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Scions of Turan: Illustrated epic manuscripts of the 16th-century Abū'l-Khairid Uzbeks and their cross-dynastic exchanges

Comstock-Skipp, J.K.

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Introduction

I. Faraidūn's sons made manifest: Firdausī's *Shāhnāma* and the interwoven historical contexts of the Abū'l-Khairids in Transoxiana, Safavids in Iran, and Ottomans in Anatolia

Although its tales come from oral traditions that had circulated in centuries prior, the *Shāhnāma*, or Book of Kings, was first put into verse by the Persian poet Firdausī who completed it in 1010 when he lived in Khurasan in the northeastern zone of present-day Iran. The work consists of epic poetry numbering over 50,000 couplets and has generated a legacy of illuminated manuscripts. After beginning with the mythical creation of the world, the next section records legendary tensions that warrant a partition between Iran and Turan (the name for Transoxiana or Central Asia in poetry). This was based on the natural dividing line of the Oxus River, even if it was only geographic and not cultural. The text also justifies a partnership between Turan and Rūm.

The tale that brings about these regional divisions is Firdausī's early account of King Faraidūn and his three sons Īraj (the youngest), middle brother Tūr, and the eldest Salm.¹ The youngest is the favorite, and Faraidūn apportions his vast empire into three and distributes the sections to his heirs. He gives his hot-headed son Tūr the eastern regions beyond the Oxus River until Khotan on the frontiers of China, seemingly coinciding with the broad Shībānīd domain of the early modern period. King Faraidūn then allots the western lands to his firstborn Salm which encompasses Rūm, or Ottoman-controlled Anatolia, and bestows the Iranian heartland upon Īraj which was a region comparable to the sixteenth-century Safavid realm. Angry with their father's inheritance decisions, the older brothers kill the youngest and launch the enmity between Iran and the regions to the east and west of it. This particular tale is pivotal in instigating the great rivalry between Persian and Turk that recurs in much of Firdausī's epic. The third and final historical section transcribes the exploits of actual figures and regnal events from the Achaemenian, Ashkanian (Parthian), and Sasanian dynasties.

One would be mistaken, however, to take Firdausī as a historiographer. His chronology is at times confused, but his words were actually used at times by military commanders to incite real armies to battle. Foes drawn from the stories' different epochs were cast as contemporary rivals in period political rhetoric.² *Shāhnāma* legends would overlap with actual historical battles and play out in real

¹ Analysis of this "pivotal myth...[of] political cosmogony" is carried out by Abbas Amanat, "Divided Patrimony: Iranian Self-Image in the Story of Faridun," in *Shahnama Studies I*, ed. Charles Melville (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2006), 49-70.

² Robert Hillenbrand, "The Iconography of the *Shāh-nāmah-yi Shāhi*," in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 53-78.

geographic spaces, allusions that were not lost on the participants actually fighting in Iran and Transoxiana at the time. The literary plight of the three brothers and the tripartite division of their father's dominion in Firdausī's *Shāhnāma* structure my analysis of the real world exchanges across the Abū'l-Khairid (Shībānid Uzbek), Safavid, and Ottoman spheres across the sixteenth century. To these I add later interactions with India increasing early in the seventeenth century. This blending of literary fiction and historical fact, and in particular the story of Faraidūn's partition and its significance to political and cultural relations centuries ago and today, has motivated my studies of the history, geography, and art of the Turco-Persianate sphere in the early modern period (Map 1: The Turco-Persianate sphere). The stories and the manuscript arts they inspired do not belong to Iran alone, however. Firdausī's *Shāhnāma* is an ideologically-charged text and it serves us as a rich source for mining its resonance in different cultural contexts and periods.



Map 1: The Turco-Persianate sphere. Map originally labeled “The Persianate world” taken from the preface to Abbas Amanat and Assef Ashraf, eds., *The Persianate World: Rethinking a Shared Sphere* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2018).

II. Abū'l-Khairid *Shāhnāma* versions situated in the context of manuscript production in Transoxiana

Shāhnāma manuscripts from the medieval through the early modern periods with verses by the poet Firdausī were overwhelmingly copied out in Persian. This study terms these materials “Firdausian,” and regional centers located within today’s borders of the Iranian nation-state copied a majority of the extant productions. Whereas many scholars have focused on these Firdausian *Shāhnāma* manuscripts and other titles from the Iranian heartland, limited attention has been given to the political and artistic connections between the regions flanking it: Ottoman-controlled Anatolia and Shībānīd-administered Transoxiana (the Abū'l-Khairid Uzbek branch). Scholarship has held that the artists of Transoxiana seldom illustrated Firdausī’s *Shāhnāma*, and this is verifiable.³ Based on the quantity extant today, the books written and read in Persian most favored by rulers in early-modern Transoxiana were those of Jāmī, Sa’dī, Nizāmī, Hātifi, and Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī. A handful of Navā’ī’s collections of Turkic poetry was also produced. Some copies of Firdausī’s *Shāhnāma* written and/or illustrated by Abū'l-Khairid artisans were exchanged as gifts between heads of state or seized as loot to line the shelves of courtly libraries, and commercial versions of varying quality were peddled by merchants and/or scribes and artists to sell to those made wealthy through religious, military, and economic means. These Firdausian Abū'l-Khairid *Shāhnāma* manuscripts were both products of and contributed to broader Turco-Persianate arts despite their small number.

With the exception of a few single articles and short manuscript monographs on Firdausian *Shāhnāma* copies produced in Transoxiana, fuller examination and their connections to other artistic centers have gone unnoticed. They languish as unresearched historical documents and material objects. What is more, mistaken stylistic attributions and misleading colophons have obscured an understanding of manuscripts held to be of Transoxianan origin and so they have evaded analysis. However, some work has been done such as the pioneering classification schema of Turco-Persianate arts of the book done by B.W. Robinson, but his diagram labeled “Persian Painting” from 1967 includes the “Bukhara style” designation as a mere offshoot of the broader Safavid category, in turn spawning the Mughal and Khurasan styles beneath it.⁴ Robinson was merely following British and European typological

³ Asserted by B.W. Robinson, *Persian Paintings in the India Office Library: A Descriptive Catalogue* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1976), 188; Karin Rühdanz, “The Samarqand Shahnamas in the Context of Dynastic Change,” in *Shahnama Studies II: The Reception of Firdausi’s Shahnama*, eds. Charles Melville and Gabrielle van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 213-33.

⁴ B.W. Robinson, *Persian Miniature Painting from Collections in the British Isles* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1967). Robinson developed this concept earlier in *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Paintings in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

conventions, privileging Timurid and Safavid arts which scholars over in the Soviet Union found problematic. In articles written in the early 1950s, academicians in the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan criticized these approaches that placed Central Asian arts under Iranian headings, going so far as to accuse “foreign scholars” (implying inhabitants outside of the USSR) of not understanding schools of manuscript painting in Transoxiana and instead articulating their own “bourgeois point of view.”⁵

Greater specificity and nuance have come in recent decades. With regard to previous scholarship on the materials of my focus, there exists a grouping of illustrated *Shāhnāma* manuscripts during the transition from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century which have been examined by the scholar Semiha Altier. All of the manuscripts in the group were likely penned together during the end of the Timurid dynasty between the 1480s through the first years of the 1500s and were made for commerce rather than courtly commission.⁶ Other scholars concur that artists with Timurid training searched for new patrons among the early Abū'l-Khairids in Herat after the shift in regional dynastic control in 1507.⁷ Writing several articles on book arts in Central Asia, Karin Rührdanz has provided an extended study of a group of *Shāhnāma* manuscripts created in Samarqand between 1600–04.⁸ Elsewhere, she has suggested an Ottoman provenance to another set with one exception scribed in Bukhara in 1535.⁹ Norah Titley offered object analysis of an early *Shāhnāma* from Transoxiana that came into the British Library, and Güner İnal overviewed the singular courtly *Shāhnāma* copy from Bukhara that is dated 1564.¹⁰ Russian-speaking scholars have briefly referenced seventeenth-century Uzbek *Shāhnāma* works as part of book compilations on Turco-Persianate painting formerly in USSR collections, most notably Galina Pugachenkova, Olimpiada Galerkina, and Mukaddima Ashrafi-Aini.¹¹

⁵ G.A. Pugachenkova, “Miniatiury ‘Fatkh-name’—khroniki pobed Sheibani-khana iz sobrania instituta po izuchenniiu bostochnykh rukopisei Akademii Nauk UzSSR,” *Trudy: Sredneaziatskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta. Arkheologia Srednei Azii* 11, no. 3 (1950): 121.

⁶ Semiha Altier, “Şiban Han dönemi (1500-1510) Özbek kitap sanatı” (PhD diss., Hacettepe University, 2014), 215.

⁷ Yves Porter, “Remarques sur la peinture à Boukhara au XVI^e siècle,” *Cahiers d’Asie centrale*, 5/6 (1998): 147-67.

⁸ Rührdanz, “The Samarqand Shahnamas.”

⁹ Karin Rührdanz, “About a Group of Truncated *Shāhnāmas*: A Case Study in the Commercial Production of Illustrated Manuscripts in the Second Part of the Sixteenth Century,” *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 118–34.

¹⁰ Norah Titley, “A *Shāhnāma* from Transoxiana,” *British Library Journal* 7, no. 2 (1981): 158-71; G. İnal, “Topkapı Sarayı Koleksiyonundaki Sultani Bir Özbek Şehnamesi ve Özbek Resim Sanatı İçindeki yeri” (Eng. summary “A royal Uzbek Shahnameh in the Topkapı Palace Museum and Its Significance for Uzbek Painting”), *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı / Journal of Art History* 6 (1974-75): 303-32.

¹¹ G. Pugachenkova and O. Galerkina, *Miniatiury Srednei Azii/Miniatures of Central Asia in Selected Examples from Soviet and Foreign Collections* (Moskva: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1979); M.M. Ashrafi, *Bekhzad i razvitiya bukharskoi shkoly miniatiury XVI v.* [Bihzad and the development of the Bukhara school of miniatures in the 16th century] (Dushanbe: Donish, 1987).

Oleg Akimushkin, and Larisa and Lola Dodkhudoeva have updated and strengthened this work.¹² Other references to select manuscripts have served nationalizing projects in the wake of Uzbek, Tajik, and Kazakh independence.¹³ In other articles and entries, Yves Porter, Francis Richard, Barbara Brend, and Barbara Schmitz have delineated manuscript trends in Central Asia and *kitābkhāna* practices in Transoxiana which I have incorporated into my research.¹⁴

I have also followed the lead of other scholars who have examined more traditional *Shāhnāma* materials but have moved beyond questions of style and provenance to contextualize the works into larger socio-political and economic settings. Robert Hillenbrand's critique of the most masterful *Shāhnāma* produced in Safavid Iran is a fine case study for relating manuscript illustrations to their historical context.¹⁵ Lâle Uluç has taken another approach to determine how the *Shāhnāma* in general has been received by an Ottoman audience outside the Iranian tradition, which Serpil Bağcı has also explored.¹⁶ Using these publications to guide my scope and structure in order to focus on the creation and reception of the *Shāhnāma* outside of Iran proper and specifically in Central Asia, my methodology fluctuates between treating select copies of Abū'l-Khairid *Shāhnāma* versions as single case studies, and as collective manuscript groups with similar production circumstances.

Formal analysis is a means to link artistic centers and manuscript production sites when there is no other information. However, a contextualist approach is also vital that is grounded in published secondary sources covering historical events occurring at the time when the illustrated manuscripts were created. I have situated myself in the region and time period of their production through the lens

¹² Oleg Akimushkin, "Biblioteka Shibanidov v Bukhare XVI veka," in *Bamberger Zentralasienstudien. Konferenzakten ESCAS IV Bamberg 8.-12. Oktober 1991*, eds. Ingeborg Baldauf and Michael Friederich (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1994), 325-41; O. Akimushkin, et al., "The Shaybanids (Bukhara, 1500–98) and the Janids (Ashtarkhanids) (Bukhara, 1599–1753)," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia: Vol. 5: Development in contrast: from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century*, eds. Chahryar Adle, et al. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2003), 580-84.

¹³ A. Madraimov, Sh. Musaev, E. Ismailova, *Oriental Miniatures: The Collection of the Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan: Volume 1, 14th-17th Centuries* (Tashkent: The Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies, 2001); Mukaddima Ashrafi, *The Tajik Miniature: Bukhara School XVI-XVII-th Centuries* (Tajikistan: A. Donisha, 2011); M. Kh. Abuseitova and L. N. Dodkhudoeva, *Qazaqstan tarikhy shyghys miniatiuralarynda = Istoriia Kazakhstana v vostochnykh miniatiurakh = History of Kazakhstan in Eastern miniatures* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2010).

¹⁴ Porter, "Remarques sur la peinture"; Barbara Brend, *Perspectives on Persian Painting: Illustrations to Amir Khusrāu's Khamsah* (London: Routledge, 2016); Barbara Brend, "A Sixteenth-Century Manuscript from Transoxiana: Evidence for a Continuing Tradition in Illustration," *Muqarnas* 11 (1994): 103-116; Barbara Schmitz, "BUKHARA vi. Bukharan School of Miniature Painting," *Encyclopædia Iranica*; Barbara Schmitz, "Miniature Painting in Harāt, 1570-1640" (PhD diss., New York University, 1981); Francis Richard has been very supportive in offering me portions of his own collected research files and images.

¹⁵ Robert Hillenbrand, "The Iconography of the *Shāh-nāmah-yi Shāhī*," in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, 53-78.

¹⁶ Lâle Uluç, "The *Shāhnāma* in the Lands of Rum," in *Shāhnāma Studies II*, 159-80; Serpil Bağcı, "From translated word to translated image: The illustrated Şehnâme-i Türkî copies," *Muqarnas* 17 (2000): 162-76.

of Audrey Burton's publications on the history of sixteenth-century Bukhara and its residents, and I have gained a broader understanding of the Uzbek realm and its connections to other regional powers within Transoxiana and beyond through R.D. McChesney's and Florian Schwarz's numerous articles.¹⁷ They further the pioneering fieldwork done decades earlier by Martin Dickson. Devin DeWeese, Maria Szuppe, and Maria Subtelny have examined cultural and literary production in early-modern Central Asia that complements my analysis of the illustrative programs when present in the works they have analyzed. In seeking local scholarship on the region, I have relied on in-depth chapters in the UNESCO series *History of Civilizations of Central Asia* edited by Chahryar Adle, et al., that illuminate histories and particular dynasties of Central Asia.¹⁸

The rarity of Firdausian *Shāhnāma* copies with components of production in Transoxiana makes the few available copies significant objects through which to analyze the cultural and historical milieus in which they were created. As creations of courtly and commercial workshops, the works reflexively illuminate their makers and era(s) of production. Given that the focus of this dissertation is on Abū'l-Khairid *Shāhnāma* copies, it is vital to equally unpack what is meant by the dynastic heading "Abū'l-Khairid", and parse the selection of subject matter interpreted to be of "*Shāhnāma*" derivation.

II.i. The Abū'l-Khairid component to the "Abū'l-Khairid *Shāhnāma*" copies: historical and dynastic information

Abū'l-Khairid (early-modern Uzbek) arts of the book occupy a curious position in scholarship, at times considered "too Persian" to be grouped with art forms from Turkic-speaking regions. The arts of this dynasty have also been considered "too Turkish" to be categorized alongside other Persianate dynasties: the Metropolitan Museum of Art website refers to the group as Turco-Mongol;¹⁹ the Austrian scholar Joseph von Hammer writing in 1828 called them "die türkische Dynastie Scheibani;"²⁰ Svat Soucek characterizes them as "Turks like the Timurids;"²¹ and even their contemporaries in the late

¹⁷ The following correctives are enormously beneficial in explaining academic divisions between British, post-colonial South Asia scholarship on the one hand; and Imperial Russian/Soviet Central Asia: Florian Schwarz, "Safavids and Ozbeks," in *Safavid Persia in the Age of Empires: The Idea of Iran*, ed. Charles Melville (London: I.B.Tauris, 2021), 357–374; R.D. McChesney, "Barrier of heterodoxy?" Rethinking the Ties Between Iran and Central Asia in the 17th Century," in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 231–67.

¹⁸ Adle, et al., *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*.

¹⁹ "Central and North Asia, 1400–1600 A.D.," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art <<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ht/?period=08®ion=nc>> (2000).

²⁰ Joseph Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches: Grossentheils aus bisher unbenützten Handschriften und Archiven* (Pesth [Budapest]: C.A. Hartleben, 1840), 351.

²¹ Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 149.

sixteenth century referred to the Abū'l-Khairid Shībānids as “Turks” and “Tatars” in Ottoman records written by the chronicler Mustafa ‘Âlī.²²

In affixing linguistic categorizations, the imbrication of Turki and Persian in the Ottoman, Safavid, Mughal, and Abū'l-Khairid realms in the early modern period must be acknowledged, with dynastic rulers frequently making use of both languages in their correspondence and personal poetry. As Ferenc Csirkés aptly points out, “there was no linguistic or cultural homogeneity in the age at all.”²³ One ought not to be anachronistic and equate dynastic borders with current national demarcations and assume the languages presently spoken within them have stayed constant, for “linguistic affiliation as a key to identity is more the product of modern ethno-nationalism.”²⁴ In the period and region of our focus, bilingualism and fluid identities were more common than they are now particularly among the elites who could afford an illustrated work of poetry.

As an example of this, the Safavid shah Ismā‘īl I was prolific in employing Firdausian *Shāhnāma* allusions and references when he would write his own Turkic poetry. Writes the translator Vladimir Minorsky: “It is a remarkable fact that while [the Ottoman] Sultan Selim and Shah Ismā‘īl both possessed poetic talents, the former wrote almost exclusively in Persian, and the latter, under the pen-name of Khatai, almost exclusively in Turkish.”²⁵ It is significant that the Ottomans later devoted the most attention to works in Turki, but the Persian language and literature remained paramount to the Abū'l-Khairids.²⁶ Although Transoxiana has been historically referred to as Turan or Turkestan to emphasize the expanse’s linguistic differentiation from Iran, Persian would be retained as a literary and administrative language in Central Asia for centuries. In taking over Timurid literary heritage, the Abū'l-Khairids introduced nomadic elements into Turkic and Persian literary traditions, but the latter remained the lingua franca in Central Asia until the Russian imperial armies forced their way into the

²² Joo-Yup Lee, *Qazaqliq, or Ambitious Brigandage, and the Formation of the Qazaqs: State and Identity in Post-Mongol Central Eurasia* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 131.

²³ Ferenc Csirkés, “‘Chaghatay Oration, Ottoman Eloquence, Qizilbash Rhetoric’: Turkic Literature in Safavid Persia,” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2016), 388.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

²⁵ V. Minorsky, “The Poetry of Shah Ismail I,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 10, no. 4 (1942): 1007a.

²⁶ Maria Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan Ḥusain Baiqara and its Political Significance” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1979), 174.

region during the 1860s.²⁷

II.i.a. Shībānīd, Uzbek, or Abū'l-Khairīd?

Applying a dynastic descriptor to the group here scrutinized is surprisingly problematic. The term “Uzbek” has been used indiscriminately to refer to the Central Asian rivals to the Timurids and Safavids across multiple centuries. Although it is currently connected to a modern nation-state delineated by different borders and containing within it different peoples than those of half a millennium ago, period Persian-language sources used the term “Uzbek” for a tribal confederation from the Qipchaq steppe descended from Jūchī, the eldest son of Chinggis Khan. Following the death of the great khan, a line traced through Jūchī’s son Shībān (active in the thirteenth century) ruled the Golden Horde (1242–1502) in the northwestern sector of the Mongol Empire. It is this Shībān who spawned the Shībānīd designation. Later, separate strains of these Shībānīds held power in Siberia (Tāibughids),²⁸ Khwarazm (‘Arabshāhīds),²⁹ and Transoxiana (Abū'l-Khairīds) by the late fifteenth century. Narrowing our focus, the Abū'l-Khairīds took root under Abū al-Khair Khan who united various nomads of the Qipchaq steppe under the name “Uzbek.” Joining together Jūchīd and Chaghataīd lines through intermarriages, these (proto-)Abū'l-Khairīds persisted in Transoxiana as allies-cum-adversaries of the Timurid princes who grew weaker as the fifteenth century passed.³⁰ Upon Abū al-Khair Khan's death in 1467, his grandson Muḥammad Shāh-Bakht (1451–1510), better known as Shībānī Khan, took over control and surpassed his grandfather's territorial gains.³¹ The moniker Shībānī was actually a pen-name for the poetry he composed.

²⁷ Aftandil Erkinov, “The Poetry of Nomads and Shaybānī Rulers in the Process of Transition to a Settled Society,” in *Central Asia on Display: Proceedings of the VII. Conference of the European Society for Central Asian Studies*, eds. Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek and Julia Katschnig (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2004): 145.

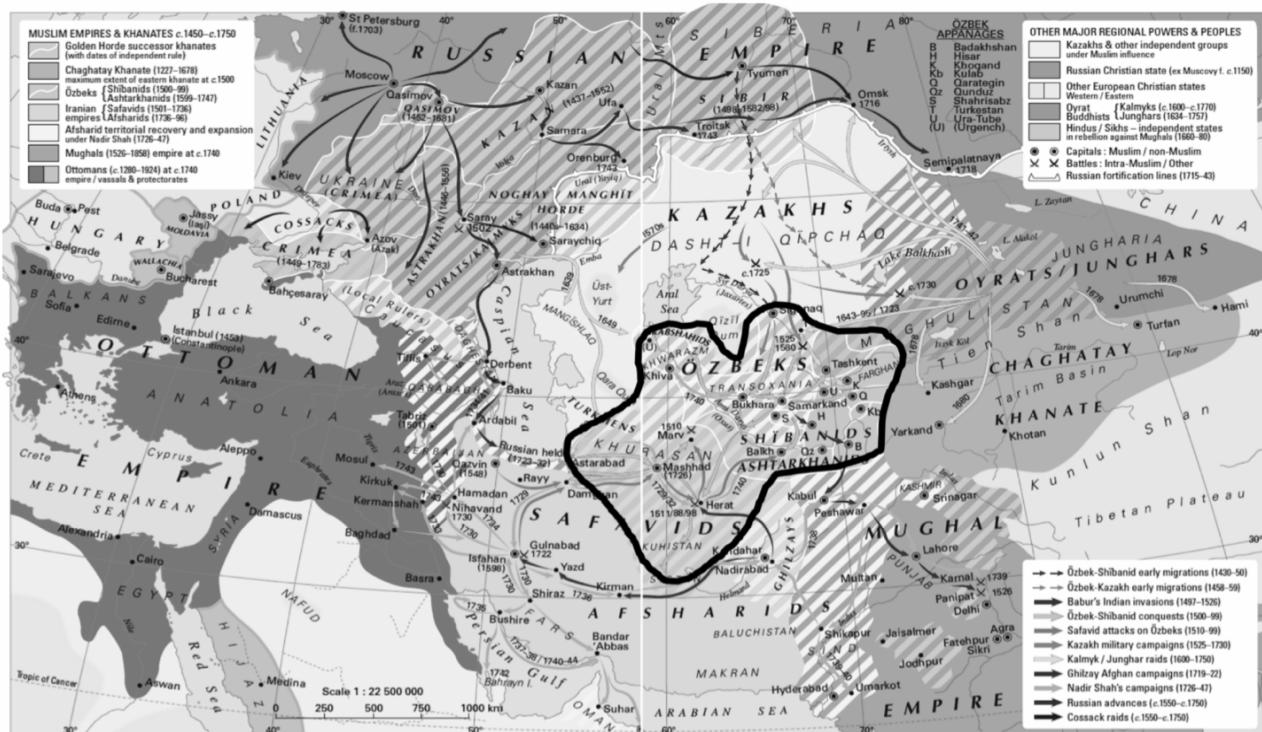
²⁸ Consult D.N. Maslyuzhenko, “The Siberian Branch of the Shibanid Dynasty in Sh. Marjani’s Studies,” *Zolotoordynskoe obozrenie/ Golden Horde Review* 7, no. 3 (2019): 485–96; Allen J. Frank, “The western steppe: Volga-Ural region, Siberia and the Crimea,” in *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia*, eds. Nicola di Cosmo, Allen J. Frank, Peter B. Golden (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 250–53.

²⁹ Also referred to as Yādigārīd, named after Yādigār Sultan, descended from his great-grandfather ‘Arabshāh, who ruled to the north of the Aral Sea ca. 1458 [Yuri Bregel, *An Historical Atlas of Central Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 48].

³⁰ Maria Subtelny notes Shībānī Khan’s strategic marriages into the Chaghataīd lines, including female relatives of Bābur and Sultān Maḥmūd: the Timurid governor of Tashkent between 1487–1508 [“Art and Politics in Early 16th Century Central Asia,” *Central Asia Journal* 27, nos. 1–2 (1983): 132, fn. 42].

³¹ The leader’s full name recorded by the chronicler Wāṣifī is Muḥammad b. Shāh Būdāq Sultān b. Abū'l-Khair Khān [Robert W. Dunbar, “Zayn al-Dīn Maḥmūd Wāṣifī and the Transformation of Early Sixteenth Century Islamic Central Asia” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2015), 22]. McChesney lists his various names: “Moḥammad Šībānī, (aka Šāhī Beg, Šaybāq, Šaybak, and Šāhbakht)” in “CENTRAL ASIA vi. in the 16th–18th Centuries,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Among his contemporaries, Bābur in the *Bāburnāma* refers to him as Shībāq (wormwood) Khan, alluding to a component to make hallucinogenic drugs. Muḥammad Ḥaidar calls him Shāhī Beg Khān in *Tarikh-i Rashīdī*; Abū'l Ghāzī, author of *Shajara-yi Turk*, calls him Muḥammad Shāh-Bakht (reported in Subtelny, “Art and Politics in Early 16th Century Central Asia,” 121, fn. 1).

The appellation “Shībānīd” has frequented scholarly literature to refer to these sixteenth-century Abū’l-Khairīd Uzbeks in Transoxiana, but Yuri Bregel spells out what is erroneous about this Shībānīd designation. He writes: “Shībānīd” technically applies to the Jūchid agnates specifically descended from [Shībān]—the grandson of Chinggis Khan—and not the later Shībānī Khan who was born almost three hundred years later.”³² Thus, “Shībānīd” is an imprecise and overly broad label that refers to the rulers of the Golden Horde through the Abū’l-Khairīd leaders. It is for this reason that I use the more accurate term “Abū’l-Khairīd” to refer to the administration that reconstituted and resurrected Chinggisid rule in Central Asia initially under Abū al-Khair Khan, but was successfully carried out by his grandson Shībānī Khan. The extent of my research allows me to assert that only the Jūchid branch of Shībānīds in Transoxiana—the Abū’l-Khairīds of the sixteenth century—produced illustrated manuscripts.



Map 2: Abū’l-Khairīd conquests under Shībānī Khan (outlined). Map taken from August Samie, “The Shibaniid Question: Reassessing 16th Century Eurasian History in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2020), 32. Modified from Peter Sluglett and Andrew Currie, *Atlas of Islamic History* (London: Routledge, 2014), 56-57.

³² Yuri Bregel, “Abū’l-Khairīds,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bukhara-iv> (accessed on 18 February 2015). McChesney’s concise account of the dynastic origins is also informative (“CENTRAL ASIA vi. in the 16th-18th Centuries”).

Shībānī Khan took Samarqand in 1501 which remained in Abū'l-Khairid hands for the next century, and incrementally extended his control over much of Transoxiana which culminated in taking Herat for the first time in 1507 (Map 2: Abū'l-Khairid conquests under Shībānī Khan).³³ Shībānī Khan met his end in late November 1510 by the sword of Shah Ismā'īl, but the dynasty he helped form continued under the leadership of his relatives. Samarqand was the seat of the great khan (usually the oldest member of the ruling house) but with power also dispersed across the cities of Balkh (the presumptive heir's seat), Bukhara, and Tashkent. These were separate appanages (governing centers) overseen by the main base in Samarqand.³⁴ Bukhara is the city most commonly associated with the Abū'l-Khairids, but its cultural and political florescence would come later in the third decade of the sixteenth century under the military commander and great khan 'Ubaidullāh b. Maḥmūd (r. 1533–40), finally becoming the de facto capital in 1557 under 'Abdullāh Khan b. Iskandar (great khan between 1582–98). These three —Muḥammad Shībānī, 'Ubaidullāh, and 'Abdullāh Khan— are the most important figures who contributed to the consolidation of the Abū'l-Khairid state (see App. 2: Periodization of Abū'l-Khairid arts of the book).

When differentiation is significant and specific periods are being discussed, I use the dynastic designation of “Abū'l-Khairid.” I deploy “Uzbek” when referencing abstract concepts associated with the region of Transoxiana and the early modern period that are not dynastically specific (such as its geographic location, cultural centers, and social groupings, e.g. military commanders, artisans, spiritual leaders). “Uzbek” (as with “Kazakh”) gradually acquired ethnic, cultural, and political nuances to imply Islamicized Mongols, but these are not intended in this study. In the early-modern Turco-Persianate realm, the term “Uzbek” referred to nomadic groups and tribal elites. Those among the sedentary population living in the same area were called Tajiks, Sarts, and Chaghataids, or by the center from which they hailed; that is to say, by *nisba* suffixes indicating origin, for example Urganchī (from Urgench), Tāshkantī (from Tashkent), Khujandī (from Khujand), Samarqandī (from Samarqand), etc.³⁵

³³ 11 Muḥarram 913 / 23 May 1507.

³⁴ Information on appanage divisions found in Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, 154; N. Kılıç, “Change in Political Culture: The Rise of Sheybani Khan,” *Cahiers de l'Asie Centrale*. 3/4 (1997): 48-67; Joo-Yup Lee, *The 'Ancient Supremacy': Bukhara, Afghanistan and the Battle for Balkh, 1731-1901* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 32-33; Lee, *Qazaqliq*, 116.

³⁵ Information derived from Richard C. Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia* (Karachi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 17; and Yuri Bregel in “Uzbeks, Qazaqs and Turkmens,” in *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia*, 228-229.

“Uzbek” was wielded in period Safavid chronicles as a group designation that later became a term of abuse akin to the labels “Turk” or *qizilbāsh* (red-headed, implying Safavid partisans based on their headwear).³⁶ When used pejoratively, it applied to “an unlettered person, a bumpkin or a rustic.”³⁷ In other empires such as those of the Muscovites and Ottomans, Joo-Yup Lee has uncovered instances in which early-Mongol (Chinggisid) and post-Mongol groups descended from the Jūchids (i.e. the Abū’l-Khairids) were both referred to as Tatar. So, to the Ottomans, the classifications of Tatar, Uzbek, Mongol, and Abū’l-Khairid denoted the same peoples.³⁸

The Abū’l-Khairids continued to use the designation *mughul* (Mongol) after Muḥammad Shībānī Khan established the khanate, although this connection to their non-Muslim and nomadic roots proved problematic.³⁹ In his commissioned Turkic-language biography the *Shībānī-nāma*, Shībānī Khan implored of the poet Muḥammad Ṣālīḥ: “Let the Chaghatay (Timurids) not call me an Uzbek,’ implying he had already risen above his nomadic counterparts.”⁴⁰ The Abū’l-Khairids lived in an age when identity was constructed mostly on religious confession bisected between Sunni and Shi‘ite branches, at least at the administrative level. It thus seems natural that Sunni Abū’l-Khairids based in Samarqand and Bukhara, and Sunni Ottomans with their capital in Istanbul, would want to team up to remove the Shi‘ite Safavids as an obstacle in their path and unite and join their empires. However, political expediency better explains their fraternity more than their being co-religionists.⁴¹

³⁶ Schwarz, “Safavids and Ozbeks,” 359-60.

³⁷ R.D. McChesney reports that it was outsiders who used the term ‘Uzbek’ in a pejorative sense to refer to the entire state, rulers, and military supporters. Leaders of tribal groups in early-modern Transoxiana were usually identified by their tribal name, never as Uzbek [“Islamic culture and the Chinggisid restoration: Central Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,” in *The New Cambridge History of Islam. Vol. 3: The Eastern Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, eds. David O. Morgan and Anthony Reid (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 241]. Soucek provides the etymology to the general name of Uzbek, derived from the khan of the Golden Horde who ruled from 1312-1341 (*A History of Inner Asia*, 145). Subtelny reports that the term Uzbek at the turn of the fifteenth century indicated uncouth, uncultured characteristics (“Art and Politics,” 133). In circa 1500, the Uzbek group name lost significance as other dynastic, regional, or tribal designations were more common. Safavids conflated tribesmen, Turks, and Uzbeks [Edward Allworth, “Chapter 3: Names and Tribes,” in *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present: A Cultural History* (Stanford: Hoover Press Publications, 1990), 39].

³⁸ Lee, *Qazaqliq*, 74, fn. 2.

³⁹ Ibid., 134.

⁴⁰ Subtelny, “Art and Politics in Early 16th Century Central Asia,” 137.

⁴¹ R.D. McChesney’s convincing assertion is elaborated in “Barrier of heterodoxy.”

II.ii. The *Shāhnāma* component to the “Abū’l-Khairid *Shāhnāma*” copies: reception and subject matter

As it was mentioned but is worth stressing, the Abū’l-Khairids claimed legitimacy through direct patrilineal descent from Chinggis Khan’s eldest son Jūchī. This is akin to the mythical Salm of Firdausī’s *Shāhnāma* in terms of primogeniture, although the region they administered aligns with the legendary realm Faraidūn conferred to the second-born Tūr. It is impossible to determine whether Abū’l-Khairids of any social standing, from commoners to courtiers, felt any affinity to certain Turanian characters within the work. But at the administrative level, as the sixteenth century went on, political power in Transoxiana took the form of dynastic succession privileging birth order, and adherence to more egalitarian Chinggisid customs loosened.⁴² Earlier, in the first three decades of Abū’l-Khairid leadership succession was by seniority coupled with skill. The heads of appanages were related to Shībānī Khan whether as an uncle or a nephew, and had their own authority but were subordinate to the great khan in Samarqand. This dispersal of power meant that “succession could not be predicted. This made it difficult for power to accrue to the Khanate and raised the level of conflict among the eligibles. The institution of heir apparenacy...evolved in response to this problem.”⁴³ By the mid century, administrative developments under ‘Abdullāh Khan became more centralized and the ruling khan styled himself more as a shah in consolidating territory and commissioning manuscripts. Coinciding with this, ‘Abdullāh was the patron of the single royal Firdausian *Shāhnāma* copy. The stories within it and the very act of its patronage resonated with his newly procured power.

II.ii.a. Firdausian *Shāhnāma* copies, Turkic-language translations, truncated versions, ruler-*nāma* specimens

This study gathers a focused corpus of manuscripts never before brought together, and classifies them as “Abū’l-Khairid *Shāhnāma*” copies. In so doing, it functions as a nuanced study of manuscript production in sixteenth-century Transoxiana. Firdausī’s work is of course an obvious inclusion in the aggregated works, but the actual tally of this title is quite small. This disinterest is discussed in my first body chapter. It does not seem to be the case that the Abū’l-Khairids associated the text explicitly with Firdausī, or as a proto-national epic promoting Iranian identity which is how it is often perceived today. As Transoxiana came under Muḥammad Shībānī’s control half a millennium after Firdausī put down

⁴² The Mongols did not initially recognize primogeniture for succession. This became practiced and preferred perhaps through exposure to the settled populations of Transoxiana and Iran.

⁴³ McChesney, “CENTRAL ASIA VI. In the 16th-18th Centuries.”

his pen, there is a period reference that suggests Muḥammad Shībānī had an affinity to Firdausī's original Sāmānid patrons with their capitals in Samarqand and Bukhara.⁴⁴ But the traditional *Shāhnāma* composition did not sustain his interest, or those of his successors.

In light of this, beside Firdausian productions I have opened up the available data to incorporate other works inspired by Firdausī's phrasing and articulation that held greater appeal to the Abū'l-Khairids. The corpus I justify grouping together encompasses illustrated texts with themes and contents pertaining to Turco-Persianate rulers and events during their reigns, and their placement in the trajectory of world history and dynasties. These include Turkic-language translations of Firdausī's original (sometimes referred to as *Şehnāme-i türkī*), and truncated copies emphasizing the later epic cycles of legendary *Shāhnāma* heroes (Barzū, Farāmarz, and Garshāsp among them) at the expense of the historical section of Firdausī's original text. Forming another category, I have also selected illustrated specimens with historiographical contents written in verse and prose, and term these "ruler-*nāma*" in my study. This ruler-*nāma* neologism refers to dynastic chronicles and biographies of rulers who lived in the recent past, or within three centuries of the date of their original composition. In the context of sixteenth-century Transoxiana, these objects consist of biographies of Tīmūr and accounts of events during the reigns of Abū'l-Khairid rulers.

When the historical contents in these ruler-*nāma* are executed in verse with meter, existing scholarship has referred to my ruler-*nāma* sub-genre as epic writing, or *ḥamāsa sarāyī* / *shāhnāma navīsī* for Timurid and Safavid chronicles about their rulers.⁴⁵ Ottoman compositions also encompass this material, and may have motivated early Abū'l-Khairid to commission their own versions. These personalized epics compare actual dynastic leaders to mythic characters from the *Shāhnāma*. Emulative of Firdausī in style and/or subject, these works include material about an actual figure or dynasty currently holding power at the time of the manuscript's creation or from a century or two earlier. My definition of ruler-*nāma* is expansive, and includes heroic (embellished, perhaps) and more straightforward (dare I say mundane) chronicling in the corpus. Focusing on materials of Abū'l-Khairid creation, these ruler-*nāma* fully or partly copy Ilkhanid works (e.g. *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*), Timurid epic biographies (*Tīmūr-nāma*, *Ẓafarnāma*), and early Ottoman dynastic chronicles in Persian and Turki

⁴⁴ Charles Melville quotes Muḥammad Amīn's *Muḥīt al-tawārīkh* (Ocean of Chronicles, ca. 1699) in his 2016 LUCIS talk: "Perceptions of History in Persian Chronicles of the Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries," forthcoming. With the victories of Muḥammad Shībānī over Tīmūr's capital Samarqand and the acquisition of Bukhara, he "placed his feet on the throne of the sultanate of the Samanids", thus suggesting long-term continuities rather than change."

⁴⁵ Barry Wood, in his dissertation "Shāhnāma-i Ismā'īl: Art and cultural memory in sixteenth-century Iran" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2002) makes extensive use of Ẓabīḥ Allāh Ṣafā's *Ḥamāsa sarāyī dar Īrān* (Tehran, 1344/1965).

(*Eskandar-nāme*, *Bāyazīd-nāma*). In verse and prose, of heroic and historic contents, ruler-*nāma* laud particular leaders and chronicle their rise to power and the enemies defeated on their paths to consolidating it.⁴⁶

Factoring these grouped materials into my analysis—original Firdausian, truncated versions with Firdausī’s mythical and legendary sections, Turkic translations of Firdausī, as well as the versified and prose dynastic chronicles of ruler-*nāma*—exposes cultural and artistic exchanges that Firdausian *Shāhnāma* materials produced in Abū’l-Khairid workshops alone cannot prove. What frequently arises from isolating these titles is a perplexing process of joint Ottoman—Uzbek manuscript production. Not all of the manuscripts were official projects taken up by the courtly workshops designated as *kitābkhāna*, *nakkaṣhane*, and *taṣvīrkhāna* across the Turco-Persianate sphere. When present, colophon information can refer to a named scribe with a nisba and date and location of production that assert an Uzbek provenance for the text.⁴⁷ But upon closer inspection the illustrations at times appear foreign to workshops in Transoxiana and come from outside the region, added decades after the ink dries. The extent of this coordination is not fully known, but understanding political events encapsulated in Appendix 1: Table of Takeovers provides a framework to then read the visual material given the textual lacuna.

III. Body chapters situated in the context of manuscript production in Transoxiana

I have divided Abū’l-Khairid arts of the book in Transoxiana into five periods, with certain battle outcomes and ascensions of rulers motivating my divisions for artistic periodization (consult App. 2 for a schematic of this information). The five body chapters to my dissertation each tackle these individual phases through a visual and textual reading of illustrated *Shāhnāma* works. With regard to the broader arrangement of the chapters, each section will weave in illustrated and text-only historiographical material made in the Turco-Persianate sphere.

Although the official dates of the Abū’l-Khairid dynasty span 1500–1599, I am extending the margins by two decades on either side to better analyze the chronological scope of illustrated materials encompassing the preceding Timurid dynasty and succeeding Tūqāy-Tīmūrid dynasty in my study. The

⁴⁶ These include copies of the *Tīmūr-nāma* and *Jāmi’ al-tawārīkh*, but not Nizāmī’s *Iskandar-nāma*, for example. My emphasis is on stand-alone titles and dynastic chronicles, and not sections to *Khamṣa* versions.

⁴⁷ Bruno de Nicola in a private conversation posits that a nisba indicates absence and not provenance; it more often distinguishes individuals by their origins when they are physically in another locale. A nisba, in essence, marks a non-native, “outsider” status.

Tūqāy-Tīmūrīds continued the patronage of illustrated manuscripts but on a reduced scale in comparison to the Abū'l-Khairīds, and manuscripts produced during the transition of power testify to artisans continuing their practice without concern for courtly matters so long as they could find buyers of their produced works.

The *longue durée* (1480–1628) fully captures the gamut of early-modern Abū'l-Khairīd artistic production by focusing on the copyists and illustrators who contributed to their book creations. Some of these artisans in the first generation worked in the courtly and commercial Timurid kitābkhāna(s) in Herat but later served the early Abū'l-Khairīd overlords. This is the topic of the first body chapter. It examines Firdausian *Shāhnāma* manuscripts produced during the Timurid—Abū'l-Khairīd transition in Central Asia. At the other end of the era comes the final body chapter also on Firdausian *Shāhnāma* manuscripts made on the cusp of the Abū'l-Khairīd—Tūqāy-Tīmūrīd power shift. It identifies artisans who had worked in the Abū'l-Khairīd centers of Bukhara and others in Khurasan but who promptly congregated in Samarqand at the *fin de siècle* to prepare manuscripts at the onset of Tūqāy-Tīmūrīd rulership in the first few years of the 1600s.

Chapter 1 includes the first decades of Abū'l-Khairīd power and artistic developments prior to a significant early Abū'l-Khairīd siege of Herat (1529). Manuscripts from the early Abū'l-Khairīd workshops of Samarqand and Tashkent in this early period are characterized by an indebtedness to Timurid traditions. Some of the masters who had worked for the Timurids to produce manuscripts continued to work for the new Abū'l-Khairīd overlords in the appanages of Samarqand and Tashkent throughout the 1520s. In 1528 at the Battle of Jam, the Safavid shah Ṭahmāsp defeated the Abū'l-Khairīd military leader 'Ubaidullāh Khan near Nishapur.⁴⁸ But during a few months between 1529 and 1530, there was a migration of artists and scribes who had formerly served Safavid patrons into the Abū'l-Khairīd domain.⁴⁹ Thus, I have made 1529 the division between the first political and artistic period from the second, and explore this in Chapter 2.

In addition to Herati kitābkhāna staff working directly in the new Abū'l-Khairīd workshop in Bukhara in this second phase (1530–1557), materials scribed earlier in Herat when it was ruled by the Timurids were taken to Transoxiana where spaces left for illustrations were filled but in a new style inspired by contemporary artists who had previously worked on Safavid commissions. This second

⁴⁸ Martin Dickson, "Shah Tahmasp and the Uzbeks: The Duel for Khurasan with 'Ubayd Khan 930-946/ 1524-1540," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1958), 129-31.

⁴⁹ Ebadollah Bahari, "The Timurid to Safavid Transition in Persian Painting. Artists in Limbo: New Evidence," *Iran* 52, no. 1 (2014): 157.

period is marked by artistic heights with captured (or invited) artisans working in the courtly Bukhara kitābkhāna. The accompanying Chapter 2 dwells on ruler-*nāma* depicting the lives of Tīmūr, Chinggis Khan, and the latter's descendants through to the Abū'l-Khairids. Sections also analyze two truncated Firdausian *Shāhnāma* manuscripts naming scribes coming from cities administered by the Abū'l-Khairids in Balkh and Bukhara. The Firdausian *Shāhnāmas*' illustrative programs however appear to derive from ateliers outside the region and time period, linked to non-courtly Ottoman workshops posited to be in Baghdad in the late sixteenth century. Another instance of joint Ottoman—Uzbek manuscript manufacture separating scribal and visual programs examines the *Shībānī-nāma* manuscript held in the National Library of Vienna. Its text was composed and perhaps transcribed early in the Abū'l-Khairid domain, but its illustrations come from an Ottoman workshop responsible for important dynastic panegyrics in Istanbul. Why a work dedicated to an Abū'l-Khairid leader would have similar illustrations as courtly Ottoman manuscripts in the 1550s is not so transparent, and I employ mid-century correspondence across the realms to offer an explanation.

It is my argument that only in the third period (1557–1575) can we call Abū'l-Khairid manuscripts quintessential products of a “Bukhara school.” At this time, the tradition really comes into its own and is linked to the patronage of the powerful ruler ‘Abdullāh b. Iskandar. This is covered in Chapter 3. Its start in 1557 corresponds to the point at which ‘Abdullāh headed the Bukharan appanage and began eliminating his rivals to create a centralized state.⁵⁰ The sixteenth century's sixth through eighth decades were fruitful and prosperous years in the Abū'l-Khairid domain, marked by strengthened political, cultural, and commercial exchanges with India, Turkey, and Muscovy. The artistic standardization of the third period's figures and set compositions in courtly Abū'l-Khairid manuscripts is associated with ‘Abdullāh Muṣavvir in works produced for ‘Abdullāh Khan, pointing to a productive partnership between the patron and painter in the 1560s. ‘Abdullāh the artist was the pupil of the master Shaikhzāda who had worked in courtly Safavid workshops, and who was in turn the pupil of Bihzād. This very chain of artistic transmission actually sums up Abū'l-Khairid manuscript traditions across the decades very nicely, comprising Timurid, Safavid, and local Abū'l-Khairid models in varying concentrations depending on the era. ‘Abdullāh's style dominated the third period up until his death posited to be sometime in the 1570s.

⁵⁰ Akimushkin, “Biblioteka Shibanidov,” 334. McChesney explains: “by the middle of the sixteenth century, the Perso-Islamic tradition of the fixed ‘throne place’ and ‘abode of sovereignty’ had completely eclipsed the Chinggisid idea of the moveable yurt as royal centre and Bukhara had taken the mantle of ‘capital’ from Samarqand” (“Islamic culture and the Chinggisid restoration,” 285).

Chapter 3 analyzes ruler-*nāma*, among them illustrated biographies of Tīmūr, and unillustrated chronicles commemorating ‘Abdullāh’s own heroics. Particular attention is paid to the sole courtly Abū’l-Khairid *Shāhnāma* of Firdausī. It is a lavish, albeit unfinished, illustrated copy and this chapter details the circumstances of its east-to-west transfer from its 1564 creation in Abū’l-Khairid Bukhara, to its arrival in Istanbul in 1594 as a gift to the Ottoman sultan Murad III. This move carries overt political significance especially when compared to Shah Ṭahmāsp’s earlier gifting of his own exquisite *Shāhnāma* version in 1568 to Sultan Selim II when the latter assumed rulership, and parallels are drawn in a section that analyzes Abū’l-Khairid gift-giving (*pīshkash*) and politics at play in the courtly transfer of manuscripts.

The fourth period (1576–1598) covers the remaining years of the sixteenth century and of Abū’l-Khairid dynastic control, and shifts attention to the Khurasan region and artistic contributions and collaborations in the workshops there. The 1570s witnessed ‘Abdullāh the artist’s death and ‘Abdullāh Khan’s decreased interest in manuscripts. This resulted in the quality and quantity of manuscript productions to taper off in Bukhara. Artists faced limited resources and were forced to find new patrons outside of the courts, and so catered to the military aristocracy and religious leaders. Many painters were now hired to work on a single manuscript, to assemble unfinished copies, or to add pictures to manuscripts that had been scribed earlier.

Chapter 4 treats a *Shāhnāma* translation that I posit migrated from west to east: from Istanbul to the environs of Herat. I am the first to recognize that its Turkic verse is by the poet Şerif Âmidî, which links it to Turkic-language *Shāhnāma* creations from the Ottoman sphere. However its incomplete illustrative program connects it to Khurasan in the 1580s/90s when it was at a crossroad of Safavid and Abū’l-Khairid disputes, as much over territory as for the Timurid legacy of political administration and culture.⁵¹ With the Abū’l-Khairids’ securing control of Khurasan between 1588–98, rather than having artisans flock to the Abū’l-Khairid capital, artists and scribes formerly employed in Bukharan workshops left them and found work in the new Uzbek province carved out of eastern Iran and relocated there to produce commercial copies. Some of these artisans went southwards to India, and still others returned from the subcontinent to converge in Khurasan at this time after an earlier exodus there.⁵² Khurasani productions from workshops in Mashhad and Herat intended for both Safavid and

⁵¹ Schwarz, “Safavids and Ozbeks,” 362.

⁵² Abolala Soudavar, “Between the Safavids and the Mughals: Art and Artists in Transition,” *Iran* 37 (1999): 49-66.

Abū'l-Khairid patrons were exported back to Bukhara and into India, where some works were reassembled and assimilated into local productions.⁵³

The final body chapter covering the fifth period (1599–1628) sits somewhat uncomfortably in that it covers the state of arts and politics in Transoxiana after the termination of Abū'l-Khairid power. After the Safavids retook the Khurasan province in 1598, the region to remain under Uzbek control was ruled by a rival offshoot to the Abū'l-Khairids, the Tūqāy-Tīmūrids. At this time, the Ottomans saw their fortunes decline in the late sixteenth century. This is in contradistinction to emerging states in India—Mughal, Deccan, and others—which were becoming powerful. We see a shift in artists, poets, and scribes from all over migrating to the subcontinent to seek lucrative employment opportunities; artists formerly working for the Abū'l-Khairids followed suit, and/or served the new Tūqāy-Tīmūrids in Transoxiana. Chapter 5 examines a group of commercial Firdausian *Shāhnāma* manuscripts from Samarqand, and a ruler-*nāma* illustrating the biography of Tīmūr. These materials elucidate artistic relations between Transoxiana and India in the late-sixteenth through early-seventeenth centuries that textual sources do not explicitly state.

IV. Methodology: colophons and the conundrum of classification

Reluctant to wed art completely with politics, I begrudgingly acknowledge that labeling a manuscript “Abū'l-Khairid” implies that the copyists and illustrators were at one point agents of or adherents to the Abū'l-Khairid state. This poses several challenges since proof of political persuasion from the era is limited and artists and scribes were very much migratory and could have completed projects in one center then would go to another if the offer was good. What is more, very rarely are the illustrated manuscripts the result of unified workshop practices working from start to finish, and the staff of a previous dynasty stayed on in the region to carry out the projects of the new overlords. This thesis provides insight into the artistic process of filling in a previously-scribed text with fresh illustrations, termed in the literature so far published on this practice as refurbished, heterogeneous,

⁵³ Porter, “Remarques sur la peinture.”

composite, amalgamated, and reincarnated manuscripts.⁵⁴ In courtly Abū'l-Khairid arts of the book, the textual component could be a work scribed during the Timurid era, or if written out in the first half of the sixteenth century, the copyist may have previously served the Timurids in prior decades but now found employment with the new dynasty in the region and continued to work there. This is a key point: artisans likely went about their work despite shifts in power, with the mentality that “a job’s a job”; vocational prospects outweigh in importance political loyalty.

In my estimation, previous scholarship has placed too much emphasis on colophons wherein information about the time and place of transcription is used to classify an entire manuscript. Many of the materials in this study are not the results of a unified scribal and illustrative program nor are all the components of their manufacture attributable to one center, so the delegation of tasks and the components necessary for completion need to be accounted for. Manuscripts that have been labeled “Shībānid” or “Uzbek” in museum and library catalogues are frequently reformatted manuscripts that were previously transcribed in other centers or in earlier times.⁵⁵ Some of the texts to these manuscripts were taken from leftover stockpiles in Herat and were brought to Bukhara during different periods; or, they were written out in Bukhara but illustrated in the Ottoman realm.

Characterizing these manuscripts as Abū'l-Khairid often obscures more than it clarifies; in most of the case studies I present, it only refers to one stage of production out of several. It is necessary to distinguish the place of transcription from the place(s) of illustration in a single manuscript. By exploring the mobility of artists, styles, genres, and the books themselves, my goal is to elucidate the production and transmission processes of Abū'l-Khairid manuscripts. I problematize scholarly

⁵⁴ Investigations of such material are found in François Déroche, ed., *Les Manuscrits Du Moyen-Orient: Essais De Codicologie Et De Paleographie: Actes Du Colloque D'Istanbul* (Istanbul: Institut Français d'Etudes Anatoliennes d'Istanbul et Bibliothèque Nationale, 1989); Marianne Barrucand on “hétéroclites” manuscripts in “Considerations sur les Miniatures Sefevides de la Bibliothèque Nationale,” *Etudes Safavides*, ed. Jean Calmard (Paris-Tehran, IFRI: 1993), 28-29; Priscilla P. Soucek and Filiz Çağman, “A Royal Manuscript and Its Transformation: The Life History of A Book,” *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East*, ed. George N. Atiyeh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 179-208; Zeren Tanındı, “Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Workshops,” *Muqarnas* 17 (2000): 147-61; Mika Natif, “The SOAS *Anvār-i Suhaylī*: The Journey of a ‘Reincarnated’ Manuscript,” *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 331-58; Bernard O’Kane, “Reconciliation or estrangement? Colophon and paintings in the TĪEM Zafarnāma and some other controversial manuscripts,” *Muqarnas* 26 (2009): 205-27. Also consult the many explorations by John Seyller to get an overview of Mughal practices: “The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts in the Imperial Mughal Library,” *Artibus Asiae* 57, no. 3/4 (1997): 243–349; “Recycled Images: Overpainting in Early Mughal Art,” *Humayun’s Garden Party: Princes of the House of Timur and Early Mughal Painting*, ed. Sheila Canby (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1994), 79; “Overpainting in the Cleveland *Tūfīnāma*,” *Artibus Asiae* 52, no. 3/4 (1992): 283-318. Marianna S. Simpson and Massumeh Farhad examine “peripatetic projects” in *Sultan Ibrahim Mirza’s Haft Awrang: A Princely Manuscript from Sixteenth-Century Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

⁵⁵ Information on this process is in Adle et al., *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, 581. Pugachenkova and Galerkina give more detail on the results of particular raids, stating that several Timurid and Safavid manuscripts were brought to Bukhara after the nine-month siege of Herat by ‘Abdullāh Khan (in 1574) and his son’s rout of Mashhad in 1598, followed by the seizure of the library (Pugachenkova and Galerkina, *Miniatury srednei azii*, 47). Manuscript refurbishment in Bukhara was also the subject of Karin Rührdanz’s Bahari Lecture presented at SOAS on March 11, 2020: “A History of Miniature Painting Between the 1540s and 1560s in Central Asia.”

attributions that privilege scribal dates at the expense of other components: illustrations executed later, multiple styles within a single manuscript, and those coming from different centers. My reading treats the book objects as palimpsests and emphasizes their totality, with cautious reliance on stylistic and formal analysis through manuscript comparisons when colophons and other textual documentation are lacking or limited. With this approach, I have uncovered political and historical dimensions through the physical transit of manuscripts across regions, and within the illustrative programs of the actual manuscripts themselves. The outcome is to uncover and explain heretofore unsubstantiated Uzbek exchanges with other regional powers through visual and textual materials. Existing scholarship has noted some of these parallels based on inference and visual affinities, but I derive my analysis from historical documentation and nuanced stylistic comparisons.

The manuscripts testify to trans-regional traffic involving painters, illuminators, and copyists. The objects these individuals produced circulated between Ottomans and Uzbeks, and Uzbeks and principalities in India. By focusing on the time period spanning the late fifteenth century through the early seventeenth, I overlay Abū'l-Khairid *Shāhnāma* productions and make connections across periods, places, and pages. Art is not separate from political, religious, economic, or intellectual matters, and my study endeavors to demonstrate this truism that might seem commonplace, but will be elucidated with unexamined manuscripts that have languished for too long in world collections.