14</sup> This painting has been reproduced in Ernst J. Grube, *The Classical Style in Islamic Painting* (Germany: Edizioni Oriens, 1968), plate 82.3, in black and white. A thumbnail size image of this painting is available at the *Shāhnāma* project website:

<http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk/new/jnama/card/cemanuscript:1566425313>. The black and white reproduction limits my analysis to the bird’s form, and not her coloration.

<sup>15</sup> Ms. 1063 F., at The National Library of Iran, Tehran, with 85 illustrations. It was copied in 1675 as indicated on its colophon. The paintings were probably added later in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. See Amin Mahdavi’s notes on the *Shāhnāma* project website. There is no mention of a patron for these paintings. The dating of these paintings remains highly speculative for now.

<sup>16</sup> Ms. 599, at the Riza ‘Abbasi Museum, Tehran. See ‘Abd al-Majid Sharifzada, *Nāmvarnāma* (Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Higher Education, 1370/1991), p. 248. For more on Visal family see Maryam Ekhtiar, “Innovation and Revivalism in the Later Persian

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Calligraphy: The Visal Family of Shiraz,” in *Islamic Art in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 257-280. The manuscript entered the Qajar royal library sometime between its production and 1875.

<sup>17</sup> Simpson, “Mostly Modern Miniatures,” p. 374. These paintings belong to a manuscript of *Khamsa* by Amir Khusrau Dihlavi (Princeton University Library, Islamic Manuscripts, no. 84G, with eight paintings), and seven individual album paintings at John Frederick Lewis Oriental Manuscript Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia (O 263-268, and O 270). The representation of the Simurgh has been repeated in seven instances in these fifteen paintings (see the same source, figs. 2, 4, 10, 11, 16, and 18), also as an architectural decorative element (e.g. fig. 12). The words ‘Simurgh’ and ‘Phoenix’ are used interchangeably.

<sup>18</sup> The appearance of these representations of the Simurgh on courtly scenes, where a king is present (e.g. King Dara), or mystic scenes (e.g. the Tavern Scene) can point to the notion of Divine presence, represented by the Simurgh. The development of this discussion and the subjectivity of the artist, however, requires further investigation.

<sup>19</sup> The Buyid dynasty was an early Islamic empire that ruled over Iran and its neighboring lands during the tenth and eleventh centuries, and Rayy, near present Tehran, was one of their capital cities. Rayy was not only a center for silk production but also an important market for the trade of various textile types. See Allgrove McDowell, “Textiles,” in *The Arts of Persia*, ed. R.W. Ferrier (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp.151-70, p. 157.

<sup>20</sup> Since the finding of this group of silk textiles, known generally as Buyid silks, in the 1920s and their appearance in European museums and exhibitions in the subsequent decade, their dating has been a problem. Sheila Blair, Jonathan Bloom, and Anne E. Wardwell categorize these silk fragments into four groups dating from the eleventh century to the mid twentieth century, with the major examples dated between the mid-sixteenth or seventeenth to the mid twentieth century. See Sheila Blair, Jonathan Bloom, and Anne E. Wardwell, “Reevaluating the date of the ‘Buyid’ Silks by Epigraphic and Radiocarbon Analysis,” *Ars Orientalis* 22 (1992): 1-41.

<sup>21</sup> Recorded as J.H. Wade Fund 1962.264 on the website of the Cleveland Museum of Art. CMA 62.264, as reproduced in R.W. Ferrier, *The Arts of Persia*, chapter 9, fig. 12, p. 157, and as frontispiece in Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, translated by Nancy Pearson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

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<sup>22</sup> Corbin, Henry, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, pp. xxxi-xxxii. He also refers to a *hadith*, interpreted by one of the Sufi masters, Simnani, about a green bird that provides shelter to the souls of the righteous in the other world.

<sup>23</sup> Sheila Blair et al., “Reevaluating the date of the ‘Buyid’ Silks,” pp. 14-15. The authors rate the certainty of these dates to 95 % confidence limit. Recorded with accession number CMA TR15370/8, and catalogue no. 12, in table 2, but the catalogue 12 shows the Accession No. CMA TR15730/8. I am not sure if the two references relate to one fragment. A similar fragment is listed from the Director’s Contingent Fund 1973.241 on the museum website.

<sup>24</sup> For example, a manuscript, Ms. Lewis O.55 at the Free Library of Philadelphia, with fifteen illustrations, was produced for the Mughal ruler, Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-84). See Muhammad Ahmed Simsar, *Oriental Manuscripts of the John Fredrick Lewis Collection in the Free Library of Philadelphia*, pp. 85-87. *The Birth of Rustam* is recorded as folio 43b (14.2 x 10.8 cm), but the Simurgh is not represented. For an image visit the *Shāhnāma* project website: <http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk/new/jnama/card/ceillustration:307798652>

<sup>25</sup> Some of these manuscripts are Ms. Lewis O.59, 1829, and Ms. Lewis O.57, 19<sup>th</sup> C. both at the Free Library of Philadelphia. Ms. P.3916 M.K.494. 1830, at Rampur Reza Library, India. Ms. Minutoli 134, 1830, at Staatsbibliothek, Berlin. The similarity of composition and palette in these manuscripts indicates the commercial purpose of their production.

<sup>26</sup> Ruyin Pakbaz, *Naqqāshī-i Iran: as dīrbāz tā imrūz* [Painting in Iran: From Past to Present], (Tehran: Zarrin va Simmin, 1388/2009), p. 186.

<sup>27</sup> The main figures in preserving this art are Mirza Hadi Khan Tajvidi, ‘Issa Bahaduri, Ali Muti’, Mahmud Farshchian, Hushang Jazi Zada, and Majid Mehregan.

<sup>28</sup> These paintings were used as visual tools in recitations of the *Shāhnāma* by the storyteller or *naqqāl*. Listening to these stories being narrated became a popular pastime activity for both the public and the elite. The Qajar rulers each had their own favorite reciter of the *Shāhnāma*. See Muhammad Tavakoli-Targhi, “Refashioning Iran: Language and Culture during the Constitutional Revolution,” *Iranian Studies* 23, no.1/4 (1990): 77-101, p.80. I have not come across any representation of the Simurgh in these paintings. It should be considered that many of these large-sized paintings have not yet been identified and catalogued, and many are still hanging on the walls of coffeehouses.

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<sup>29</sup> Including Husayn Zenderoudi, Parviz Tanavoli, Mas‘ud ‘Arabshahi, Jalil Ziapur (the founder of the Fighting Rooster Society, *Khūrūs Jangī*), Nassir Oveisi, Zhaza Tabatabai, Sadiq Tabrizi, Faramarz Pilaram, and Mansur Qandriz.

<sup>30</sup> At the third Tehran Biennale, the art critic and journalist Karim Emami coined the term *Saqqā-khāna* when a work by Husayn Zenderoudi (a combination of geometric forms and calligraphic writings) reminded him of *Saqqā-khāna*, a small structure to offer water to the public. It is raised as a religious act in memory of the Shi‘i martyrs in the Karbala desert who suffered from thirst to death. These structures are usually decorated with Shi‘i decorative elements or Quranic writings on brass and other metal objects. See Emami, “Art in Iran, xi. Post-Qajar (Painting),” *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

<sup>31</sup> It was at his atelier, *Kabūd*, that the *Saqqā-khāna* school of art was formed. See Rosa Issa, “Borrowed Ware,” in *Iranian Contemporary Art*, eds. Rosa Issa, Ruyin Pakbaz, and Daryush Shayegan (London: Booth-Clibborn, 2001), p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> Farah Diba, then the queen, purchased this work. It is preserved at the Niavaran Palace Museum. In a documentary film on this artist’s works, *Parviz Tanavoli: Poetry in Bronze*, directed by Terrence Turner, this Simurgh is mentioned briefly with the characteristics of *Quqnūs* by its former owner. In an after-show conversation with Parviz Tanavoli, the artist assured me that his work represents the Simurgh of the *Shāhnāma*. I am thankful to Mr. Tanavoli for providing me with an image of this work. My visual analysis of this sculpture is limited to this image. Personal communication with the artist through email, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Emami, “Art in Iran, xi. Post-Qajar (Painting),” *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

<sup>34</sup> Hamid Keshmirshakan, “Neo-traditionalism and Modern Iranian Painting: The Saqqa-khaneh school in the 1960s,” *Iranian Studies* 38, no.4, (2005): 607-630, p. 607.

<sup>35</sup> One of the major concerns of Islamic government was the resistance against the cultural influence of the West, coined as ‘cultural aggregation’ (*tahājum-i farhangī*).

<sup>36</sup> The works can be accessed through the artist’s Facebook page. I am thankful to Mr. Mehregan for providing me with the dates of execution for these two works. Personal communication via Facebook messenger on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Attar, *Mantiq al-Ṭayr*, ed. Shafi‘ee Kadkani (Tehran: Sukhan, 1385/2006), pp. 336-38. For English translation see ‘Attâr, *The Canticle of Birds: Illustrated Through Persian and Eastern*

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*Islamic Art*, trans. Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis, pp. 230-31. The translators chose a masculine gender for the *Quqnūs* that does not match the concept of the rebirth the bird stands for. Apparently, for the first time in Persian literature, the *Quqnūs* is recorded by ‘Attar in this anecdote possibly based on oral narrations. The *Quqnūs* in this story has the combined characteristics of the two Greek mythical birds of Phoenix and the dying and singing swan. See the same source p. 231 commentary of an illustration by Michael Barry.

<sup>38</sup> Some literary examples are a collection of poems, *Quqnūs under the Rain* (1966) by Ahmad Shamlu; and a play titled *Quqnūs* by Mahmud Dulatabadi. See Muhammad Sharifi, *Farhang-i Adabīāt-i Fārsī* [the Encyclopedia of Persian Literature], (Tehran: Muin, 1387/2008), p. 1133. With the advent of modernity in Iran, Persian literature like other forms of cultural products absorbed the elements of modernity and strived to liberate itself from the formalities of a millennium-old classical literature. From the mid to the end of the twentieth century, some exemplary works of poetry, short story, novel and other forms of literature were created.

<sup>39</sup> One of the major criticisms of different political and religious parties, as well as the public, to the Pahlavi dynasty was its openness to foreign powers, the Western super powers in particular. The words Satan and devil were used to refer to these powers in the vocabulary of post-revolution Iran, and were only partly stopped by the presidency of Muhammad Khatami.

<sup>40</sup> The English title of the work, therefore the choice of ‘Phoenix’ for the *Quqnūs* is by the artist as seen on his website: <http://www.farshchianart.com/html/lastbreath.htm>

<sup>41</sup> Both paintings can be viewed on the artist’s online gallery at <http://www.farshchianart.com/farshchian.htm>. Most of the works by this artist are permanently exhibited at Farshchian museum in Sa‘dabad Palace Gardens, Tehran.

<sup>42</sup> The manuscript is at Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin. For a reproduction see ‘Attar, *The Canticle of the Birds*, commentated by Michael Barry, p. 231 where the illustration is titled *Death and Resurrection of the Phoenix*.

<sup>43</sup> Keshmirshekan proposes the classification of Iranian painters during 1980s and 1990s to be traditionalists, modernists, and neo-traditionalists. See Keshmirshekan, *Contemporary Iranian Art*, p. 210. This group of neo-traditionalists should not be confused with the artists of the *Saqqā-Khāna* movement active in the 1960s.

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<sup>44</sup> The festival started in the early post-revolution years in 1982 and since then is held annually. I have not been able to identify the artist who designed the crystal Simurgh.

<sup>45</sup> Abbas Daneshvari, “Seismic Shifts Across Political Zones in Contemporary Iranian Art: The Poetics of Knowledge, Knowing and Identity,” in *Performing the Iranian State: Visual Culture and Representations of Iranian Identity*, ed. Staci Gem Scheiwiller (New York: Anthem Press, 2013), pp. 81-120, p. 110. He explains that the crisis of identity results from the artists’ uncertainty regarding the structures of knowledge.

<sup>46</sup> This new trend can be called the New Art in Iran. See Keshmirshakan, p. 237.

<sup>47</sup> Tirafkan lived and worked in Tehran, New York, and Toronto, but he is not considered a part of the Iranian diaspora since most of his works were created in Tehran, where they are preserved at Tirafkan foundation since his death in Toronto in 2013.

<sup>48</sup> “Sadeq Tirafkan: In Search of National Masculine Identity,” translated by Roya Monajem, *Tavoos Art Magazine*, Tehran, published in online magazine Payvand Iran News, 07/06/2011, retrieved <http://www.payvand.com/news/11/jul/1055.html>

<sup>49</sup> Iranian Diaspora Art was formed as a result of many Iranian artists leaving the country either before or after the revolution to live and work outside Iran. The notions of identity, cultural memory, nostalgia, interpretation, and criticism of the Self, Society, and politics occupy their work.

<sup>50</sup> He started as a graffiti artist in San Francisco, but developed a passion for manuscript illustrations and coffeehouse painting while studying Persian painting during his visit in Iran in 1997.

<sup>51</sup> The interview with the artist by Cynthia Hough in December 2007. Accessed online at <http://www.fecalface.com/SF/index.php?Itemid=92&id=938&option=com-content>

<sup>52</sup> Such examples of monochromatic margin drawings are numerous. An example of the Simurgh in a full-page drawing by an unknown artist is from a sixteenth-century (1580) manuscript of *Ahsan al-Kibār* of Ibn ‘Arabshah preserved at Gulistan Palace Library, no. 2258, reproduced in *Shāhkārhāy-i nigār-garī-yi Iran* [Masterpieces of Persian Painting]: Exhibition Catalogue, ed. ‘Abd al-Majid Husayni Rad (Tehran: Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, 1384/2005), p. 216.

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<sup>53</sup> In technical terms, the rendition of the Simurgh according to the rules of Persian painting is flawless. I am not certain if Ebtekar achieved this mastery in drawing during his one-year course of training in Iran or copied it from the many available drawings of the bird.

<sup>54</sup> Foreword by Sheila Canby, *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings*, translated to English by Ahmad Sadri, illustrated by Hamid Rahmanian (New York: Quantuck Lane, 2013), p. xi.

<sup>55</sup> The interview with the artist was conducted on March 12, 2016, with the approval of the Human Research Ethics Board of the University of Victoria.

<sup>56</sup> *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings*, p. 561.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with the artist. Rahmanian finds the Simurgh one of the most fascinating characters of the *Shāhnāma*, with theatrical characteristics. He has produced and directed a shadow puppet play, *Feathers of Fire*, based on the characters of the Simurgh and Zal in the *Shāhnāma*. The play has been widely received and praised in the United States since its first performance in February 2016. For the illustration of Gayumarth and the Simurgh see *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings*, illustrated by Rahmanian, p. 6.

## Conclusion

The fantastic Simurgh has maintained a significant presence in Persian culture. The visual and textual references to this bird manifest a mysterious and complex symbolism shaped around this super-natural creature in Persian literary sources. The Simurgh evolves from a myth, to the symbol of royalty, to the guardian of Persian kingdom, and finally to represent the Divine. This promotion and transformation is facilitated through the idea of divine protection and kingship inherited from ancient Persia. This notion was associated with the Simurgh and transformed her image into a powerful symbol.

The intertextual analysis of the Avestan and Pahlavi references to the Simurgh, and their comparison with the characteristics of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma*, allowed this study to trace the amalgamation of sources in the Persian national epics. Through a process of literary creativity, Firdausi combines the characteristics of the two mythical birds, *Saēna* and *Vāreghna*, to shape the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma*. By borrowing the element of glory from one bird and associating it with the other, the author successfully preserves an ancient myth of Persia, the mythical Simurgh, and carries her into the new society and culture of Persia after Islam.

The transformation of ancient Persian myths into Islamic Persia continues in the works of Islamic philosophers such as Suhrawardi who, once again, synthesized the mythical bird of pre-Islamic Persia with its recent embodiment in the *Shāhnāma*. In this phase of transformation and in the work of Suhrawardi's contemporary, 'Attar, the simurgh was raised to the symbol of the Divine. In his allegorical narrative, at the end of their search for the Simurgh or their God, the souls of the seekers, (the thirty birds), unite with the divine essence and become the Simurgh.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Simurgh becomes the metaphor for God.

Like most of the ancient Persian myths, the Simurgh owes its survival to this day in Iranian culture and society to the work of Firdausi, and his synthesis of both written and oral sources. In the process of displacement in literature, the mythical concepts transform and turn into literary ones.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the myth of the Simurgh changes into a literary character with supernatural abilities in the *Shāhnāma*, and represents a mystical concept in Iranian mystic literature. Yet some encyclopedic sources, mentioned in chapter two, classify the fantastic bird along with other birds, and reveal some ambiguity regarding its nature. In addition, the survival of the Simurgh through the long history of this nation relates to the presence of the royal, divine, and Iranian glory (*farr-i īzadī*, *farr-i Īrānī*) sought for by both rulers and individuals. While *farr-i īzadī* secured the kingship, *farr-i Īrānī* defines the Iranian identity and its heritage.

It is in the light of these literary sources from the genres of epic literature and religious writings that the representations of the Simurgh are contextualized in this study. The three proposed iconographic prototypes for the bird are also constructed as a result of the amalgamation of visual elements from within the culture, or adapted from neighboring cultures following the transculturation of objects. The first prototype, the composite Simurgh rendered in an abstract style, delineates the attempts to represent a supernatural entity. The examples of this visual type date mostly to pre-Islamic Persia (before 650 CE). Nevertheless, the stylized features of this type, as an established visual form, do not disappear from the arts of Islamic Persia altogether, and remain in that art for a while. The possible sources for the combined elements of this complex animal remain undetermined. As a group of scholars argues, the most abstract representation of the bird is limited to a pair of wings.<sup>3</sup>

The second visual prototype of the Simurgh imagery reflects the variety of interpretations in written and visual sources for this bird and the ambiguities around it. While in its earlier

phase, in early Islamic Persia, the representations of the Simurgh approximate to the Sasanian examples and their abstract qualities, later examples, generated in Ilkhanid paintings, reveal a more natural-looking bird with limited composite elements. The formation of the third visual prototype however, can be justified through the process of translation of cultural entities facilitated by means of the circulation of objects. The systems of trade and gift giving between the courts of China and Iran under the Mongol empire, as well as the admiration the Ilkhanid rulers had for the artifacts brought from China, (textiles in particular), introduced an elaborate, colorful bird motif, the Chinese phoenix, into Persian visual vocabulary. The earliest representations of this motif in Persian art appear on the tile revetments of the Ilkhanid summer palace in Takht-i Sulayman (1265-82 CE).<sup>4</sup> However, when employed in Persian art, this flawless form represented an old idea.<sup>5</sup> The Chinese phoenix portrayed the fantastic Simurgh. This Chinese-inspired Simurgh gradually became established as a visual type replacing the earlier visual models for the Persian fantastic bird. The superiority of this visual type (the third visual prototype of the Simurgh imagery, as I suggest) in form matched the artistic standards of the golden age of Persian painting, when the masterpieces of this art—in its traditional definition—were created.<sup>6</sup> Thus this type was instituted as a lasting motif representing the fantastic bird in the Iranian visual vocabulary and maintained this position to the present.

All three iconographic types of the fantastic bird, as I claim, were perceived to be and thus represent an established concept in the Persian system of thought, being glory (*farr*, *xvarənah*). This association of the Simurgh with glory (image and idea) ensures the sustainability of the form in Persian art. In other words, the Simurgh signifies glory, be it royal, divine, or Iranian. The presence of glory transforms the Simurgh into a powerful image. The translation of the representations of the Simurgh in this context led this study to measure the agency of the

patrons and artists in including the image of this bird in the *Shāhnāma* manuscripts produced under royal patronage during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. While the depictions of the Simurgh in some of these royal copies can be perceived as the patrons' desires to have access to a legitimate rule (in case of copies made for the Timurid prince Muhammad Juki, 1445-46, and the Safavid Shah Isma'īl II, 1576-77), in other royal manuscripts (as for copies made for the Safavid kings Tahmasp and Shah 'Abbas I) the Simurgh portrayed the presence of divine fortune. Thus either the assumed presence of divine protection, or the demand for it, required to achieve kingship, shapes the presence of the Simurgh in these manuscripts and empowers these images.

The social and political events of the lives of these patrons, lent by the contemporary historiographies, permit an evaluation of the political aspirations and concerns of each patron to some extent, and their personal ambitions to a lesser extent. The works of an exceptionally well-documented artist, Sadiqi bek Kitabdar, add to our understanding of the reception of these images.<sup>7</sup> The references to Sadiqi's temperament toward his colleagues, mentioned by the contemporary historians, as well as his criticism of other literary figures of his time, unveil an authoritative character in him. He was a learned man, with a military background and strong links to the high officials of the time. Sadiqi certainly distinguished himself from the artistic crowd of the court, probably assuming a higher position for himself. At the time of the production of these two copies of the *Shāhnāma*, the preoccupation of his patrons with political concerns provided the opportunity for this ambitious artist, Sadiqi, to substitute the subjectivity of his patrons. Therefore, the two representations of the Simurgh in the *Shāhnāma* manuscripts of Isma'īl II and 'Abbas I, indicate not only the royal glory (*farr-i īzadī*), required for the kingship, but also the Iranian glory (*farr-i Īrānī*), as perceived by the artist.

According to the *Avesta*, all worthy Iranians can possess *farr-i Irānī* that bestows wisdom and prosperity on them. It is the responsibility of people to seek and achieve this *farr*.<sup>8</sup> In incorporating the Mazdean doctrines into his Philosophy of Illumination, Suhrawardi sees the Light of God in every seeking man, learned men in particular.<sup>9</sup> Contemporary to Sadiqi, Abu'l Fazl 'Allami (1551-1602), the chief secretary and ideologue of the Mughal court, interprets the divine source of the emperors' royalty in his *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. He described this Light, referred to by Suhrawardi, as *farr-i īzadī* (Divine Glory), and acknowledged the learned men to be capable of achieving this glory.<sup>10</sup> It is unclear at this point whether or not Sadiqi had any knowledge of the new Divine Religion (*Dīn-i Ilāhī*) formulated by 'Allami.<sup>11</sup> Regardless, the royal patrons and artists shared the perception of the Simurgh imagery as the signifier of the God-given glory. This perception is shaped by the Persian system of thought and the ideologies these individuals received from their environments —the courtly realms of Persia, in which the notion of divine protection or glory was understood as a requirement for kingship.<sup>12</sup>

This idea of divine glory, transferred from pre-Islamic Persia to its Islamic era, still empowers the image of the Simurgh in modern Iran. In representing the fantastic bird, modern and contemporary Iranian artists search for, question, and claim their Iranian identity. Artists of modern Iran amalgamated modernist, nationalistic, and Islamic discourses in their artistic practices.<sup>13</sup> However, after the fall of the last Persian monarchy, and faced with a new visual vocabulary structured around the Islamic ideologies of the revolution, these artists were denied the opportunity to represent their national heritage, and were prevented from practicing modern art.<sup>14</sup> The new socio-political changes generated some ambiguities around their national identities for the artists. Therefore, the representations of the Simurgh, in any form and context, in the works of these artists reveal the search for that identity. Through that search, some of these

artists successfully blend the visual principles of the past and present. In their work, the image of the Simurgh continues to be powerful by promoting the notion of national Iranian identity.

While this study was designed to examine the motif of the Simurgh, its power, and its perception among the rulers/patrons of Persian courts, the same meaning can explain the appearance of this motif on other objects produced within Persian culture. The images of the Simurgh decorate portable objects, the margins of manuscripts, as well as the walls of buildings.<sup>15</sup> Although close examination of such occurrences is yet to be conducted, the association of the fantastic bird with the notion of glory and fortune, as established in this study, can offer a meaning to this motif in its decorative category. Similar to the representations of the Simurgh as a character in the illustrations of a story, the representations of the Simurgh on other objects can bestow protection and certain powers upon the owners and users of those objects. This, however, requires a separate study that would complement the present one. Thus far, the iconographic study of the Simurgh imagery and its contextualization in the light of textual sources, exclusive to the pre-Islamic representations of the bird, has been offered only by Hanns-Peter Schmidt.<sup>16</sup>

The methodological approach employed in this study in contextualizing the motif of the Simurgh can also be applied in interpreting the presence of other super-natural beings in Persian art. Since the *Shāhnāma* functioned as a conveyor of ancient Persian myths and systems of thought into the Islamic society and culture of this land, the representations of wondrous creatures in the illustrations of the text, both royal and commercial productions, can be examined in a similar manner. Studies as such would reveal the significance of those representations in Persian culture, their meanings, and their visual sources. These interpretations however need to be in relation to the textual references. As this study demonstrates, the same iconographic type

was used to depict both the good and the evil counterparts of the Simurgh. Intertextual analysis of the *Shāhnāma* in relevance to its preceding written sources, namely the body of Zoroastrian literature, identifies the dual principles of this ideology (Ahura and Ahriman) as the sources for both the good and the evil Simurghs.

Many super-natural creatures come to life in the stories of the *Shāhnāma*. Following an ancient tradition and to prove their adept heroism, most heroes of the national epics are challenged in a fight with a monstrous creature, or a group of them. Sam, Rustam, Gushtasp, Isfandiar, and Bahram-i Gur had to slay dragons (*izhdihās*). Hushang, Tahmuras, and Rustam fight with demons (*dīvs*). In their adventures, Bahram Gur fights a rhino-wolf while Bahram-i Chubina slays a composite animal, the lion-ape (*shīr-i kappī*). Some of the creatures and characters can transform into other beings: a sorcerer disguised herself as a young girl to deceive Rustam, and Faridun transformed himself into a dragon to test his sons. These strange creatures, with their visual peculiarities, have frequently been illustrated in the manuscripts of the national epics. Some of these creatures of wonder, such the angel Surush, who rescued Khusrau Parviz, originating directly from the pre-Islamic written sources, match the definitions provided by Firdausi as well as in pre-Islamic literary sources. Yet in some examples the illustrations do not follow the text of the *Shāhnāma* as closely. The white horse that killed Yazdgird I, the unjust, is never represented by any of the demonic features Firdausi describes this monster (*izhdihā*) with. Such discrepancies of text and image offer other sources for the formation of a motif. In this case, the popular beliefs around a historical event shaped the natural looking, even handsome, representations of the horse that killed the unjust king.<sup>17</sup>

An analysis of the visual representations of the uncanny in single episodes of the national epics, their frequency of repetition in illustrated manuscripts, and the unity of their forms allow

an understanding of their perception in the societies that produced them. The perception of the images of *dīvs* (demons) by their viewers in the illustrations of the *Shāhnāma* manuscripts is examined by Francesca Leoni. These images indicate the ideas of pre-modern Iranian society about what was considered evil. In his triumph over the white *dīv*, the Persian hero, Rostam, exemplifies a moral message, reflected throughout the *Shāhnāma* as the victory of good over evil.<sup>18</sup> However, the conflict of the evil and the good, a persistent theme in the *Shāhnāma* originates from the ancient Persian system of thought, preserved in Avestan and Pahlavi sources. Intertextual examination of these sources in defining evil and its variances could appear beneficial in complementing the study of *dīvs*.<sup>19</sup>

Another recurring supernatural creature in the illustrations of the *Shāhnāma*, also a decorative motif in Persian art in general, is the dragon (*izhdihā*). In its decorative instances the motif sometimes appears in combination with the Simurgh, or fighting with the fantastic bird. In the *Shāhnāma* stories and paintings though, the dragon depicts an antagonist that the heroes have to encounter. In an exemplary study, Sara Kuehn contextualizes the iconography of this hybrid motif in the medieval Islamic world up to the Mongol arrival in Central Asia. Incorporating written sources from various genres and examining countless visual examples, Kuehn suggests that the motifs of the dragon and the serpent can convey both “benevolent and malevolent connotations.”<sup>20</sup> Both textual and visual sources indicate this ambiguity, which Kuehn explains through the two varying receptions of the motif. While in official religious and political ideology, the dragon is associated with evil and carries malicious symbolism, in popular beliefs and legends the motif provides protection and security desired by the public.<sup>21</sup>

The above-mentioned study of the dragon motif certainly provides a successful example of the iconographic study of a symbol, confined to the medieval period but expanding over wide

geographical spheres. The present study of the Simurgh imagery, on the other hand, remains focused on Persian territory (although that is a changing concept through history), and Persian ideology of the kingship. The textual sources informing the present study are confined to the ones that shape the Persian system of thought, being the Zoroastrian body of literature. The idea of glory (*farr or xvarənah*), the birds *Saēna* and *Varēghna*, one possessing healing and productive powers and the other having protective attributes, are preserved in these written sources. These sources nourished and inspired both narrative accounts (e.g. the *Shāhnāma*) and religious mystical writings (e.g. *Mantiq al-Tayr*) of Persia after Islam, transferring some of the ancient myths of this land to its medieval and pre-modern eras. As references to the Simurgh mentioned in encyclopedic and scientific sources reveal, the fantastic bird and its nature also caused some ambiguity and uncertainty, mainly when approximating the Semitic counterpart of the bird, 'Anqā.<sup>22</sup> The examination of the Simurgh imagery as a decorative motif, as proposed above, will result in a more accurate understanding of public perception of the motif. Although the present study focused on the idea of kingship and the reception of the royal patrons of the Simurgh imagery and its symbolism, the return of the Simurgh to the works of Iranian contemporary artists reflects the establishment of this form in both official and popular belief systems of Persia.

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<sup>1</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (North Carolina: the University of North Carolina Press, 1975), pp. 306-307.

<sup>2</sup> Bahar Mukhtarian, *Darāmadī bar sākhtār-i usṭūra-yi Shāhnāma* [An Introduction to the Mythical Structure of the *Shāhnāma*], (Tehran: Agah, 1389/2010), pp. 37-38.

<sup>3</sup> These scholarly views are discussed in chapter three. For discussions on a pair of wings in Achaemenid art see Michael Barry, "Sîmorgh in Persia's Sky," in Farīd-od-Dīn 'Attār, *The Canticle of the Birds: Illustrated through Persian And Eastern Islamic Art* (Paris: Diane de

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Selliers, 2013), p. 32. For Sasanian examples see Vladimir G. Lukonin, *Persia II*, translated from Russian by James Hogarth (Switzerland: Nagel, 1967), p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> It is discussed in chapter three. Also see Tomoko Masuya, “Ilkhanid Courtly Life,” in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353*, ed. Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002), p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> A.S. Melikian Chirvani, “Le Livre des Rois, Miroir du Destin II: Takht-e Soleymān et la Symbolique du *Shāh-nāme*,” *Studia Iranica* 20 (1991): 33-148.

<sup>6</sup> The stylistic analyses of the representations of the Simurgh in the royal manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* executed between 1370s and 1675-76, in chapter four, are aimed to demonstrate the formation of this visual prototype.

<sup>7</sup> As was mentioned in chapter four, Sadiqi composed at least ten written accounts including a treatise on painting, *Qānūn al-Suvar*, and one on the poets and intellectual figures of his time, *Majma‘ al-Khawāš*. He commissioned a manuscript of *Anvār-i Suhaylī* (1593, Bute Ms. 347) for himself. See Tourkhan Gandjei, “Notes on the Life and Work of Šādiqī: A Poet and Painter of Šafavid Times,” *Der Islam* 52 (Jan. 1975): 112-118.

<sup>8</sup> See *Aštād-yašt* 1 and *Zāmyād-yašt* 53, both discussed in chapter two under the concept of *farr* (*xvarənah*).

<sup>9</sup> “In every seeking soul there is a portion, be it little or great, of the Light of God.” Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, quoted by Soudavar in *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship* (Costa Mesa, Mazda, 2003), p. 8, note 13.

<sup>10</sup> Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings*, pp. 7-8, also discussed in the conclusion to chapter four of this study.

<sup>11</sup> It is highly probable that the news of this new religion, devised at the court of emperor Akbar (1556-1605) as a solution to facilitate his rule over religiously diverse subjects, had reached the Safavid court. The *Ā’in-i Akbarī* makes the third part of *Akbarnāma*, the historical account of the emperor Akbar’s reign composed by Abu’l Fazl ‘Allami. See R. M. Eaton, “Akbar-Nama,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/akbar-nama> (accessed on 25 April 2014).

<sup>12</sup> The Safavid rulers, in particular, claimed the charisma of kingship through their lineage to both the Shi‘i Imams and the Turco-Mongol rulers of Persia. For discussions on this synthesis

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see Abolala Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts: Selections from the Art and History Trust Foundation* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), p. 413. For the Safavid inception of Shi‘ism as a state religion and their claim of legitimacy see Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> Hamid Keshmirshekan, *Contemporary Iranian Art* (London: Christie’s, 2013), also see chapter five of this study.

<sup>14</sup> The latter was condemned as a sign of the cultural aggregation of the West (*tahājum-i farhangī*), discussed in chapter five.

<sup>15</sup> Some of these examples were examined in chapter three.

<sup>16</sup> Hanns-Peter Schmidt, “The Sēnmurw: of Birds, Dogs and Bats,” *Persica IX*, *Jaarboek Voor het Genootschap Nederland-Iran Annuaire de la Societe Neerlando-Iranienne* (1980): 1-85.

<sup>17</sup> In a study on an illustration of this episode from a fourteenth century Inju manuscript (1352-53), preserved at the Royal Ontario Museum (967.315.1), I have demonstrated the discrepancy between text and image in this story, and offered the influence of the folk beliefs, rather than text, as the source of inspiration for illustrating the monster. The paper was presented at the tenth biennale of Association for Iranian Studies, Montreal, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Francesca Leoni, “Picturing Evil: Images of *Dīvs* and the Reception of *Shahnama*,” in *Shahnama Studies II: The Reception of Shahnama*, ed. Charles Melville and Gabrielle van den Berg (Cambridge: Brill, 2012), pp. 101-118.

<sup>19</sup> There are at least ten different *dīvs* presented in the *Shāhnāma*, each representing an evil attribute. See Mahmoud Omidshar, “Dīv,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, updated 2011, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/div>. The Avestan *Daevas* (*Dīvs*) are the creations of Ahriman to assist him in conflict with Ahuramazda. See *Bundahišn*, trans. Bahar (Tehran: Tus, 1385/2006), 34. *Dīvs* are frequently mentioned and described as the forces of evil in the Avestan and Pahlavi literature.

<sup>20</sup> Sara Kuehn, *The Dragon in Medieval East Christian and Islamic Art* (Boston: Brill, 2011), p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Kuehn, *The Dragon in Medieval East Christian and Islamic Art*, p. 207.

<sup>22</sup> These sources are discussed in chapter two. The visual examples are discussed in chapter three. This ambiguity is noticeable in accounts such as ‘*Ajā`ib al-Makhlūqāt, Manāfi` al-*

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*Haywān*, and even *Garshāspnāma*, where the Simurgh is described with the attributes or the name of *ʿAnqā*.

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Appendix A:

Comparative Table of the Representations of the Simurgh  
in Persian Royal *Shāhnāma* Manuscripts

The <i>Shāhnāma</i> manuscripts made for/dynasty year of production	The upbringing of Zal by the Simurgh	The Birth of Rostam Assisted by the Simurgh	The Fifth Ordeal of Isfandiar: Killing the Simurgh	The Healing of Rostam and Rakhsh by the Simurgh
The Great Mongol/ Ilkhanid c. 1230s				
Sultan Uways/ Jalayirid c. 1270s	❖			
Baysunghur/ Timurid 1430				
Ibrahim Sultan/ Timurid c.1420s-1430s			❖	
Muhammad Juki/ Timurid 1444-45	❖			
Shah Isma‘il I/ Safavid c.1520	❖			
Shah Tahmasp/ Safavid 1522-35	❖❖❖			
Shah Isma‘il II/Safavid 1576-77	❖		❖	
Shah ‘Abbas I/ Safavid 1587-97	❖			
Shah ‘Abbas II /Safavid 1654-55				
Shah Sulayman (Safi II)/ Safavid 1675 single page added to 1587-97 copy made for Shah ‘Abbas I		❖		

## Figures



Fig.1: Rock relief, Persepolis, Iran, 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE.  
Source: online image

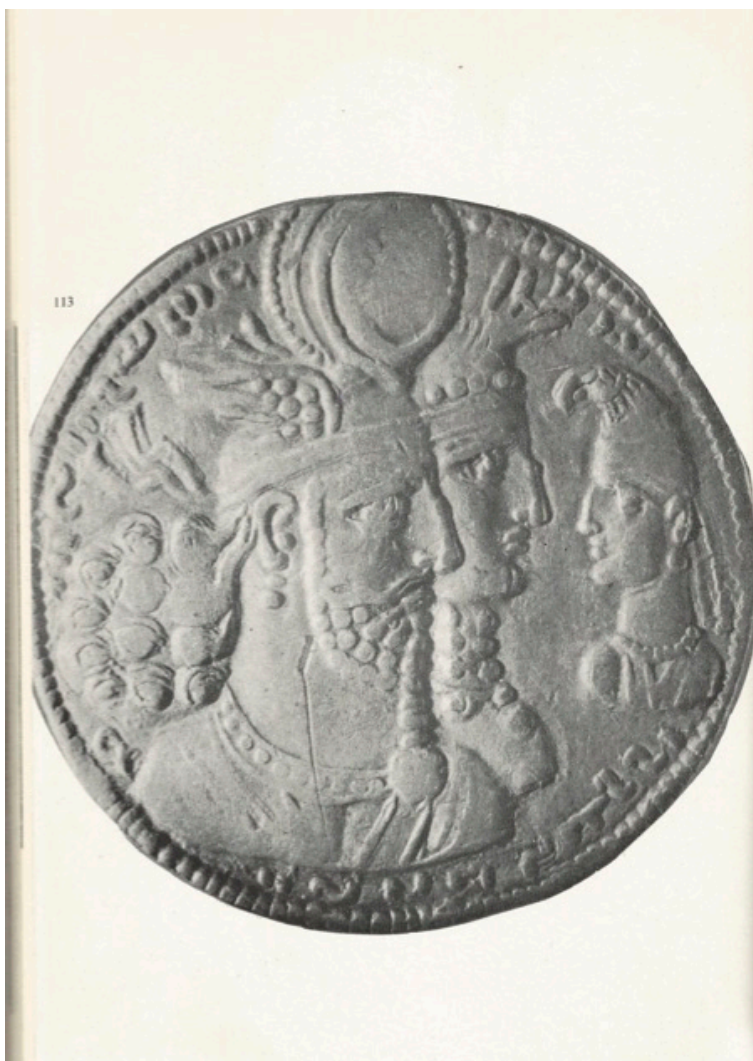


Fig. 2. Sasanian Coin of Warahrān/Bahram II with his Queen and Prince, 276-293CE, silver.  
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Source: Lukonin, V. *Persia II*, 1967, plate 113.  
Also in actual size in Ferrier, *The Arts of Persia*, 1989, p. 196, fig. 3.



Fig. 3a. The Senmurw/Simurgh on the garment of a king/horseman, Rock relief, great iwan, left hall, Taq-i Bustan, near present Kirmanshah, western Iran, 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century.

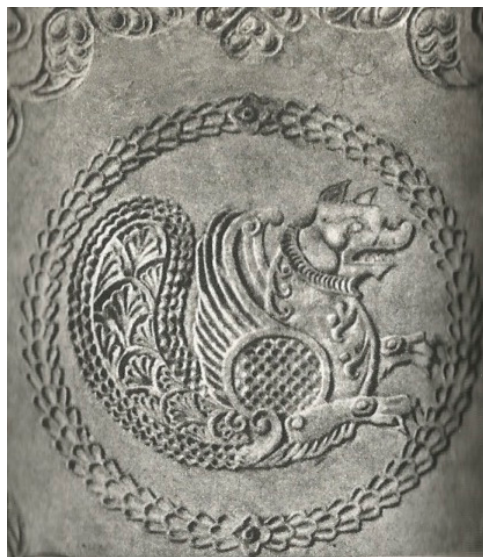


Fig. 3b. The Senmurw/Simurgh in a roundel, Rock relief, back wall of the iwan of Khusrau, Taq-i Bustan, near Kirmanshah, western Iran, 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century.

Source: online images of Taq-i Bustan



Fig. 4. The Senmurw/Simurgh in roundels, Iran, 7<sup>th</sup> century, silk fragments.  
Left: Musee des Arts Decoratifs, Paris. Right: Museo Nazionale, Florence.  
Source: Ghirshman, *Persian Art: The Parthian and Sasanian Dynasties*, illustrations 275 and 276, p. 229.



Fig. 5. The Senmurw/Simurgh on a plate, Iran, 7<sup>th</sup> century, bronze, 3 x 36.8 cm.  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund (60.161).

Source: The museum website



Fig. 6: The Senmurw/Simurgh on an ewer, Iran, Sasanian period, 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, silver.  
The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.  
Source: Lukonin, *Persia II*, illustration 165.



Fig. 7: Double-headed Eagle on a large silver plate. Sasanian Iran, 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century.  
Riza 'Abbasi Museum, Tehran (Acc. No. 160).  
Photo by author.



Fig. 8: Eagle [?] Bearing a Woman on a gilded silver dish, Sasanian Iran, first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, 22.2 cm. The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (Oriental Art Collection S-217).

Source: The museum website



Fig. 9: *Viṣṇu Rides the Bird Garuda*, from a *Rāmāyānā* manuscript, Vol. 2, Mughal India, 1597-1605, 27.5 x 15.2 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (F1907.271.173-346, folio 290 verso) Source: Barry, *The Canticle of the Birds*, p. 191. The reference to this figure appears on chapter three, note 43.



Fig. 10:  
above: A Male Figure Lifted by a Bird into the Sky.  
left: A Female Figure Lifted by a Bird into the Sky.  
Details of paintings on muqarnas zones, central ceiling, Cappella Palatina, Palermo, 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Source: Grube and Jones, *The Painted Ceilings of the Cappella Palatina*, pp. 75 and 77.

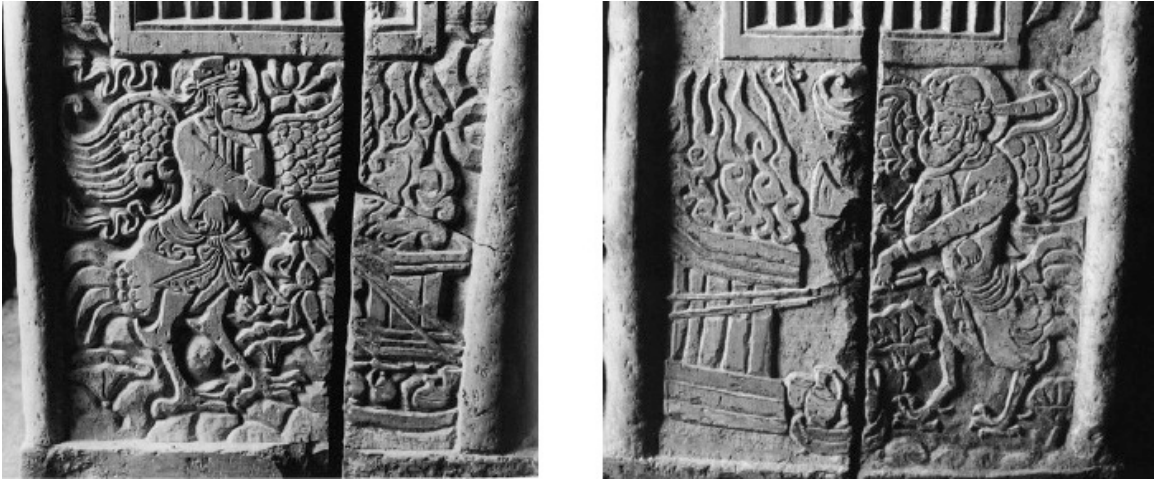


Fig. 11: The Priest-birds, stone walls of a Sogdian tomb  
in Xi'an, Northern China, 6<sup>th</sup> century.  
Source: Riboud et al., "bird-priests." accessed at academia.edu.



Fig. 12: Stucco plaque with the Senmurw/Simurgh, 7th to early 8th century, Umayyad dynasty. Chal Tarkhan- Eshqabad, Northern Iran. 19.3 x16.9 cm. London, The British Museum (135913).  
Source: The museum website



Fig. 13: Detailed of a fur-lined silk caftan with the motif of Senmurw/Simurgh, Iran, 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century, length about 140 cm. The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

Source: Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina. *Islamic Art and Architecture, 650-1250*, p. 125, fig. 202.



Fig 14: Octagonal Tray decorated with the motif of Simurgh, Iran, 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century, 36 cm, gilded silver, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin.

Source: Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair, *Islamic Arts*, p. 116, fig. 64.



Fig. 15: Overglaze luster-painted tile with the Simurgh/phoenix, probably Takht-i Sulayman, Iran, c.1270s. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (12.49.4)



Fig. 16a (left): Overglaze star tile with the Simurgh/phoenix, probably Takht-i Sulayman, Iran, c. 1270s.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institutions, Washington D.C. (S1997.114)

Fig. 16b (right): Hexagonal unglazed and underglaze painted tile with the Simurgh/phoenix, Takht-i Sulayman, Iran, c. 1270s.

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst (I.1988.10)

All the three images above are reproduced in Komaroff and Carboni, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan*, 2002, as figures 97, 101, and 95 respectively.



Fig. 17: *The Simurgh*, from a manuscript of *Manāfi' al-Hayawān*, by Ibn Bakhtīshū', Maragha, North-western Iran, ca. 1297-1300. Ink and color on paper. Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (MS M. 500, folio 55r). Source: Komaroff and Carboni, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan*, 2002, fig. 169.



Fig 18a (right): *Anqā*, from a manuscript of *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt* of Qazvini, probably Mosul, Iraq, 1305-1315. Ink and color on paper, 10.8 x 13.8 cm.

The British Library, London (Or.14140, folio 122v).  
Source: Carboni, "The London Qazwīnī," plate VII B

Fig. 18b (left): *The Story of an Isfahani Merchant Rescued by a Giant Bird*, from a manuscript of *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt* of Qazvini, Mosul, Iraq, c. 1300. Ink and color on paper, 31 x 20 cm (full folio). London, The British Library (Or. 14140, folio 39a).

Source: Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image and Cosmos*, figure 28

The dates and their variance follow the dates given by the two authors.

Fig. 19: Above left: *The Story of an Isfahani Merchant Rescued by the Rūkh*, from a manuscript of 'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt of Qazvini, Wasit, 1280.

معرض بها ليهل ليه فقال يا فتى انك ناعطينك الملكة والارز الملكة اما ان تفتش على الخبز  
فترى في جوفه ليل والاسلمه بمراد المرحوم والارز الملكة والارز الملكة والارز الملكة  
حصل لزوجها الجوز وكان الماشي عظمه المار اعطى بهما على ما عظمه به في حال انهما  
اجتهدت بهودته فاذا اطار عظمه ليل الملكة اجروا ما عظمه جازوه وقدموا على الشجر  
فاختفت منه خوراسان مصطادى الى ان اصابوه الصابغ فمعه جازوه وطاروا كالملكه الملكة  
حالا اطروه وقدم على شدة ذلك انما جازوه في شجره جازوه في شجره جازوه في شجره جازوه  
وطاروا صحنها انما كان الملكة لئلا تفتش عنده من عظمه جازوه الى ان تفتش جازوه  
الفرقة من جازوه في شجره جازوه في شجره جازوه في شجره جازوه في شجره جازوه

Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich (MSS cod. arab. 464, folio 65b).

Fig. 20a: Below left: *The Magpie and the 'Anqā*. From a manuscript of 'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt of Qazvini, Fars, Iran, 1322.



22 x 14 cm (ruled area of the page).  
Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library (MSS Yeni Cami 813, folio 166a).

Fig. 20b: Below right: *The Story of an Isfahani Merchant Rescued by the Giant Bird* from a manuscript of 'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt of Qazvini, Fars, Iran, 1322.



22 x 14 cm (ruled area of the page).  
Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library (MSS Yeni Cami 813, folio 50v).





Fig. 21: Above right: *The 'Anqā Steals the Bridegroom away from his Wedding*, from a manuscript of *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt* of Qazvini, Iran, late 15<sup>th</sup> century. 10 x 6 cm.  
Royal Asiatic Society, London (MS. 178, folio 408a)

Source of images 19, 20a, and 21:  
Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos*, figures 27, 29, and 30.

Source of image 20b:  
Berlekamp, "From Iraq to Fars," figure 11.



Fig. 22: *Sam Asks the Simurgh to Return his Son, Zal*, from the Freer *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Baghdad (?), ca. 1300. Ink and color on paper. The Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. (F192931) Source: The museum website



Fig. 23: *Sam Asks the Simurgh to Return his Son, Zal*, from the Second Small *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Baghdad (?), ca. 1300. Ink and color on paper. Portland Art Museum, Portland (70.27.2)

Source: The museum website.



Fig. 24: *The Simurgh Returns Zal to Sam*, from the First Small *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Northwestern Iran or Iraq, ca. 1300. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund (69.74.1)

Source: the museum website



Fig. 25: *Sam Asks the Simurgh to Return his Son, Zal*, from the Gutman *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Isfahan, 1330s- 1340s. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1974.290.2v)

Source: The museum website



Fig. 26: *Isfandiyar's Fifth Ordeal: Killing the Simurgh*, from the Gutman *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Isfahan, 1330s-1340s. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1974.29.28)

Source: The museum website



Fig. 27: *The Birth of Rostam*, from Diez Albums A fols. 71, Isfahan, 1330s-1340s.  
Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Berlin (71, S7.)



Fig. 28: *Sam Asks the Simurgh to Return his Son, Zal*, from an Inju *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Shiraz, 1333. The National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg (Dorn 329. Folio 021v.)  
 Source: Adamova and Giuzal'ian, *Miniatiury rukopisi poëmy Shakhname"1333 goda*.



Fig. 29: *The Simurgh Returns Zal to Sam*, from Stephens *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Shiraz, 1352-3, or earlier. The Ebrahimi Collection (0160, folio 24a).  
 Source: Sotheby's catalogue. 1998. p. 56.



Fig. 30: *Isfandiyar's Fifth Ordeal: Killing the Simurgh*, from an *Inju Shāhnāma*, Shiraz, 1330, 11 x 22.5 cm. The Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul (Ms. H.1479, folio 145a).  
Source: Çağman and Tanindi. *The Topkapi Saray Museum*, plate 39.



Fig. 31: *Rostam Shoots Isfandiyar*, from an *Inju Shāhnāma*, Shiraz, 1330, 37.7 x 29.3 cm. The Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul (Ms. H.1479, folio 156a).  
Source: Elaine Wright, *The Look of the Book*, fig. 80.



Fig. 32: Left: a page from a manuscript of *Mūnis al-Ahrār*, Isfahan or Shiraz, 1341 or 1350s.  
The Cleveland Art Museum, Cleveland (1945.385.b)

Right: a page from a manuscript of *Mūnis al-Ahrār*, Isfahan or Shiraz, 1341 or 1350s.  
The Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (F1946.14)  
Source: The museum websites



Fig. 33: Attributed to Shams al-Din, *The Simurgh Carries Zal to her Nest*, possibly designed for a *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Tabriz, 1370s or earlier, prepared for Sultan Uways Jalayir, 31.5 x 19 cm. Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul (Album H. 2153, folio 23a).

Source: Çağman and Tanindi. *The Topkapi Saray Museum: The Albums and Illustrated Manuscripts*, plate 50.



Fig. 34: Textile with phoenixes on a field of flowers, eastern Central Asia, 13<sup>th</sup> c. Silk tapestry. Textile Traces Collection, Los Angeles (T.0292).

Source: Komaroff and Carboni, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan*, 2002, fig. 203, cat. No. 187.



Fig. 35a: Dish with flattened rim, Chinese porcelain, 7 x 41 cm. 14<sup>th</sup> century. Ardibil Shrine Collection, Iran (29.122)

Source: J. A Pope, *Chinese Porcelains at the Ardebil Shrine*, 1981, plate 14



Fig. 35b: Dish with flattened foliate rim, Chinese porcelain, 7.5 x 47.5 cm. 14<sup>th</sup> century. Ardibil Shrine Collection, Iran (29.128)

Source: J. A Pope, *Chinese Porcelains at the Ardebil Shrine*, 1981, plate 22.



Fig. 36: *The Simurgh Heals Rustam and Rakhsh*, from an album, Iran or Central Asia, c. 1400.  
34. 5 x 50 cm. Topkapi Saray Library, Istanbul (Album H. 2152. Folio 48a).  
Source: Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, fig 23.



Fig. 37: *Isfandiar's Fifth Ordeal: Killing the Simurgh*, from a *Shāhnāma* manuscript made for Ibrahim Sultan, Shiraz, 1420s or early 1430s, 14.9 x 14.4 cm. Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS. Ouseley Add 176, folio 263v).



Fig. 38: Preliminary ink drawing of a Simurgh struggling with a dragon, opening pages from a *Shāhnāma* manuscript made for Ibrahim Sultan, Shiraz, 1420s or early 1430s, with an earlier possible date for preliminary drawings. Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS. Ouseley Add 176, folio 7 recto).

Source: the *Shāhnāma* project website



Fig. 39: Right: Design for a quiver with the Simurgh, Iran, c. 1400-1450. Ink on paper, 37 x 19.5 cm, from the Diez Album, Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (f. 73.S.49,#1.)  
Left: Panel with the Simurgh, Iran, c. 1400-1450. Ink on paper, 22 x 32 cm, from the Diez Album, Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (f. 73.S. 63, #2.).

Source: Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, cats. 91 and 93.



Fig. 40: *The Simurgh Restores Zal to his Father, Sam*, from a *Shāhnāma* manuscript made for Muhammad Juki, Herat, 1444-45 CE, 17.1 x12.8 cm. The Royal Asiatic Society, London (Ms. 239, folio 16b).

Source: Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, cat. 43.



Fig. 41: *Zal Is Sighted by a Caravan*, from Shah Tahmasp's *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Tabriz, 1523-35, attributed to 'Abd al-'Aziz, directed by Sultan Muhammad. The Art and History Collection, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution (LTS1995.2.46, folio 62v).



Fig. 42: *Sam Comes to Mount Alburz*, from Shah Tahmasp's *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Tabriz, 1523-35, attributed to 'Abd al-'Aziz, directed by Sultan Muhammad. Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (folio 63v).



Fig. 43: *Sam Returns with Zal*, from Shah Tahmasp's *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Tabriz, 1523-35, attributed to Qadimi, directed by Sultan Muhammad. The Ebrahimi Collection, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution (ELS2010.7.2, folio 64v).



Fig. 44: *Isfandiyar's Fifth Ordeal: Killing the Simurgh*, from Shah Tahmasp's *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Tabriz, 1523-35, attributed to 'Abd al-Vahhab, directed by Aqa Mirak. The David Collection, Copenhagen (folio 436v).

Source of all four images: Canby, *The Shahname of Shah Tahmasp*, 2014, pp. 111-113, and 265.

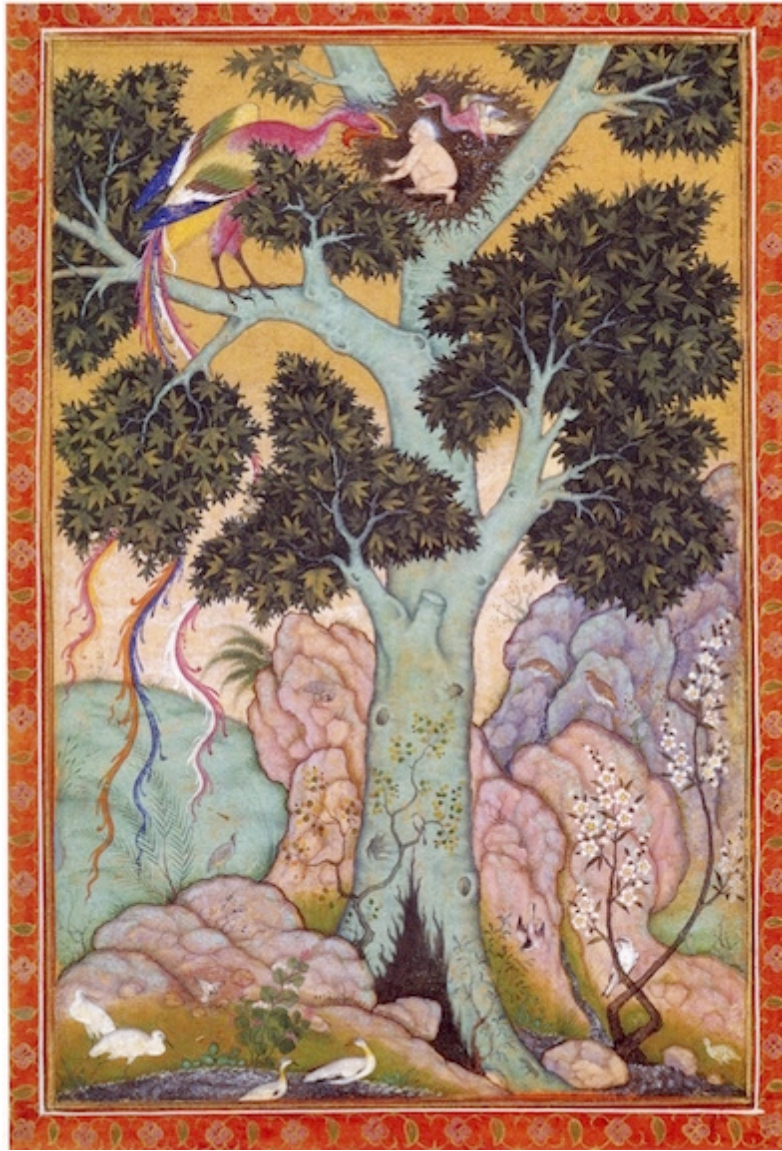


Fig. 45: *Zal in the Simurgh's Nest*, attributed to Mir Sayyid 'Ali, Kabul, c.1550-55.  
Private Collection (unnamed).

Source: Crill et al. ed. *Arts of Mughal India*, 2004, p.36.

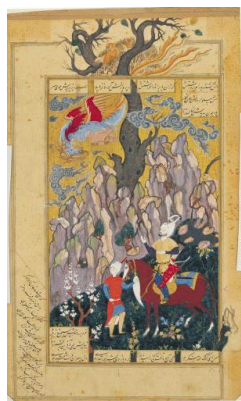


Fig. 46: *The Simurgh Returns Zal to his Father Sam*, from Shah Isma' il II's *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Qazvin, 1576-77, attributed to Sadiqi Bek.

Riza 'Abbasi Museum, Tehran (ACC. No. 615).

Source: Museum staff



Fig. 47: *Isfandiar's Fifth Ordeal: Killing the Simurgh*, from Shah Isma' il II's *Shāhnāma* manuscript, Qazvin, 1576-77, attributed to Siavush. 39 x 30 cm.  
The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (Acc. No. Ir.M.69/D)

Source: Welch and Welch, *Arts of the Islamic Book*, cat. 29B.



Fig. 48: *The Simurgh Carries Zal to her Nest*, from the *Shāhnāma* manuscript of Shah 'Abbas, Qazvin, 1587-97, attributed to Sadiqi Bek. 31 x 23.5 cm. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ireland (Per 277.12a)

Source: The museum website

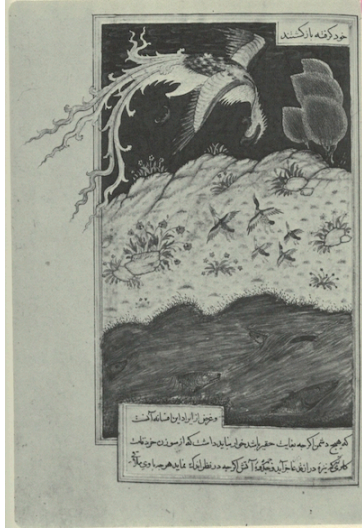


Fig. 49: Sadiqi, *The Simurgh and other Birds Flying over the Sea*, from a manuscript of *Anvār-i Suhaylī*, Qazvin, 1593. Aga Khan Museum, Toronto (MS AKM 289, folio 91a or 85a?)

Source: A. Welch, *Artists for the Shah*, fig. 50.



Fig. 50: Miskin (?), *The Raven Addressing the Assembled Animals*, from a manuscript of *Anvār-i Suhaylī*, Mughal India, ca. 1590. The British Museum, London (1920 9-17-05).

Source: S.C. Welch, *Imperial Mughal Painting*, plate 11.



Fig. 51: Habibullah, *The Conference of the Birds*, added to a 15<sup>th</sup> century manuscript of *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, Isfahan, first decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

25.4 x 11.4 cm.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Acc. No. 63.210.11, folio 11r).

Source: The museum website



Fig. 52: *The Simurgh Leads the Birds to Save the Sandpipers*, from a manuscript of *Anvār-i Suhaylī*, Herat, c.1500.

The British Library (Add. 18579, folio 104).

Source: 'Attār, *The Canticle of the Birds: Illustrated Through Persian and Eastern Islamic Art*, p.21.

The reference to this figure appears on chapter four, note 114.



Fig. 53: Attributed to Mu‘in Musavvar, *Isfandiyar’s Fifth Ordeal: Killing the Simurgh*, attributed to a manuscript of the *Shāhnāma* made for Shah ‘Abbas II, Isfahan, 1650, 34. 2 x 22 cm.

Private Collection.

Source: A. Welch, *Shah ‘Abbas and the Arts of Isfahan*, cat.56.



Fig. 54: Mu' in Musavvar, *The Simurgh Restores Zal to Sam*, from a dispersed copy of the *Shāhnāma*, Isfahan, 1660s, 26 x19.5 cm.

Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, UK. (Mss. 1070r)

Source: Barbara Brend and Charles Melville, *Epic of the Persian Kings*, cat. 83.

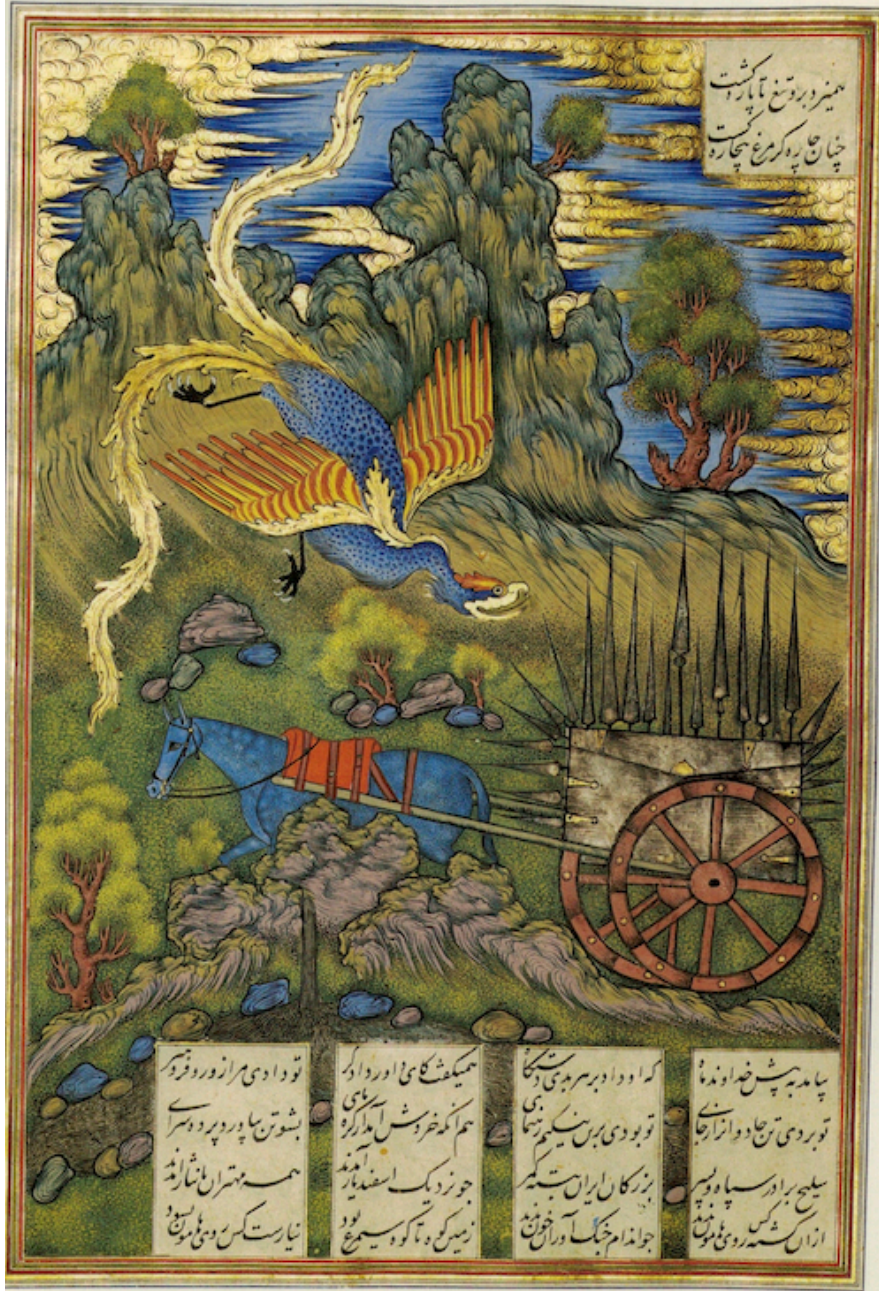


Fig. 55: Attributed to Muhammad Qasim, *Isfandiar's Fifth Ordeal: Killing the Simurgh*, from a *Shāhnāma* manuscript made for Qarachaghay Khan, Mashhad, 1648. The Windsor Castle, UK. (Ms. Holmes. 151. Folio 439 A).

Source: Robinson, Sims, and Bayani, *The Windsor Shahnama of 1648*, cat. 98.



Fig. 56 a-b: Signed by Malik Husayn Isfahani, *Sulayman and the Queen of Sheba Surrounded by Angles, Birds, Demons, and animals*, double-page frontispiece to Qarachaghay Khan's manuscript of the *Shāhnāma*, Mashhad, 1648.

The Windsor Castle Collection, UK (Ms. Holmes. 151. Folios 5b-6a).

Source: Robinson, Sims, and Bayani, *The Windsor Shahnama of 1648*, cat. 1B-1A.



Fig. 57: Muhammad Zaman, *The Simurgh Assisting the Birth of Rostam*, an addition to the *Shāhnāma* manuscript of 1587-97 made for Shah 'Abbas at the order of Shah Sulayman (Safi II), probably in Ashraf, Mazandaran, 1675-76 CE. 24. 5x 14.5 cm.  
The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Per. 277. 003).

Source: Sims, Marshak, and Grube, *Peerless Images: Persian Painting and Its Sources*, p. 301.  
Cat. 220.

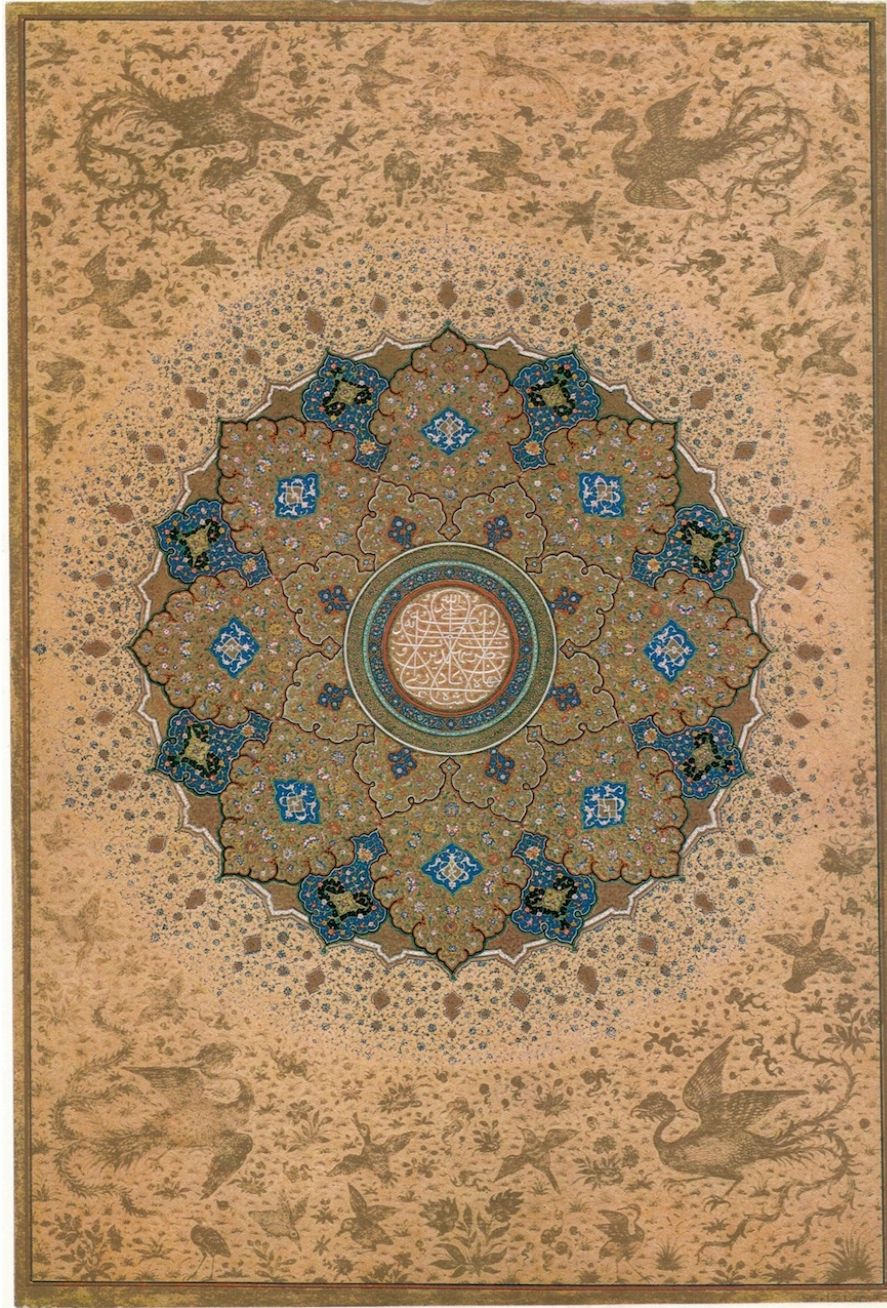


Fig. 58: *Shamsa* bearing the name and titles of Shah Jahan, from the emperor's album, Mughal India, ca.1640. 38.6 x 26.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (55.121.10.39)

Source: the museum website

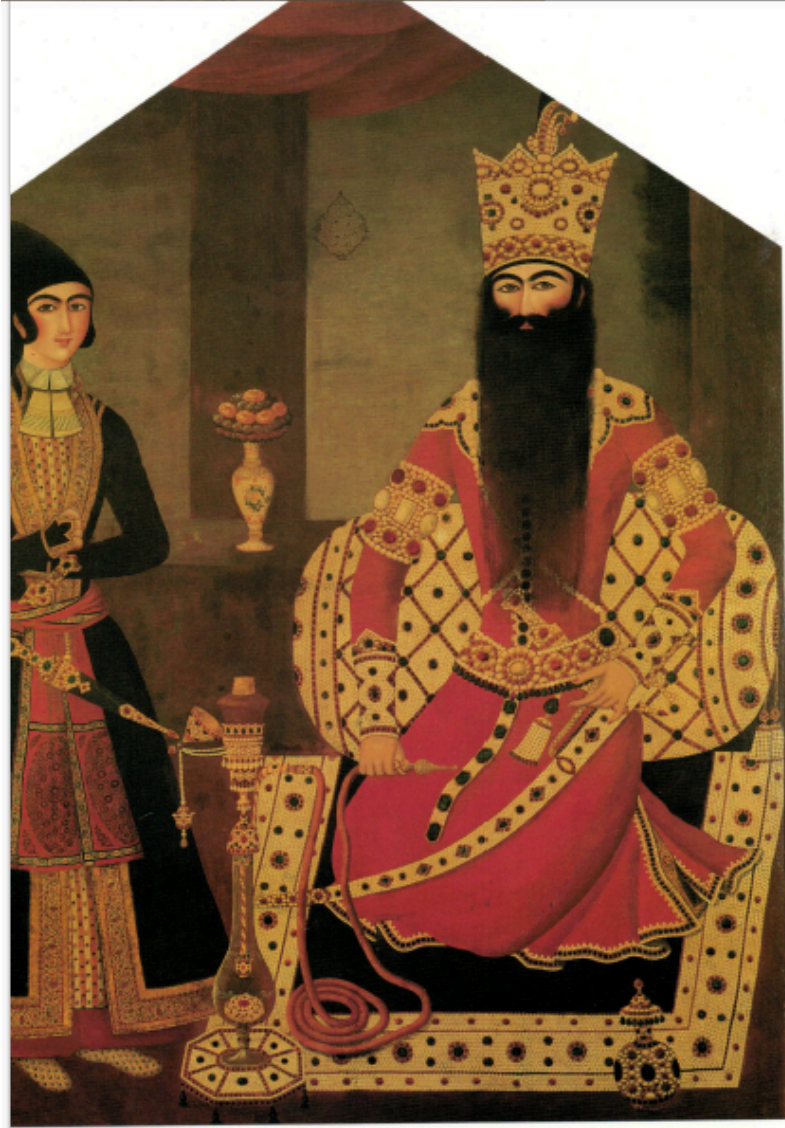


Fig 59: Attributed to Mihr 'Ali or Muhammad Hasan, *Fath 'Ali Shah Attended by a Prince, Smoking Water Pipe*, Iran, second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Oil on Canvas, 222.5 x 162.5 cm. The Collection of Mrs. Eskandar Aryeh

Source: L. S. Diba, *Royal Persian Painting*, cat. 42



Fig. 60: *Zal Summons the Simurgh to Heal Rakhsh and Rustam*, possibly a royal commission. Qajar Iran, early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Free Library of Philadelphia (Ms. Lewis O.58, folio 322r)

Sources: The *Shāhnāma* project website



Fig. 61: *Zal Summons the Simurgh to Heal Rustam and his Horse, Rakhsh*, from a *Shāhnāma* manuscript prepared for Mirza Muhammad Sharifa, inscribed probably in Shiraz, 1614, paintings added ca. 1900-1925. 36.4 x20.5 cm.

The New York Public Library (Spencer, Pers. Ms. 2. Folio 367v)

Source: Ernst J. Grube, *The Classical Style in Islamic Painting*, pl. 82.3.



Fig. 62: *The Birth of Rostam*, painting added to a 17<sup>th</sup> c. manuscript, Iran, 19<sup>th</sup> century. National Library of Iran (Kitabkhana Melli), Tehran (Ms. 1063 F folio 46v).

Sources: The *Shāhnāma* project website



Fig. 63a, left: Silk fragment with double-headed birds carrying human figures, Rayy, Northern Iran, probably produced between early sixteenth century and present. 171 x 65 cm.  
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (CMA 1962.264).

Fig. 63b, right: Silk fragment with a double-headed bird in a roundel, Rayy, Northern Iran, probably produced between early sixteenth century and present. 16.4 x 15.6 cm.  
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (1973.241).

Source: The Cleveland Museum of Art website.



Fig. 64: *The Simurgh Returns Zal to his Father, Sam*, from manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*, Kashmir.

Top left: 1829. The Free Library of Philadelphia (Ms. O.29).

Top right: 1830. Rampur Reza Library, India (Ms. P.3916 M.K.494).

Bottom left: 1830. Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (Ms. Minutoli 134, folio 32r).

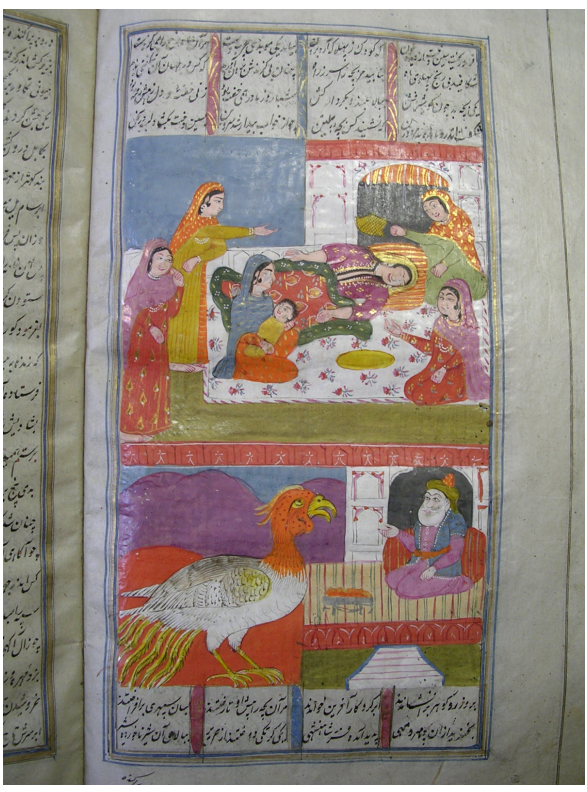




Fig. 65: *The Birth of Rostam*, from manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*, Kashmir

Top left (previous page): 1853, Christie's, London (Ms. 2013 October 7, lot 299-300).

Top right (previous page): 19thc. The Free Library of Philadelphia (Ms. Lewis O.57, folio 47v).

Middle below (previous page): 1829, The Free Library of Philadelphia (Ms. Lewis O.59).

Above: 1830. Rampur Reza Library, India (Ms. P. 3916, M.K. 494, folio 104).



Fig 66: *Isfandiyar's Fifth Ordeal: Killing the Simurgh*, from manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma*, Kashmir.

Top left: 19<sup>th</sup> century, The Free Library of Philadelphia (Ms. Lewis O.57).

Top right: 1833, Charles Deering Collections, Northwestern University Library, Evanston (Ms. 21. folio 40r).

Bottom left: 1830, Ms. Minutoli 134, folio 343v. Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (Ms. Minutoli 134, folio 343v).

Source of all the illustrations from Kashmir manuscripts is the *Shāhnāma* project website.



Fig. 67: Parviz Tanavoli, *The Simurgh*, Tehran, 1967. Ceramic.  
Niavaran Palace Museum, Tehran.

Source: courtesy of the artist



Fig. 68:

Right: Parviz Tanavoli, *Poet and Nightingale Cage*, 1970, bronze, 92 cm,  
Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art

Top Left: Parviz Tanavoli, *Poet*, 1961, copper, 190 x 92 x 91 cm

Bottom Left: Parviz Tanavoli, *Prophet*, 1962, bronze, 97 x 40 x 20  
Collection of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

Source: Hamid Keshmirshakan, *Contemporary Iranian Art*, figures 3.8, 3.9, 3.11.



Fig. 69: Majid Mehregan, *The Simurgh and the Ezhdiha (Dragon)*, Tehran, 1984.  
Source: the artist's Facebook page.



Fig. 70: Majid Mehregan, *The Quqnuṣ*, Tehran, 1979.  
Source: the artist's Facebook page.



Fig. 71: Mahmud Farshchian, *The Last Breath of Phoenix*, Iran, 1999,  
82 x 50 cm.

Source: [farshchianart.com](http://farshchianart.com)



Fig. 72: Mahmud Farshchian, *Dissimulation*, Iran, 1977. 61 x 45 cm.  
Source: Farshchianart.com.



Fig. 73: *Death and Resurrection of the Quqnūs*, detail of an illustration to a manuscript of *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*, unknown artist, Herat, 1456. Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.  
Source: ‘Attar, *The Canticle of the Birds: Illustrated Through Persian and Eastern Islamic Art*, p. 231.



Fig. 74: Farah Ossouli, *The Simurgh*, Tehran, 1989. Gouache on cardboard, 100 x 70 cm.  
Source: the artist's website ([farahossouli.com](http://farahossouli.com))

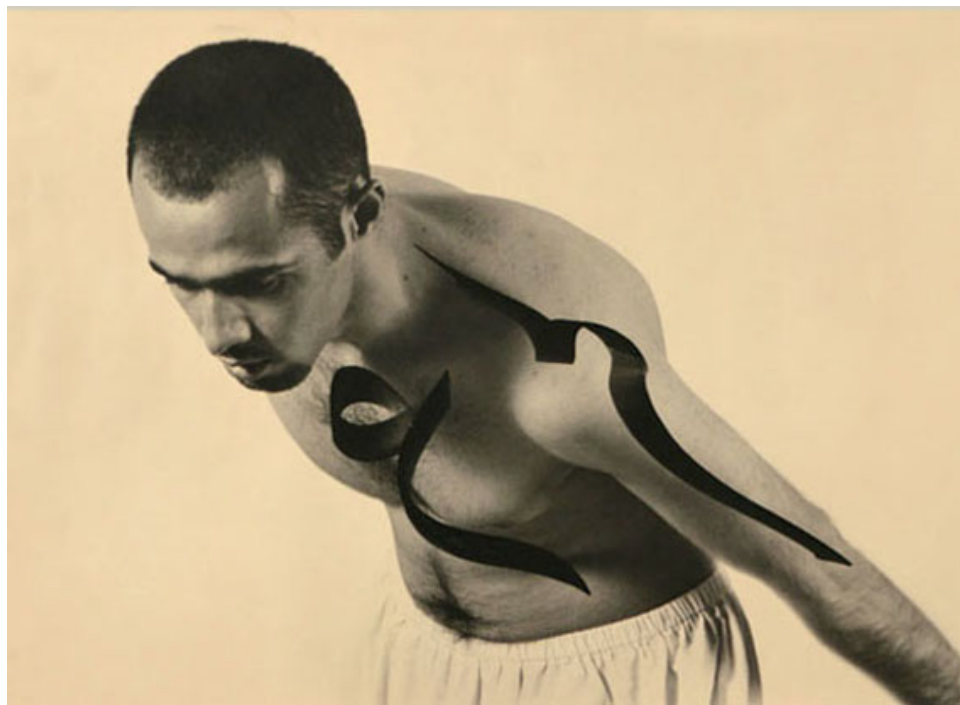
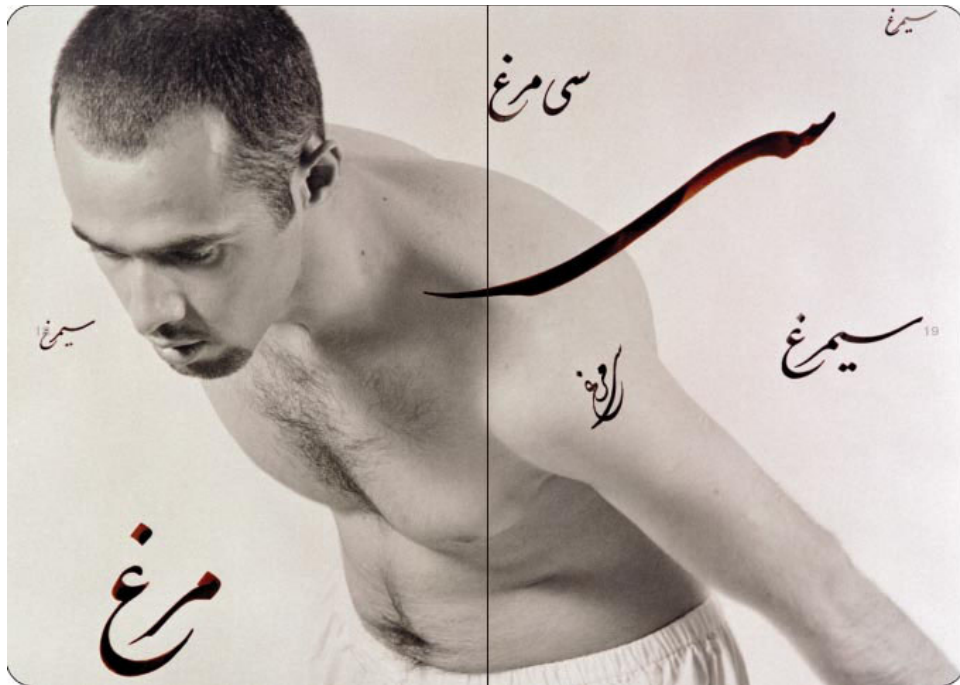


Fig. 75: Sadiq Tirafkan, *Body Signs, Body Curves*, Iran, 2001-2002.  
Photography with printed words  
Source: online image



a.



b.



c.

Fig. 76 a,b,c: Ala Ebtekar, *Zīr-i Gunbad-i Kabūd (Under the Indigo Dome)*, 2009  
Source: online images

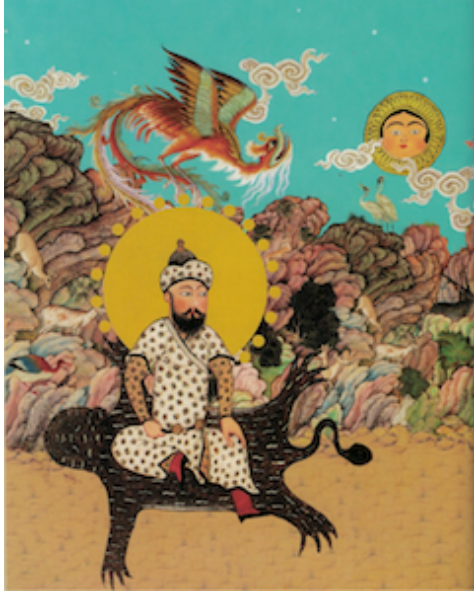


Fig. 77: Hamid Rahmanian, *The Simurghs*, illustrated in *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings*, 2013



Fig. 78: Hamid Rahmaniaan, *The Simurghs*, illustrated in *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings*, 2013.

Source: Rahmaniaan, *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings*, pp. 6, 22, 87, 86, 90, 99, 135, 137, 513, 515.