

## ABSTRACTS

### *A Unique Episode from the Karnamag i Ardashir i Pabagan in a 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Illustrated Indian Manuscript of the Shahnama*

Nasrin Askari

Unlike many episodes that were interpolated into Firdausi's poem from other Persian epics and folkloric tales, the episode under discussion comes from the *Karnamag i Ardashir i Pabagan* (The feats of Ardashir, son of Babak), a Middle Persian text about the rise to power and reign of Ardashir (r. AD 224–240), the founder of the Sasanian dynasty (224–651). The episode does not appear in any of the published editions of the *Shahnama*, nor does it seem to have been recorded in any of the manuscripts that were consulted for these editions. Surprisingly, the episode is not only versified but also illustrated in an Indian manuscript that has been dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Alwar, Government Museum, ms. ACC 114). The existence of this episode in the *Shahnama* manuscript poses a problem. If it is an early interpolation, why is it not found in major manuscripts of the *Shahnama*? And if it is a late interpolation, how did it find its way into an Indian manuscript of the *Shahnama* at such a late date? Were the details of the account of Ardashir as related in the *Karnamag* known in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? An analysis of this unique episode may shed light on the history of the “corruption” of Firdausi's *Shahnama*.

### *In Search of Heroism: Rustam and Sultan Muhammad Shahshuja' Bahadur, Prince of Bengal*

Saqib Baburi

Heroism and valour are qualities universally prized by all societies, irrespective of time, geography, culture, or religion. For avid readers of the grand Persian literary epic, the *Shahnama* of Firdausi, these qualities were considered most prominently and appositely embodied in the figure of Rustam, son of Zal. Paragon of martial and courtly virtue, he came to be celebrated widely in contemporary and subsequent poetry, historical literature, and political rhetoric, while episodes from his eventful life were frequently illustrated in palatial murals and manuscript painting. Capturing the attention of *Shahnama* readers throughout the Near and Middle East, as well as Central and South Asia, the adoration of Rustam was not limited simply to Iranian borders. This paper considers the popularity of Rustam as seen in a substantial corpus of single detached and independent paintings created and collected in the libraries and ateliers of Taimurid/Mughal South Asia. Special attention is paid here to an image bound in a highly programmatic album *muraqqa'* presently in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, attributed here for the first time to the patronage of the mid 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup>-century governor of Bengal, Prince Sultan Muhammad Shahshuja' Bahadur (*ob. ca* 1071/1660), second eldest son of Shahjahan Padshah I (*r.* 1037-68/1628-58, *ob.* 1076/1666). The paper goes on to examine the political and propagandist intent behind the album's inception and juxtaposition of Rustam's image with that of Shahshuja', the significance of which is made all the more cogent in light of the wars of succession that brought about Shahjahan's dethronement and Shahshuja's own brief spell of independent rule. The paper additionally discusses the album's broader

relationship with known imperial and princely albums as a means of assessing the thematic scope, artistic quality, and originality of its painted and calligraphic assemblage, as well as its codicological methodology. While not the only source for the iconography and iconology of heroism, the album's contents demonstrate the *Shahnama*'s enduring significance as an important means by which Taimurid political rhetoric, symbolism, and propaganda can be studied.

*Visit of a Mysterious Friend: A Classical Poetic Topos and its Roots in the Shahnama*

Natalia Chalisova

It is well known that the *Shahnama* is a rich source of the Iranian imagery for the subsequent New Persian literary tradition. This case study presents a descriptive survey of a poetic topos that apparently takes its origin in the *Shahnama* and later on permeates all the high genres of poetry. The topos of 'visit of a friend' is central to the descriptions of poetic inspiration in the Persian *qasida*, *masnavi* and *ghazal* poetry. The medieval treatises on literary theory do not touch the subject at all, but if we turn to the poems, we find many contexts where the authors describe just how they receive their inner artistic power in terms of gaining inspiration from a certain *friend*. The topos of a friend who brings inspiration and helps to shape the author's plot and message is recurrent in the introductions to the *masnavi* poems, in the introductory parts (*nasib*) or *fakhr* parts of the *qasida* poems and in the *ghazal* lines devoted to the theme of 'Poet and Poetry'. In my presentation I am going to provide the exemplary passages from the *masnavis* (Gurgani, Nizami, Rumi), *qasidas* (Anvari and Nasir-i Khusrau) and *ghazals* (Sa'adi and Hafiz); to discuss the *friend's* personae and impersonations (helpmate, beloved, patron or his messenger, mysterious divine messenger, Surush), his possible attributes (cup of wine, musical instrument), states (mirth, intoxication) and functions (arranging a feast, encouraging a poet in his distress, serving wine, telling a story). The topos under discussion varies considerably from text to text in detail, but its invariant form can be traced back to the *Shahnama*. We find passages relevant to the case in the chapter 'Laying the foundation of the book' (*bunyad nihadan-i kitab*) and in the preface to the *Dastan-i Bizhan-u Manizha*. The texts under analysis provide some circumstantial evidence that the *friend* topos could have been also incorporated in Middle Persian Literature. In conclusion I discuss the remote but still possible connection of the *friend* topos with a Zoroastrian mythologem of Sraosha who brings good *thoughts* to whomever Ahura Mazda wishes.

*Models of Gift-exchange and the Privileging of Siyavash as a Culture Hero of Iranian Civilization in the Poetics of the Shahnama of Firdausi*

Olga Davidson

The seminal study of Marcel Mauss on the concept of the gift (*Le don*), which appeared in the early 1920s, has generated a wealth of research on practices of gift-exchange from different vistas and disciplines. My study draws upon such research, concentrating on the vocabulary of exchange and on the way this vocabulary informs our notions of societal values, ties of kinship, and scales of power in different

societies. Particularly relevant is the research of Claude Lévi-Strauss on the “potlatch” mentality of gift-exchange in the guest-host relationships of societies in Northwest America, and that of Emile Benveniste on comparable mentalities of reciprocity that are implicit in Indo-European languages. In the case of Benveniste, his pioneering *Le Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* placed the vocabulary of gift giving in the context of other related notions, including ties of personal loyalty, friendship and hospitality. Such notions, as Benveniste showed with his characteristic erudition are “difficult to define otherwise than by the sum of their peculiarities.”

My study is a further exploration of these peculiarities through a close study of the dialectic of gift giving and guest friendship as an alternative to hostage taking. This dialectic, as I will argue, is brought to life in the story of Siyavash as retold by Firdausi in the *Shahnama*. This hero of Iranian epic treats a hostage agreement in good faith as a genuine treaty, and he expresses his resolve to stand by the original agreement. He is thus an exponent of good faith for both sides, that is, for the Turanians as also for the Iranians. But that stance leads to a shift in his own status: now he will become a hostage himself, since his own side decides not to honour the good-faith agreement that Siyavash had negotiated. In the end, as I will argue, the self-sacrifice of Siyavash as a hostage makes him a paragon of good faith and thus a culture hero of Iranian civilization. I will also show parallel themes in other traditions, as in the case of ancient Greek myths about Homer as a hostage who sacrifices his own eyesight for the sake of maintaining good faith.

*History, Story and Discourse: The Narrations of the Reigns of the Last Kayanid Kings*

Saghi Gazerani

Certain episodes of the *Shahnama*, from the inception Western scholarship, were recognized to have been of Parthian origin. However, in spite of their considerable length and breadth, they remain largely unidentified and unexplored. This is especially surprising as these stories that contain reflections of the Parthian history are the only indigenous narrations of this complex and relatively little-known period of almost five-hundred years of Iran’s pre-Islamic past. The reigns of the last Kayanid kings, Bahman, Humay, Darab and Dara contain references to Parthian history and in examining them, not only will the narratives as they appear in the *Shahnama* be consulted, but also those from the corpus of the Sistani Cycle of Epics as well as popular medieval literature. The comparative approach to these stories is used to discuss the divergent historical narrations and the varied discourses that are shaped as the narration of some watershed events of Iran’s past is unfolded.

*The Shahnama in Georgian Cultural Tradition*

Irina Koshoridze

The Iranian great epic poem *Shahnama* had a big impact on the Georgian life of the medieval period. Georgia was the only non-Muslim country at this time where the *Shahnama* was translated, the first translations being done in 12<sup>th</sup> century, as is proved by the contemporary Georgian literary sources (unfortunately the translated originals of this time didn’t survive). The first surviving translated versions of the *Shahnama*

are dated to the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. There are two groups of them: the prosaic anonymous and the poetic versions. Most of them covered the main episodes of the *Shahnama*. Apart from the direct translations, there are variations on the *Shahnama*, which also are prosaic, and the poetic versions. (Utrutiani, Baamiani, Jimshidiani). In these literary monuments there are heroes with the same names as their Persian models.

Beside the Georgian translations, in Georgian depositories there are Persian *Shahnama* copies too. The Georgian Centre of Manuscripts has kept the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>-century manuscripts of *Shahnama*. In the collections of Georgian National Museum there are also the single page paintings and the folios from the *murraqa*'s with illustrations from the *Shahnama*. All these manuscripts are richly decorated with illuminations. In our paper we will present these illustrations and will try to analyze their stylistic features, which changed by the époques, schools and the artists.

### *Babr-e bayan in the Shahnama and its Parallels in Iranian and Russian Mythology*

Victoria Kryukova

Despite the fact that babr-e bayan, a magic armour of Rostam, has repeatedly attracted attention of scholars, its role in the great Iranian epic seems to be still not completely clear. This image was most likely not a concrete object but rather a result of the merging of different elements and meanings derived from Iranian, Near Eastern and Greek (including Dionysean cycle) mythological systems, which makes the image of the hero in feline skin, together with the feline itself, as a symbolic animal associated with gods, of special interest.

Some possible allusions of babr-e bayan can be traced in Russian mythology, namely in a much later and farfetched but very curious image of Rostam/Yerusan who became a part of Russian folklore. These are Russian feline antagonists of a fairy tale hero - Kot Bayun ('Cat the Story Teller') and Kot Zamorsky ('Cat from Overseas').

### *Firdausi's Shahnama and 'Attar's Masnavi Poetry*

Leyla Lahuti

The influence of Firdausi's poem on all aspects of Persian culture is universally recognized and doesn't need to be proved. It accumulated, structured and "beautified" (adorned) – in the words of the poet himself – the cultural and religious experience acquired by the Iranian tradition.

The history as it is represented in the *Shahnama* is retold not only for its own sake, it is not a mere recounting of the events of days of yore. While talking about the past the author offers us his vision of the inner meaning of the events taking place. This system of meanings becomes one of those ties that make Firdausi's "castle made of poetry" so structurally sound and enduring.

The poetical language of Firdausi, his way of uncovering these meanings, lays the foundation for the Iranian poetic narrative as well as the Iranian poetic world-view as a whole. And so, we can trace some of the power lines connecting the first national epic with the first Sufi masnavis. The presence of Firdausi in these poems occurs, to use the language of traditional terminology, in both “visible” and “hidden” forms. “Visible” influence can be seen, for example, in direct references to Firdausi, clear allusions to the *Shahnama*, as well as in the references to the characters of the *Shahnama*. The less obvious, “hidden”, influence can be traced on the level of ideas and at the level of textual structure.

Firdausi himself notes sometimes that what he is telling us is but a myth or a legend, and invites the reader to delve into the inner meaning of his symbols, although the seeming simplicity of the language of the *Shahnama* makes the task rather difficult. This work can be facilitated by studying the later Sufi poetic tradition. The analysis of treatment of similar ideas found in the poems of ‘Attar might let us penetrate deeper into the laconically expressed “meanings” of the *Shahnama*.

### *The Case of the Second Small Shahnama*

Farhad Mehran

The Second Small *Shahnama* is a dismantled, illustrated manuscript of Firdausi’s *Shahnama*, attributed along with three other similarly small size and dismantled manuscripts to Baghdad, early 13<sup>th</sup> century by Shreve Simpson based on their extant illustrated folios.

The analysis of the text surrounding the images and some 183 other text pages later obtained by Shreve Simpson and kindly put at the disposal of the author shows that the Second Small *Shahnama* is an exceptional manuscript close to the Florence manuscript (dated 614/1217), containing the totality of the missing verses of the reign of Kay Khusrau and some 40% of the second part of the *Shahnama* missing from the Florence manuscript.

The reconstruction of the manuscript shows that the Second Small *Shahnama* was originally in two volumes with some 306 folios and more than 95 images (only 51 of them currently known). The length of its text in original form is estimated at 49,714 verses, making the Second Small *Shahnama* one of the manuscripts with the least number of added and omitted verses, and compatible with its early 13<sup>th</sup>-century attribution.

### *Rashid al-Din and the Shahnama*

Charles Melville

At approximately the same time, in the first decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the tentative acclimatisation of the Mongol Il-Khans to the culture of their Iranian territories bore fruit both in a renewed interest in Firdausi’s *Shahnama* and in an impressive

historiographical project, namely the commissioning of Rashid al-Din's history of the Mongol Empire and the peoples with whom the Mongols came into contact. The development of pictorial cycles to illustrate both texts – the ancient legends of pre-Islamic Iran and the contemporary history of the new empire to form on the Iranian plateau – went ahead together (in parallel if not in sequence) and in both cases marked an original departure in manuscript production and its associated arts. In the context of the extraordinary creative ferment of the Il-Khanid court, it is revealing to explore Rashid al-Din's engagement with the *Shahnama*, and the narrative of the pre-Islamic dynasties of Iran, in those sections of his world history that deal with the legendary past.

This paper will examine the sources for Rashid al-Din's section on the kings of ancient Iran (in Part Two of the *Jami' al-tawarikh*, still only available in manuscript), and the extent to which he relied on Firdausi's text. It will also explore the differences between the earliest Arabic and Persian copies of the *Jami' al-tawarikh* and one of the few later manuscripts that contain this part of the work. The choice of episodes for illustration in those manuscripts produced under Rashid al-Din's supervision will also help to understand the nature of his reading of the *Shahnama* in the ideological environment of his time.

*The Afterlife of a Royal Gift: The Ottoman Inserts of the Shahnama-yi Shahi*

Ünver Rüstem

It is well known that the *Shahnama-yi Shahi*, the famous copy of the Persian Book of Kings made for the Safavid shah Tahmasp I, was gifted by that ruler to the Ottoman sultan Selim II in 1568. Although the manuscript would remain in Ottoman possession for the next three centuries, almost no attention has been paid to this period of its ownership, a neglect that is all the more remarkable given the Ottomans' own intense engagement with the book. For in AH 1215 (AD 1800/1), Selim II's successor and namesake, Selim III, commissioned his chief gunkeeper, Mehmed Arif, to provide each of the manuscript's 258 paintings with an accompanying insert inscribed in Ottoman. Many, if not most, of these inserts were lost with Arthur Houghton's dismemberment of the book, but forty of them are preserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and it is with this invaluable (though regrettably limited) sample of Mehmed Arif's work that the present paper is concerned. While intended as a synoptic Turkish translation of the Persian text, the inserts do much more than retell Firdausi's narrative: they reveal a wealth of information on how the *Shahnama-yi Shahi* was received in its late-Ottoman context, which in turn sheds considerable light on more general questions of how Firdausi's epic on the one hand and illustrated manuscripts on the other were viewed and understood in the Islamic world. Given the paucity of comparable evidence, Mehmed Arif's inserts – quite apart from what they tell us about the afterlife of a particular manuscript – thus constitute a rare and extremely important document in the broader study of Islamic book culture.

## *Sekandar and the Idea of Iran*

Daniel L. Selden

Firdausi's portrayal of Sekandar in the *Shahnama* remains provocatively oxymoric. While older Iranian accounts pointedly dismiss "that evil, wretched, heretic, sinful (*druwand*), maleficent Alexander . . . [who] killed the ruler of Iran (*Ērān dahibed*) and destroyed and ruined the palace (*dar*) and the sovereignty (*xwadāyīh*)," Firdausi places Sekandar's reign—both literally and figuratively—directly at the centre of his poem. The hybrid scion of a Darab and a Macedonian princess repudiated for her evil (*dēwānag*) stench, Sekandar—according to Firdausi—*both* "radiates the royal farr" *and* constitutes "an Ahreman". Thus, as Sekandar's forces are about to overrun Iran, his half-brother Dara allegorizes the ensuing conflict as the repetition of an earlier battle between two Pishdadian kings: "They are Zahhak and we are now Jamshid." This allegoresis, in turn, recalls Firdausi's admonitory remarks regarding the Akvan-e Div: "You should realize that the div represents evil people, those who were ungrateful to God. When a man leaves the ways of humanity consider himself a div, not as a person. If you don't appreciate this tale, it may be that you have not seen its real meaning." This leaves us with the perplexing question of how Sekandar, a Macedonian foreign div, nonetheless—for Firdausi—constitutes the Kayanid king around which Iran as a nation begins to cohere.

Historically, one of the most powerful and lasting achievements of the Sasanian regime was its introduction of the idea of Iran. The *Widēwdāt*'s concept of *Aīryanem Vaējō* was vaguely geographic, and the conglomerate empire of the Achaemenids lacked the nominalism of a proper name. For the Sasanians, however, *Ērānšahr* first and foremost constituted a nation, not only in the sense of a territory confined within specific bounds, but also of an ethnos with shared customs, values, language, and religion. The Avestan notion of the king as "master of the seven climes" (*sālār ī haft kišwar*) gives way here, then, to the Sasanian phantasm of national coherence over time and collective mastery of space. Within the Sasanian ideological context, therefore, the *Dēnkard*, in particular, helped to validate these claims—even if retrospectively from the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD—insofar as it forges a historical genealogy that progresses cohesively from the rule of Kay Wištāsp, through the onslaught (*ēbgat*) of Alexandar, to Kay Ardaxšēr's foundation of the Sasanian state. Thus, the *Dēnkard* not only conceptualizes *Ērān* as a cultural and political unity: Alexandar constitutes the lynchpin of this totalization, insofar as he both introduces a break and fosters a continuity. On the one hand, he marks a caesura, a potential disjunction between the older world of the Avesta and the new Sasanian theocracy. On the other, his assault (*ēbgat*)—reconceptualized as interruption—provides the occasion from which to overcome this split—among other ways, as here, through the continued vigour of the Avesta. Hence, in the *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšēr ī Pābagān*, Ardaxšēr's rise to supreme authority (*wuzurg pādixšāyīh*) proceeds *az marg ī Aleksandar ī Hrōmīg*—"from the death of Alexander the Greek". As the symbolic Other, then, of both the Kayanid and Sasanian regimes, Alexandar remains not only dialectically indispensable to the emergence and ideological formation of the historical-political entity that we still know today as Iran: for Pahlavi writers, he effectively constituted the pivot around which the history of *Ērānšahr* turned.

Raya Shani

The paper deals with the earliest extant, richly illustrated, copy of Ibn Husam's *Khavarannama*, an epic poem completed in 830/1462 in Quhistan, celebrating the heroic deeds of 'Ali b. Abi Talib and his four companions in the far-off land of Khavaran. The paintings are in the so-called Commercial-Turkman style, originating in mid-15th-century Turkman dominions of southwest Iran. This would mean that the epic, composed by Ibn Husam in the eastern region of Quhistan, soon arrived in the west. Considering that Ibn Husam's text concentrates mainly on 'Ali, whose courage and supernatural powers are shown to derive from divine inspiration, it would seem that the anonymous patron who commissioned the manuscript belonged to a circle fervently pro-'Alid in sympathy. This may indicate that Shi'i-oriented circles were already flourishing in Iran during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as if to set the stage for the adoption of Shi'i Islam as the state religion by the Safavid Isma'il I in 1502.

Some of the paintings, signed by a certain Farhad, are dated by his hand to 1477, which means that the text of the Tehran copy was illustrated only a decade and a half after Ibn Husam completed his epic. This may indicate that the artist working on the illustrations was without any earlier illustrated copy as a direct model. As I shall attempt to show, he successfully overcame this obstacle by creating an original combination of two frames of reference similar to those that had been used by the author, Ibn Husam. Like the latter, he drew on the iconography of the *Shahnama* as a favourite model while bestowing the traditional roles of Rustam and other heroic figures on 'Ali. My discussion will elaborate on the pictorial means used by the artist to make his paintings imbued with a strong feeling of piety and deep devotion to 'Ali.

*The Shiraz Connection: New Pictorial Evidence of Timurid Manuscripts Travelling to Sultanate India*

Emily Shovelton

This paper will focus on an illustrated copy of the *Shahnama* of Firdausi, dated 843/1440, now in the Khuda Bhaskh Library in Patna. The seal of Muhammad Shah, Sultan of Gujarat (*r.* 1442-51) is stamped in the margins yet the page layout and style of paintings fit with manuscripts produced in contemporary Timurid Shiraz. This *Shahnama* sheds new light on the evolution of 15<sup>th</sup>-century Sultanate painting and further demonstrates the wide appeal of illustrated texts produced in the city of Shiraz. This paper aims to contextualise the Patna *Shahnama* within both the corpora of Shirazi and Sultanate illustrated manuscripts, and re-examine the connection between the pictorial style of Shirazi manuscripts and their counterparts in Sultanate India.

*Zal the Perfect Man in the Shahnama*

Shokoufeh Taghi

In Persian literature, there often appears an old man, with young face and white hair, named Khidr, Hay ibn Yaqzan or Peer. This man supposedly has access to the source of eternal life and divine knowledge. He reflects the image of immortality, as related to the instinctive wisdom. Since Zal, also born with white hair, was raised by Simorgh, he is the only hero in *Shahnama* who is wise and immortal. This paper examines the literature dealing with the concept of the Perfect Man, to compare the characteristics offered in Sufi and Islamic-philosophical texts with the properties of Zal's personality. By showing the similarities and differences between Zal and the Old Man, I intend to prove Zal is the embodiment of instinctive wisdom in the *Shahnama* and the symbol of Perfect Man in Iranian thinking.

*Siyavash in Contemporary Iranian Drama and Cinema*

Saeed Talajooy

Whether as the archetype of sacrificial heroism, the hero of oath and peace, the harbinger of Mithra, or the migrant victim for the commemoration of whose death the first Iranian passion plays were formed, Siyavash has recurrently captured the imagination of artists in Persian speaking communities. This importance may simply be brushed away as another evidence for the obsession of Iranians with sacrificial heroism, but it may also be seen, as Henry Corbin indicates, as a major point of convergence between the cultural practices of pre-Islamic, Islamic and modern Iran. My paper reviews the history of this presence in contemporary Iran, examining the dramatic and cinematic adaptations that have recreated the legend for a modern audience or highlighted its importance as a link between the past and the present. I will focus on Fereydoun Rahnama's film, *Siyavash dar Takht-e Jamshid* (Siyavash in the Persepolis, 1965) and Bahram Beyzaie's screenplay, *Siyavashkhani* (Siyavash Recitation, 1992).

*The Persian Epic Cycle and the Shahnama of Firdausi: Preliminary Results and Future Prospects*

Gabrielle van den Berg

In this paper, I will go into some questions related to the phenomenon of so-called secondary or later epics that were composed as a supplement to the *Shahnama*. These epics are often 'hidden' in *Shahnama* manuscripts and only a small part of them have received scholarly attention. Are these epics reflections of an oral tradition connected with the *Shahnama*? What is the position of these epics vis à vis the *Shahnama*? How can research into these epics be optimized?

*Persian Verse Shahname-style Historical Writing at the Ottoman Court in the Late Fifteenth century: Firdausi and Malik Umri's Shahnama*

Sara Nur Yıldız

Persian held a privileged place in Ottoman letters as a ‘minority’ prestige language of culture at the largely Turcophone Ottoman court. One could say that the privileged locus of Persian in Ottoman practice was based on its role as a ‘celebration of aesthetic power’. As the Ottoman polity underwent the transformation from being a regional power to an early modern empire, members of its court patronised historical writing in Persian, drawing directly upon the prestigious imperial traditions of the Persianate world, in search for an appropriate literary Islamic imperial discourse.

A considerable share of Persian historical writing undertaken for Ottoman patronage took the form of *shahnames*. Firdausi’s *Shahnama*, with its convergence of history, political theory and verse, provided the quintessential expression of the Persian aesthetic and its accompanying imperial tradition. The late medieval and early modern periods of the Turko-Iranian world witnessed the spawning of versified *shahname*-histories for the expression of claims of transregional imperial power. Ottoman patrons of Persian historical writing thus sought to shape the Persian tradition for their own cultural-political needs and aspirations, particularly in the context of rivalry with various Persianate polities in the greater Islamic Turko-Iranian oecumene.

This paper focuses on how a seminal late 15<sup>th</sup>-century versified *shahname*-style Persian history, Malik Umami’s *Shahname*, drew directly upon Firdausi’s masterpiece, ideologically and aesthetically. It also examines how the genre of *shahname*-style versified historical writing functions as a versatile medium for describing various contemporary events and conflicts, while extolling the sultan’s authority and fashioning an imperial identity. This versatility is demonstrated well with Malik Umami’s highly literary *Shahname*, which is not limited to extolling the sultan’s military success, but also deals dramatically with the trauma of internal dynastic conflict and succession struggle on a metaphysical level.