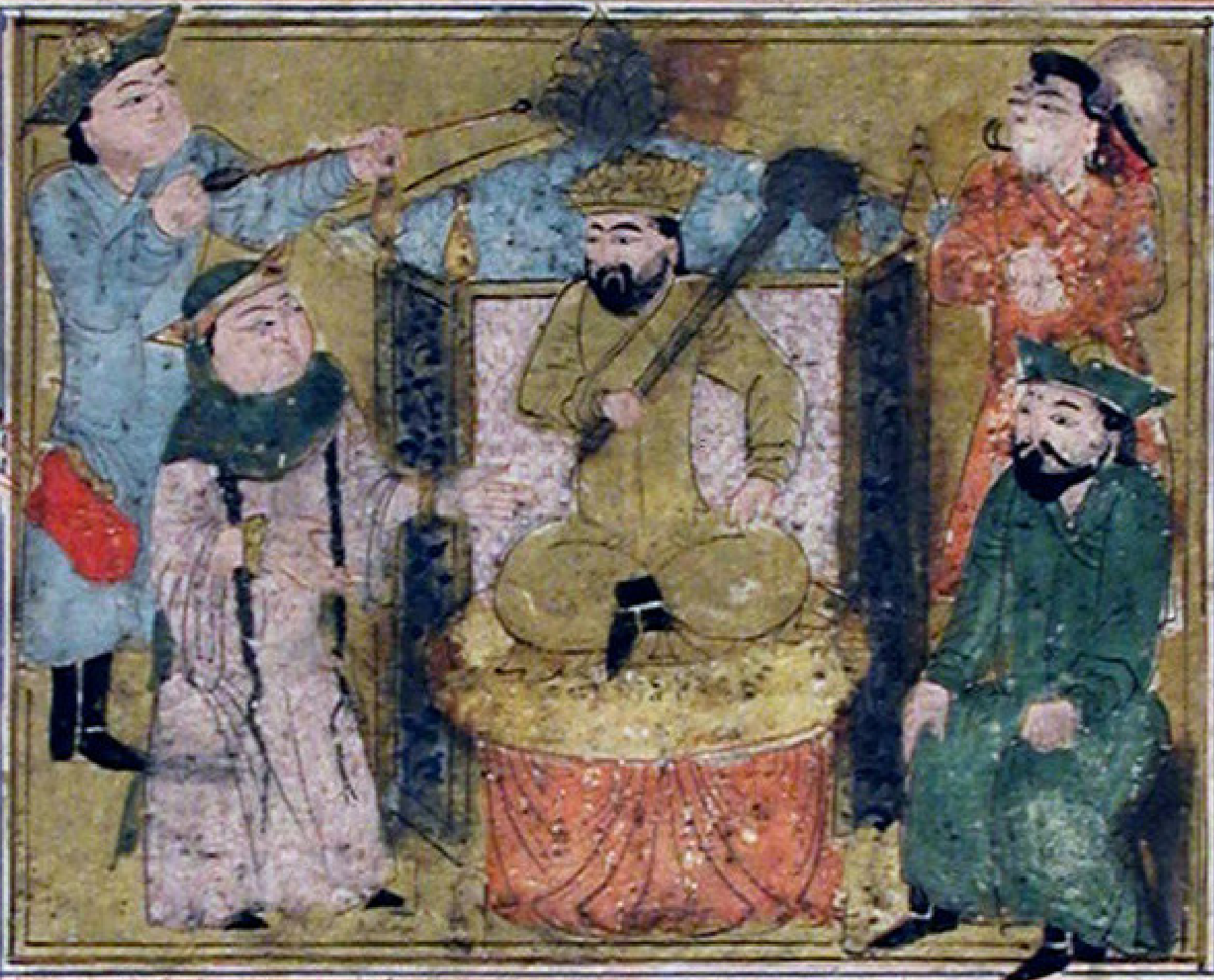


ASTERPIECE MINUTE

رترکان کا نامور ساہو شاہ
 ہر جہاں دیلا نسینہ اسب
 سرکان کشور و را با و اند
 شہنشاہ کی تی ترا بر کشید
 مکر ازہ بر خرد باد شہل
 اکرم زخم بند مردان دم
 مدہ کار کرد نیل کان ساد
 ہمہ لخم مانہ اندر شکفت
 بدافت کور است کوید می
 یلانینہ گفت ای کرغایہ
 کی ہر روز من چند کہ بگذرد
 جوہر من چنین باشد اندر خبر
 تاج کی کی نہ بنارد می
 سیر س کند ہر من ترک زاد
 کوز کی قبالہ اندر آری شمار
 کی باج ہر زند و ماتحت در
 زہر و زخم منہش نشین
 ہر کرد یہ گفت دیو سیاہ
 تو ہر ام رادل بخوش ادوی
 گفت از نو کراہ ہوی جاہد
 سادہ ما جوہر مدین و کلاہ
 کی نامن ز ہرام ہر کشب
 اگر ہا ورا اندا سکر کھترند
 جنان کمرہ نامداران ہرند
 خدمت خواست روشن جان فون
 ہر تو در جہان شہر باری کئی
 بایران سوارست سبب ہزار
 بنا کانت راہم جنان نام داد
 کی اوست کرد با برار من
 تن خویش را برد باری کئی
 ہمہ ہلوان ہمہ نامدار
 بفرجام ہر دشمنان کام داد
 تو از روی تخت شاہنشای
 ہر مند مردی جو نوشتن روا
 ہمہ یک سل شاہ را بندہ اند
 تو باداش از سکوی ہد کئی
 کی دانخواست ترا پار سل
 ہر سیار سل از براند جہم
 ماسا کی بند من است یاد
 سہدار لب را بندان رفت
 جہراہ خوی بخوید می
 ہر بخیرای شاہان نرن
 دکت محی ہلوان ہر خور
 برادرت را شاہ ایران شہر
 جہر خلعت از دوکل سارد می
 کی اندر مانہ مبادان شراذ
 ہر تحمہ سیر سالیان صد ہزار
 سادہ کون نام اشان مہی
 بندہ اندایش بند کران
 تو افکندی از جنت تختی
 ہر اسوب کن نرم دارم را
 ہر دشت و جلاست او ہر رست
 جوہر ام کوید بران کھتران
 ہر مردمان ہر مارا سیری
 کون راہ براش ہر ام را
 تو کوہی ہر کھترانہ از دقت
 رادرت داہند و جا کرد
 کی از تو بنیم ہمہ ملی دم
 ہر کھترانہ تو کھتر ہر شراذ
 سحر کوی ہر روشنہ درواری
 ہر گاہ او ہر جہر و شہر ترند
 ہر بر تن و جان ما ہر ستم
 جو شہر رنج ہر تحمہ ما ہر بار
 ہر گفت ہر کھترانہ از بال زن
 کی نویلا کردی ہر زہر و کھتر
 ہر نام سادہ شمارا سیرا
 ہر ہر مرادہ خوش ادوی
 ہر از ہر ہر ہر کھترانہ شد



Welcome back to Masterpiece Minute at Virtual SDMA. This is your host, Ladan Akbarnia, Curator of South Asian and Islamic Art at The San Diego Museum of Art. In this podcast, I explore SDMA's collections of art from places such as India, Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Drop in every week to pick up a new mini talk led by SDMA curators spotlighting works from the Museum's collection.

This episode is the first of a two-part podcast featuring the arts of the book in Iran. And what better way to introduce them than through illustrated pages of the *Shahnama*, or “Book of kings”? Comprised of tales from pre-Islamic oral tradition, the *Shahnama* was written into 50,000 lines of verse around

the year 1010 by Abu'l Qasim Firdawsi. It is considered the national epic of Iran. The text's countless chronicles about Iran's semi-mythical kings, warriors, rivals, heroes, villains, and lovers inspired the production of wall paintings, shadow theater, illustrated manuscripts, textiles, portable objects, and architectural decoration in and beyond Iran and Central Asia. Whether recited or sung for the court or the common people, or read in the intimacy of one's private royal chambers or humble home, the *Shahnama* served as a basis for the formation of national identity in Persianate literary and visual culture. Its rich legacy continues with the surviving tradition of storytelling performances in Iran and India as well as through the contemporary art and theater of Iran, Central Asia, and the Diaspora.

Today's work comes from one of the earliest known illustrated copies of the *Shahnama*, believed to have been made in the early 14th century under the Ilkhanid Mongols, who ruled Iran and parts of Iraq and Central Asia from 1256 to 1353. The surviving folios, most of which are at the Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery of Art, share a small, 6-column text format, on paper measuring roughly 12 x 9 inches (or 31 x 22 cm). Horizontally arranged illustrations occupy less than half of the columned space. Our page comes from one of Firdawsi's final chapters, which recounts the over 400-year reign of Iran's Sasanian dynasty before its decline in 651 following the Arab invasion.

Bahram Chubina, a prominent nobleman who served as commander-in-chief of the Iranian army under King Hormuzd II, appears here in an enthronement scene embellished with bright-colored pigments and generous amounts of gold. Surrounded by attendants, he listens to his sister Gurdiya, shown in long braids gesticulating at left. The strong and wise Gurdiya appeals to Bahram not to aspire to the throne held by Hormuzd: “Design not evil, brother! It will bring ill on your own head.” While Hormuzd is subsequently assassinated by his own son, Khusraw Parviz, Bahram Chubina refuses to heed Gurdiya’s advice, usurping the throne from Khusraw in 590. Sure enough, ill *does* fall on Bahram’s head the very next year: Khusraw Parviz launches a successful campaign against him, defeating and eventually

killing Bahram Chubina before restoring his throne and taking Gurdiya as his wife.

While this painting is meant to illustrate an event *before* Bahram Chubina usurps the throne, the artist chose to allude to the future — or to Bahram's claim to kingship — by depicting him enthroned, crowned, and holding the sovereign's scepter (originally silver, now blackened with oxidization). The figures also wear Mongol hats and attire. This, along with other stylistic and compositional elements, and the fact that the Persian text, which is read right to left and was penned in a legible upright script known as naskh, point to an Ilkhanid context for the production of this dispersed *Shahnama*. In the absence of a colophon, which can provide valuable

information about the manuscript's production — its patron, makers, place, and date — scholars have attributed this copy and the group of small-format *Shahnamas* to which it belongs to a range of places and dates. These include northwestern Iran, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Baghdad (in Iraq), with dates spanning the early decades of the 14th century. This was soon after the Ilkhanids began asserting their independence from the Great Mongols in China following the death of Qublai Khan. Imagine the impact of widely circulated, courtly commissions of Firdawsi's text — a quintessential monument to the legacy of Iran's ancient kings — copies elaborately illustrated with figures in contemporary Mongol dress... the *Shahnama* would have served as a brilliant tool for legitimacy, connecting the Ilkhanids

visually to the historic chain of Iranian rulers.

Thank you for listening! This has been Ladan on Masterpiece Minute at Virtual SDMA. Join me next week for a further look into the world of the *Shahnama*, when I discuss a page from another dispersed copy in the Museum's collection.

BALBOA PARK

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