

WRESTLING IS CENTRAL TO SOME OF THE MOST FAMOUS LITERATURE FROM ANCIENT HISTORY

Gilgamesh was a hero in ancient Mesopotamian found *Epic of Gilgamesh*, an epic poem written in Akkadian during the late 2nd millennium BC. Gilgamesh was highly skilled in wrestling and utilized it in his exploits.

Homer's epic poetry in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* written in ancient Greek during the 8th century BC. contain many references to wrestling. Odysseus in particular is described as a skilled wrestler. This skill is vividly described in the *Iliad* with his bout with Ajax.

The *Shahnameh* is a long epic poem written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi between c. 977 and 1010 CE and is the national epic of Iran. Rostam is the most celebrated legendary hero in *Shahnameh* and Iranian mythology. Rostam was always represented as the mightiest of Iranian paladins (holy warriors). He was highly skilled in wrestling, which he often employed in his battles.

I want to share a beautifully illustrated example of Rostam found in a modern production: **Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings**. Translated and adapted (to prose) by Ahmad Sadri, and illustrated by Hamid Rahmanian. Published by Liveright: New York (2017).

The Challenge of Puladvand (p. 409)



Puladvand, who was known for his heroic frame and prodigious talents in the use of lariat and mace, led a huge mass of warriors to where the Iranian army was camped. A loss to Puladvand would doom the cause of Iran. A wave of panic shook the Iranians, and all eyes turned to Rostam for help. Rostam stepped up to challenge the mighty Puladvand.

After exchanging taunts, the two champions pounded each other with their heavy maces until it was clear that they were in a stalemate. They agreed to settle the contest by wrestling.

Rostam lifted his opponent high upon his neck and pounded him on the ground with such force that he was left there for dead.