The most famous episode of the *Shāh-nāma* is no doubt that of Rustam and Suhrāb: and more specifically, the culmination of this story, in which Suhrāb is killed by his father Rustam. Until the very last moment, Suhrāb, the son does not know he is fighting his father, although to the reader or the listener nothing could be more obvious. The father, Rostam, does not know the formidable hero he is fighting is in fact his own son Suhrāb, born from an affair he had with the princess of Samangān, Tahmina. A secret affair this was; though in most *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts it has been promoted to something more official, by inserting a number of verses in which a priest comes to perform a kind of instant marriage service:

He ordered a worthy priest to come  
And to ask her from her father;  
When the king heard these words he became glad,  
He became proud as a cypress;  
He gave his daughter to that hero,  
As befitted his traditions and beliefs  
When he handed over his daughter to that hero,  
Old and young rejoiced therein,

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From joy all were beside themselves,  
And they praised the hero,  
Saying: may this new month be prosperous to you,  
May the head of those who wish you ill be severed.

Dick Davis, who proposed an introductory typology of interpolations to the *Shāh-nāma*, has described this kind as type 3, ‘interpolations made on moral or ideological grounds.’ Even in the oldest manuscripts known, the Florence ms dated 1217, the verses containing the official marriage have been added in the margin. The prudent scribes did not deem it paradoxical that this line was followed by the verse:

And when in secret she’d become his mate,  
The night that followed lasted late and long.  

The added lines would make the union of Rustam and Tahmīna hardly a secret. But as Dick Davis argues, Islamic family values outweighed such discrepancies, at least in the manuscript tradition. But what the scribes and with them the audience failed to acknowledge was that the secret union between Rustam and Tahmīna was solemnized, not by a priest, but by a precious gift from Rustam to Tahmīna. This gift was the famous *muhra* or seal from Rustam’s arm. He gave this seal to Tahmīna, so that, if she should become pregnant, she could give it to her child:
