

Persian Miniatures

Page 4:

Riza-i Abbasi, *Love Scene*, 1610s-1620s.

Gouache on paper, 10.4 x 7.4 cm.

The National Library of Russia, St Petersburg.

Page 7:

Riza-i Abbasi, *Youth Holding a Jug*, 1627-1628.

Gouache on paper, 22.3 x 12.5 cm.

Museum of Western and Oriental Art, Kiev.

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“Epigrams succeed where epics fail.”

— Persian proverb



در دار السلطنة سزانه
بیاختن سزانه
رضاء

Chronology

749:	The Abbasid line of caliphs takes power from the Umayyads.
762-763:	Foundation of Baghdad.
9th century:	Birth of Persian language.
945:	The Buyids take over Baghdad.
Middle of 10th century:	Influence on Persian Art of the Fatimid patronage. Miniatures painted in brilliant colours. Naturalistic treatment of animals.
c. 1010:	<i>Shahnama</i> of Firdawsi.
1055:	The Seljuks become the new guardians of the caliphate of Baghdad.
12th century:	Rise of manuscript production: medical treatises, books about animals.
1200:	<i>Khamsa</i> of Nizami.
1206:	Genghis Khan is recognized as supreme leader of all the Turko-Mongolian peoples.
1220s:	Mongol invasion led by Genghis Khan, end of the Abbasid line of caliphs.
1229:	Ugedei is recognized as Great Khan of the whole tribal group.
1250s:	Mongol invasion led by Hulegu Khan.

- 1253: Campaigns of the Great Khan Möngke to take back the territories in western Asia that slipped from Mongol grasp after the death of Genghis Khan.
- 1258: End of the Abbasid caliphate with the capturing of Baghdad by the Mongols, beginning of the Ilkhanid Empire in Persia.
- 1295: Ghazan Khan becomes Ilkhan, reforms of the government and revitalisation of the economy.
- c. 1298: Death of the calligrapher Yaqut al-Musta'simi.
- 1304: Death of Ghazan Khan, vizierate of Rashid al-Din, patron of the arts. Rise of book production.
- 1304-1316: Reign of Uljaytu.
- 1316-1335: Reign of Abu Sa'id.
- 1501: Shah Ismail puts the Turkoman Aq Qoyunlu out of Iran and settles Safavid rule.
- 1595: Isfahan becomes the new capital of the Safavid Empire.
- 1601-1624: Safavid territory expands westward to include Bahrain, Azerbaijan, Shirvan, Armenia, Georgia, Kurdistan and Iraq.
- 1648: Safavid territory expands to Afghanistan.
- 1779: The Qajar Agha Muhammad takes control of northern Persia.
- 1906: Persia becomes a constitutional monarchy.





Miniature painting – decorating with illustrations the pages of a hand-written book with the aid of gouache – is one of the domains in which Persians excelled. It is owing to this art that many monuments have fortunately survived to this day.

In ordinary manuscripts, the artist sketched out the major elements of his composition with a black or red pencil before painting.

Princess Humayun Spies Humay at the Gate

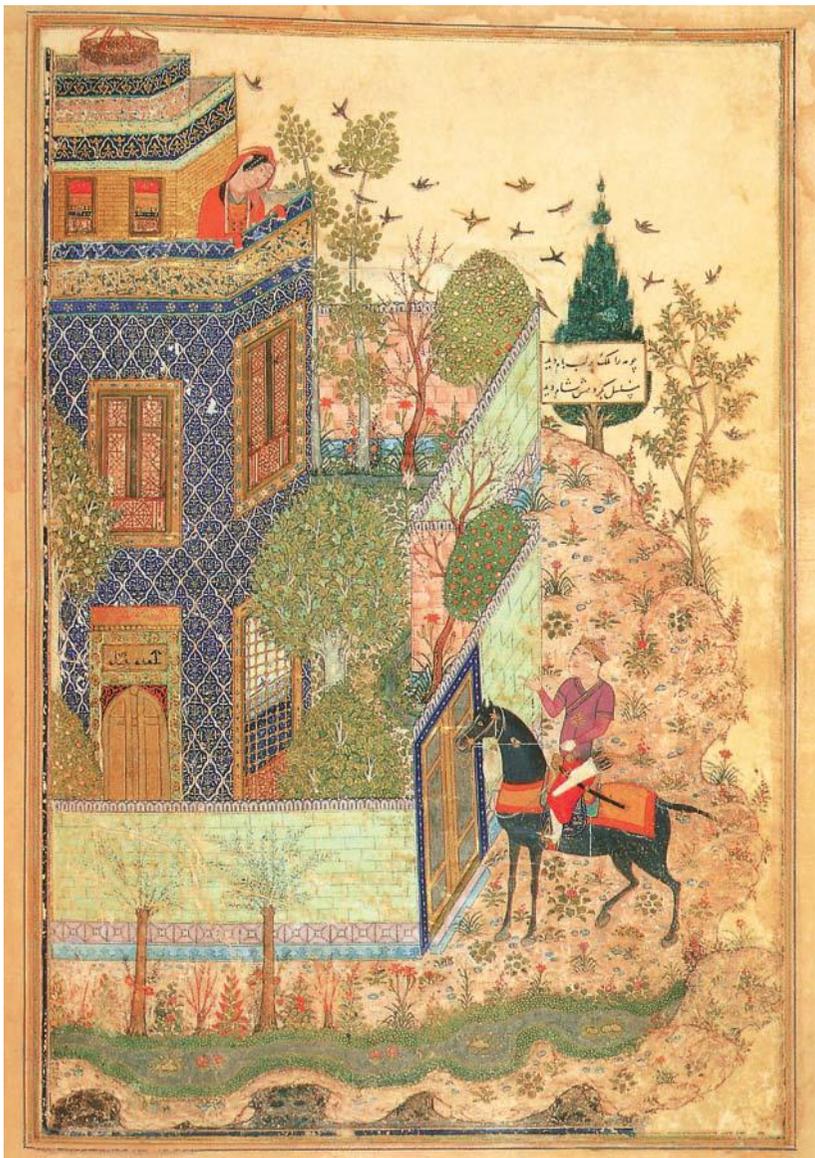
Illustration from Khwaju Kirmani's masterpiece

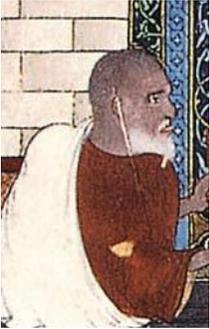
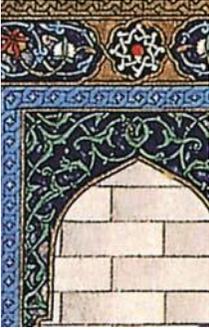
Three Poems

1396

38.1 x 24.7 cm (folio)

The British Library, London

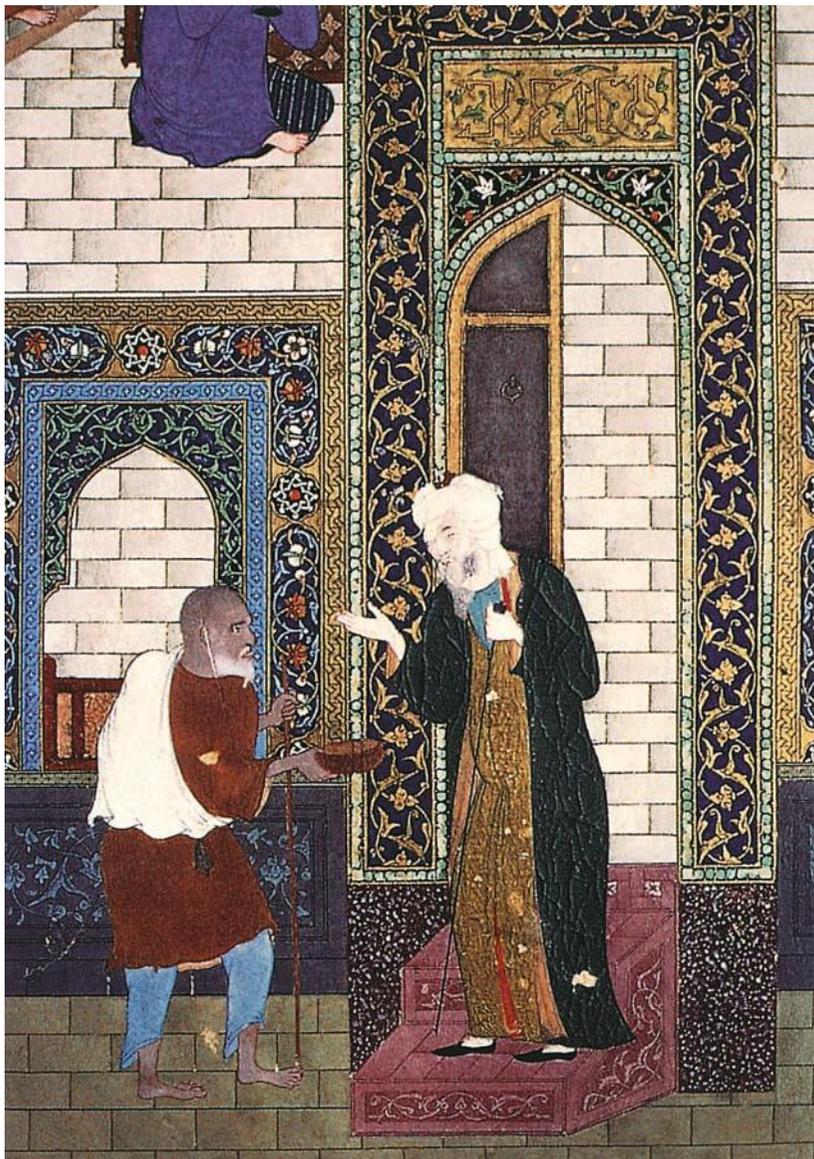




In very elaborate manuscripts, the miniature was not done directly on the page where it had to appear. The copyist left the page blank, and then the artist would bring the special sheet on which he had painted and laminated it. This sheet was covered with a thin layer of plaster and finely coated with

A Muslim Giving Alms

Illustration by Bihzad from Sa'di's masterpiece
Bustan (The Orchard)
15th century
National Library, Cairo

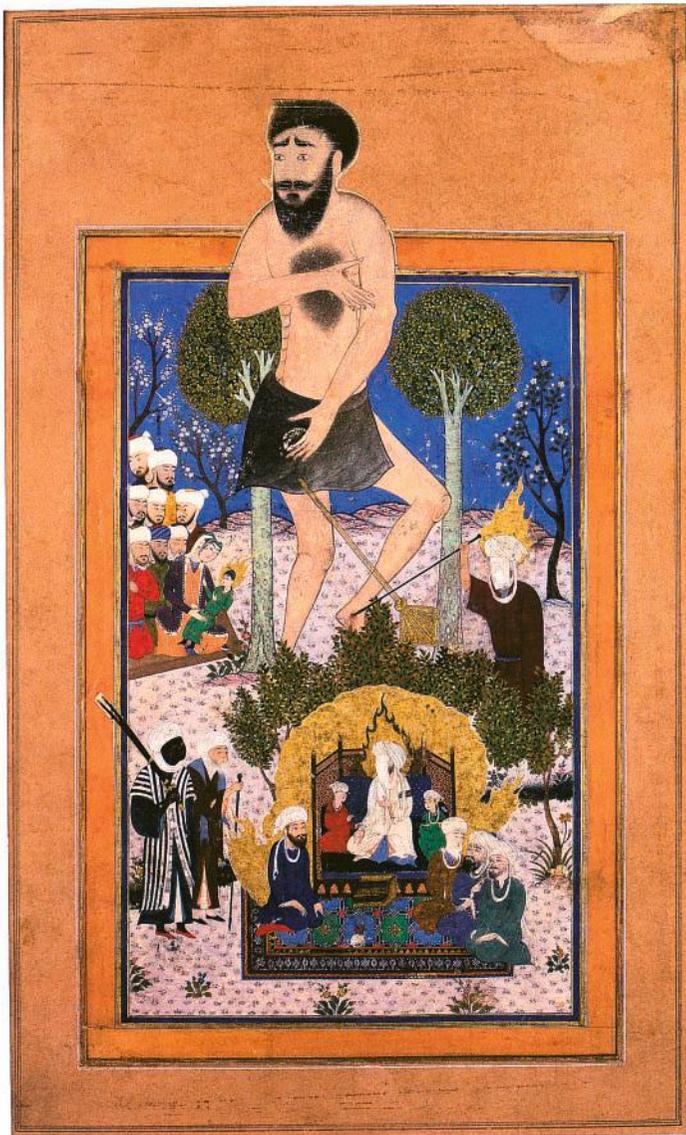




acacia gum: it was on this primer that the artist drew and painted. The paintings on some sheets are so thick that they could pass for a type of relief. Some jewels were made of superimposed layers of gold sheets reworked with a stylus, as in some Venetian paintings. Should the artist append his name,

Frontispiece of an Account of the Lives of the Prophets, Depicting Moses Striking the Giant Og, Mary with the Baby Jesus and the Prophet Muhammad with His Two Grandchildren, Hasan and Husayn

Artist and source unknown
Early 15th century
38 x 24.4 cm
Khalili Collection





he did so slyly, in a corner of the miniature in Talik characters so fine that they are very difficult to decipher. Where the drawing is a representation of a house, the names of the monarch or artist comprise an inscription that runs the length of the border. The last page of a manuscript usually bears the year it was completed.



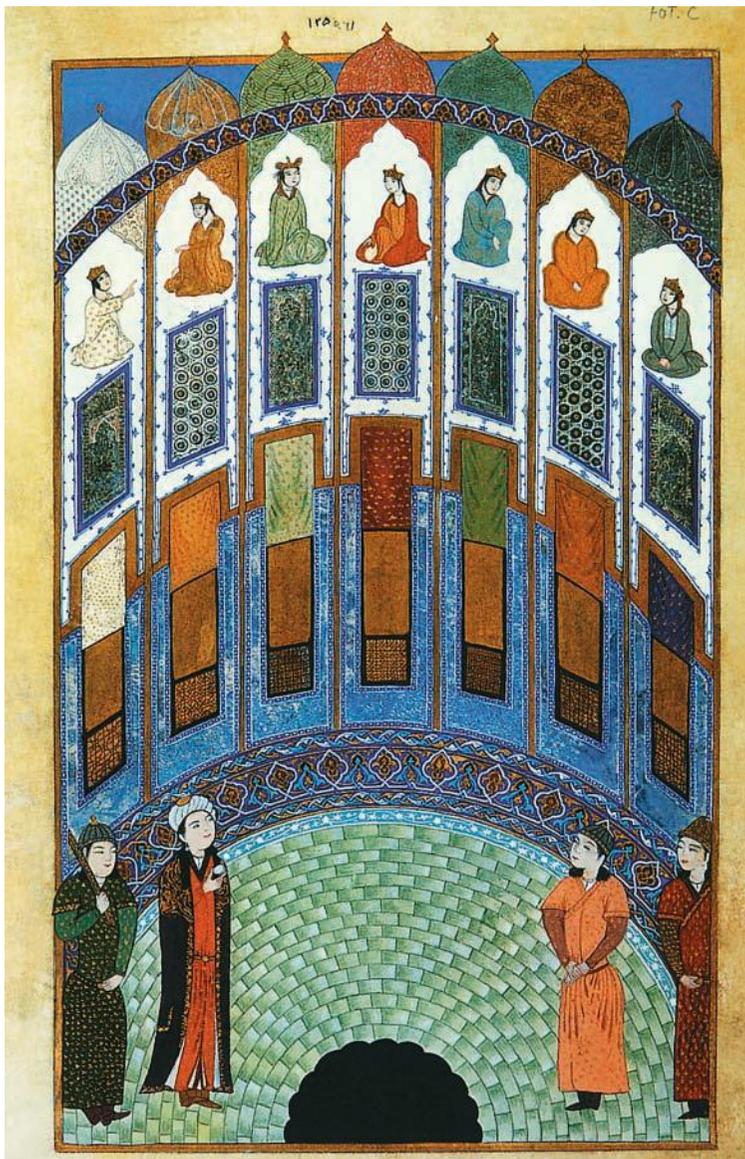
Bahram Discovers the Hall with the Seven Portraits

Illustration from Nizami's masterpiece

Haft Paikar (The Seven Idols)

1410-1411

Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon

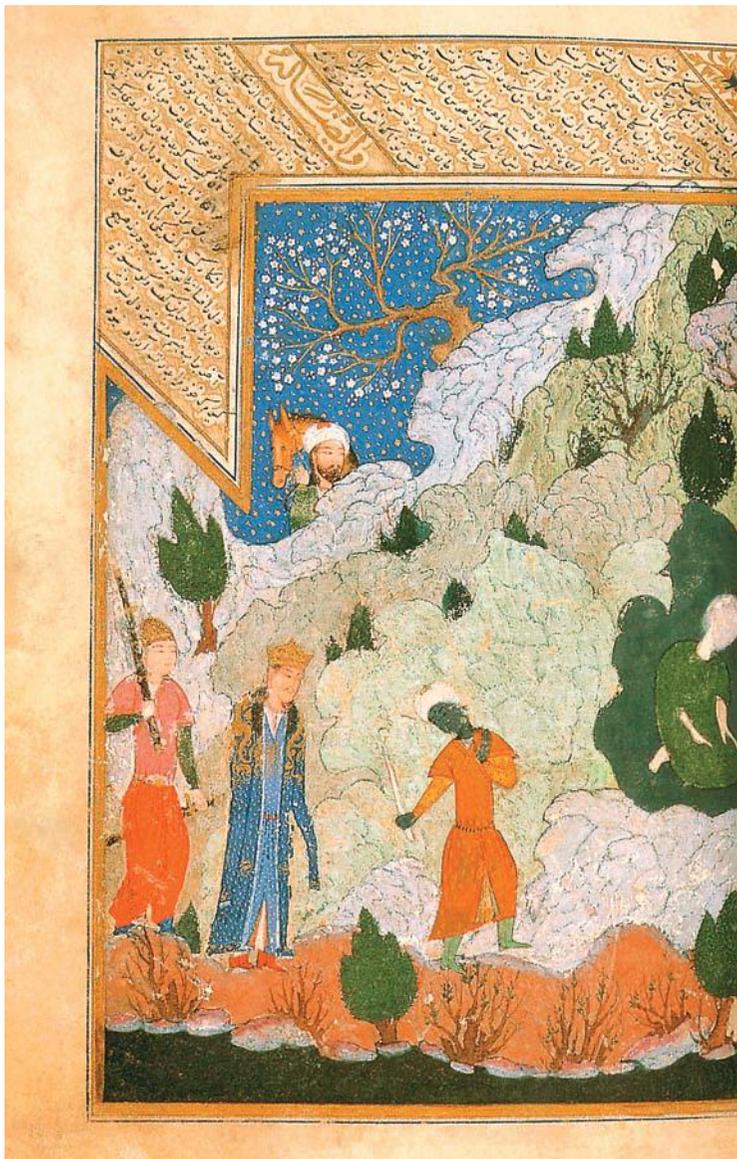




However, miniatures often were added after the manuscript itself was created. A mastery of these works and an attempt to classify all of them according to their countries of origin and schools is a very daunting task, as very few of the manuscripts are dated and signed by the painters.

Alexander the Great Visits the Sage

Illustration from a miscellany by Jalal al-Din or
Iskandar ibn 'Umar Shaykh
1410-1411
18.4 x 12.7 cm (folio)
The British Library, London





They often have the names of calligraphers, but rarely those of illuminators. This implies that the work of the calligrapher was considered more important than the painter's. Equally noticeable in these manuscripts is the rather unscrupulous way in which the artists transgressed the law of the Prophet and scorned the prohibition against representing



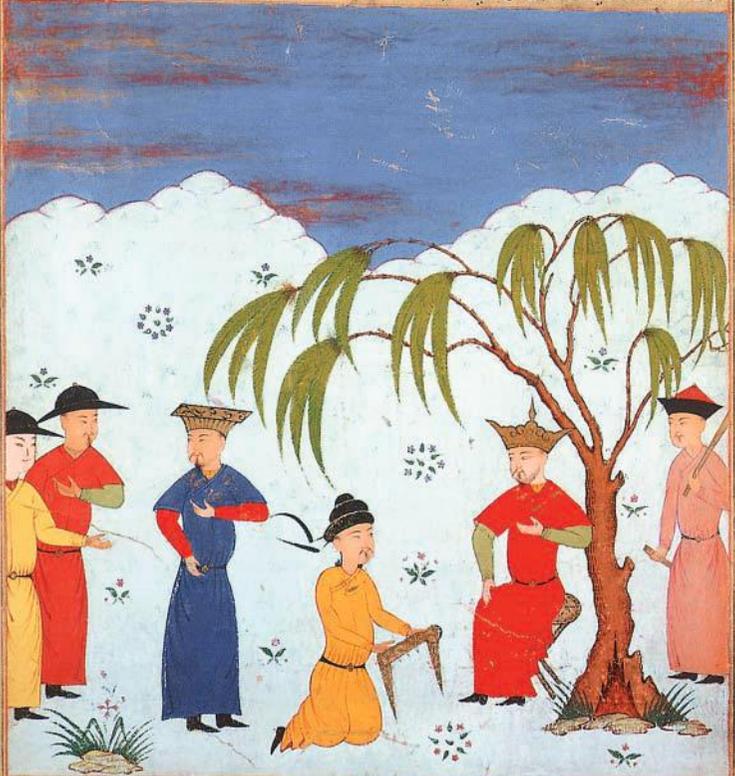
The Sages of China Bringing Books on History to
Gházán Xán

Illustration from Hafiz-i Abru's masterpiece *Majma'a al-Tavariikh*
c. 1425-1430

33.8 x 23 cm (folio)

The British Museum, London

چیزی از آن نسخ بدین ولایات رسید و درین وقت که بادشاه اسلام خلدالله سلطانه و اعلاشاه فرموده که تاریخ
 مبارک را تألیف کنند و بنویسند چون سالک مذکورده را در قدیم الایام هیچ بادشاه بیگانه مستحکم دانید بود و در آن
 ممالک نیامده چنانکه بر زبان او رونق نام دارا و ایزد سبکساز کردانید و در تحت تصرف خویش آورده اند و بدان سبب
 حکایات آن درین تاریخ آوردن ضروری بود بادشاه اسلام خلدالله ملکه فرموده که تواریخ احوال آن مملکت و بادشاهان
 آنجا بر سهیل ایجاز و اختصار انحصار کرده شود بر وفق فرمان نافذ لایزال نافعا و مطاعا از هیچ یختای ساسی و مگو
 نام هر دو بر طریط و تحجیم و تاریخ ختای واقف اند و لغوی از آن کتب ختای باخود آورده و آن معانی را مستحکم تواریخ
 که داشتند حاضر کردند و تقریر کردند که هر چند تاریخ اهل ختای عظیم قدیم است و عدد سالها را دوازده بیان نمودی
 که پیش ازین باخواه ضربالذکر تقریر کرده اند لیکن تاریخی که اسامی بادشاهان آنجا در آن شروع و مفصل است و بنیاد حکایت
 بران نهاده اند و درین وقت میان اهل ختای شهرتی دارد و تاریخی درست و محقق است و تمامت حکایت و ادایایان بر آن اعتماد





living forms, which Islam inherited from Judaism. Indeed, it is actually through these manuscript miniatures that we gain the greatest insight into the genius with which some of these oriental masters handled the human figure, better than in any other sector of their arts.

The Jackal and the Lion

Illustration from a Persian translation of the
Panchatantra: Kalila wa Dimna
1429

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul

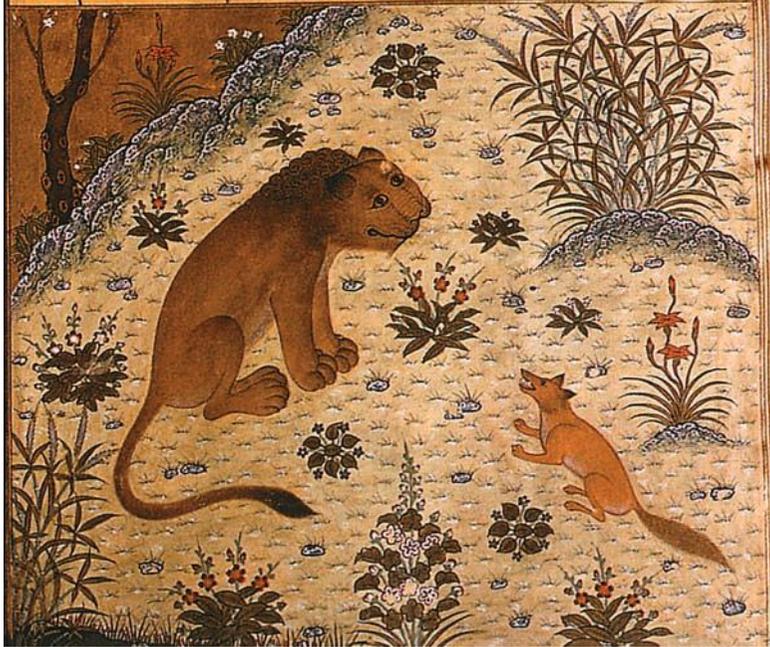
از خط خیزد نظیر اگر سپود و چهل
بر بندد که بر سپید از خط باز آید

و در سر کار خوض شو آن کرد مگر بر صفت و قوت طبع عمل سلطان و باز ز کافی در بیا و بنا لغت
و مغایرت دشمن و علما کونید مقام صیاح مروت بد و موضوع پیستوده آید در خدمت یا دشانمان

کامران و مکرم یادمان ز یاد قانع و محترم

اِذَا مَا لَمْ يَكُنْ لَكَ غِيَاظًا فَادْعُ عِبَادَكَ لِتَعْبُدُوا طَاعًا
وَ اَنْ تَمْلِكَ الدُّنْيَا جَمِيْعًا نَهْوَاهُ فَاتْرُكْهَا جَمِيْعًا

قلیله گفت ایزد تبارک و تعالی خیر و جنت و صلاح و سلامت بدین غریب و صریح بر خد خالت
مزون دارد در دنیا برفت و بر شیر سلام کرد شیر از نزدیکان خود پرسید که گیت کند فلان فلان
گفت آری پریش را نشخستم او را بخواند و گیت گامی باش گیت بد را که ملک بیتم شده ام





There are representations of hunting or battle scenes which, for their mere heroic and picturesque character and sense of movement, can hardly be equalled. There are portraits which, based on an analytical study of the possession of the type, the profound individual character and the masterful

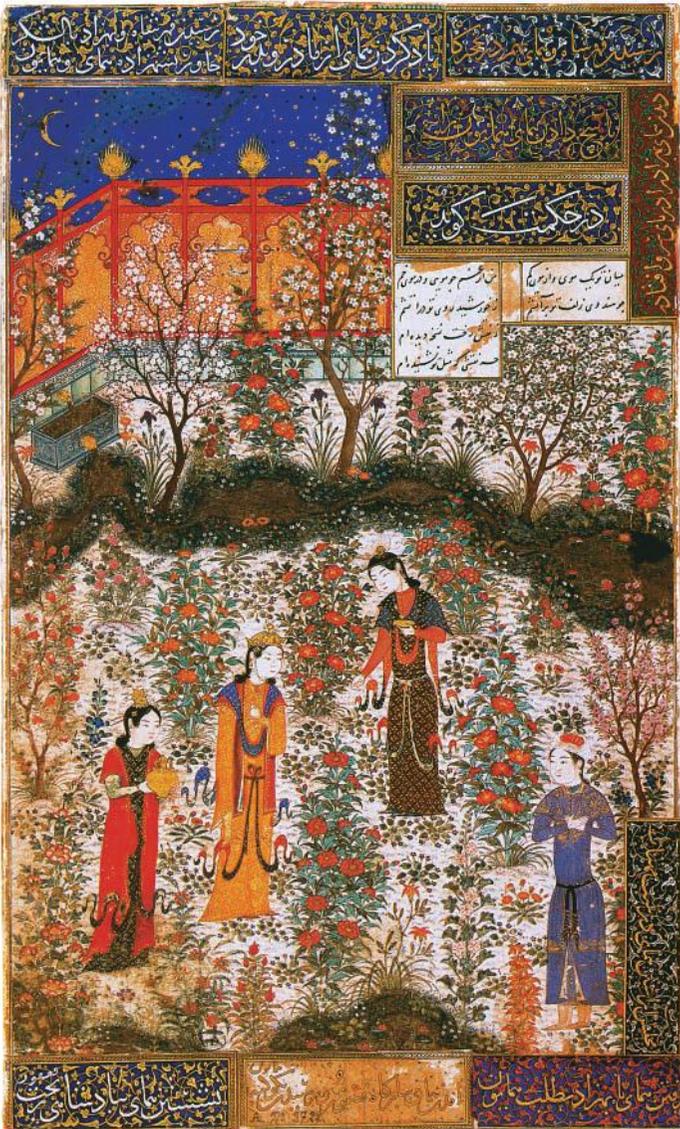
The Persian Prince Humay Meeting the Chinese Princess Humayun in a Garden

Artist and source unknown

1430-1440

29.5 x 18 cm

Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris





representation of the human figure, parallel the greatest masterpieces of this type in the West.

In Persia, the golden age of miniature painting dates from around the beginning of the 11th to the mid-14th century. This phase of Persian art (after the Mongol conquest) and this particular art form was subsequently to occupy a dominant position in figurative art.

Kuyuk the Great Khan with Courtiers and Attendants

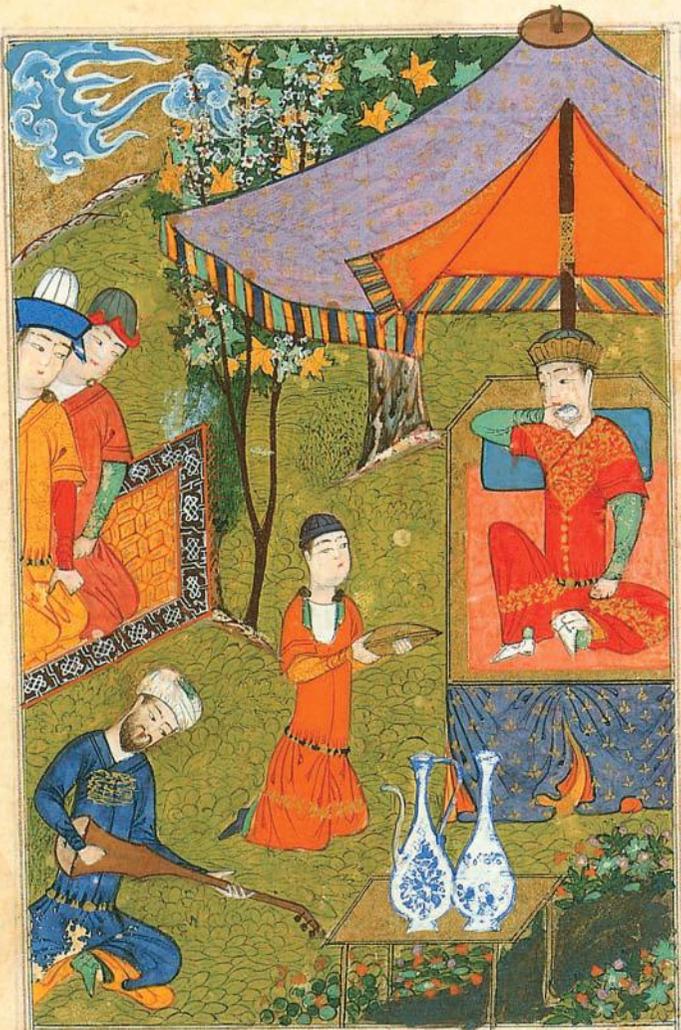
Illustration from 'Ata Malik ibn Muhammad Juvayni's masterpiece

Ta'rikh-i Jahan-Gushay

1438

26.5 x 17.3 cm (folio)

The British Museum, London



الکاه بر عقب آن به بیرون بارگاه آمدند و سه نوبت آفتاب را از انور زدند



The art of Iran at this period was the art of cities, of cultural centres, an art of master craftsmen, calligraphers and painters scattered throughout the country, an art for various customers – for the sultan, of course, but also for merchants and wealthy citizens. The first Persian manuscript with real miniatures that is known to us is the Persian poem of Ayyuqi,

The Battle of Ruhham the Paladin and Bazur
the Sorcerer

Illustration from Firdawsi's masterpiece

Shahnama (The Book of Kings)

c. 1440

33.4 x 22.2 cm

Royal Asiatic Society, London

سپه دار کوه بخشنان را
من نبیل پر کمان تو ایم
تو باشی چسب کوه سپهر
با هر کسی در دامنش برده
چسب در نام امان از زخم
چو جا دو بدیش پایت

گر خشن در راه کوه جانمان
ز چسب کوه داده خرا، پویم
تو ما را کوه دار ازین زنده
بر نام تو بود با خشت کوه
ز درن تاخت ایستایمان
غمودی ز پولاد سپهر کجک

کوه ای بر زار ز در دامنش را
از افسون و از جادوی کوه
ازین تاخت سر ما با چسب
که آن جا با نام زنده
ز در دامنش ایستایمان
غمودی ز پولاد سپهر کجک

تو ای کوه خشنان را
چسب خاکی در دامنش را
خاکی چسب تو کوه را
با افسون و تهنسب ان کوه
جادوی با در بران کوه





Varqah and Gulshah, commonly assigned to the early or mid-13th century. It was probably produced in Upper Mesopotamia (Jazira) or Anatolia.



The miniatures were painted by the artist Abd al-Mumin ibn-Muhammad al-naqqash al-Khowi, and some of the miniatures reveal



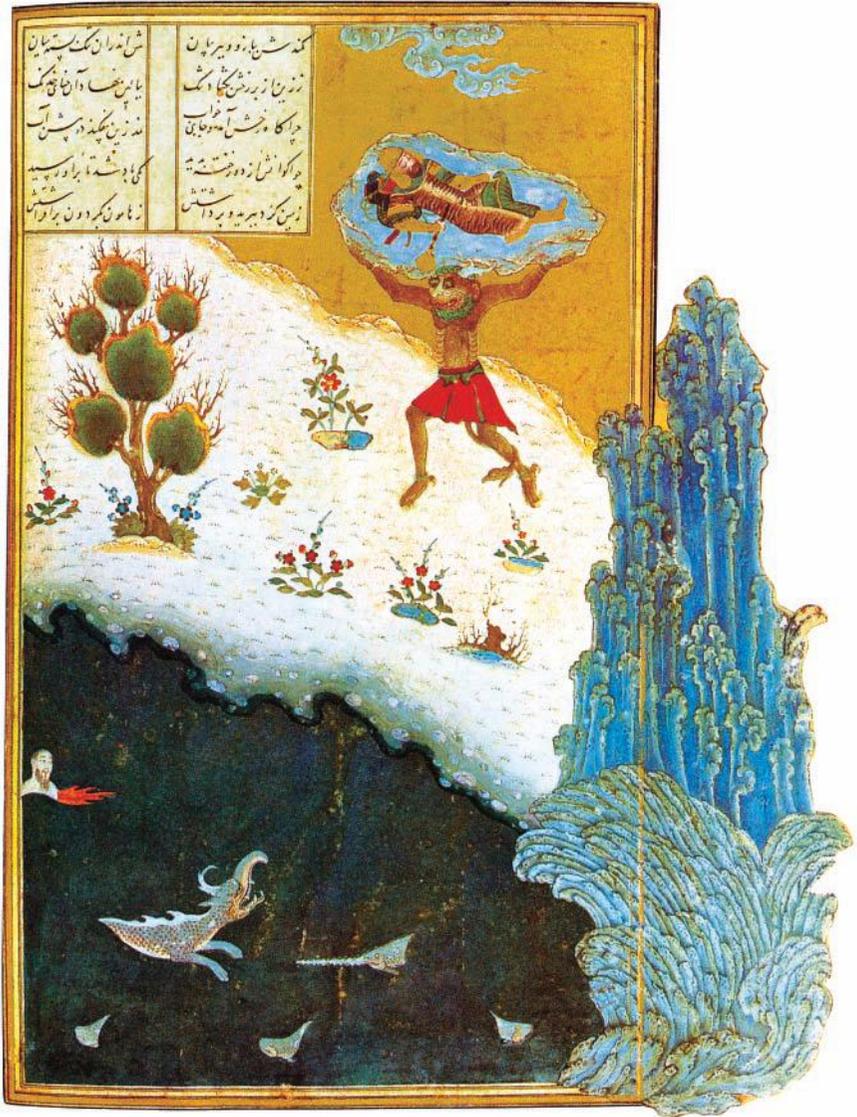
The Demon Akhwan Throws the Sleeping Hero Rustam into the Sea

Illustration from Firdawsi's masterpiece

Shahnama (The Book of Kings)

1440

Royal Asiatic Society, London





the following characteristics: the frieze-like compositions of several miniatures are analogous to frescoes, with the interrupted action continuing beyond the frame in a linear development; some of them are painted against a vivid, often deep red, background which is characteristic of frescoes

Courtiers by a Stream

Illustration from Firdawsi's masterpiece

Shahnama (The Book of Kings)

c. 1450

18 x 11.5 cm

The British Museum, London





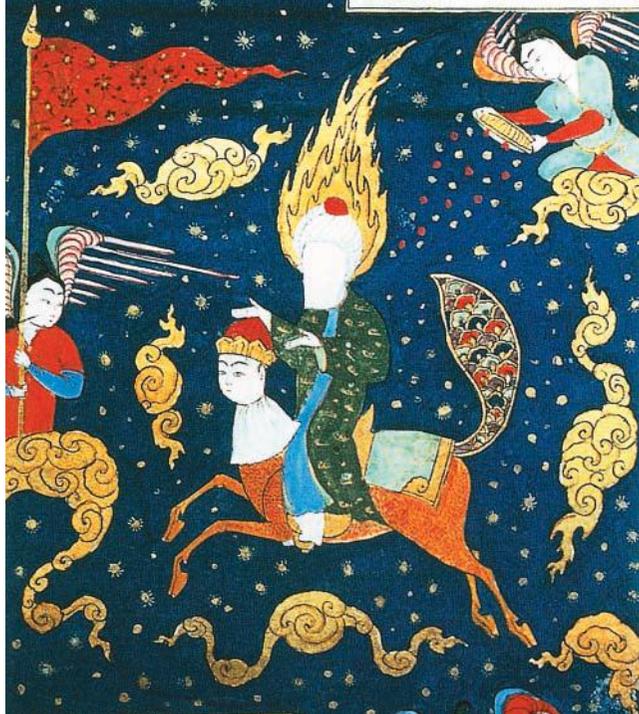
and also, for example, of the miniatures of the Kyzyl Manichaean treatise; absolutely every detail of iconography and style in this group of miniatures coincides precisely with the details found on contemporary lusterware, especially on *minai* ceramics; finally, luxuriant plant

Isra or Muhammad's Night Journey to Heaven on
His Steed Buraq

Artist and source unknown
1458

Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul

در گمشد سپهر کوینی
وز مملکتش دو کون سوئی



کوی پسرین با بادش
خاک رهشت و جار بادش





ornamentation serves as a background to some of the designs in this group of miniatures, as on ceramics.



It is the influence of the Iranian miniature which is cited as an explanation for the illustrations on metalwork and even the style of painting of Iranian ceramics.



Majnun and Salim in the Palm Grove

Illustration from Nizami's masterpiece *Khamsa*
(literally "collection of five")

1462

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul

<p>کجا در دما عیار بود باد اول بر لب سایان بودی ابراسته در کجا رت آید ی آید ن روی او چینی چون شد جان کز شستی</p>	<p>گفت آن چه مهار بود کوی برویت غلیم نمنه و دوی خواهی که نخاذه مارت آید</p>	<p>با پر زشت و خوش آید بوی سه زلف آن نکارت گنجا که خطاست این جلای</p>	<p>چون خوش نمنه او در آید این روی ز روی و نکارت مرا سه عاشق از مای</p>
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But is there any evidence at all, even circumstantial, bearing witness to the existence of miniature painting in Iran before the end of the 13th century? We do have a manuscript treatise on astronomy, Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi's *Book of the Fixed Stars* (completed in 1009-1010 AD).

Mi'raj or The Ascension of the Prophet

Illustration from Nizami's masterpiece *Khamsa*
(literally "collection of five")

1463

32.4 x 21.7 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

متمن از غایت روشنایی
رفت ولی ز محنت پایی نماند
پرده برانداخته دست حوال
آیت نوری که زوالش نبود

آمده در منزل بی منزلی
بست ولی نصرت جانسخت
از در تعظیم پسر ای جلال

غیرت ازین پرده میانس
جون سخن از خود بد را مدعا
پای شد آنگه سپر انداخته

چهرت از آن گوشه غایب گشت
با بخشش یافت قبول سلام
جان نمانش نمی خط بر ساخته
و دیده بخشش که خیالش نبود



دیدن او بی عرض و جوسر
دیدن آن پرده مکانی نبود
کفر بود و نفعی صفاتش مکن
دید محمد از بخششی و کسر
است خرد را ز خدا عجایب بسته
پشت قوی گشته از این گنا
ای سخت مهر ز با نهایی ما

گر عرض از اسود
رفتن آن راه ز ما نی نبود
جای بود و وقف چهار تن مکن
بل همین چشم هر آن شمشیر
لب بسکه خنده پیوسته
روی در او رده با من کارگاه
بوی نوجوان داری با نهایی ما

دیدن معبود پسندیده
سر که در آن پرده نطق داد یافت
سنت و لیکن ز مغرب گجای
خورد شرباتی که علی ساخته
متمن از کج تو آنگه شد
زان سخن عشقش نماند
دور سخن را بجاست سنان

دیدن او دیدنی و دیده نیست
از بهجت چهرتی راه یافت
سر که خین نیست نباشد خدای
جرع آن درد دل مار سخت
جمله مقصود و میسر شده
در نفسی رفته و باز آمده
ضمح سخن را بنطای سنان



It contains fine drawings and scientific illustrations which are of a set type and are treated exactly like all illustrations to scientific works of the time. These are not, of course, miniatures in the true sense of the word; they lack any artistic perception of the world.

Information about illustrations in early manuscripts is also extremely sparse in written sources.

Moses Transforms His Staff into a Serpent before Pharaoh

Illustration from the masterpiece
Tarikh-i bal'ami (The Annals of Bal'ami)

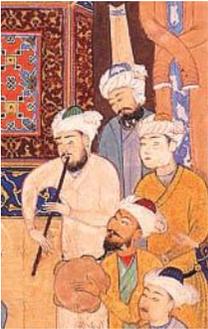
1470

35.3 x 24.5 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin



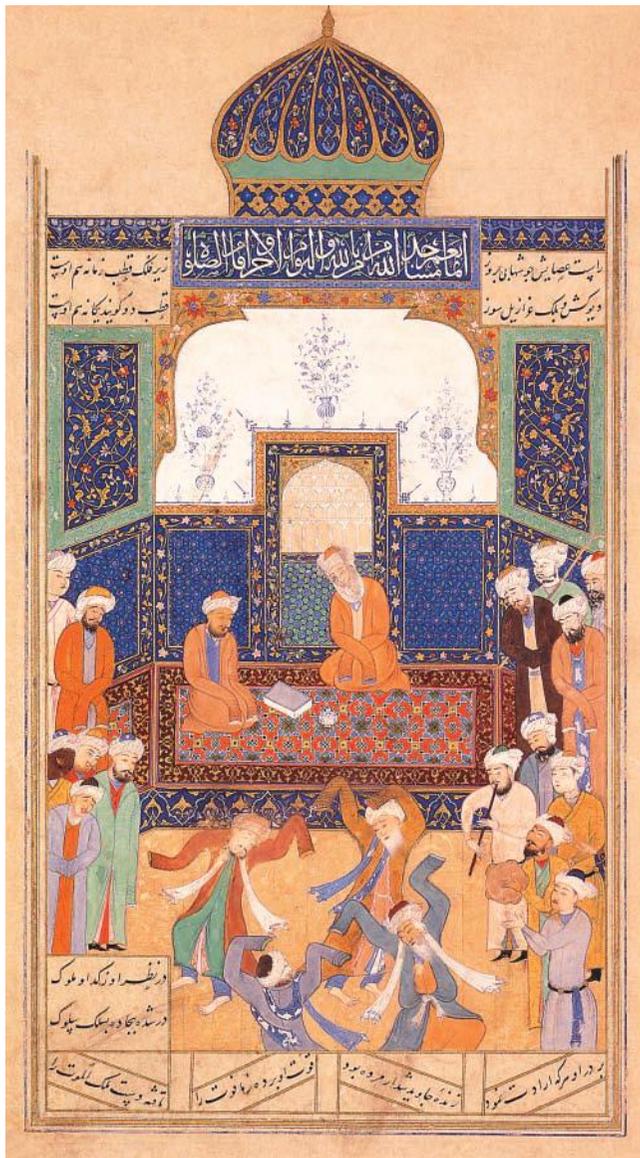
In fact, only three references can be mentioned. Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi (12th century) relates that when Abu Nasr Arraq, the famous mathematician and nephew of the Khwarazmshah Abu al-Abbas Mamun, visited Mahmud of Ghazni in the early 11th century, the latter ordered him to paint a



Sufis Performing Sama before Shaykh
Nizam al-Din Awliya

Illustration from Amir Khusraw Dihlavi's masterpiece
Khamsa (literally "collection of five")
1485
25.3 x 16.7 cm
The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin







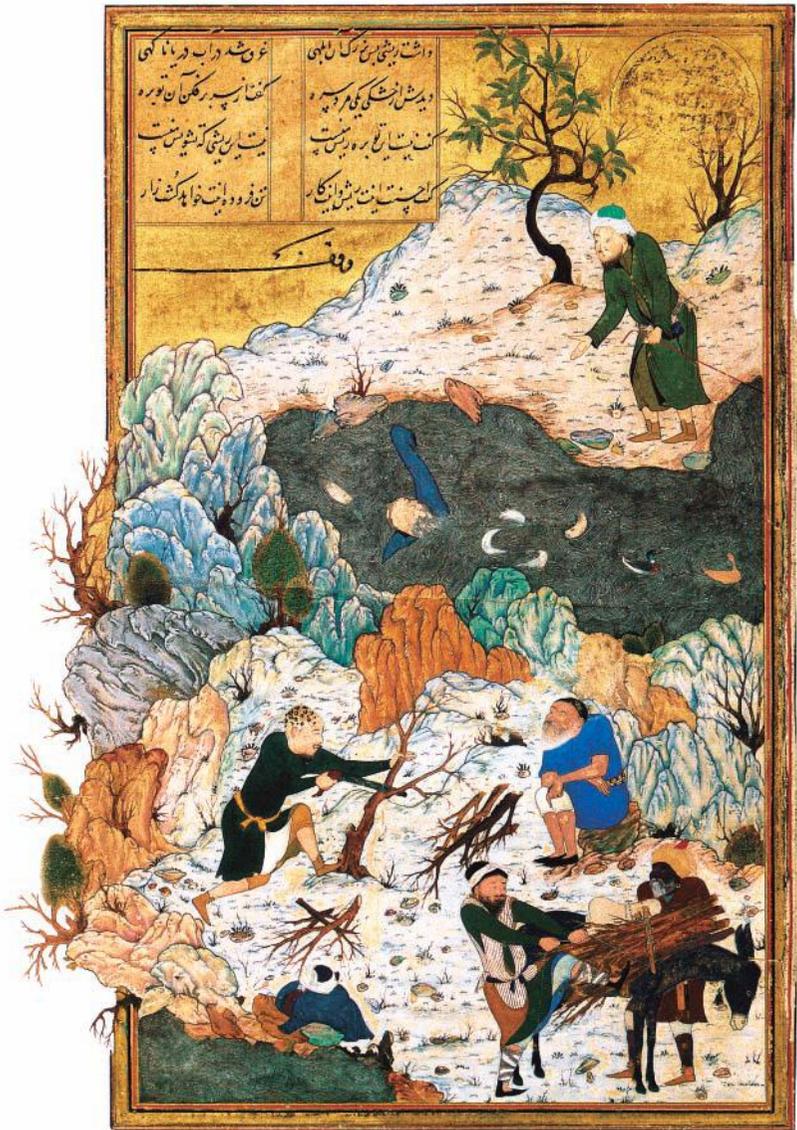
portrait of the renowned scientist Abu-All ibn Sina, who not long previously had refused to work at the court of Mahmud and fled to Iraq. Mahmud wanted the portrait to be duplicated in order to send it to various provinces to identify the runaway. This reference is probably pure legend, and if it



An Arrogant Clerk Engulfed under the Weight of His Own Beard

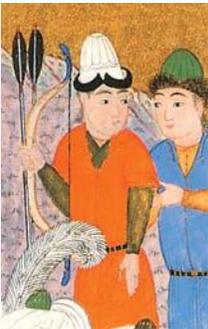
Illustration by Bizhad
1487-1488

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York





is not, then the story may be of more interest to the history of criminology than that of the Iranian miniature! More reliably, al-Rawandi relates that in 1184 he copied a collection of various poets' works in which the artist (*naqqash*), Jamal-i Isfahani, had included the portraits of these poets.



Fariburz Comes before Kay Khusraw

Illustration from Firdawsi's masterpiece

Shahnama (The Book of Kings)

1494

24.4 x 16.2 cm

The British Museum, London

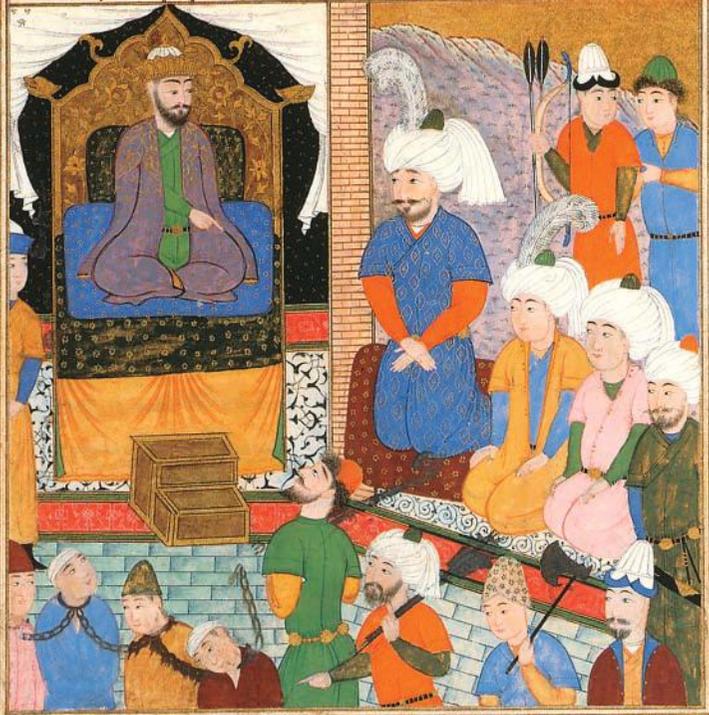
که دانت کاین چاره کرد و پند
 از آن ناداران برخواستن بجای
 یکی پیشه دیدند و آستند و
 به بنجشده و یکدیگر بر سباده
 فرستادند و امر کشوری
 بچو کشت از آن داستان روز
 کس آمد بر سباده ایران سباده
 پذیره شد آن شاه و کدداور

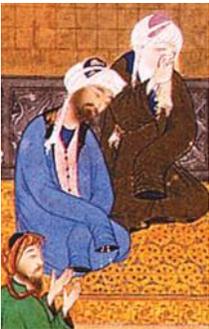
سباده ارد از چنین مطالب شود
 با بر آید و آدمی گنت و کوی
 سیه شد ز سنگ بر داشت بود
 بنجید بکشتن از آن جایگاه
 زمر ناداری و بر سردی

من اورا چنان ست پیش کنم
 دو منزل رفتند از آن دو کاه
 سران خدیگان از در شاه بود
 همی بود بار امشای بدست
 بسی های و چیز و جستن شاه

نشش تا که در سیاهوش گتم
 که او گشتند هم در کوی سباده
 فرستادند از دست کوتاه بود
 یکی شاه و در خرم می خفته برست
 بر دنده ز کبک آن تنزایار
 رز دستش سپید و جرج بلست
 که آمد و پیر ز کافیر کا و پیر سپاه
 سیوان و دیلمان و آن شکنان

رسیدن فرینرز در کجسره





Finally, one source reports that during the siege of Merv by the Mongols in 1220, a list of artists and craftsmen of the city was compiled at the command of the captors. Naturally, it would be difficult to maintain that the term *naqqash* in this text includes miniaturists. Earlier accounts are just as sparse and imprecise.

Funeral Procession for Layla's Dead Husband

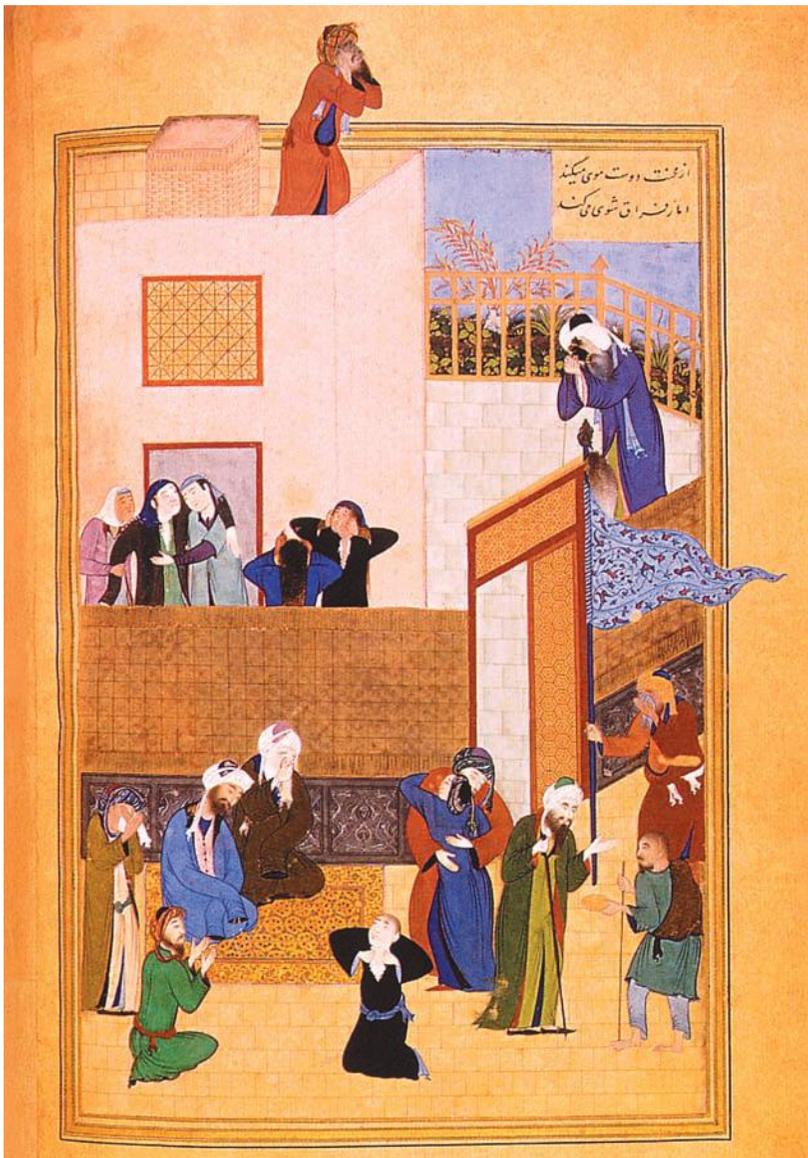
Illustration attributed to Bihzad from Nizami's masterpiece

Khamsa (literally "collection of five")

1494

18 x 9.5 cm

The British Library, London



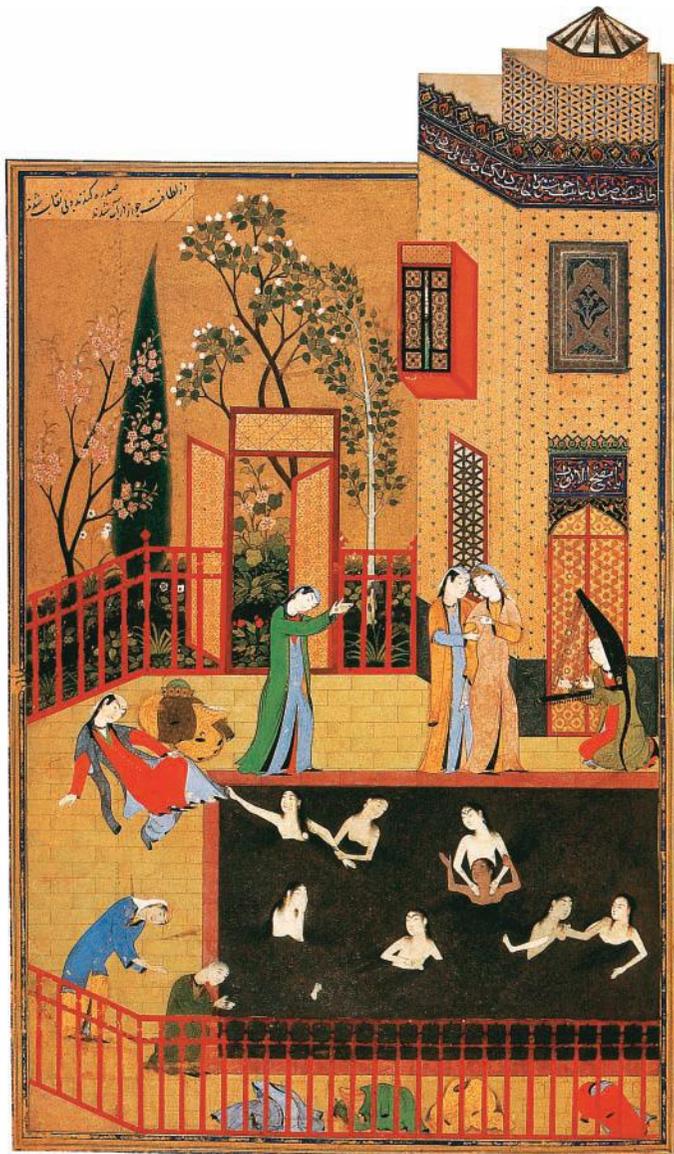


There are the accounts of the “official portraits” of the Sassanid rulers in the book of Sassanian history kept at Estakhr (Fars province) during the early 10th century and there is the information that the collection of fables, *Kalila wa Dimna*, translated in the 8th century from Middle Persian into Arabic, had been illustrated by Chinese artists.



A Mature Man Watches Young Girls Bathing

Artist and source unknown
1494-1495
The British Library, London





Only this last report seems to be direct evidence of miniatures decorating a manuscript, but this example involves an Arab manuscript and Chinese artists. The reference is evidently credible, since it is known that Chinese artists, among other craftsmen, were captured by Arabs at the battle of Talas and taken to the Caliphate.



Recovery of Malikha's Body by the Holy Man Bishr

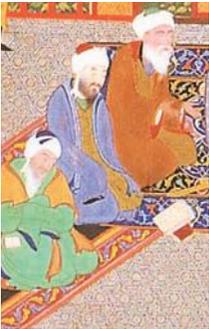
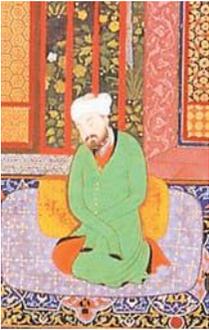
Artist and source unknown
1494-1495
The British Library, London





From Chinese sources we even know the names of two of them – in the end they managed to return to their native land. All other reports speak not of early Iranian manuscript illumination but of portrait painting or scientific illustration.

The portrait miniature as a genre had already established itself in the Sassanian



Alexander the Great and the Seven Sages

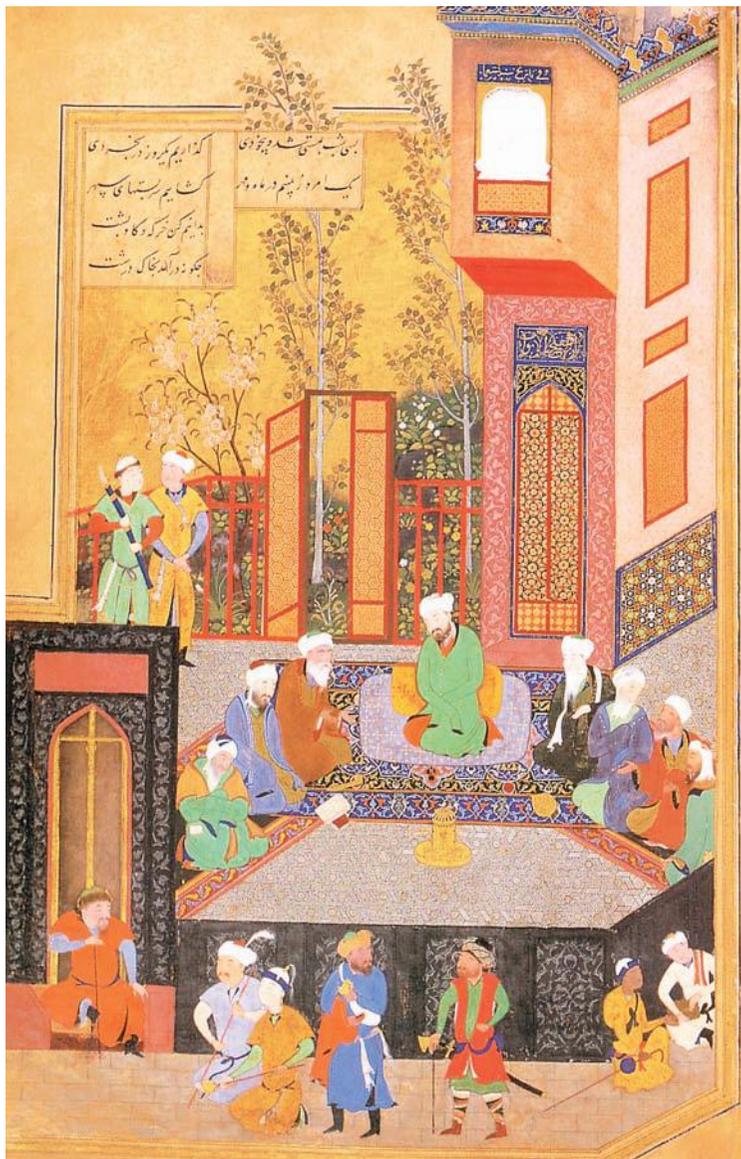
Illustration attributed to Bihzad from Nizami's masterpiece

Khamsa (literally “collection of five”)

1494-1495

24.1 x 16.8 cm

The British Library, London





period (224-651 AD), and developed, even flourished, in Iranian painting during the following centuries. The facts available at present attest that fresco painting existed on Iranian territory in the 10th to 12th centuries, and that it was above all widespread in the north-east and beyond the borders of Iran;

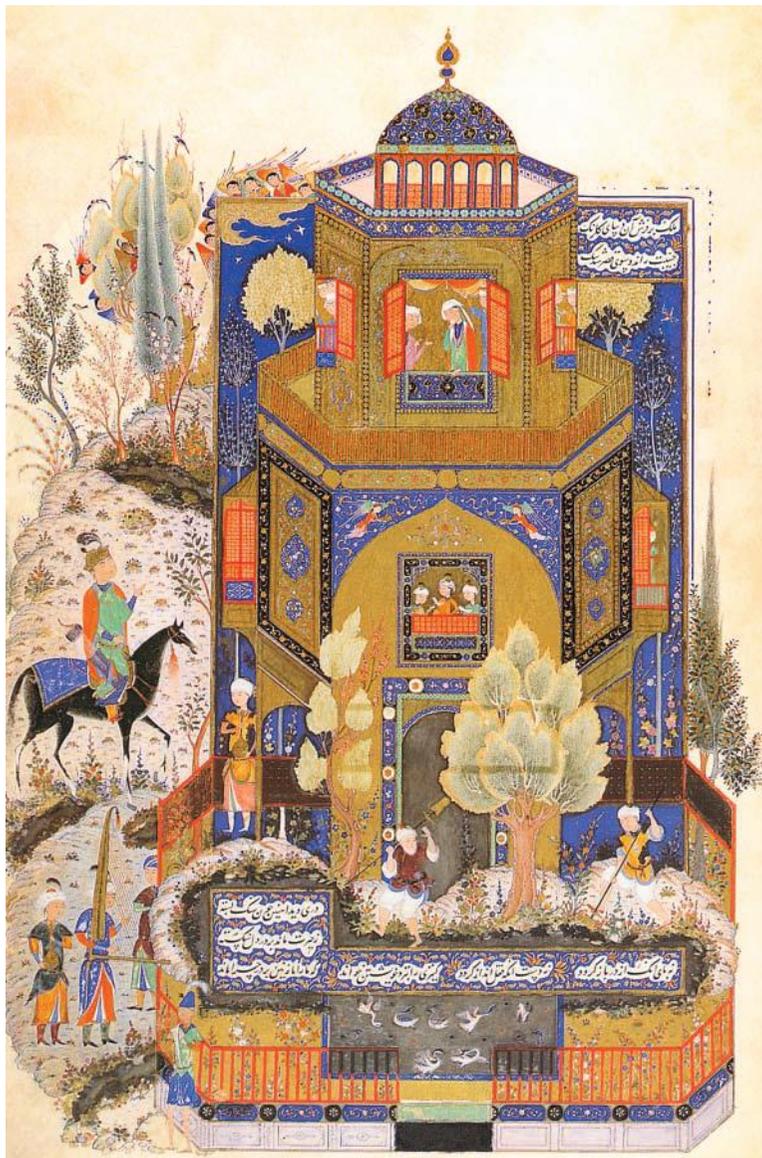
Khusraw at Shirin's palace

Illustration from Nizami's masterpiece *Khamsa*
(literally "collection of five")

Late 15th century

29 x 19 cm

Keir Collection, London





we also know that portrait painting has existed in Iran since the Sassanian period, and that there are a number of illustrations of literary and epic subjects among works of applied art, even cycles of such illustrations. Finally, the very earliest manuscript miniatures in Persian works that are known to us (*Varqah and*

Alexander the Great Fighting Against Darius

Illustration from a work of Mir Ali Shir Nawai
16th century
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

آوارش گشا خسرو دژگون
 چه باق تو کلاکتی گلایس تمام
 سستی غلین آگه خود دیدار پس
 ملک سیرت آسب پرست ایله
 انی ندم می شیر در آن چمان

غایت قلیب پرودی نپن چون
 لار دین کیم اول بلا شیر ایدی کلام
 کرب کرگت تیز چوره اندکی پس
 ساپ سبیل دینمیز دست اول
 آتین انجن انی شیران چمان
 تو کاکتاج دغا چاسی باق قریتر

بولور کیم پاسه روان لاکای
 روان بولدی سیرانده قیل شی
 انی غنیلیدین کیم شزار ایدر لب
 حایل دانی پسته سجاوه کرک
 چه سندان طرقتین دایله دی
 اگکا دانی باق بولوب ترن خیز

یکایکت بارین استمان لاکای
 تو تن دیکت غلطا اوست کیم سرتی
 بلا ایدرین ک او تی جانقب
 قول ایچسره سناک کلب نادر دیک
 تور رب خسرو غنپ دایله دی

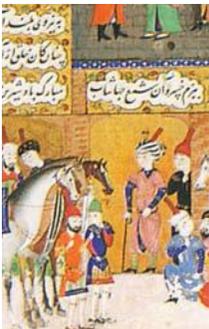
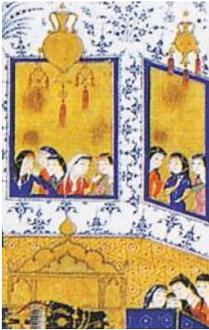


هری سپر کایه ایدر ایه رشتی لار
 هم خسرو چ باق ایدی شاپت

بسی سپر هرین قاپکشتی قلد
 سان پر لور کسیدر کچکشت

اوج او ز انیشش آون لوب کره
 سیراق سالدی اندکی خیز چمن

او توب کیم شان لوبی کورما یزده
 سندان دوقونب دیدی آفرین

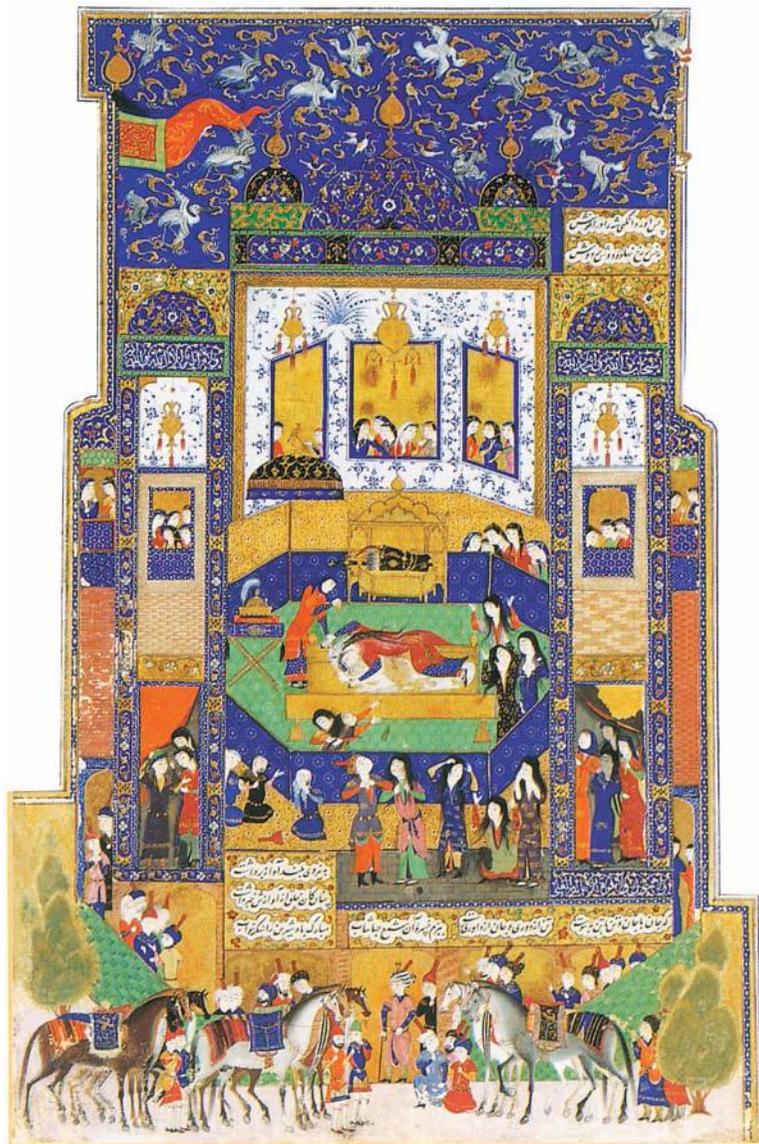


Gulshah and the Shiraz *Shahnameh*) bear witness to the influence of fresco paintings and the decoration of ceramics. One can assume that the illustrative, narrative quality, which had already been present for a long time in Persian art – in wall-paintings, metalwork, stucco and textiles – became

Shirin's Suicide

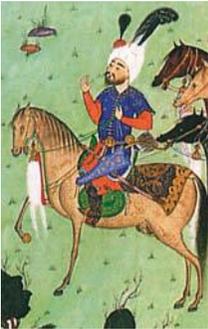
Illustration from Nizami's masterpiece *Khamsa*
(literally "collection of five")
c. 1505

Gouache and gold on paper, 29.5 x 19 cm
Keir Collection, London





widespread during the 11th and 12th centuries in ceramics as well (on vessels and lustre tiles, often forming what were, in essence, almost wall-paintings); only afterwards did those same artists, or at any rate artists with the same technical training, also create Iranian manuscript illustrations.



Sam Bringing His Son Zal Back from Mount Alburz

Illustration, attributed to sultan Muhammad or one of his pupils, from Firdawsī's masterpiece *Shahname* (*The Book of Kings*)
c. 1522-1525

Gouache, gold and silver on paper, 28.2 x 18.5 cm
Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin

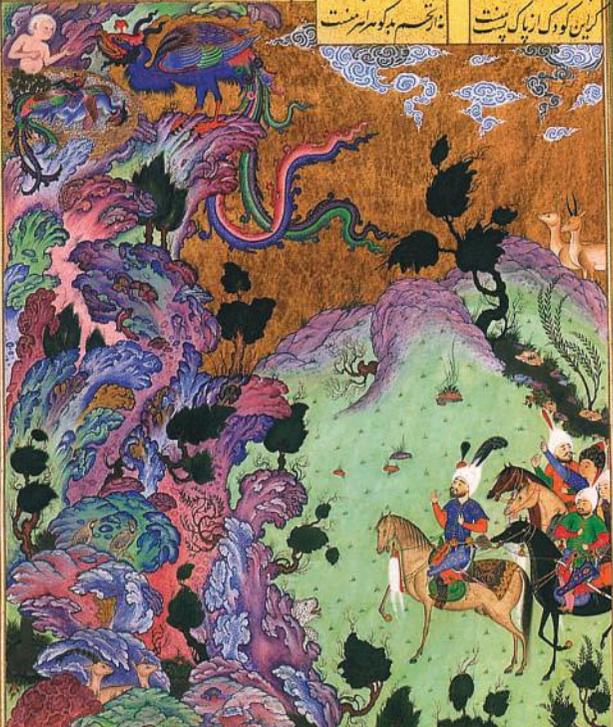


و قلم و برتران برتر است
 ز ره شمعان و ز جویش مذ
 میزان کپست را تو کن ای پسر

بدانت کو و او کرد او را
 کمی گفت کای بتر از این کای
 این برتر شدن بنده را میسر

بد پیش کی کشت کرد کجایم
 دو دو دام را بر جان یک کای
 ز ترس حق جان پار کند ام
 یا ز ترس هم که کوسر است

پیشته چو یب کردار سام
 بر بردن جنت و کی بود
 پیوستش بر تو پیرا کایم
 کین کو و کای این کای است



مزاج بزود پورا گفت در راه
 شناسیش هملاک بدتر است

بر حمت برافسند از این نین
 جواد او را این از با گفتند



This is all the more likely since, as scholars point out, one characteristic of Persian artistic perception is an extremely close connection between word and object, literature and fine art. As a rule, comparisons run both ways: life is breathed into objects, and human attributes and feelings are ascribed to them,

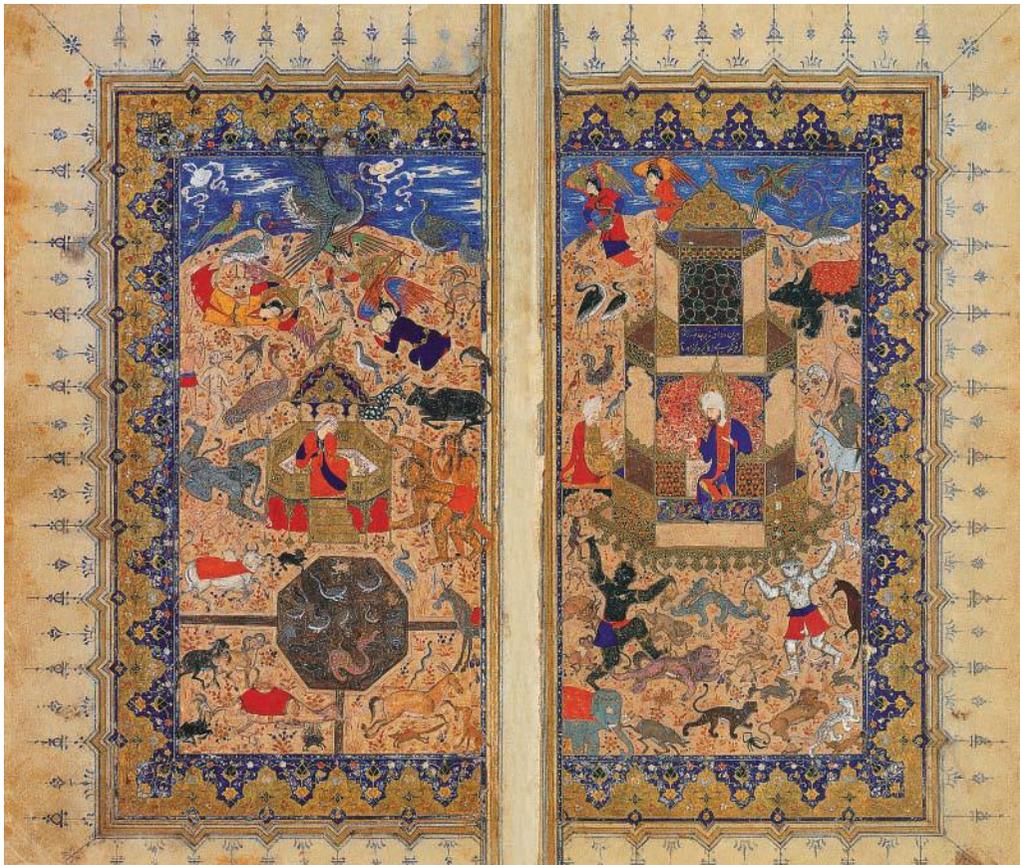
Solomon and Bilqis

Illustration from Nizami's masterpiece *Khamsa*
(literally "collection of five")

1529

29.7 x 18 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin





while human experiences and states of mind easily find a precise symbol among objects in the immediate environment.

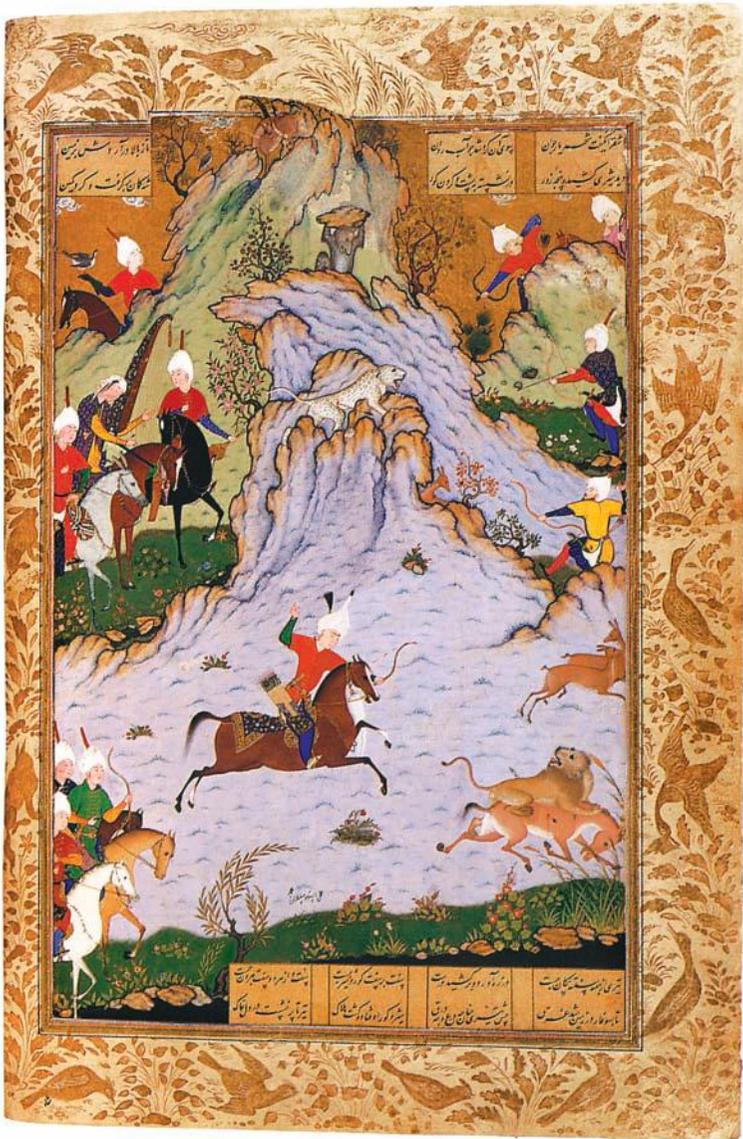
Thus, the actual circumstances of reading poetry take on another sense: the participants of the scene are no longer surrounded by everyday objects, but by

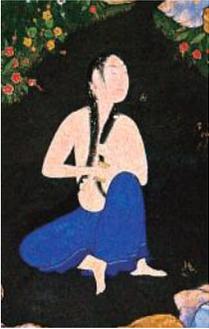


Bahram Hunting a Lion

Illustration, attributed to sultan Muhammad,
from Nizami's masterpiece *Khamsa* (literally "collection of five")
1539-1543

Gouache, gold and silver on paper, 36.5 x 25.1 cm
The British Library, London





object-symbols with all their various, and usually human, characteristics. A bowl in the hands of those listening to verse is no longer a simple bowl but a metaphor brought to life: the open tulips of wine bowls are hearts filled with blood, the lips of the cup are the lips of a beloved, the bowl itself is the bowl of the

Prince Khusraw Watches Queen Shirin Bathing

Artist and source unknown
1539-1543

The British Library, London



ایسکندر در راه کاسپین
پادشاهان را در پیش خود
پادشاهان را در پیش خود
پادشاهان را در پیش خود

پادشاهان را در پیش خود
پادشاهان را در پیش خود

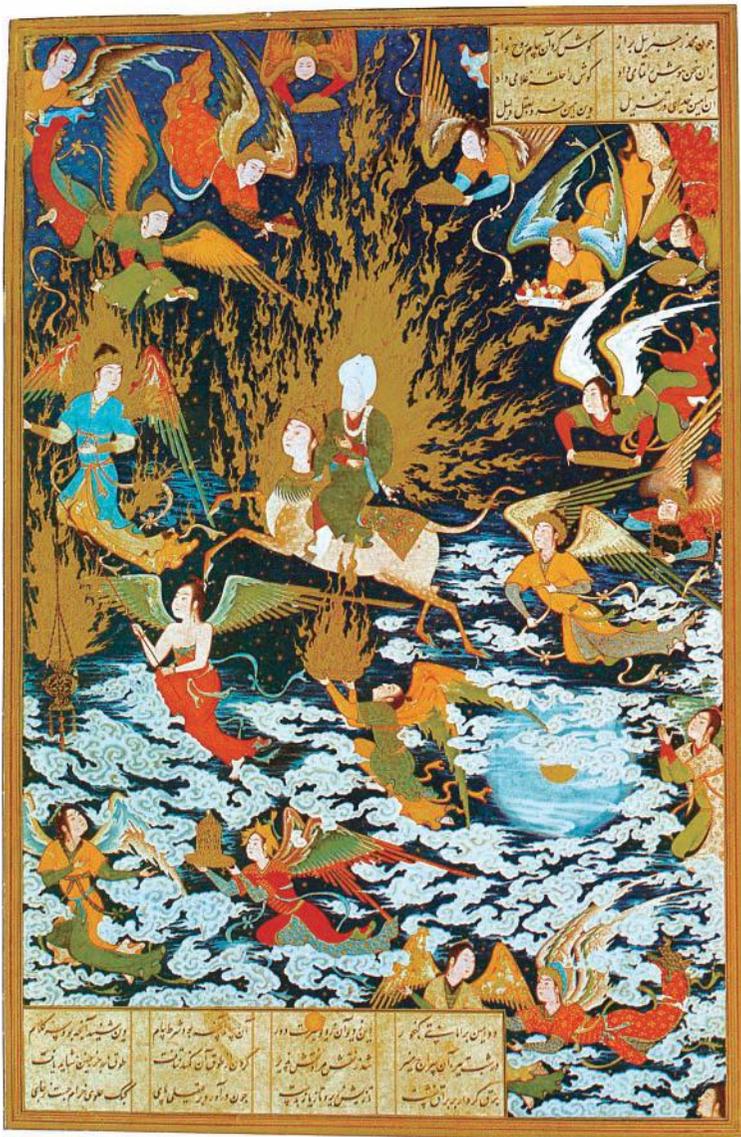


heavens tilted above the world, and the turning of a round bowl repeats the whirling of the wheel of fate. It is interesting to cite the viewpoint of scholars studying comparatively early miniatures of the so-called Shiraz school (the miniatures in the *Shahnama* of 1333).

Isra or Muhammad's Night Journey

Artist and source unknown
1539-1543

The British Library, London





These miniatures differ fundamentally in their draughtsmanship from what we are generally accustomed to seeing in later Persian miniatures (15th-17th century). What one might call a painterly basis dominates here. In terms of technique, these miniatures are on the one hand connected to fresco

Sultan Sanjar and the Old Woman

Illustration attributed to sultan Muhammad
from Nizami's masterpiece *Khamsa* (literally "collection of five")
1539-1543

36.5 x 25.1 cm

The British Library, London



۱۸

مرد درین پیشانی او کز
پشت زود او این کز گرفت
خانم دای خود با او کز
پرنی را پستی کز گرفت

کای یک آرم کوم بودم
روز در پید این کوم بودم



painting and on the other – and this is of vital importance – to paintings on ceramics of the so-called Rey type, in which peculiarities of brushstroke and contour are explained by technical demands, that is, the need to paint the object rapidly. Of course, it is difficult to imagine a direct link between wall-painting

The Flight of the Tortoise

Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Tuhfat al-abrar (The Gift of the Free)

1548

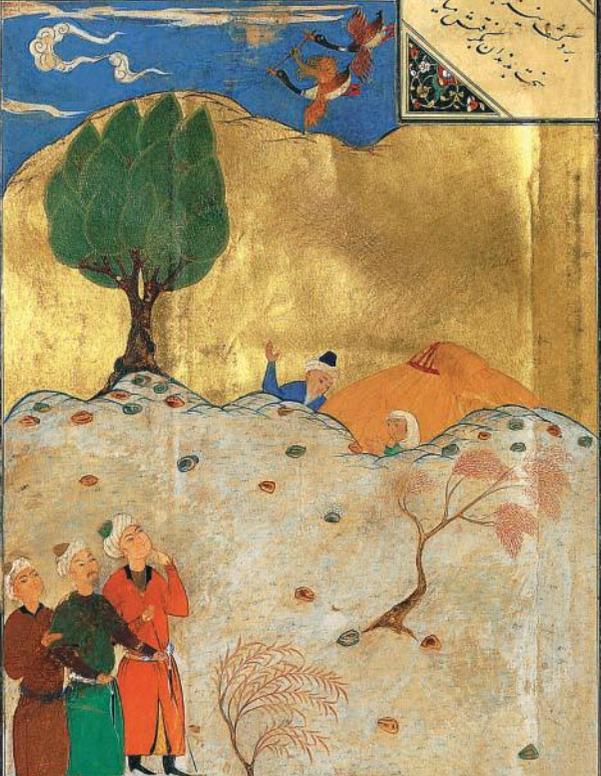
28.2 x 18.2 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

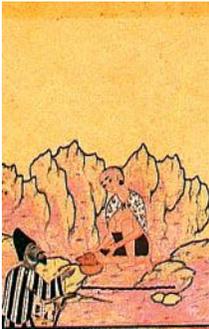
مخ سوگشت طبل بلان
بر پسر جی که افتادشان

میل پشنگرد به پسر بلان
چون سوی خشکی سرفاقدشان

بر سر گشت سینه بانجان و بان
تخت بزرگ بر تختش بیان



بایک بار از موکای شایسته
یک شایسته بود کار گزینت



and designs on metal and ceramics that does not take book illustration into account. It is, of course, far easier to consider that early illustrated manuscripts have simply not survived to the present day. But all the facts cited above tell us that we have no right to insist categorically that Iranian illuminated manuscripts existed before the mid-13th century.

Alexander at the Ka'ba

Illustration from Firdawsi's masterpiece

Shahnama (The Book of Kings)

Mid-16th century

36 x 21.5 cm

Khalili Collection





How, in actual fact, could absolutely all of the illuminated manuscripts have disappeared? Surely they would have been carefully preserved in court libraries. If they were all destroyed, why have a number of Arabic manuscripts with illustrations remained, produced in the middle of the Abbasid Caliphate?

Ali Fighting to Take the Fortress of Qamus

Illustration from the masterpiece

Falnama (Book of Divinations)

1550-1560

59.7 x 45.4 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin





The total silence of early Persian sources on the subject of manuscript illumination is also strange. How many stories they tell of wall-painting! There are the anecdotes about Attar whose father, a merchant of perfumes (a fairly wealthy one), out of loyalty ordered a portrait of Mahmud of Ghazni to be set in

Alexander the Great Oversees the Building of the Wall

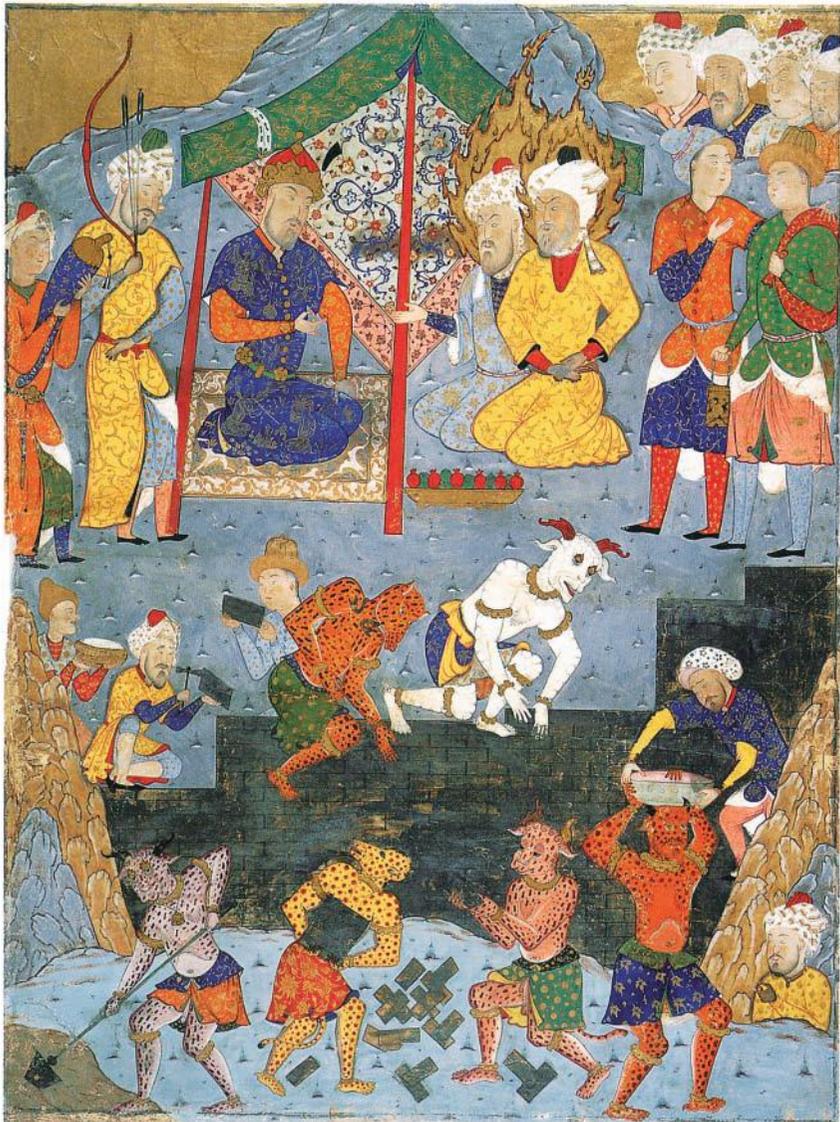
Illustration from the masterpiece

Falnama (Book of Divinations)

1550-1560

59.4 x 45 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin





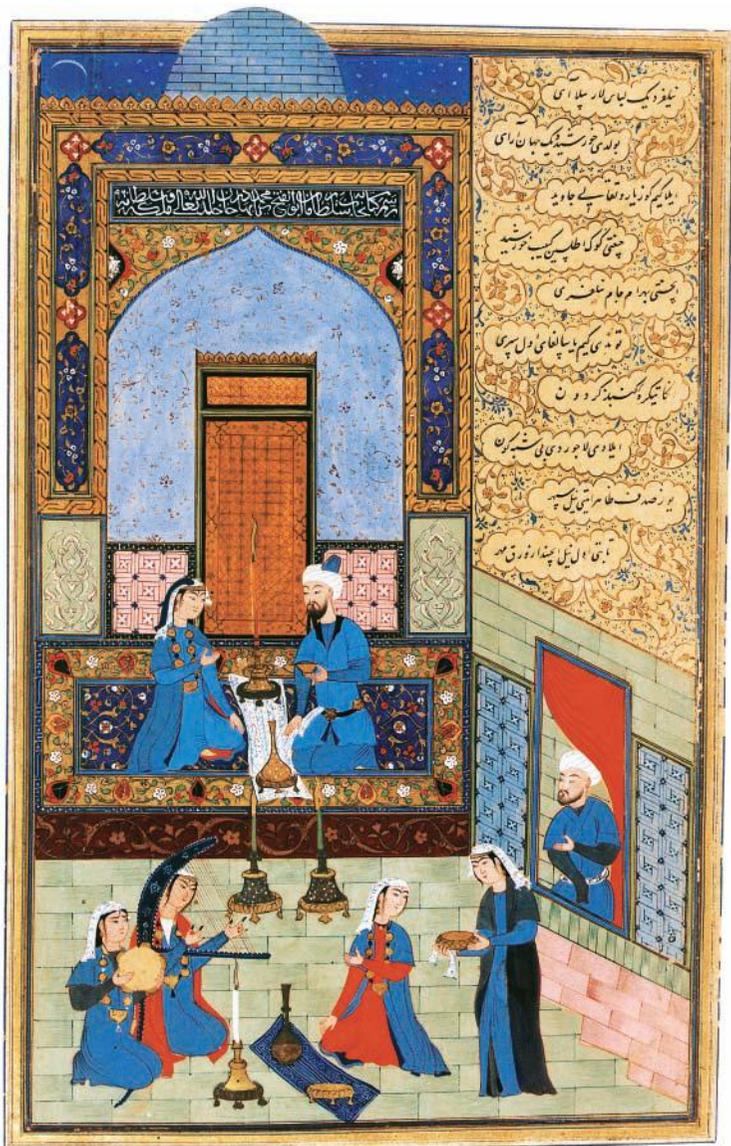
the state apartments of his house, or the story told by Baihaqi about the erotic paintings in Mas'ud's pavilion, or the famous verses of Farrukhi (although this poet greatly disliked both antiquity and pictures): "Painted at several noble places in that palace [the palace of Mahmud of Ghazni] are pictures of the King of the East [Mahmud]. At one place in

Prince Bahram Listening to the Story of the Princess of
the Blue Pavilion

Artist and source unknown

1553

Bodleian Library, Oxford



شیرازیک لیسار لاری
بدری چو رسته یک جهان رای
بماند کوزار و قاسم کس جاوید
چو سنجی کوکله طبرستان کس خورشید
چستی برام جامه شامشوری
تو بی کیم با باغی دل سپری
تا نیکو راسته بگردون
ایلاوی لاجوردی بی شمشیر
بر صند طاهرستی کس سپهر
آبی اول نعل یشار نورق کس

بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم
الحمد لله رب العالمین
والصلاة والسلام على
المرسلین
الطیبین الطاهرات
الکرامات
الاجتباء
المرسلین
الطیبین
الطاهرات
الکرامات
الاجتباء



battle with a spear in his hands, at another place – at a banquet with a goblet in his hand.” And not a single reliable reference to Persian illuminated manuscripts or Persian miniaturists surfaces before the 14th century. In the 14th century, the feudal system was at its height in Iran.

Angel

Artist and source unknown

c. 1555

18.1 x 10.2 cm

The British Museum, London



و ادبیت ترا دو چهره کمان مرد و دوست

از دو کفایت بقصد قدرت است ادبیت

هم صورت که پس ترا دار دوست

مهر است نگرد و ادبیت دار کاس ما



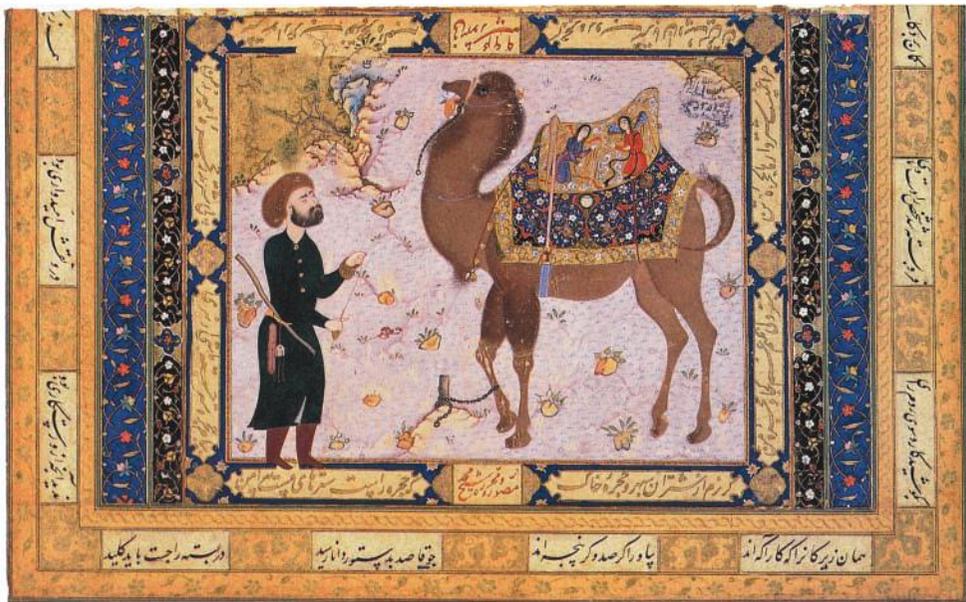
At the same time, from the middle of the century, it was the age of individual rulers each striving to create their own magnificent court, with their own poets, scholars and artists. But the “prestige” of such a ruler, which he could flaunt to his rivals and subjects, was no longer a matter of precious

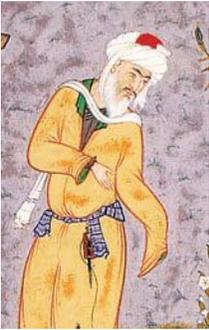


Camel and Its Keeper

Illustration signed by Shaykh-Muhammad
1556-1557

Painting mounted as an album page, 13.1 x 21.1 cm (folio)
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





vessels of gold, silver or bronze inlaid with gold and silver, expensive ceremonial dinner services made in the lustre technique or painted in enamels, or tile work decorating the halls of palaces, mosques and tombs. These rulers were both weaker and poorer than their predecessors and there had long

The Wise Old Man Chides a Foolish Youth

Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft anrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

14.6 x 13 cm (painting)

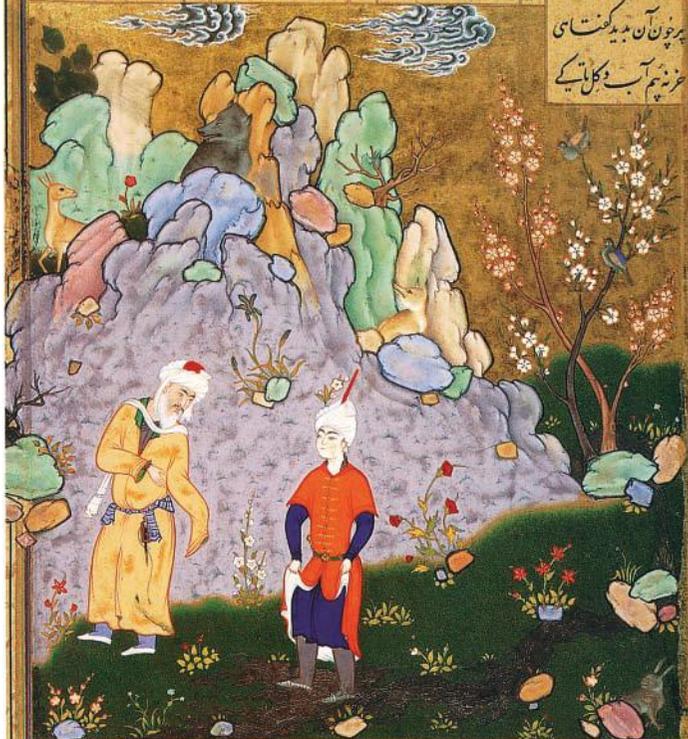
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.

پرستانه می نهاد قدم
 بر چون آن بدیگفتی
 عزیزم آب و گل استیکه

وان جوان از بی پستاد دژم

کشن سبا و اسود در آن

از گل آلود جامه پایشین



چندواری که جامه بر گل
 یکت چون دل لغبت لایه
 مرد عارف که در وفا خرد
 بیکار پیش و پس نه کرد
 نامضی فالت و لولول غیب
 شده امروزه می فردو پیش

دل بک در ارمیغش دل

از گل آب جامه توانست

که شود پاکتر ز بارچینست



نیت چرخه روشنی

می کند از پر شعور و وفوت

مرفشین با بخی آن صورت

نقطه حال کشته فوایش

شغل حال پسته لپسته نازل

ذکر ماضی فکر پستتقبل



been no vast frescoes in their palaces, no stucco panels depicting the heroic exploits of their noble ancestors and no portraits of themselves. Therefore, miniature painting and calligraphy appear to have become the primary “prestigious” branches of art. Costly manuscripts of ancient narrative poems or verses written by the ruler’s court poets or by

A Depraved Man Commits Bestiality and Is
Berated by Satan

Illustration from Jami’s masterpiece *Haft awrang*
(*Seven Thrones*)
1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.



ایستاد بر این کسب و کار
شهرت بر پیشانی آید
ای کسب و کار ما بر این
شهرت بر پیشانی آید

نکته ای در کسب و کار است
و بر صد هزاره است این



historians praising his or his ancestors' grandeur and decorated with miniatures executed by court painters or simply by skilled miniaturists involved in commercial production were highly prized.

As for ceramics and metalwork, they were "democratised". Craftsmen produced these articles for the middle ranks of society, so there were no longer ceramics bearing texts



The Simple Peasant Entreats the Salesman Not to Sell His Wonderful Donkey

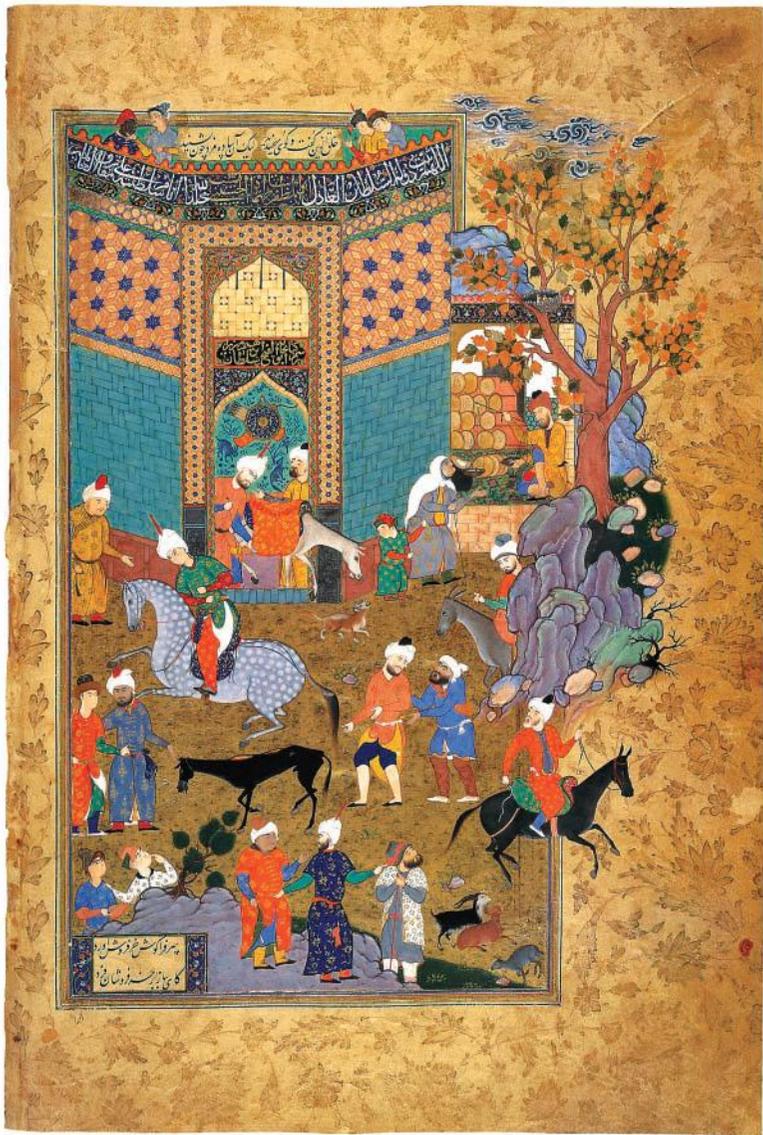
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





of great poems and decorated with pictures that were either themes from these poems or, much more frequently, pictorial equivalents of the verses; the inscriptions on metal objects, which were more durable and expensive, were popular quotations or specific catchwords – albeit from the works of great poets – and not poetic texts.

A Father Advises His Son about Love

Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft anrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

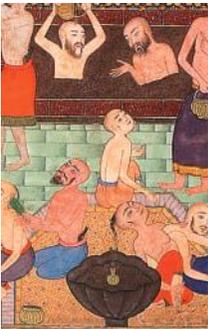
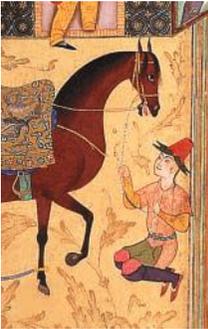
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





The social class of customers was changing and Persian miniature painting occupied the position of the most prestigious branch of art.

For many centuries, miniature painting was to be the leading genre in the Iranian fine arts. Oleg Grabar's assertion is perfectly correct: "The Rashidiyya School of painting did have a greater importance in the development of



The Dervish Picks Up His Beloved's Hair from the Hammam Floor

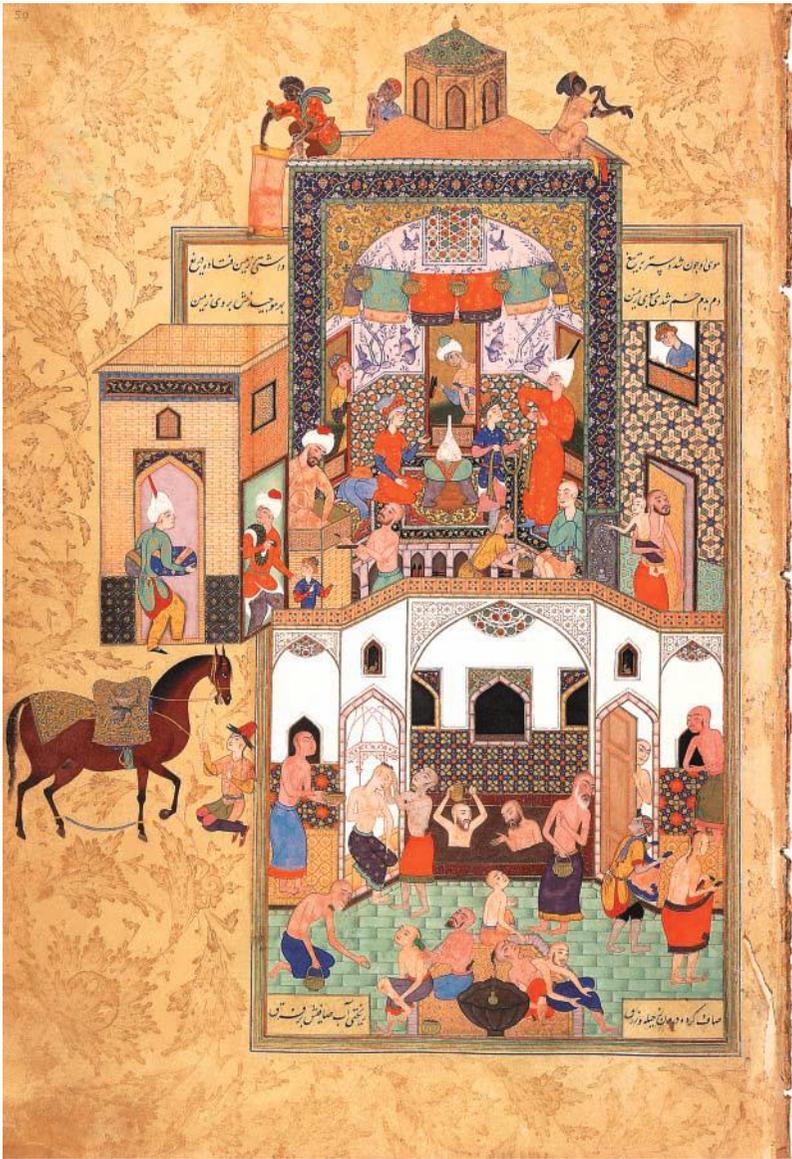
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





Persian art after the death of its founder in 1318 than the architectural style of Azerbaijan in the 13th century”.

The Shiraz School of miniature painting is represented by illuminated manuscripts from the first decade of the 14th century onwards. Eight examples are known, four of them being Firdawsí’s poem, the *Shahnama*. In the earliest copies the miniatures are executed in a flat



Bandits Attack the Caravan of Aynie and Ria

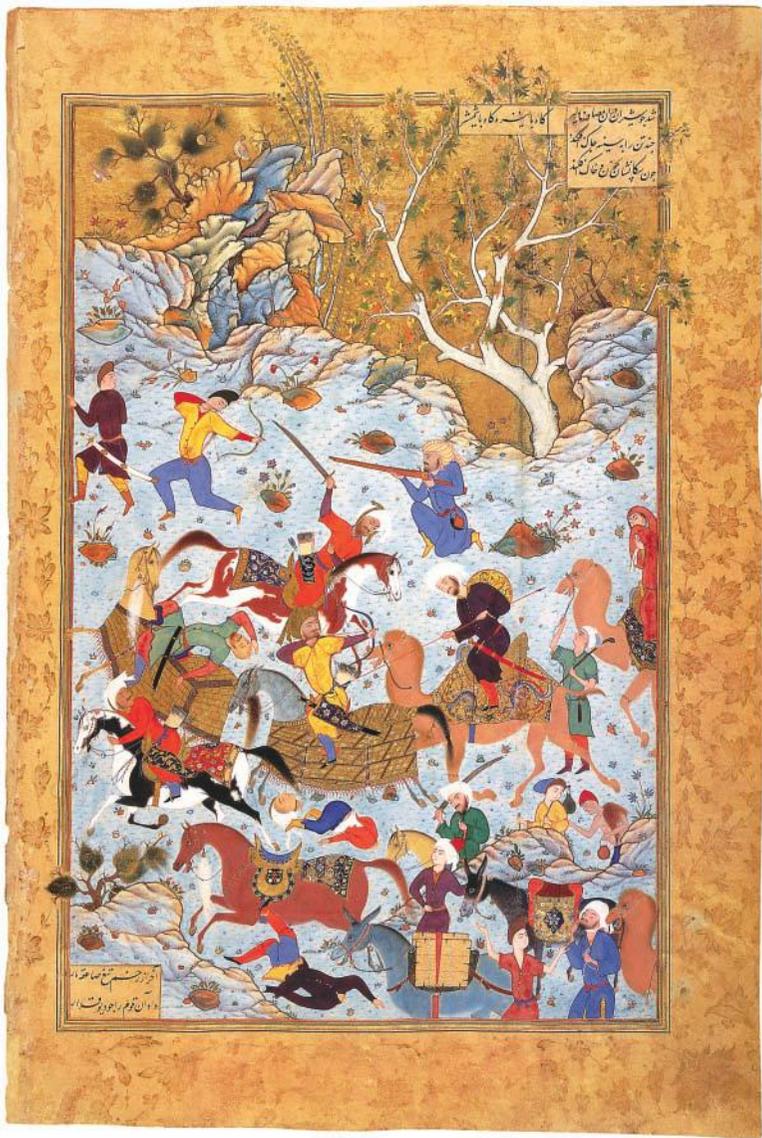
Illustration from Jami’s masterpiece

Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





style with strong affinities to wall-painting and ceramic painting.

The large number of miniatures in these early manuscripts is interesting, but it is even more important to note that many of them are simple, standard compositions, scenes of a palace reception, a battle or various sorts of garden scenes or hunts. Thus, in the manuscript of the *Shahnama* dating from 1333,



The Aziz and Zulaykha Enter the Capital of Egypt and
the Egyptians Come Out to Greet Them

Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





for example, more than thirty out of fifty-two miniatures are standard scenes of battles, hunts and “conversations”, etc. Such neutral, standard compositions have been aptly compared to the so-called *wasf* in literature. The *wasf* is obligatory in almost all genres of Persian literature; it is that part of a work which contains descriptions of nature, royal hunts and feasts, battles or, say, weapons, jewellery and carpets.

Yusuf Is Rescued from the Well

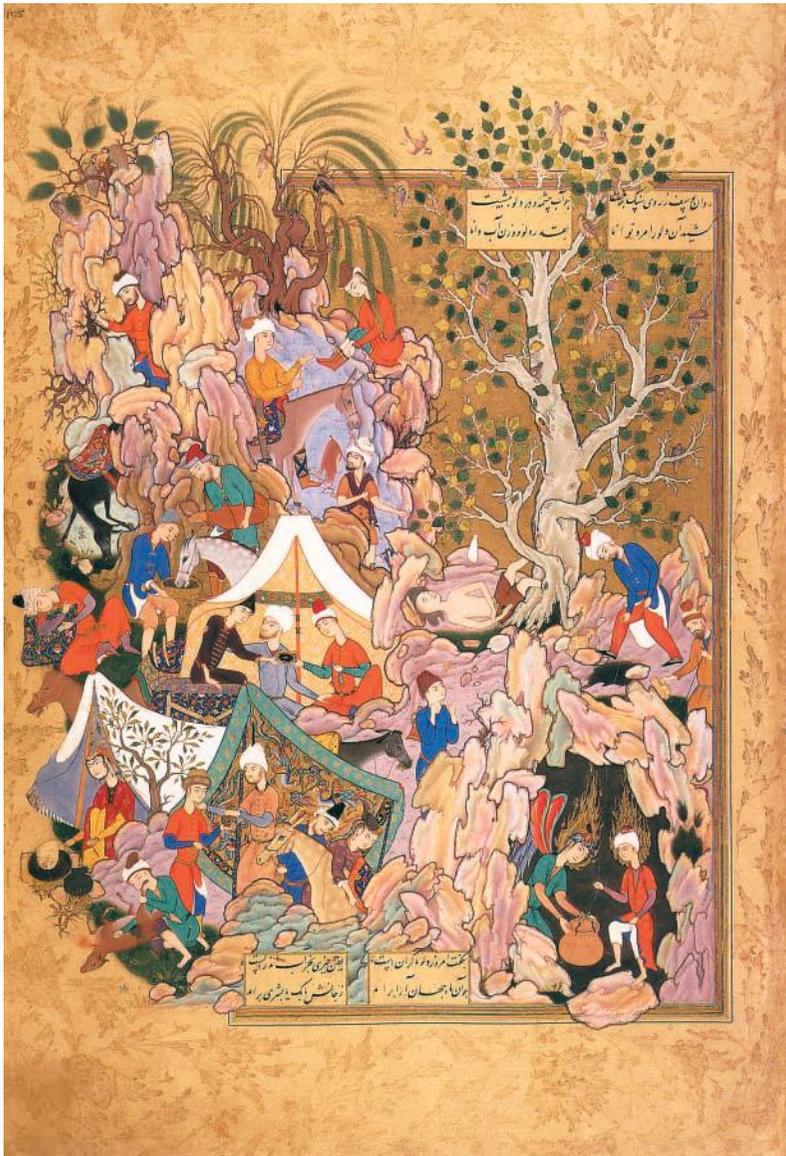
Illustration from Jami’s masterpiece

Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.



دراغ پسته در دی سبک چنگ
شیران دورامد تو آناه
براست پسته در دورامد
است در دورامد آب و آناه

نکته کرده در آن اینست
بر آن بهستان را بارام
بازنشش یک بهتری برام
بازنشش یک بهتری برام



The descriptions had no independent significance at all. They were vivid literary pictures, like decorations against whose background the action unfolded. The beauty of these decorations in literature was often arrived at through “combinative methods”: poets would from time to time interchange the same standard descriptions and motifs,

Yusuf Tends His Flocks

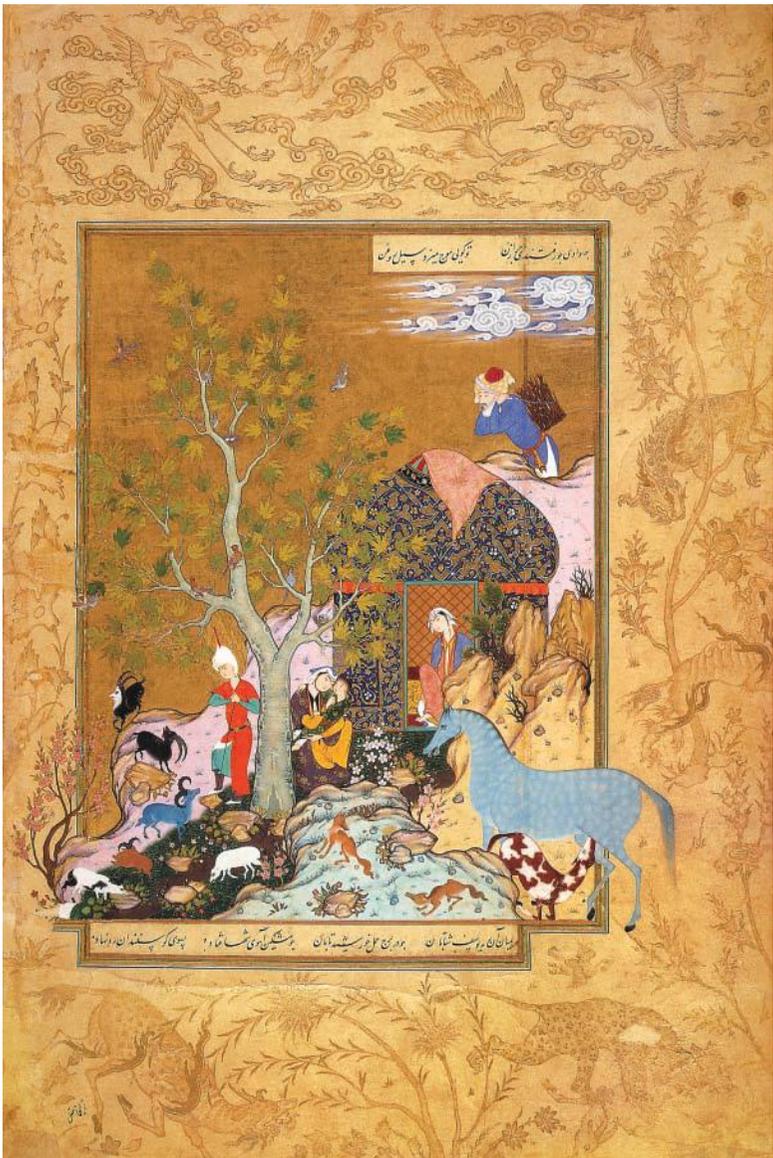
Illustration from Jami’s masterpiece

Haft anrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





complicating the images more and more and illuminating them in a clever play of words. Early miniatures are extremely exact illustrations of the text. Like those in western medieval manuscripts, they are based on a standard subject into which some significant concrete detail from the story they illustrate has been introduced.



Yusuf Preaches to Zulaykha's Maidens in Her Garden

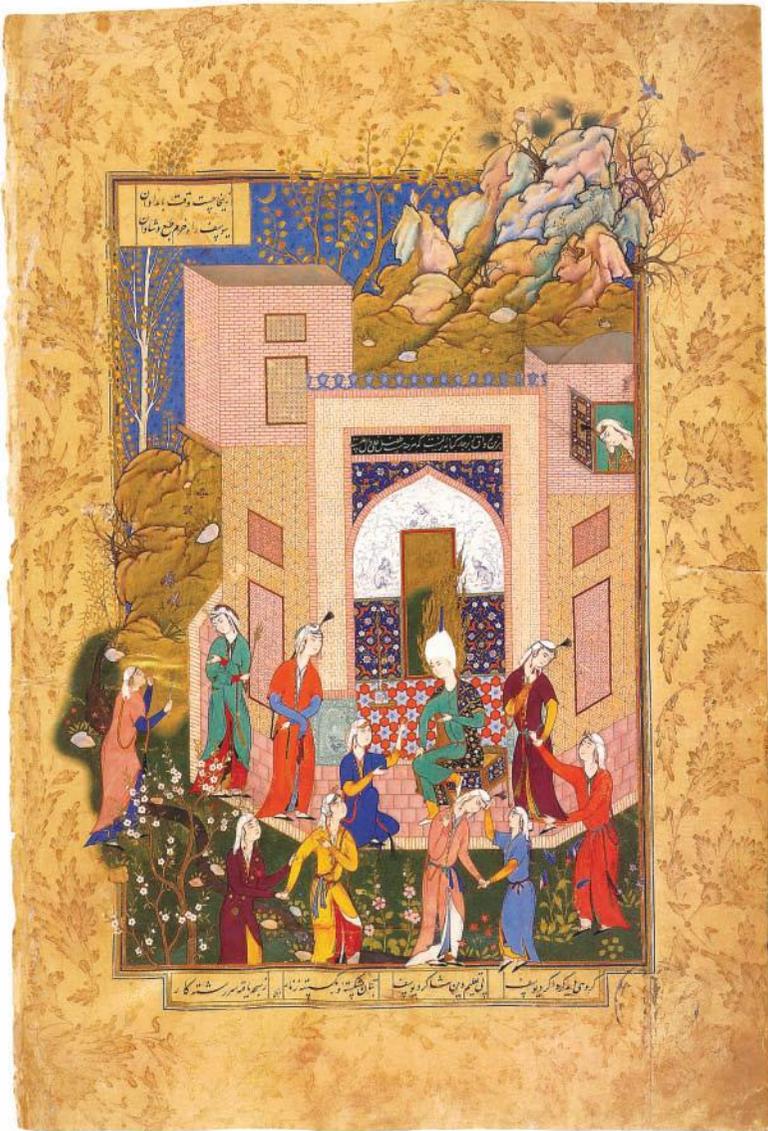
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft anrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





Therefore, when depicting Zahhak, the artist reproduced the standard scene of a king on a throne but added snakes growing from the king's shoulders. This manner of illustration develops from one manuscript to another and gradually establishes its own standards with subjects that were, initially, original.



The Infant Witness Testifies to Yusuf's Innocence

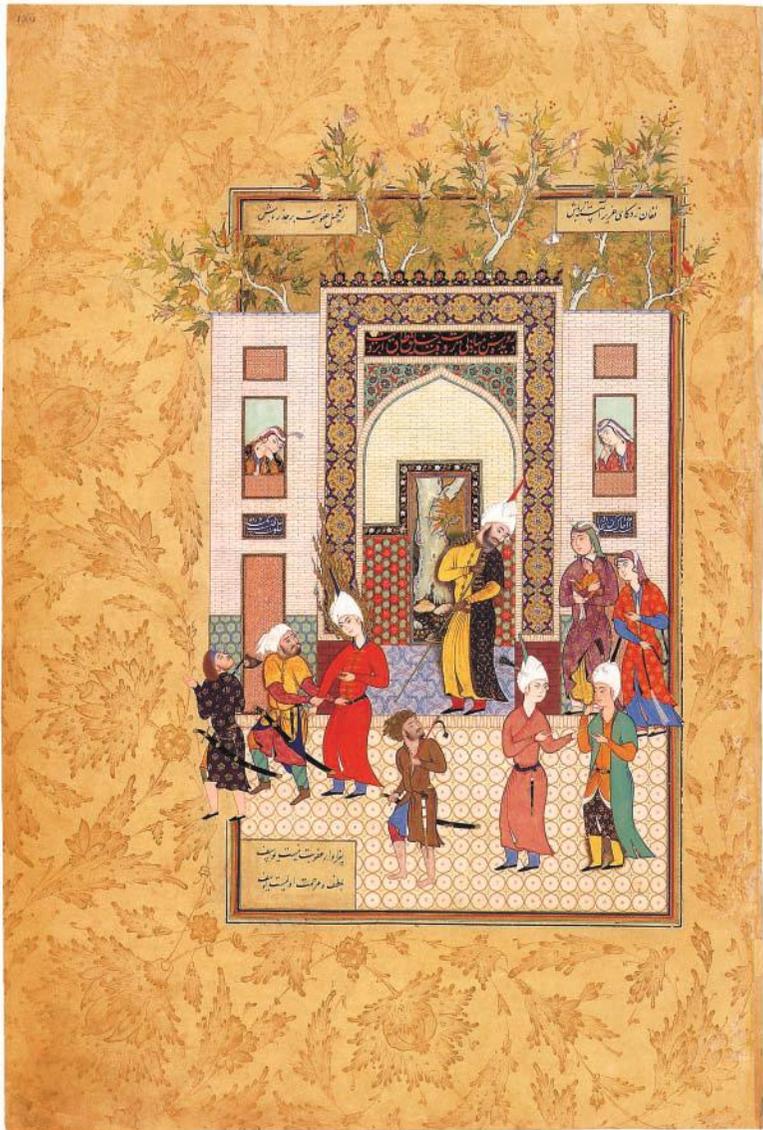
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft anrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.



تقی میرزا است بر عهد امیر

نمان دهگان امیر است پیش

پژار در محبت است و صفت
خط در محبت است و صفت



The miniaturist proclaims his identity in the character of the painting – in the colour scheme and the attention to intricate detail. Within this framework a great artist could rival a great poet. But all these features were to emerge later. To return to the Shiraz School in its first phase, it should be observed that these miniatures are marked by imperfection, coarseness and standardisation.

Yusuf Gives a Royal Banquet in Honour of His Marriage

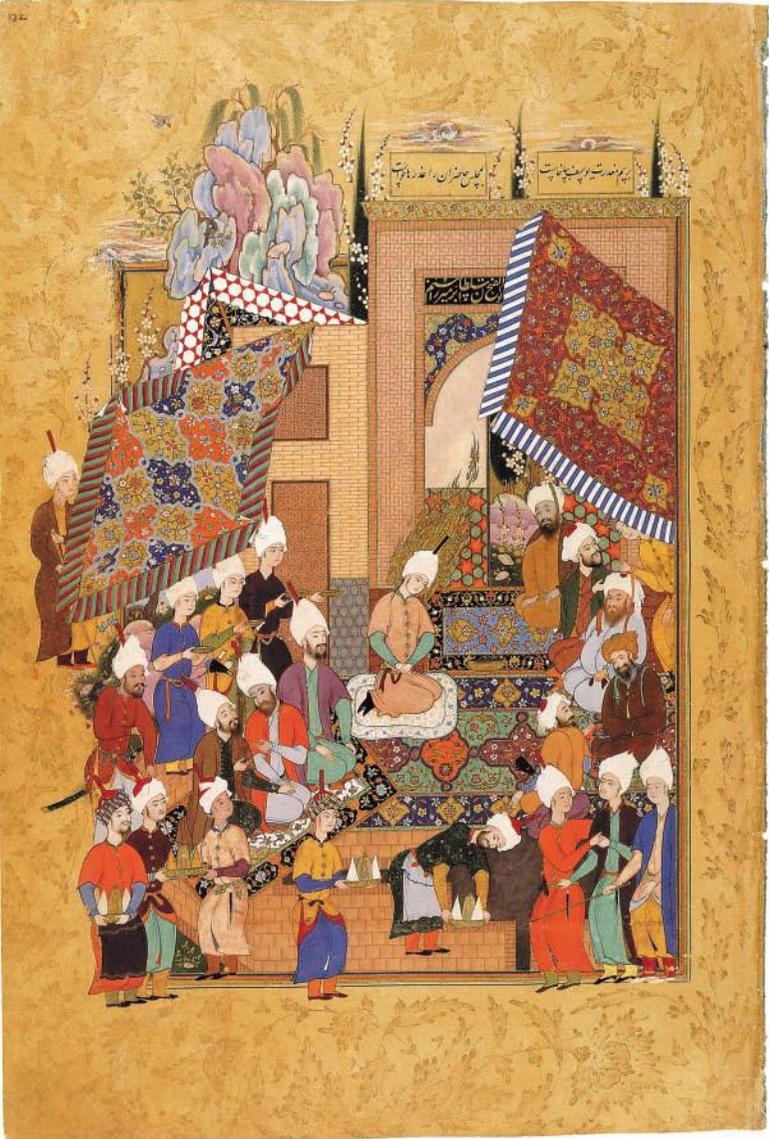
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





In artistic terms, they are not actually very interesting works. They are, so to speak, stereotypical miniatures. Yet at the same period in Tabriz, the masterpiece of Iranian illumination was produced, the Demotte *Shahnama*, which we have already mentioned. At that time the Mongol dynasty of the Ilkhans, or Hulaguids, ruled in Tabriz.



The Gnostic Has a Vision of Angels Carrying Trays of
Light to the Poet Sa'di

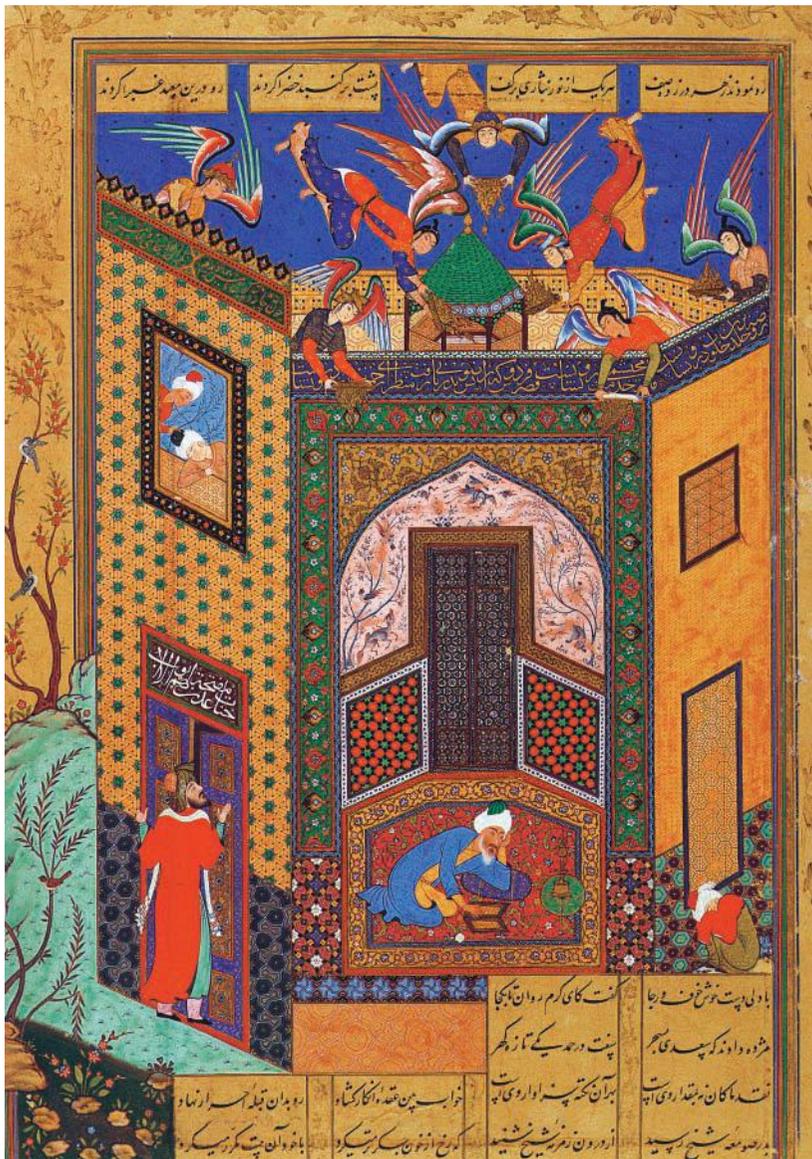
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.



دو دین میهد بر کار آمد
 پشت برکت بنمنا کردند
 مرکب از نویناری رنگ
 را نمودند بر سر ز دولت

باز در آن پست که بر زمین
 در آن پست که بر زمین

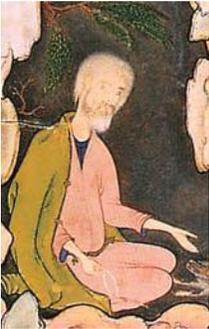
باز در آن پست که بر زمین
 در آن پست که بر زمین

با دلی پست خوش فتنه با
 مژده دادند که پست می
 نت در مکانی بنقلد او می پست
 در صنوبر میخ شیب
 گشت کای کم روان کجا
 پست در هیچی که تا ز کمر
 بر آن کتخ پسته اواری پست
 از درون زعفران شیب

باز در آن پست که بر زمین
 در آن پست که بر زمین



These were the descendants of Hulagu, the grandson of Genghis Khan. One of them, Ghazan Khan (1295-1304), in an attempt to rescue the country from the cruel devastation that had been a consequence of Mongol invasion and rule, announced a series of important official reforms that were put into practice by his vizier, Rashid al-Din.

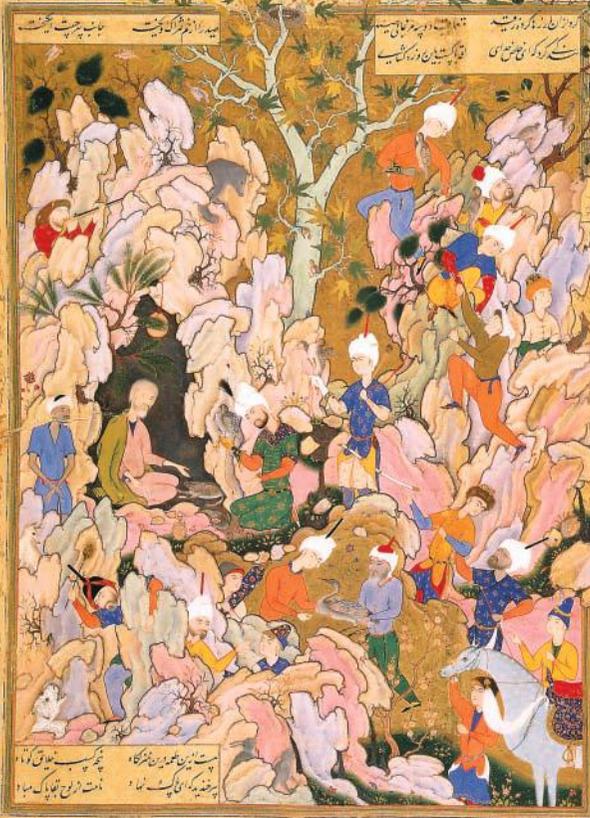


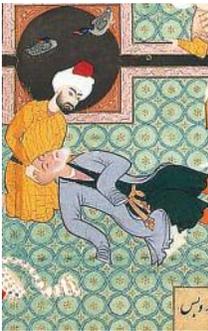
The Pir Rejects the Ducks Brought as
Presents by the Murid

Illustration from Jami's masterpiece
Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)
1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





Rashid al-Din was an advocate of strong power and a centralised political system – ideas which, as it happened, were stubbornly opposed by the Mongol nomadic military aristocracy. In the consolidation of centralised power, Rashid al-Din was helped by the propagation of his own concept of an “Iranian empire of the Ilkhanates”.

The Fickle Old Lover Is Knocked Off the Rooftop

Illustration from Jami’s masterpiece

Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





He called the Mongol khan the refuge of the Caliphate, an Iranian Khosrau and successor to the Kayanid kingdom.

Rashid al-Din's chief work, *Jami al-tawarikh* (*Collection of Chronicles*), is permeated by these concepts. The work was conceived as a genuinely universal history which would include the history of all the then-known peoples, from the Franks to the Chinese.



The Arab Berates His Guests for Attempting to Pay
Him for His Hospitality

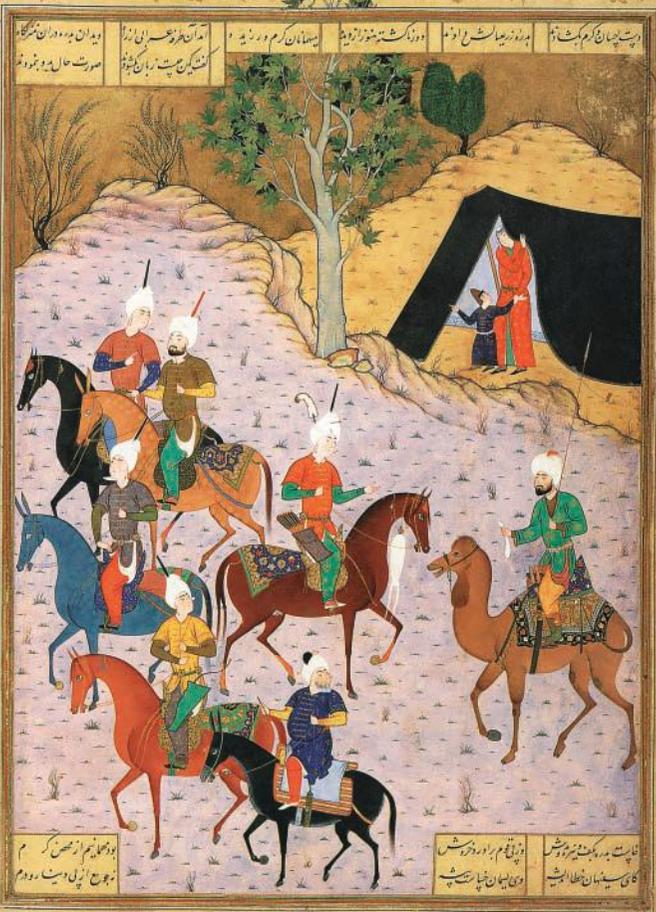
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft avrang (*Seven Thrones*)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.



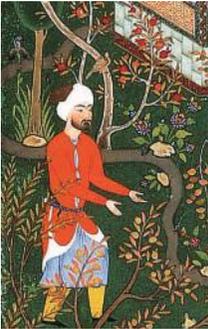
پست پان کرم کشت
 برده ز جید اسلح او دم
 دوز کشت بنه ز دوز
 اسماهان کرم در زید
 آمان هر کس انی زرد
 کشتن کرم پست ز بان کوش
 ویدان برده ان سنگ
 صورت حال بر و نمود

ناپست بر کشته ز دوش
 کای سیدان خطا پیش
 نوز قلم بر او دوزخش
 وین ایسان تپا کشت
 و کما انی از سخن کرم
 جرح انی و دست روم

داد



To realise this grandiose plan, an entire “academy” was founded, which included scholars, calligraphers and artists. Among them were two Chinese scholars, a Buddhist monk from Kashmir, a Catholic monk from France, scholars of Mongol traditions, etc. The manuscript of the *Collection of Chronicles* was illustrated by artists who strove to portray “ethnographic pictures” of the various peoples.



The Townsman Robs the Villager's Orchard

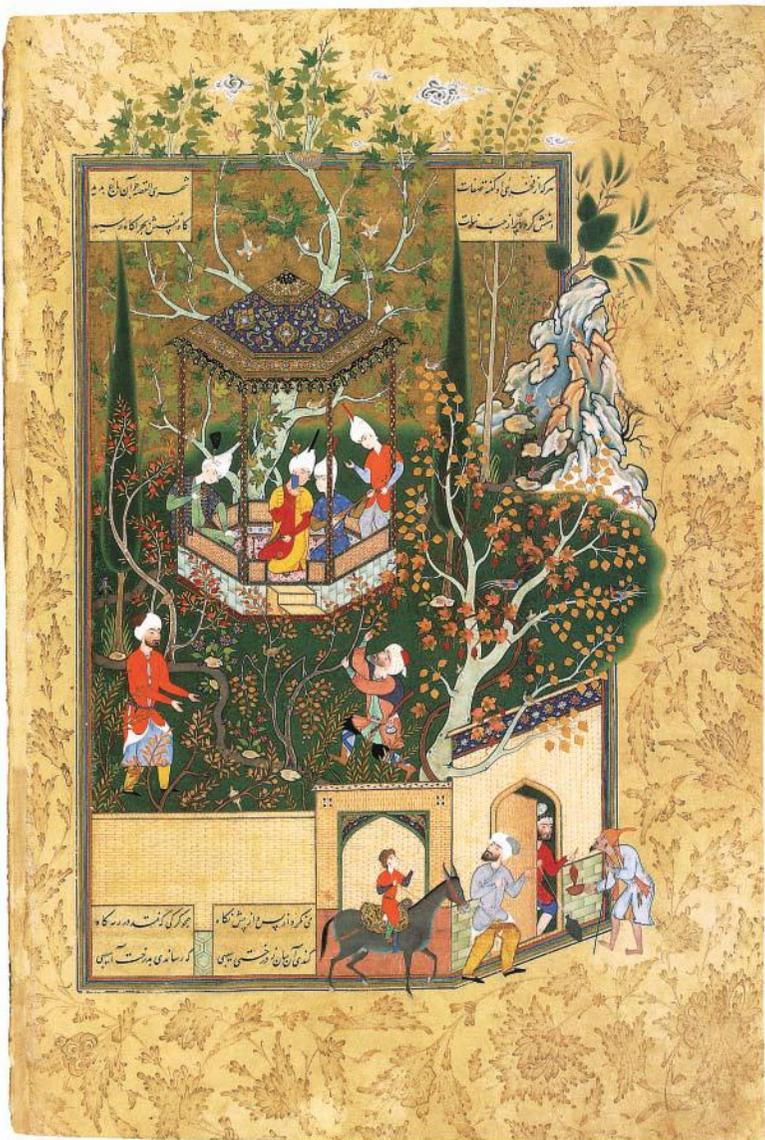
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.



شیرین شکران باغ
 کامرین شهر کامرین

میرانوشی که گزشتن است
 پیش که در این دست است

هر که گزشت در راه
 که گزشتی در راه
 که گزشتی در راه
 که گزشتی در راه

ی که در آن پس از این
 که گزشتی در راه
 که گزشتی در راه
 که گزشتی در راه



The very strong influence of Chinese painting is noticeable in the illustrations – there were many Chinese articles and craftsmen in Iran at that time, brought there by the Mongols.

Not long afterwards (perhaps during the third decade of the 14th century, at the court of Ilkhan Abu Sa'id) a sumptuous manuscript of the *Shahnama* was produced,

Salaman and Absal Rest on the Happy Isle

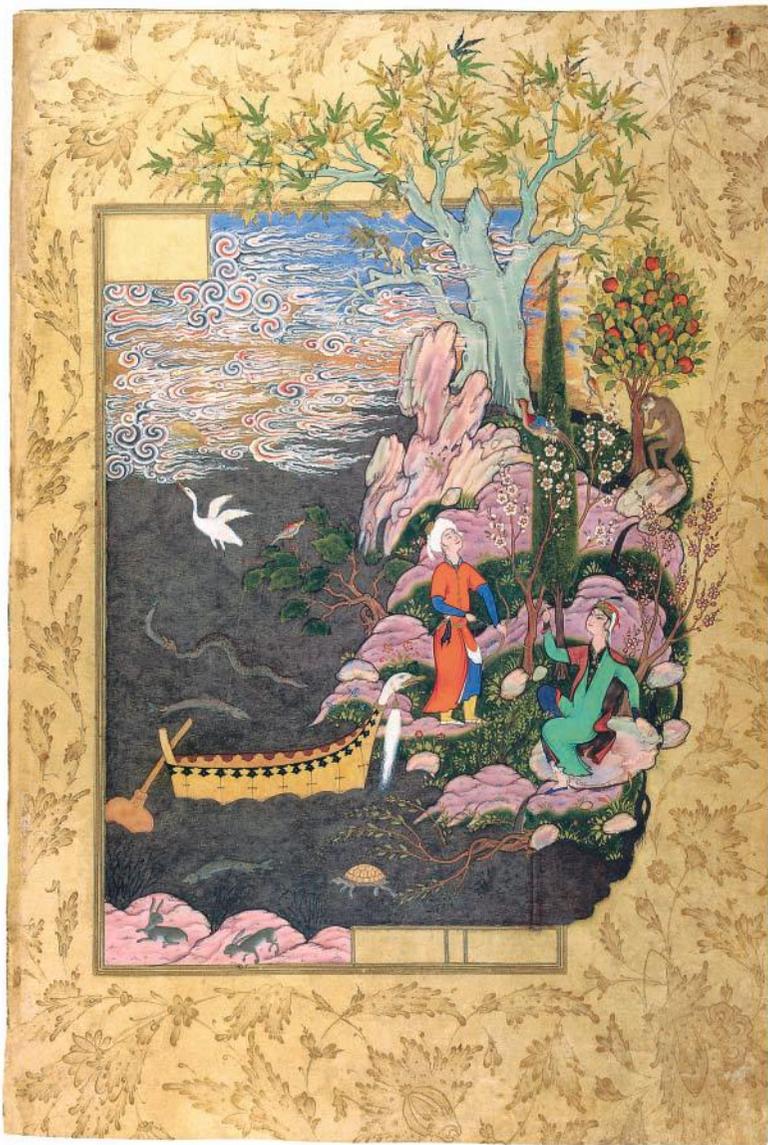
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

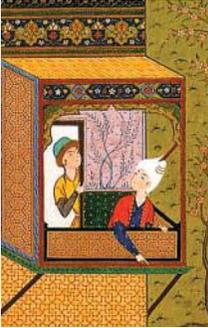
Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

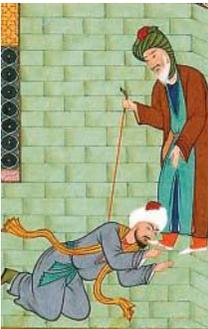
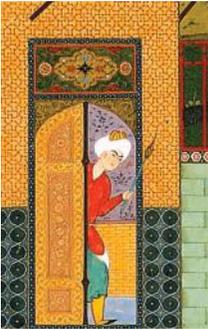
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





astounding in the quality of its miniatures and the originality of its approach. It has been suggested that the choice of themes for its 120 or more miniatures was governed by a definite programme.

First of all this programme stressed the legitimacy of royal power, the same concept as Firdawsī's "divine Khwarnah (*farrah*)", which alone provides the strength and might of a legitimate lord and his divine right to power.



The Murid Kisses the Pir's Feet

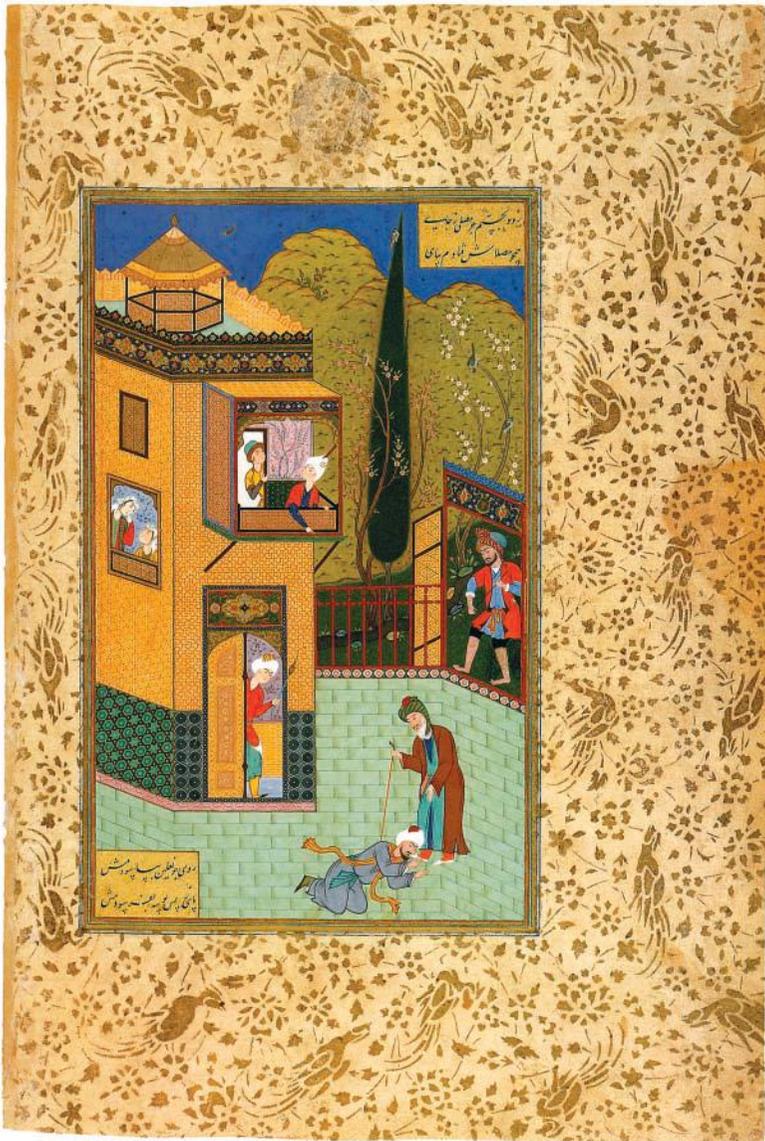
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

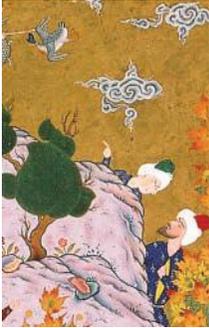
Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





However, the important fact is that the miniatures are painted with overwhelming mastery; they are already far from being simply illustrations, although there are plenty of standard motifs in this *Shahnama* – throne scenes, hunts, banquets and battles. The miniatures of the Demotte *Shahnama* are the first to represent a new movement in Iranian miniature painting, one that has nothing to do with illustration, for “the elaboration of

The Flight of the Tortoise

Illustration from Jami’s masterpiece

Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.



پروین خدیجه شاهان
برای روشنگر زلف شاهان

بسیار که در این جهان است
یک شایسته که در جهان است



the narrative through the image of man leads the viewer to a highly moral interpretation of the epic". However, the Demotte *Shahnama* is a unique manuscript that did not give rise to any imitations. In essence, the style of Iranian miniature painting was laid down in the 1360s and 1370s in the cities of Baghdad and Shiraz, and this was the style which was to determine its development for several centuries.

The East African Looks at Himself in the Mirror

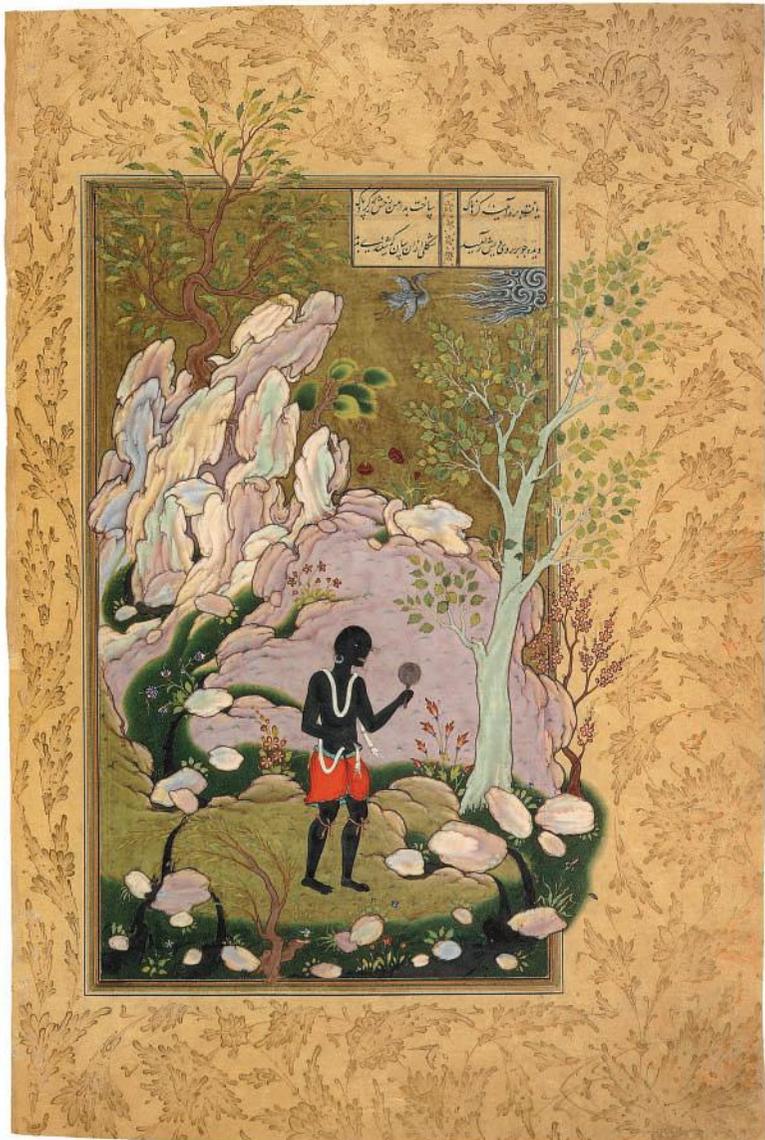
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft anrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





The first manuscripts with miniatures clearly displaying this style are the Shiraz *Shahnama* of 1370 and the manuscript of poems by Khwaju Xirmani, copied in 1396 in Baghdad by the calligrapher Mir Ali Tabrizi. Around this time, the initial stage of development of Iranian miniature painting – the stage represented by the miniatures in *Varqah and Gulshah* or the Shiraz *Shahnamas* of 1330 and 1333, or by the so-called



Qays First Glimpses at Layli

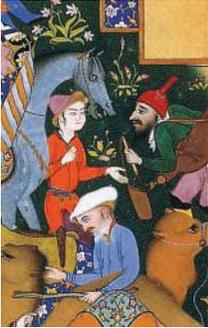
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft anrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.



“Small *Shahnamas*” of the same period – was gradually but inexorably becoming a thing of the past.

Chinese painting of the Sung period played an important role in establishing the new style, especially in the depiction of landscape. Motifs from Chinese ceramics and textiles, widespread in Iran at that time, were equally important.



Majnun Approaches the Camp of Layli's Caravan

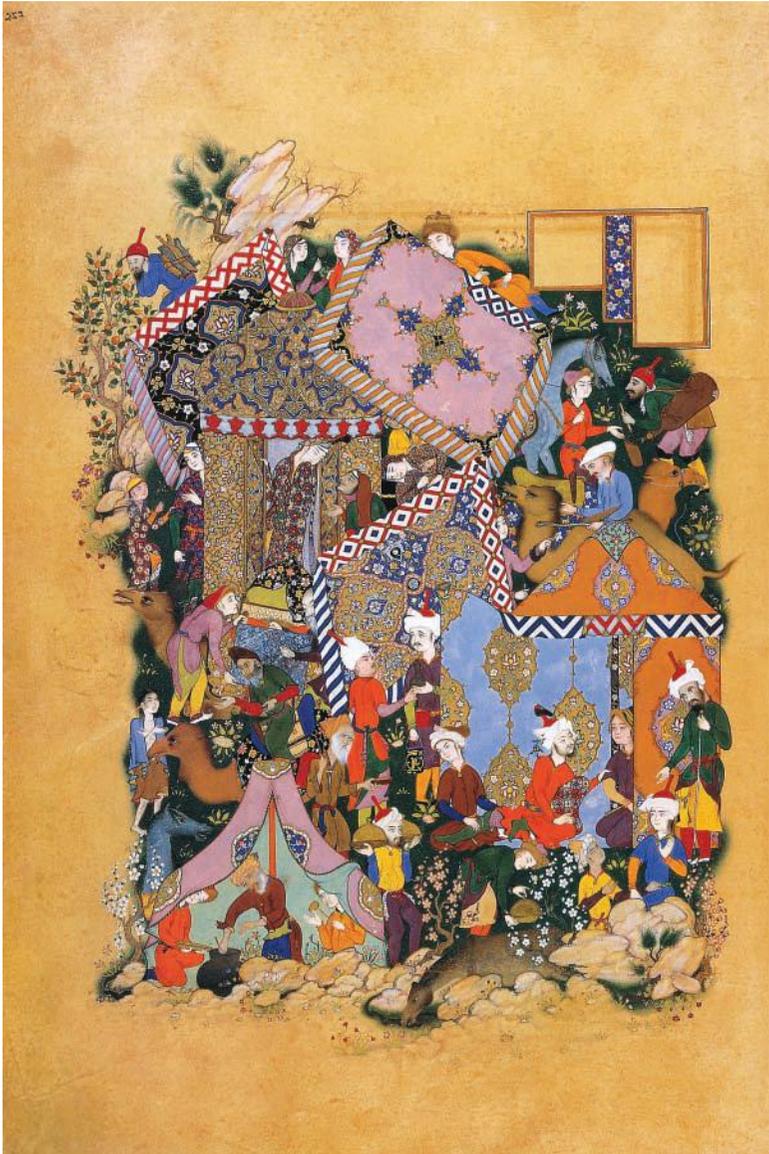
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

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Contemporary Arab miniature painting and Rashidiyya miniatures also played a large part.

During this period, manuscripts of the *Shahnama* were the most often illustrated texts. At that time, the *Shahnama* was arousing interest for the first time since it had been written, evidently for political reasons, both at the Mongol court of the Ilkhans (to which we have already referred) and at the court of their vice-regents, the Injuids in Shiraz.



Majnun Comes before Layli Disguised as a Sheep

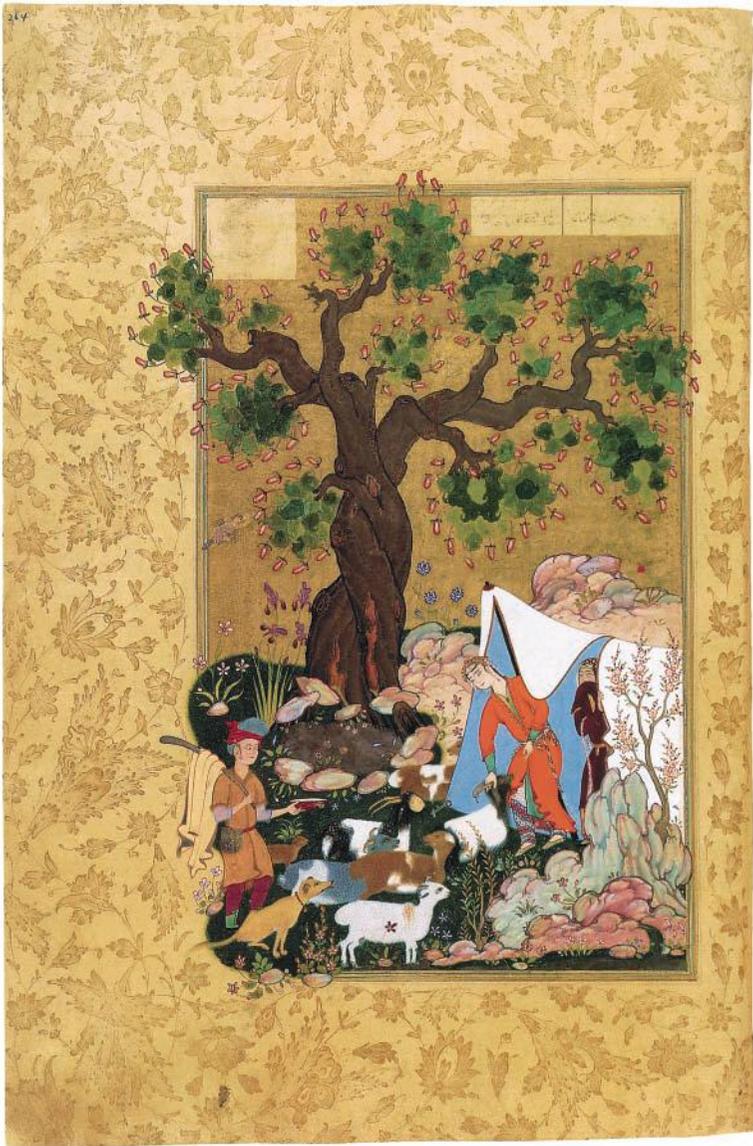
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





One could even go so far as to say that the development of genres in Iranian miniature painting began with the illustration of this work, which was viewed at the time not from the angle of its poetical merits but above all from that of its legitimist ideas. Naturally, however, this process was much more complex than that described here.

The Mi'raj of the Prophet

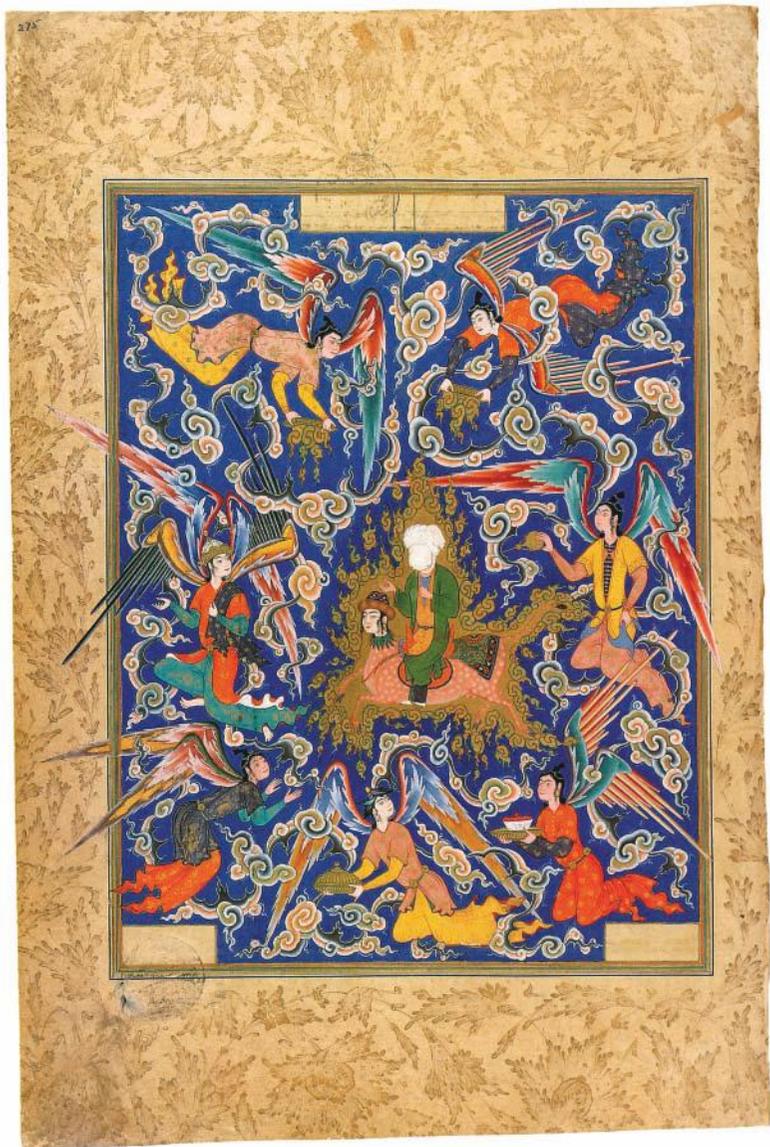
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

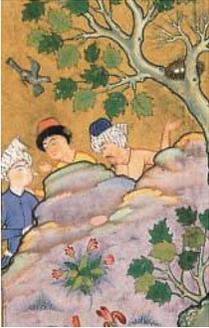
Haft anrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





It is important to stress that from the very outset, the illumination of manuscripts was concentrated at the courts of their owners and consequently, apart from their purely artistic aims, came to fulfil specific political functions.

Dust Muhammad (16th century) also dates the beginning of miniature painting to the time of Ilkhan Abu Sa'id: "It was then that Ustad Ahmed Musa... removed the veil from



Khusraw Parviz and Shirin Deal with the Fishmonger

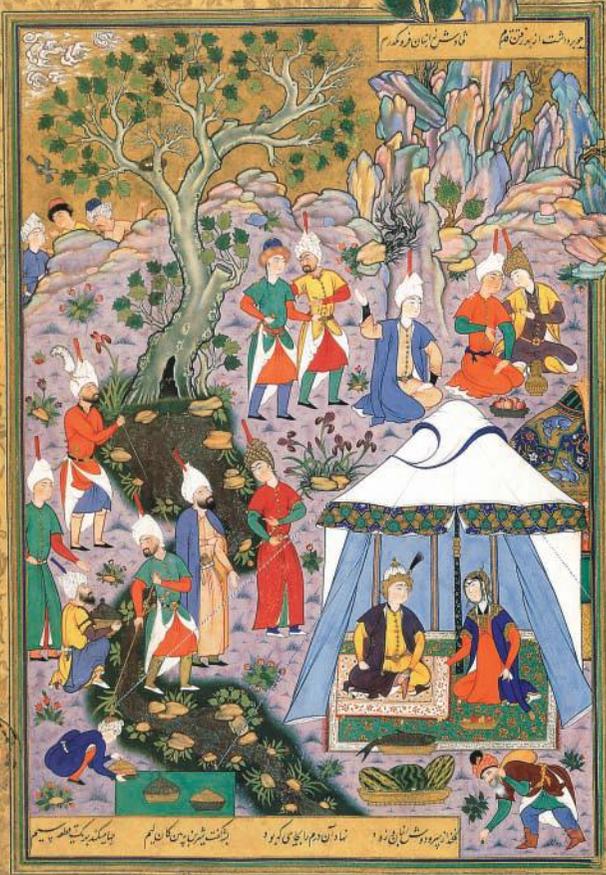
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft anrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





the visage of painting and introduced such a manner of drawing as is generally accepted to the present day". It was this same Dust Muhammad who described in detail the founding of the famous *kitabkhanah* (library) in Herat by Baysunghur, the grandson of Timur, who ruled in Herat during the 1420s and 1430s.



Alexander Suffers a Nosebleed and Is Laid Down to Rest

Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft anrang (*Seven Thrones*)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





The best painters of the time, brought from Tabriz and Shiraz, were gathered there. The literature, painting and calligraphy of Iran developed in such *kitabkhanah* as those founded by Rashid al-Din and Baysunghur. As objects of pride for the rulers at whose courts they were founded, such *kitabkhanah* naturally reflected the tastes of their patrons and the actual problems of the day.

Solomon and Bilqis Sit Together and Converse Frankly

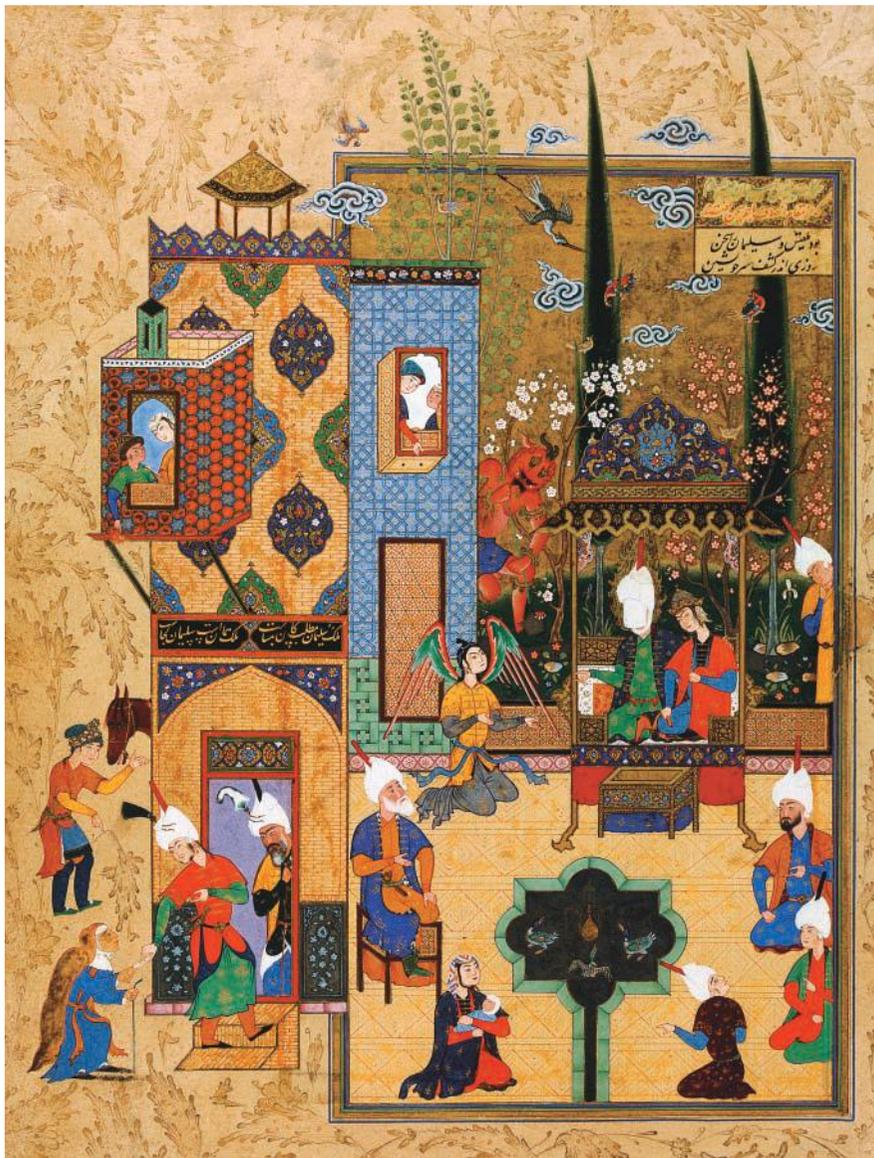
Illustration copied by Ayshi ibn Ishrati from Jami's masterpiece

Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

46.8 x 34.4 cm (folio)

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





The history of medieval Iranian libraries is one of the most interesting chapters in the history of its culture.

In referring readers to the specialist literature, we would point out that the work of many scholars has established the existence of several schools of miniature painting at various times in Tabriz, Shiraz, Mashhad, Isfahan, etc.

Old Man in Landscape

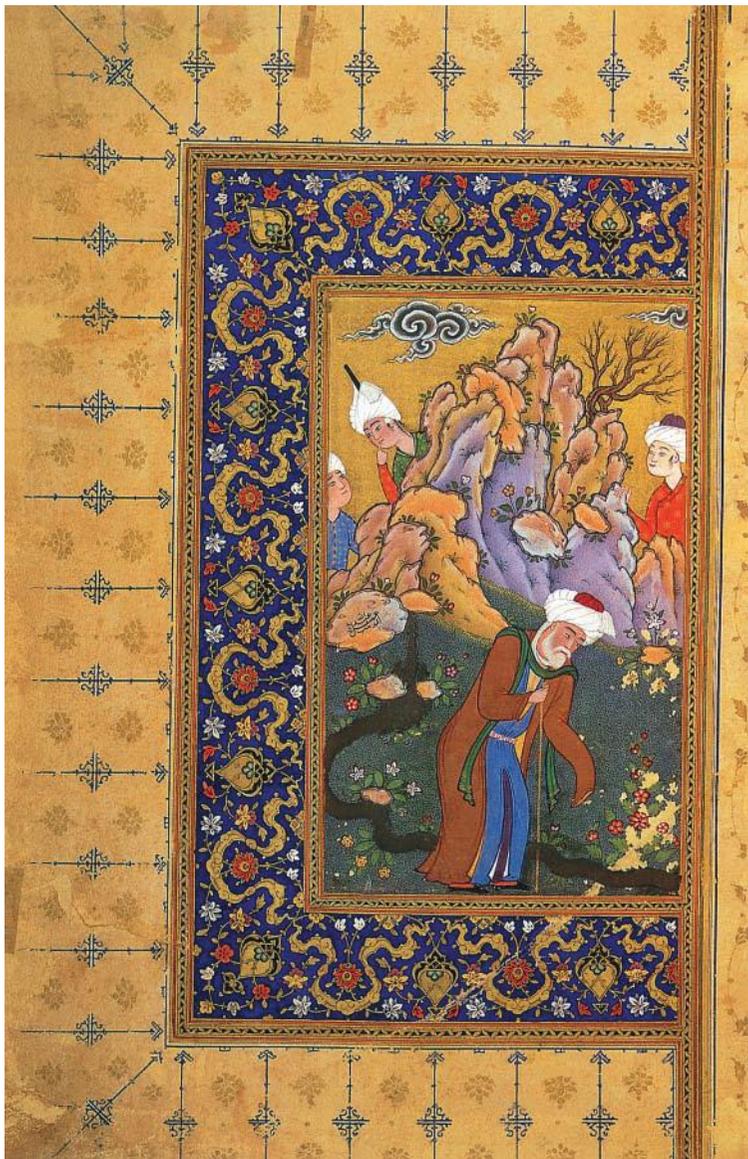
Illustration signed by Abdullah al-Shirazi from Jami's masterpiece

Haft avrang (Seven Thrones)

1564-1565

21.7 x 14.5 cm (folio)

Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon





These schools all passed through phases of flowering and decay. In the 15th to early 16th century, the Herat school reached the peak of achievement; miniature painting was dominated in the 16th century by the Tabriz School and in the 17th century by the Isfahan School.

Research on the Middle Ages reveals a number of complex and unresolved problems.



Ali Fighting to Take the Fortress of Qamus

Illustration from the masterpiece
Athar al-muzaffar (The Exploits of the Victorious)
1567

26 x 17.8 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

دماوندی بوی خاک است دیوان گشت خور ز بگفت آوره پیشه وردور زود صدی بر گشتش جان	سپاه سرگز است کلب زور گشته نمبر ریدند اینش گل کور پراگشتن از شد بوی ا	براه شکر آرا بر اسلام علی خود را زه زب می خواه در قوزان می دشتش	کبوس آمدن من کج چو را غم شخا دور تو کا گرفتن کرده تمام ز پیش
---	--	---	--



روایت اینست کمان در گش چون موم بوده	سیر کرده در او آید گرفته پیش رخ سیر کرده	عده راستی چون گرفته پیش رخ سیر کرده
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It appears to us that the basis for their solution will be a substantiated relative chronology, tracing the periods of development in Persian art after the spread of Islam throughout the country. For a long time, historians of Persian art have adhered to a dynastic chronology. Such classification has a certain justification, for after a large territory had been unified under the control of a single dynasty that then ruled for a

Muhammad and Ali at Ghadir Khumm

Illustration from the masterpiece
Athar al-muzaffar (The Exploits of the Victorious)
1567

26 x 17.8 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin





century or more, a certain unity of style was created in that state. But a more detailed study of objects and a precise determination of their dates have shown that periods of change in art do not always coincide with the emergence or fate of dynasties.

In 1970, Ernst Grube suggested a new classification for the development of Persian

Muhammad and Ali Destroying the Idols of the Ka'ba

Illustration from the masterpiece
Athar al-muzaffar (The Exploits of the Victorious)
1567

26 x 17.8 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin



art in the Middle Ages. He distinguished five periods from the appearance of the Arabs to the beginning of the 18th century. The first three periods, in his opinion, were common to the whole area dominated by Islam. These are: the period of its establishment (650-850 AD), the first inter-regional style (850-1050) and the second inter-regional style (1050-1350).

Adam and Eve

Illustration from the masterpiece
Qisas al-anbiya (The Tales of the Prophets)
1570-1580
31.7 x 19.9 cm
The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

بیرون روید از بهشت که عاصی بهشت اندر نباشد تو که آدم و
 و حوا و ابلیس و طاووس و مار همه دشمن یکدیگر خنکند ای
 تبار که و تقال در قرآن مجید و سفران حمد خبر میدهد



قوله من اذنب ذنبا مغفورا فاستغفر الله له سبعين الف مرة
 و متاع الجنة فستحضر في الجنة اذ ذنبا مغفورا فاستغفر الله له سبعين الف مرة



After this, in Grube's opinion, art in Islamic countries follows separate lines of development in different regions. As regards Iran, he considers it possible to distinguish two periods: the art of Central Asia and Iran between 1350 and 1550 and the art of Safavid Iran between 1550 and 1700.

Grube sketches only the most general outline of each period's characteristics without supplying any details.

Qabil (Cain) Carrying the Body of His Slain Brother Habil (Abel)

Illustration from the masterpiece
Qisas al-anbiya (The Tales of the Prophets)

1570-1580

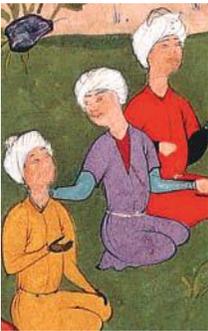
31.7 x 19.9 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

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 او میان آن بود چنانکه خدای تعالی فرمود و قَبَعَتْ اللَّهُ عِزْرًا بِأَخِيهِ
 يَجْتَبِي فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهُ كَيْفَ يُوَارِي سَوَاءَ أَحِيهِ
 خدای تعالی کلاغی را بر فراز پستاد تماز زمین را بجا وید که نماید ویرا مرده



پنهان کردن عید از آن برادر خویش را بپوشید و پشیمان شد و گویند



This important work was written forty years ago and its ideas have not been further developed, as far as we know, either in studies by Grube or those of other authors. It seems to us, however, that the periodic chronology suggested by Grube is correct. In his research into Iranian metalwork of the 14th to 18th century Anatoly Ivanov has come to the same conclusions with regards to the two final periods.

Idris Instructing His Children

Illustration from the masterpiece
Qisas al-anbiya (The Tales of the Prophets)

1570-1580

31.7 x 19.9 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

براسان میت چنانکه خدا می کف و رَفَعْنَا مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا

و بعد از او رسن خندان بودند و لیکن بچگدام صاحب شریعت نبودند تا آنکه



که نوح بیرون نیاید و نوح از فرزندانش پیل بود و بعد از او رس

علیه السلام بجا رسد و هفت و سال بود و اندا علم با الصواب



In Grube's classification, the second inter-regional style (1050-1350) is the most interesting. In his opinion, it arises in various centres of Central Asia and eastern Iran at the end of the 10th century and reaches its full potential towards the mid-11th century. One of its chief distinguishing features is its attention to the depiction of people.

The Destruction of Sodom

Illustration from the masterpiece
Qisas al-anbiya (The Tales of the Prophets)
1570-1580

31.7 x 19.9 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

تا آسمان ببرد و چنانکه اهل آسمان او از خروش او بشنودند عت
دراشت فرمان امد از خدای تعالی که کرد ان جبرئیل علیه السلام بگردانند



بر زمین آمدند جمله ناپدید شدند و هر کسی از ان قوم پراکنده بودند بشهر
دیگر خدای تعالی سنگ بفرستاد تا بر ایشان فرو بارید و هلاک گشتند



During this period wall-painting becomes very widespread, its style probably originating in eastern Turkistan. Perhaps there was miniature painting in eastern Iran at the time, but no examples have survived.

It used to be customary to end the history of the Iranian miniature with the fall of the Safavid dynasty.

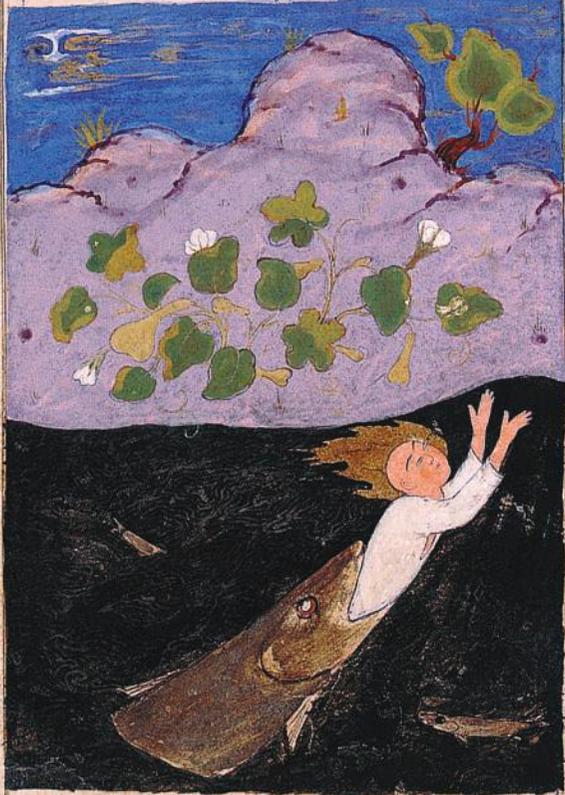
Jonah Cast from the Belly of the Fish

Illustration from the masterpiece
Qisas al-anbiya (The Tales of the Prophets)
1570-1580

31.7 x 19.9 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

نماز و بیکر بود که خدای تعالی ماسی را الهام داد تا بکراشه دریا آمد و پیوس را
عذبه سلام بسلامت از شکم بیرون انداخت و همه اندام وی



بجون کوشتی کشته بود و ضعیف شده و جهل روز طعام نخورد بود
خدای تعالی در ساعت درخت کدو را برومانید و بزرگ و برکنار



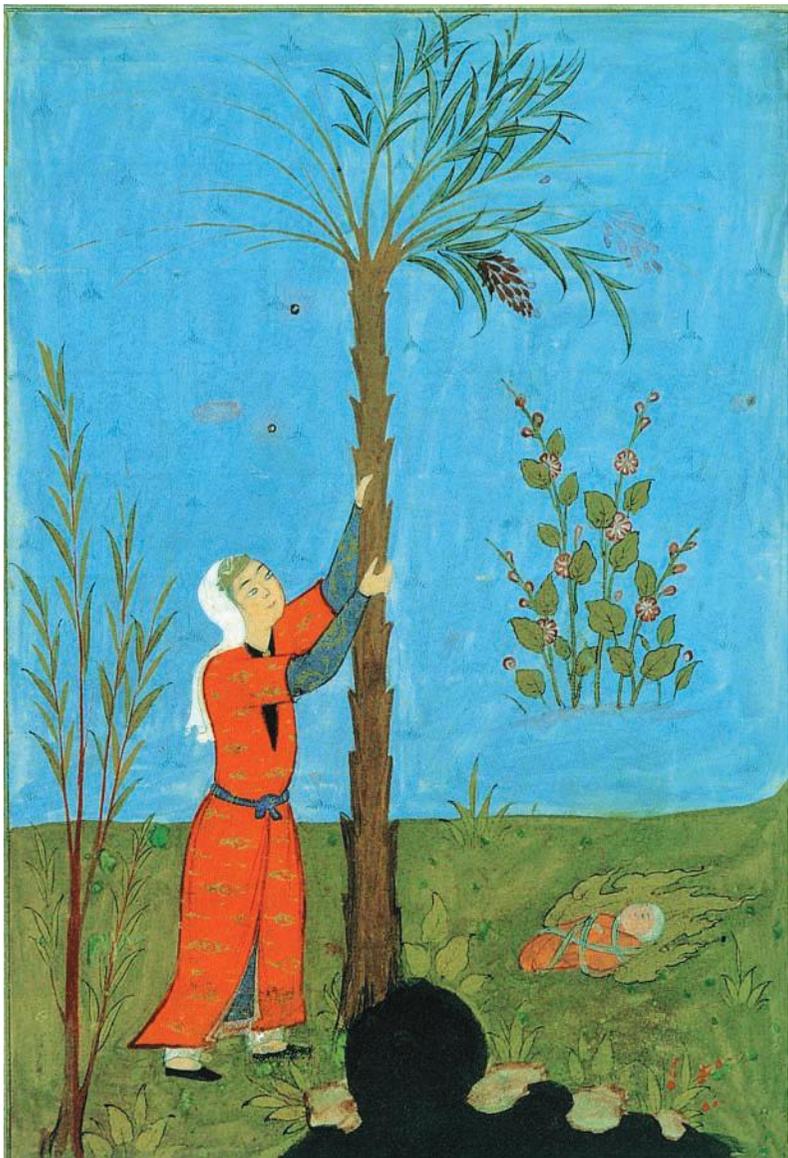
At the end of the 20th century, this tendency began to change and 18th-century painting attracted ever greater attention. An abrupt alteration in the style of miniatures occurs in the second half of the 17th century, linked to the influence of European painting and, possibly, to that of the Indian miniature. The style of the Isfahan school of miniatures, known to us in the work of Riza-i Abbasi,

Mary Shakes a Palm Tree to Provide Food for Baby Jesus

Illustration from the masterpiece
Qisas al-anbiya (The Tales of the Prophets)
1570-1580

31.7 x 19.9 cm

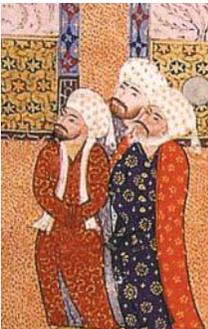
The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin





survives until the beginning of the 18th century but then vanishes completely.

Thus we can state that at the end of the 17th century Persian art entered a period of change, heralding the beginning of a new phase. Evidently the first half of the 18th century was a sort of transitional period and new elements were finally victorious in the mid-18th century.



Muhammad and Ali Cleanse the Ka'ba of Idols

Illustration from Mir Havand's masterpiece
Randat ai-Dafa
1585-1595



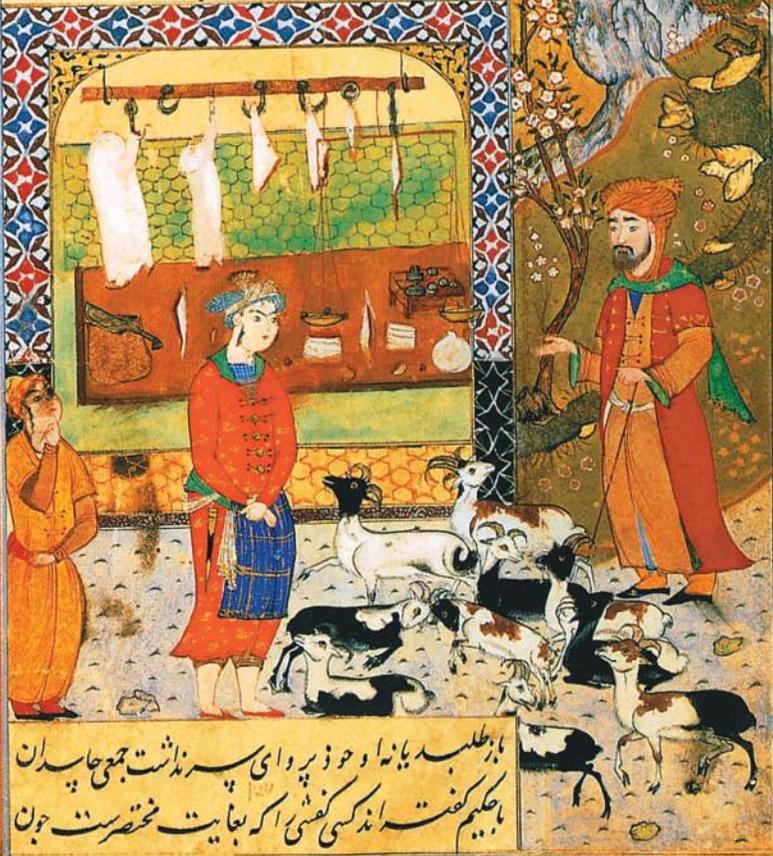
Unfortunately, the new phase began with a “dark age” characterised by a decline in technical skills. This was reflected in all aspects of applied art in Iran, but was not caused by any great social crisis in society; rather it was a result of the collapse of life in the cities where crafts were concentrated, largely as a result of the extremely unstable political situation in the country.

Butcher's Shop in the Isfahan Bazaar

Illustration from sultan Husain's masterpiece
1590

Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin

دکفش خود را طلبید آن جوان همان روز اول کفش را
گم کرده بود بقصد آنکه بیپند که پروای آن دارد که آنها



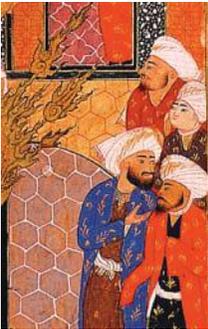
با طلبید یانه او حوز پروای پسنداشت جمعی چایدان
با حکیم گفت اندک کسی کفشی را که بغایت مختصر است چون



Wars and invasions brought desolation and ruin to the cities, something that is mentioned by all travellers in the second half of the 18th century and at the very beginning of the 19th century.



The unification of part of the country under the power of Karim Khan Zand did not last very long and therefore did not result in any resurgence of crafts.



Muhammad and Ali Destroying the Idols of the Ka'ba

Illustration from *Rawdat al-safa (The Garden of Purity)*

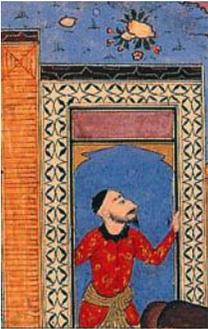
1595

35.5 x 25.4 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin



There were probably only miniatures and oil paintings – aspects of court art – which were of a comparatively high standard, although one should point out nevertheless that very few specimens of 18th-century miniatures and painting have survived: apparently here too the number of artists decreased.



Yazdagird III at the Mill in Merv

Illustration from *Rawdat al-safa* (*The Garden of Purity*)

1595

35.5 x 25.4 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin



Turning to the new phase, which began more or less in the middle of the 18th century, we are treading on extremely unstable ground, composed of assumptions and hypotheses. Generally speaking, interest in 19th-century Persian art began to thrive only in the middle of the 20th century and at first was only concerned with painting and lacquerware.

Abu Bakr Carrying Muhammad on His Shoulders as
They Approach the Cave in Mount Thawr

Illustration from *Rawdat al-safa* (*The Garden of Purity*)
1595

35.5 x 25.4 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin



Court art during the rule of Faṭ'h Ali Shah Qajar (1797-1834) experienced something of a renaissance. This affected painting, miniatures, lacquerware – the work of court artists – as well as jewellery and weapons of various sorts. These works were produced for the upper ranks of society and show clear signs of ancient artistic traditions. This was probably dictated by some sort of imperial ambition on the part of Faṭ'h Ali Shah,

Muhammad and the Rashidun

Illustration from *Silsila-nama (Genealogy)*

1598

26 x 14.4 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin



as is suggested by the creation of rock reliefs, a tradition lost since the time of the Sassanids but reborn during his reign. However, mass-produced objects such as ceramics and metalwork, which were used by a wide cross-section of society, bear witness to a clear decline in technical skill in comparison with the preceding phase in Persian art. The crisis as a whole began in the 1840s, when Persian art fell into a decline

Young Man Lying Down

1600-1635

9.8 x 18.8 cm.

The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg





as a result of the factory goods from European countries that poured into Iran at that time. The total rejection of the old techniques of miniature painting and the definitive acceptance of European ones apparently date from the same period.

The new trend in miniature painting that emerged at the end of the 19th century took the 17th-century Isfahan School as its model.

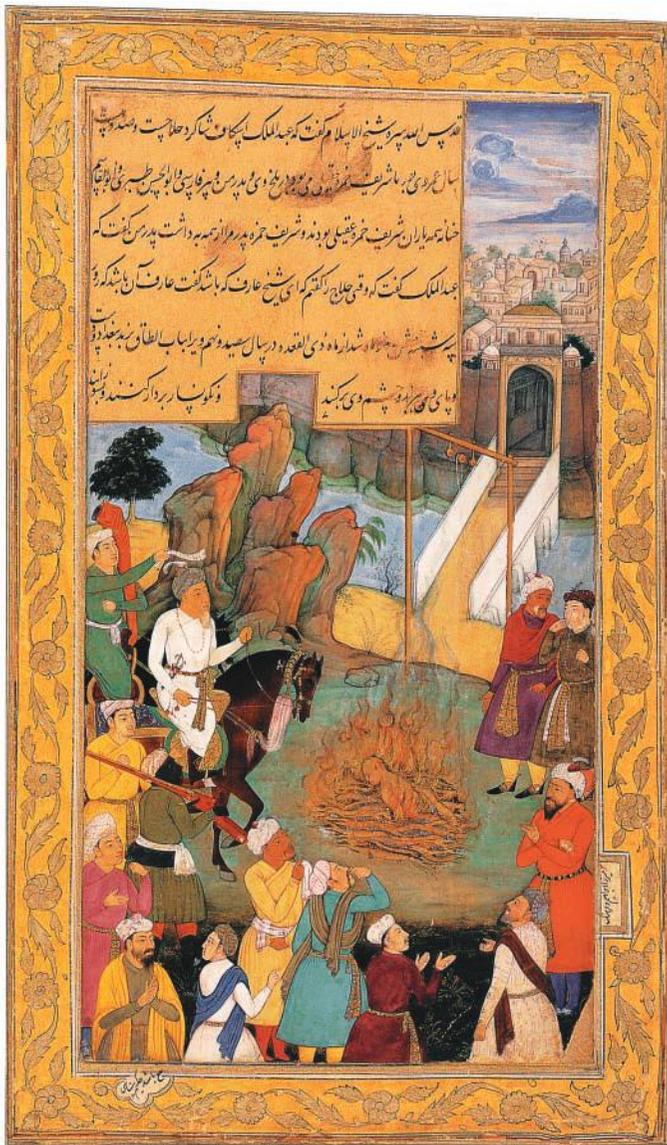
The Martyrdom of al-Hallaj

Illustration from Jami's masterpiece
Nafabat al-uns (The Breaths of Fellowship)

1604-1605

34.5 x 22.3 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin





It is not clear what caused this fascination for such a distant historical past, but this type of work continued to be manufactured through the 20th century.

In examining the problems of a periodic chronological classification we have concentrated mainly on highlighting the provisional boundaries between phases and very little has been said about the reasons behind changes in art.

Rustam Striking the Door of Afrasiyab's Palace

Illustration from Firdawsi's masterpiece

Shahnama (The Book of Kings)

c. 1610

22.7 x 15.4 cm (folio)

The British Museum, London





This question is even more complex than the chronology itself and very little is known about it.

Casting one's eye over the history of art in Iran in general after the consolidation of Islam one can say, if only by way of preliminary hypothesis, that its progressive development continued until the first half of the 14th century, when the art of medieval Iran reached its height. This is clearly seen in miniatures and other forms of art.

Rustam is Assisted by His Horse, Rakhsh,
as He Fights the Dragon

Illustration from Firdawsi's masterpiece
Shahnama (The Book of Kings)

1648

Royal Library, Windsor Castle, Windsor





The following centuries were a period of gradual decline, although at first glance this is contradicted by the flourishing of the miniature in the 15th century, when it developed and perfected those principles and devices that had been created during the preceding period. Such a deduction completely corresponds to ideas of the historical development of Iran in the age of

Rustam Beside the Dying Sohrab

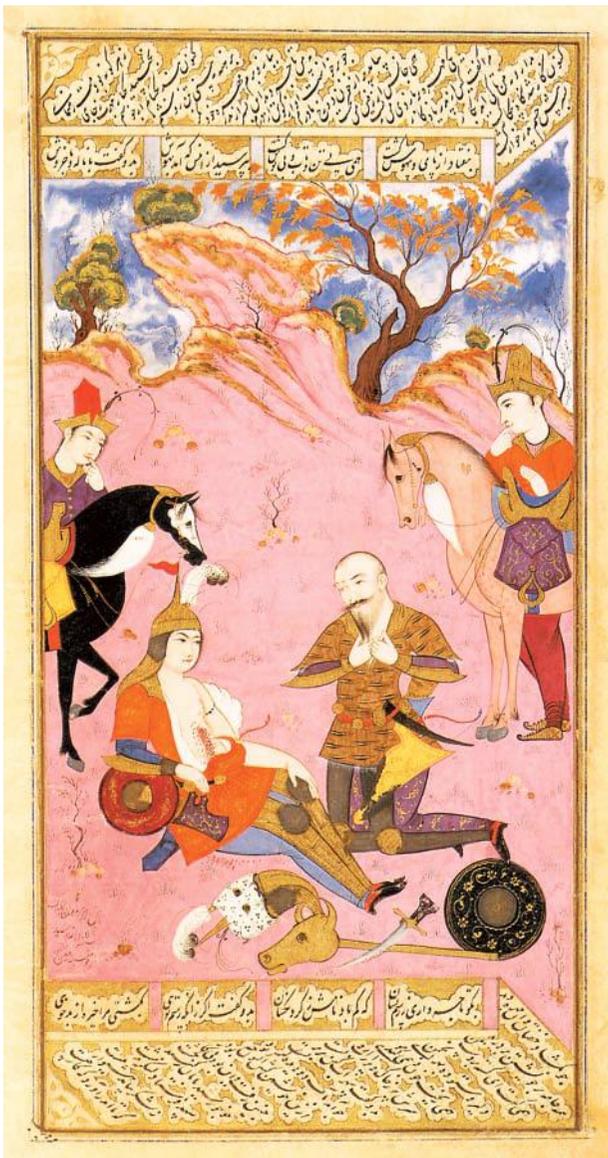
Illustration signed by Mu'in Musavvir from Firdawsi's masterpiece

Shahnama (The Book of Kings)

1649

28.6 x 14.1 cm

The British Museum, London





feudalism; at any rate, it roughly coincides with the overall chronology accepted by historians.

Within the larger phases one can, of course, distinguish shorter periods during which there were intense developments within one or other art form. For the time being, it is interesting to note that the length of each phase gradually diminishes as one approaches the modern era.



Alexander in the Land of Gloom

Illustration from Firdawsi's masterpiece

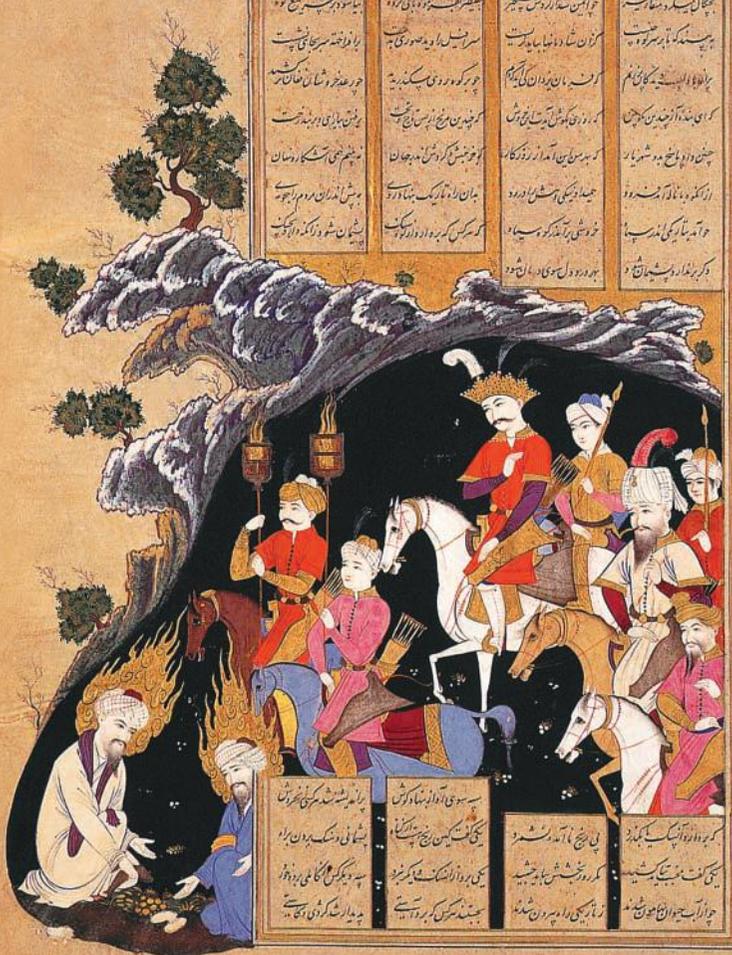
Shahnama (The Book of Kings)

c. 1650

35.3 x 24 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

بناگال بسکه در نهان است بر پسته که تا بر سر راه پراگان و ایستگاه کجایم کوی نهان از پیشین کجاست	چو امین شاه اگر در دست کزان شاه تا بنیابان است کوشه این دوران کجایم کوزی که پیش تر شایع است	بسیار هفت زده ای که کرد سرش را و در صورت کجاست چو گوگردی مسکند است کوشین میخ این شایع است	یاشور بر سر تیغ کوه را در تیره سحر جانی است چو در هفت زده ای که کرد بر این بازی بر نهان است
چو در روز اول بر پیشانی از کوه و ناگانه بر سر راه چو در میان کجای اندیشه که بر سر این آمار روزگار	بمان را تا که یک بنیاد بود شود می را تا که یک سپاه که سر کس کرده در راه کوه چو در روز اول بر پیشانی	بسیار هفت زده ای که کرد سرش را و در صورت کجاست چو گوگردی مسکند است کوشین میخ این شایع است	یاشور بر سر تیغ کوه را در تیره سحر جانی است چو در هفت زده ای که کرد بر این بازی بر نهان است



سپه سوری آواز نهاد گوش بناگال بسکه در نهان است بسیار هفت زده ای که کرد سرش را و در صورت کجاست	کوه در راه آهنگ است بسیار هفت زده ای که کرد سرش را و در صورت کجاست	بسیار هفت زده ای که کرد سرش را و در صورت کجاست	بسیار هفت زده ای که کرد سرش را و در صورت کجاست
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در تیغ کوه
سپهر



This may be explained by the acceleration of historical development, but may also be the result of our as yet extremely limited knowledge of the art of earlier ages.

If a work on the history of Eastern culture across several ages demands the drawing of conclusions, then we have probably not achieved that end. But in actual fact “deductions” set forth in one or two pages could only vulgarise and generalise,

Tarikh-i jahanara
(The Chronicle of the World-Adorning One)

Artist and source unknown
1683

26.5 x 18 cm

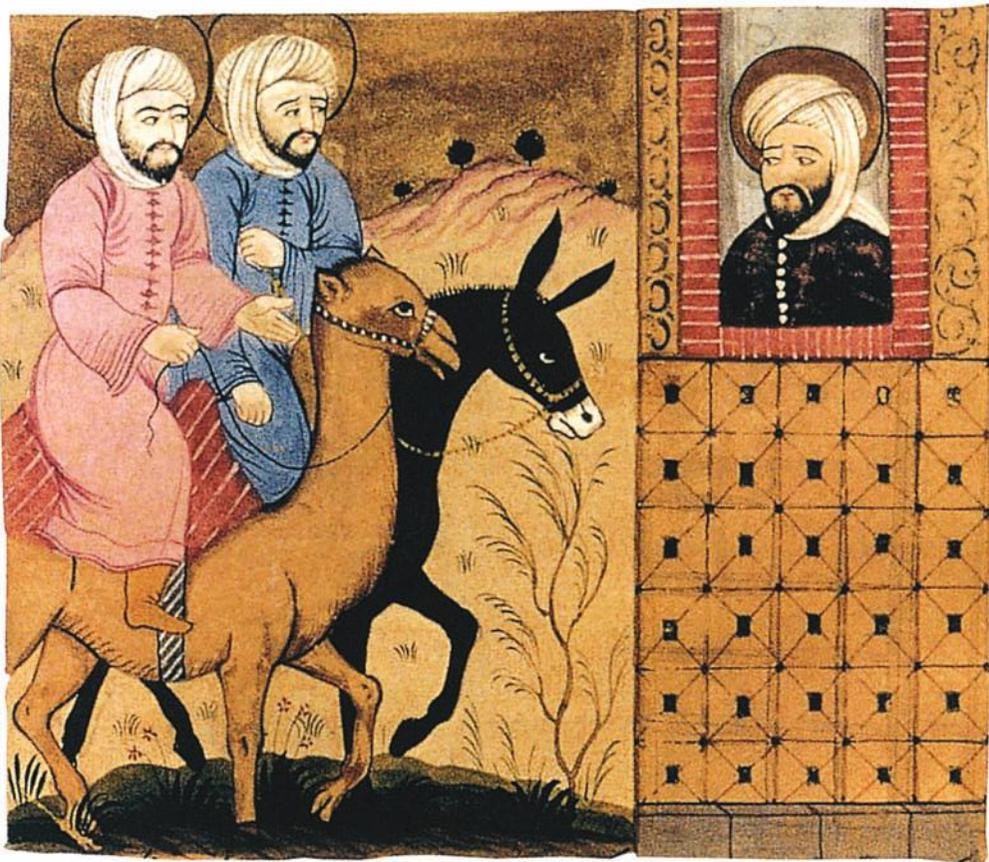
The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin



in effect reducing to banalities – or to excessively speculative categories – all the complexity and colour of the “motion” in the history of a culture; they would eclipse a multitude of unelucidated questions and unproved assumptions. Consequently we shall only allow ourselves one generalisation – a statement by Nikolai Konradina, *On the Meaning of History*:
“In different lands, humanists have seen different aspects of the human personality as

Jesus on a Donkey and Muhammad on a Camel, Riding Together

Illustration from a work by al-Biruni
18th century
Parliamentary Library, Tehran





constituting its value. Their views have naturally been contingent upon their historical circumstances. Participants in the Chinese Renaissance saw the value of the personality chiefly in the human ability to attain self-perfection; the humanists of Iran and Central Asia saw it, mainly, in the fact that the highest moral qualities are accessible to man: spiritual nobility, magnanimity, friendship; the representatives of the Italian

Harem Garden

Artist and source unknown

18th century

David Collection, Copenhagen





Renaissance regarded human beings as, above all, the bearers of reason, considering reason to be the highest manifestation of humanity's essence."

Although its underlying meaning is to assert the existence of Iran's own special "renaissance", the description of Iranian humanism given here seems, nevertheless,

Hafiz and His Spiritual Master

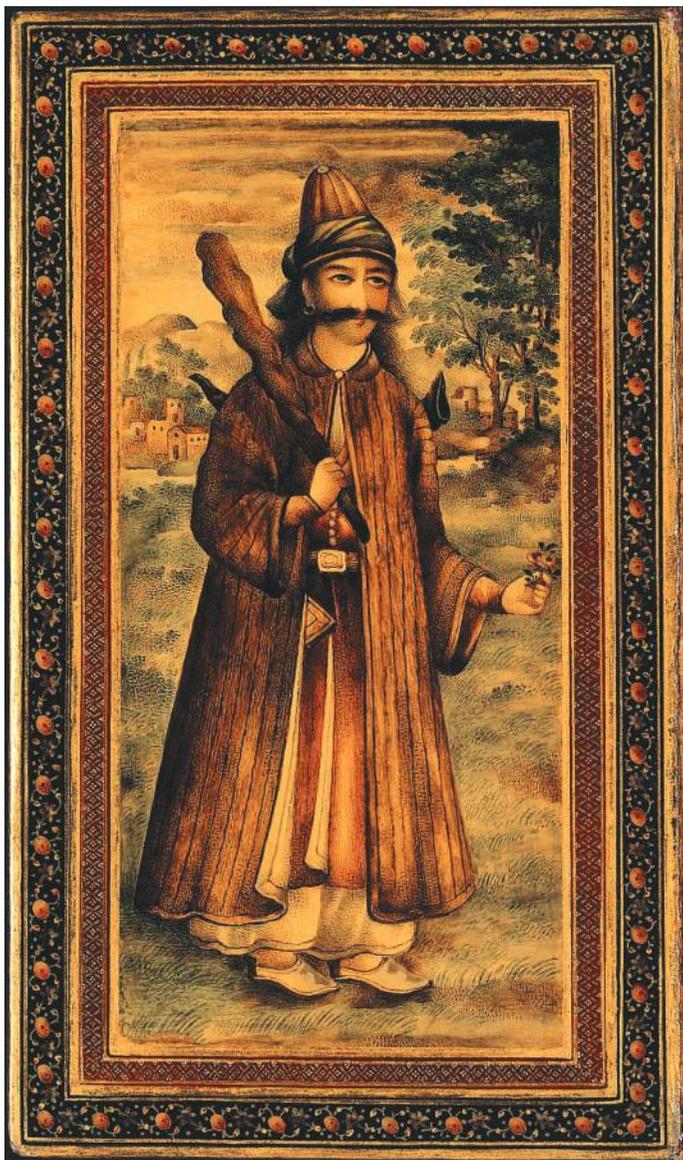
Illustration from Hafiz's masterpiece

Divan (collected poems)

1838

15.4 x 9.3 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin





to be correct, despite the fact that a search for “renaissances” in various historical and cultural areas is not a problem that is particularly relevant to the history of Iranian culture. What is certain is the significance of the miniature art form in the history of Persian art and culture: these compact, richly-detailed illustrations captured the Persian spirit of revelry and reverence and beautifully preserved the traditions of the empire for subsequent civilisations and for us today.

Bird and Flowers

Artist and source unknown

Mid-19th century

11 x 16 cm

The British Museum, London





The Plates

The illustration of the manuscript of al-Ghazzali's *The Revival of the Studies on Faith* betrays the influence of an earlier period: the composition still divides into two separate parts not linked by the common frame; ornamented medallions are depicted in the left margins. However, new features appear at the same time, such as vertical cartouches that connect the upper and lower parts of the page decoration. The floral ornament is large. The interlace in the corners of the cartouches is characteristic of the 14th century.

The palette – gold, dark blue, green, white and brown (red?) – is traditional.

Frontispiece of a Manuscript (left half)

Illustration from Al-Ghazzali's masterpiece
The Revival of the Studies on Faith

1330s

25 x 21 cm

The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg



The miniatures of this manuscript illustrating the poem *Shahnama* were produced in Shiraz in the second quarter of the 14th century, during the rule of the Inju dynasty. They are characterised by rather crude draughtsmanship, large and somewhat clumsy human figures and a colour scheme in which red, yellow and gold predominate.



Rustam Besieges the Castle of the Ogre Kafur

Illustration from Firdawsi's masterpiece

Shahnama (The Book of Kings)

1330s

Gouache on paper, 21.5 x 13 cm

The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg

گندنی سندان خنجر برید
 جنبتا چو در زلی چهل سر
 بد زانم و چون ترازی حکم
 جو تو زین و زانم بر آید
 بر او دراز تا باغ و درخت
 بستی رخسار و زلف و دراز
 بند کس و بر تراز و سواد
 سلطنت و ایند بیخورد
 اگر سالها زین و درخت
 بیازد بر تراز و بر زمین

بسی کردیم و در سوس
 بز کار زین خنجر پل از سر
 دست لقی با سه ریزد
 ز هر گونه داند کار را خواند
 با درخت و نهی کرد که
 ازین باره در درازند
 برین رخسار پلایک
 بزواند و در راه آورد
 باشد بد خنجر ز او
 زافسون سل و در جان

مخوری بز سر سر زوال
 بلند کای موربا زور و
 در بیست زین اندر زین
 کویاره آفتند از کوه

که بره تکشش سر و کار
 برین کوه بی بلند بوش
 که درانه خوانند ز کار
 برینک جو زین و زین



چون شمشیر سیم بر آید شد
 بی کوز در و بد
 چو بر سیم کار گرفت
 اما مغرب کار ایمن را داشت
 ستونها خنجر ز ما پیش
 زو در آن باره نور کرد
 و آن ازی که غیر زین
 در بیان ما شد نماند زان
 در لاشه بر و باران
 بی زین سیم و لوله
 زین و کشتن تا گرفت
 چو در آن نماند
 تو بیل و آن زهر و
 شاه سیم و در آن

دل زنجیر چو آید شد
 بشنای بر او و
 هر دین و مانده شملت
 بد کار کای می گرفت
 یو او فقط سیاه زین
 ز هر سویه اندام یک
 میان ازی و بر و
 سیمها گرفت و زین
 عزمت بود زان
 ستور و غلام و بر
 سران کتو سیاه
 بران نام و زین
 زای ما شین
 در جای کله

بی زرم و زین
 بدوی بر شکر ز اولی
 هر آنگاه که از باره
 بی باره از آن
 چو بی زور و زین
 بز زین که حکم
 همه بر داند
 برده می بایند
 از آن
 نهنم با مده
 بز و کشتن
 که در
 نه می
 در

سیاه اندر و در
 زود را با خنجر
 زانه سرش
 ز بر او
 چو بد را
 کما و
 کرای هر
 بدش از
 در هر
 سش جهان
 نهادند
 بر داند
 کجای
 سر و

شود



In Shiraz during the second half of the 14th century, a new style of miniature painting took over from that of the so-called Injuid school. During the early 1370s miniatures appeared which betrayed the influence of Chinese painting, but with their own idiosyncratic treatment of individual elements such as the horizon, water and vegetation. Chronologically, this style appears during the rule of the Muzaffarid dynasty (1356-1393). Though their format is small, the miniatures are more richly coloured than works of the second quarter of the 14th century; movement is more skilfully portrayed here and elements of the landscape are treated with more subtlety.

Bahram Gur Falls into the Pit

Illustration from Amir Khusraw Dihlawi's masterpiece *Khamsa*
(literally "collection of five")
1370-1380s

Gouache on paper, 12.8 x 8.7 cm
The Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Tashkent

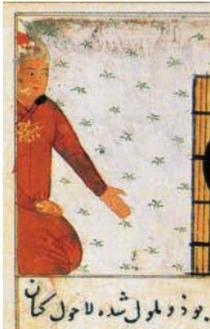
هر چه نخل که سوخته لرزشتاد
 تیران ز مرد رست جیتی ز صاف
 شاه بدران کی بی ز دش بگو
 بزان خطها سوار تا در دست
 تا که از پیش چاه آمد تنگ
 توست شاه نیز در تنگ کور

کور کین ز دور خدای اکتفا
 موکتبی اردبکاه شکاف
 در تنگی شد درون چو بود کوه
 چینه می زدیم تر شست شست
 در فتادن ندانست کور در تک
 رفت در چاه که در کور کور

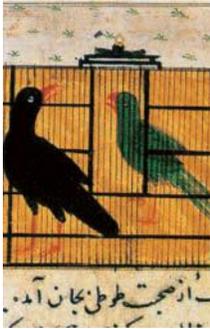


آن که در میل از آن دوریش مژ
 از قضا کور شد که پیش ندید
 هت در چرخ کجای این چه کار
 کور بیایان که سوختی چاه آمد
 آنکش از چاه کور شود اکتفا
 از چه کور کس بزود شرفت
 از جن شد چه کور رخصه سیاه
 در دوشه شه خیل اسپداه
 آن که کشت خاک کشتین
 از آن چه خنای ماه کشیده
 تا از چه بود بلکه غار حه ای د

سره که دی میان تلب ز دور
 چاه را ز بی پای خویش ندید
 به بیانی اول اول الایسا
 کور بر دای سوختی شاه آمد
 عاقبت هر چاهی کور اکتفا
 کور کور کور کور کور کور
 به معرفت بود درین چاه
 بی نیاید شمرده غور شمدون
 ادقی کن بی ادوشن ز زمین
 ماه بیما ران چاه کشیده
 ثابت چاه میل داری بی بد



All the miniatures of this manuscript illustrate the Gulistan. Their small size and sparse scenery and the colour range dominated by yellowish-brown tones indicate that they belong to the Shiraz school of the first half of the 15th century, although they are not by the leading masters of that time. The manuscript's Shiraz origin is also indicated by the layout of the text on the page and the triangular medallion with plant ornamentation in the margins.



Parrot and Raven in a Cage

Artist and source unknown

Mid-1420s

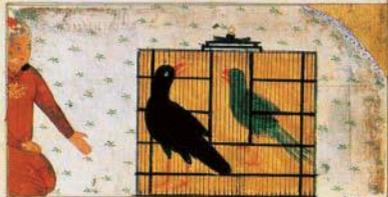
Gouache on paper, 8.2 x 4.2 cm

S. Khanukayev Collection, Saint Petersburg

لیفگله

خال روی تو از چمن معانیست
 تو چه بجز می در لنگ دره ایست
 در معانی من از زیر معنی منم
 که در کشا دنی بازم غایب می
 بیست شه آید تمام درستی
 که از چرخ آفتاب در دایره ای

بوی گل از غنچه بود سر سبز
 بوی گل از غنچه بود سر سبز
 کل زاده در سوات عرب
 یا راسته قتی آن طرب
 ز قنداب آید بر سر پخت
 ز قنداب آید بر سر پخت
 کل زاده در سوات عرب
 یا راسته قتی آن طرب
 ز قنداب آید بر سر پخت
 ز قنداب آید بر سر پخت



و غیرت یک خواب از صحت طول بخان آمد
 بود و بلبل شده لاجل کان
 از که بر شش کسی من آید می گفت ایچ محبت نکوت و طالع دارون
 و ایام بر طولون و در نگار دست لایق گلشن آفت که در صحت زانی
 بودی و در هر دو با فی خراسانی
 پارسا بسین تدر زده ای
 که نو ذم طریله از زبان
 تا چه کرده ام که در و کارم بقوت آن در سلک محبت چنین الهی نموداری
 تا جنس ما و برای در بند بلا شتلا کرده است

کس کس تا بد بای انوار ای
 که تو را در بهشت باشد مای

این گل بلبل بدان آورده آمد آنی که بنده آید
 اما از آرزو آن قدرت
 نادان را از فلان و شتلات

قطعه زاده ای در سماع و زندان بود
 که طریلی ز باقرش منشین
 که تو هم در میان ما

حکایت در قیاس داشتیم که سالها با هم سفر کرده بودیم در میان و یک
 خود در دستیار حقوق صحبت داشت شد آخر الامر بیست لنگ نقی آزار
 خاطر من روان داشت و دوستی میان ما سپری شده و با این همه دوستی

در غنچه گل از غنچه بود سر سبز
 بوی گل از غنچه بود سر سبز
 کل زاده در سوات عرب
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 ز قنداب آید بر سر پخت
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 ز قنداب آید بر سر پخت
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 ز قنداب آید بر سر پخت
 ز قنداب آید بر سر پخت

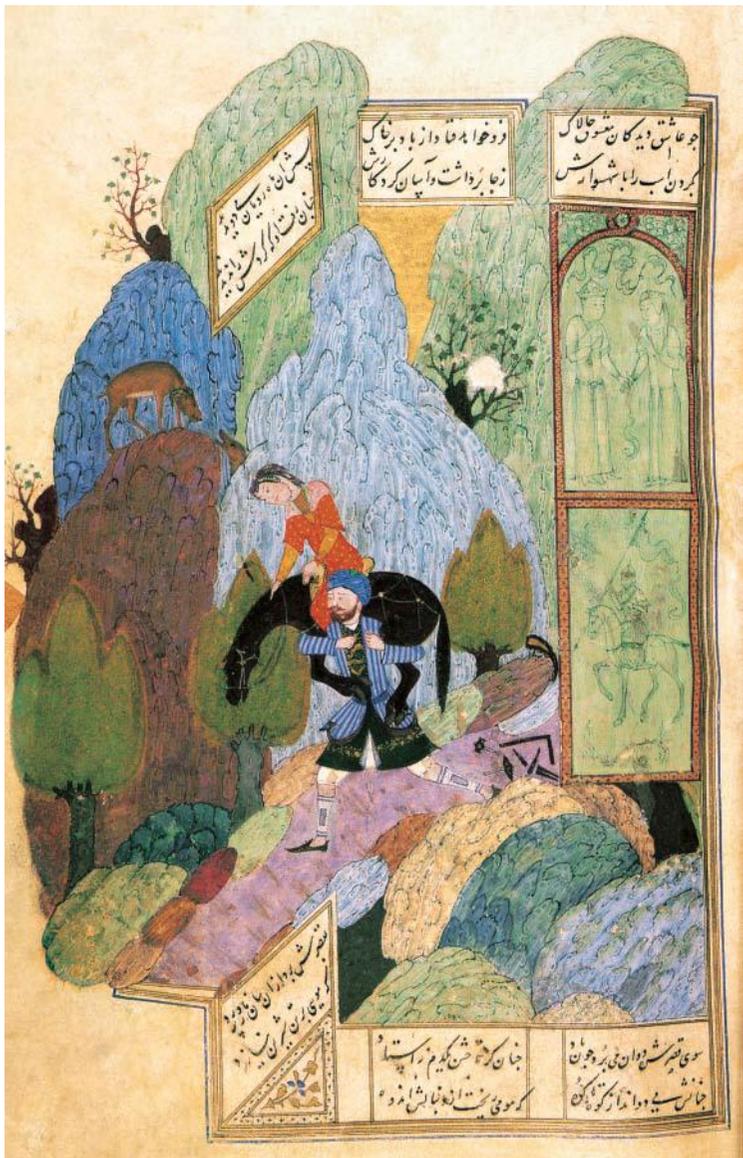


The miniature reproduced here is an illustration to the poem *Khusraw and Shirin*. It depicts the meeting of Farhad and Shirin in the mountains. This episode is one of the most popular among illustrators of the story of king Khusraw, the beautiful Shirin and the stonemason Farhad. The miniature corresponds exactly with the story by showing characters against a background of steep, inaccessible mountains with sharp peaks, which take up almost the whole sheet and even overlap the margins. The posture and movements of a man carrying a heavy load on his shoulders are conveyed with great mastery.

Farhad Carrying the Horse and Shirin

Illustration from Nizami's masterpiece *Khamsa*
(literally "collection of five")
1430s

Gouache on paper, 16 x 12.1 cm
The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg



چو عاقل دیدگان شونجالی
 گردن آب را با شهسوارش

ز دعوای درقا دار با درنگ
 ز جای برداشت و آسان کرد گامش

بسیار با درون کسب و خیر
 بیایان ز کار و کوشش



تیرش به درازان کسب و خیر
 کسوفی ز کار و کوشش

جان کز دشمن کیم بر آید
 کسوفی ز کار و کوشش

سوی تیرش دهان بی بره جوان
 جان سپید و دانا ز کار و کوشش

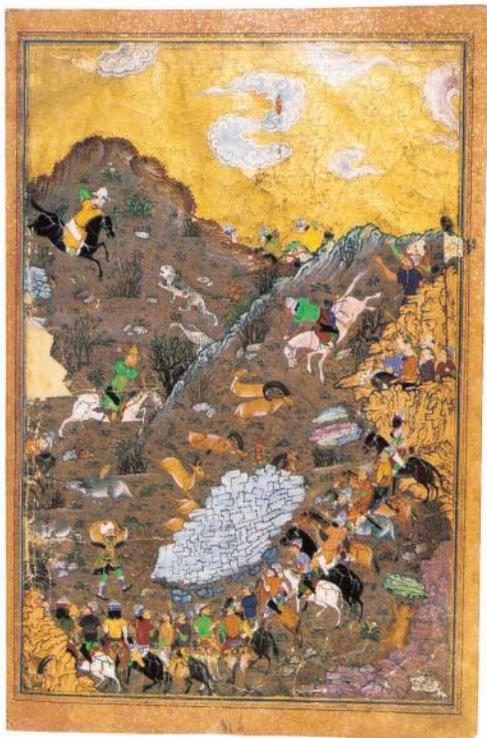
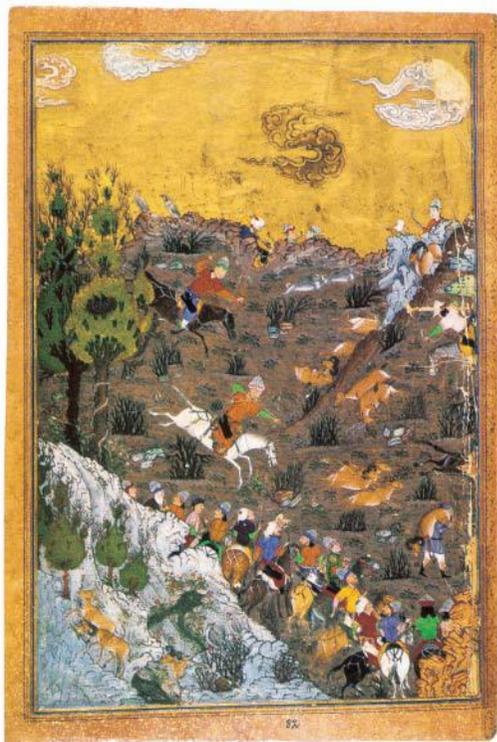


This large-format double composition is glued into a later manuscript of the mid-16th century in which it occupies the final pages. It is possible that it was cut into two parts at that time. Its palette of dark grey and brown tones is unusual in 15th-century miniatures of the schools known to us. The treatment of plants, clouds and mountains links it to Herat miniatures of the 1460s.

The Shah's Hunt

Illustration by Shah-Mahmud al-Nishapuri from
Jami's masterpiece *Silsilat al-dhahab*
1460s-1470s

Gouache on paper, 37.5 x 27 cm and 37.8 x 25.5 cm
The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg





Two miniatures of this manuscript have been well-known to scholars for a long time. The human figures, slim and elongated with small, rounded faces almost devoid of any expression, are all treated identically, which would indicate the work of a single artist. The landscape (especially the tree with variously coloured leaves) is characteristic of the work of artists of the Herat School of the late 15th century.



Relatives Visit Majnun

Illustration from Amir Khusraw Dihlavi's masterpiece

Majnun and Laila

Late 15th century

Gouache on paper, 16.5 x 11.7 cm

The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg





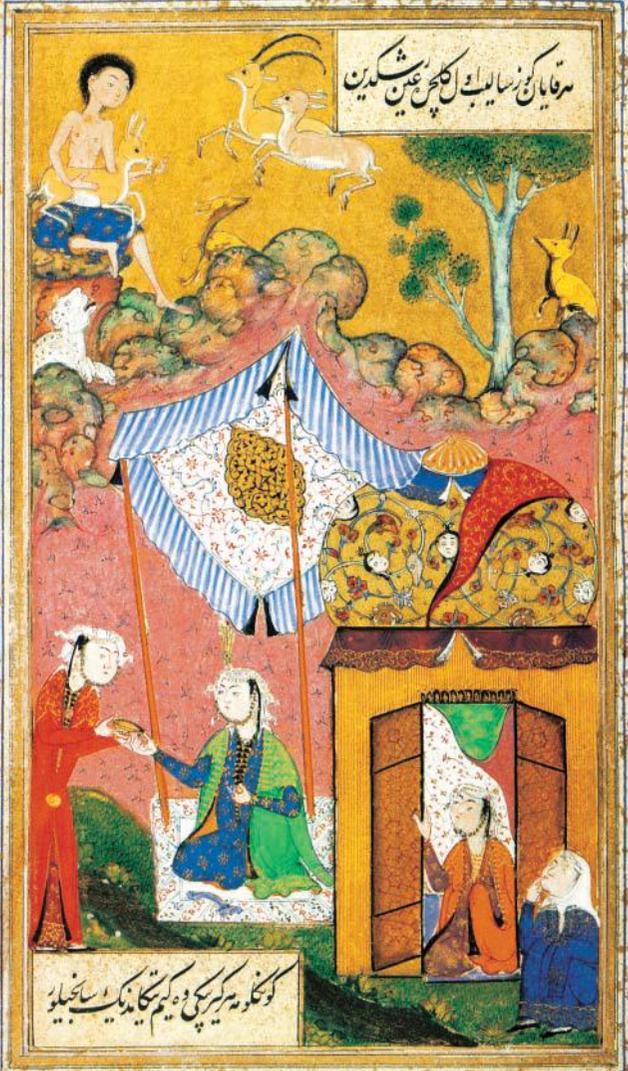
This small manuscript is a masterpiece of Persian book design during the early years of the 16th century. It is very probable that it was produced for some important person, which would explain such a high artistic level of calligraphy, illumination and binding. The colour scheme and the treatment of figures and landscape are evidence that the present work belongs rather to the Herat School of the 1520s than to that of Tabriz.

The Lovers' Meeting

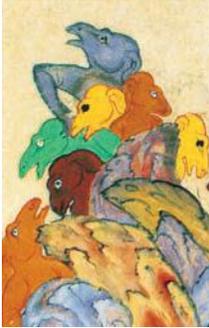
Illustration from sultan Husain Baykara's masterpiece *Divan*
1520s

Gouache on paper, golden highlights, 12.8 x 7.3 cm
Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of
Sciences, Saint Petersburg

سرفایا کو زنا دیگ کچھ عین شکرین



کو نکلو یہ کر کے یہ کہ تم تھکا دیکھا سنا جلیو



In the miniatures of this manuscript one can trace the process of consolidation of the Tabriz School of miniatures, which took place during the mid-1520s. In the early 16th century Tabriz already had its school of miniatures, whose most brilliant representative was Sultan-Muhammad Iraqi. Around 1520 Bihzad came to Tabriz, together with the future Shah Tahmasp, and he became the head of the court library (*kitabkhanah*).



Alexander Sets Out in Search of the Water of Life

Illustration from Firdawsi's masterpiece

Shahnama (The Book of Kings)

Mid-1520s

Gouache on paper, 24 x 20.5 cm

Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of
Sciences, Saint Petersburg

خنک و با پنج کزماست کج
 همه شمشیر کشیده گنج
 سینه پرانده بیکه که در سینه
 بنفشه بود که مسکرا ن آورده
 کج و مسکنه نیم قرون
 ز سر کشوری دانشی میگرد

بخشش شما آمدنی و پنج
 ز توده ز ما و غنیمت و گوار
 پیارند جنبه آنکه باید کار
 دود و دیوار که دازد و میپوشی

به بندم کن این ارادت ن برآ
 ز همه حبه توای همه نیدام
 چنانکه از به بردند چیزی که خوش
 زین تا سر تیغ بالای او

بینه سروی کنی تو که کفایتی
 برستند بیایم تا زنده ایم
 پاورده از آن فیلسوفان کن
 مسکن روی و بنگه از آن برده
 جوشده شسته کار و اندیشه
 دو صد شاه رسیده به نیای او





The miniatures in this manuscript were executed over ninety years after the copy had been completed. There are thirty-nine miniatures in the manuscript, four of them added later, possibly in the 18th-19th century. One of the 16th-century miniatures bears the signature of Qasim-i Ali, i.e. Qasim ibn Ali. This artist was a contemporary of Bihzad and not inferior to him in his artistry. Very little is known of his life, but judging by the less vivid palette of this copy's miniatures in comparison to those of Tabriz in the 1520s, one can assume that Qasim-i Ali worked in Herat and was still alive in the mid-1520s.

The First Sermon of Hasan ibn Ali

Illustration by Qasim ibn Ali from Muhammad al-Husaini al-Varamini's masterpiece *Ahsan al-Kibar*
1526

Gouache on paper, 15.8 x 21 cm
The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg





One can assume that the miniatures in this manuscript copied by the young Shah Tahmasp I were executed by the best artists of his court workshop. Judging by the different styles, the miniatures were executed by various artists, although all were from the same school. The artist who produced this miniature painted two others with a similar theme. The particular treatment of landscape and faces – small, rounded, with bushy eyebrows – is characteristic of his style. He also conveys movement with great skill.

Polo Game

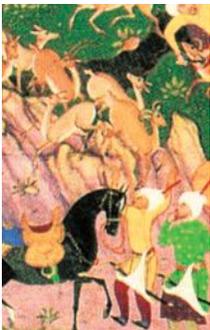
Illustration from Arifi's masterpiece *Khal-nama*

Late 1520s

Gouache on paper, 13.8 x 10.4 cm

The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg





This large-format double composition is glued at the beginning of Jami's poem, but does not illustrate it. In its bright palette and treatment of figures, this miniature belongs among the late products of the Tabriz School.

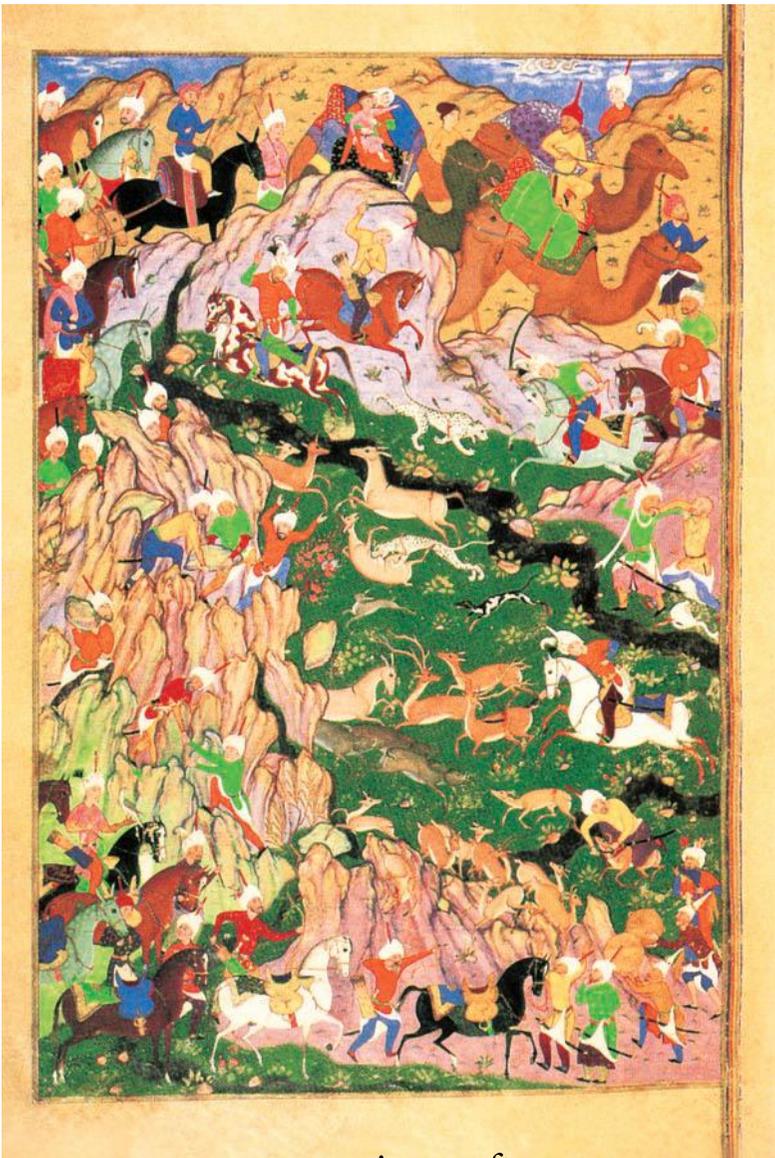
Shah's Hunt (left folio)

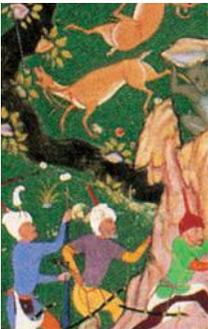
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece *Silsilat al-dhabab*

Mid-16th century

Gouache on paper, 31.7 x 21 cm

The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg





It is possible that the treatment of the mountains already displays features which were to reach their full development in the workshops of Qazwin and Mashhad around the late 1550s and 1560s. This work by a talented, unknown artist is a true masterpiece of the Persian miniature.

Shah's Hunt (right folio)

Illustration from Jami's masterpiece *Silsilat al-dhabab*

Mid-16th century

Gouache on paper, 31.7 x 21 cm

The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg





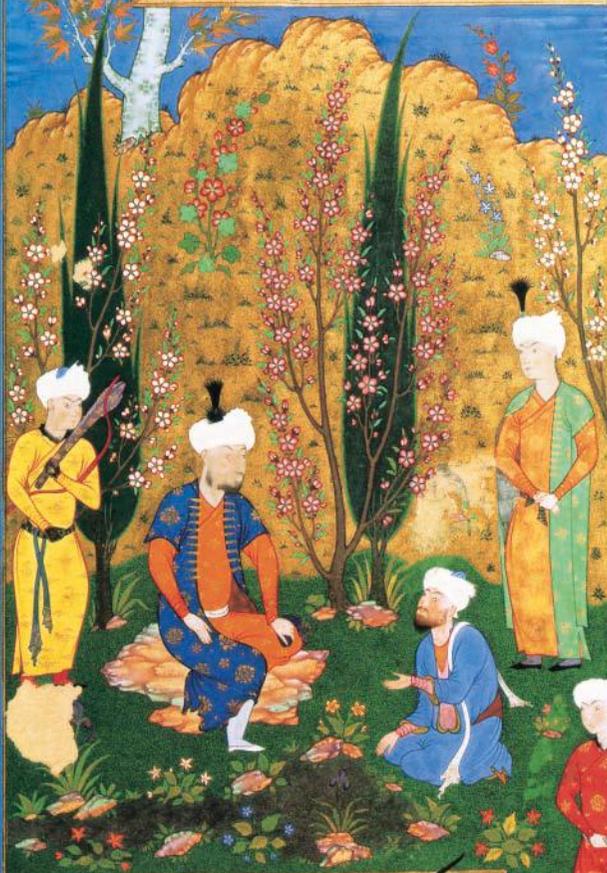
This sumptuously decorated example of the *Lavaiḥ* was copied by the famous calligrapher of the second half of the 16th century, Ahmad Mashhadi, for the ruler of Mazandaran, Murad Khan. Apparently the artistic merits of this manuscript were so great that Qazi Ahmad Qumi, the well-known biographer of artists, mentions it in his work, which is an extremely unusual occurrence.

The Shah Listens to the Teachings of a Sufi

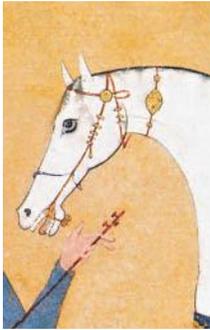
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece *Lava'ih (Shafts of Light)*
1570s

Gouache on paper, 16.3 x 9.3 cm
The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg

مرصورت دلکش که تراروی نمود



خواهد فلک شین و در چشم تو ربود



The miniature *Youth Playing a Lute* belongs to the Qazwin School. The figures of the youth and the white horse are set against the clear ground of the paper, which is characteristic of Qazwin miniatures on separate sheets. At the bottom of the miniature is the artist's not-entirely-decipherable inscription: "Painted by a poor man, who trusts in the mercy of Allah Sharaf al-Husaini al-Yazdi, in the year 1003." No other work by this artist is known.

Youth Playing a Lute

Illustration by Sharaf al-Husaini al-Yazdi
1594-1595

Gouache and gold on paper, 12 x 20.8 cm
The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg



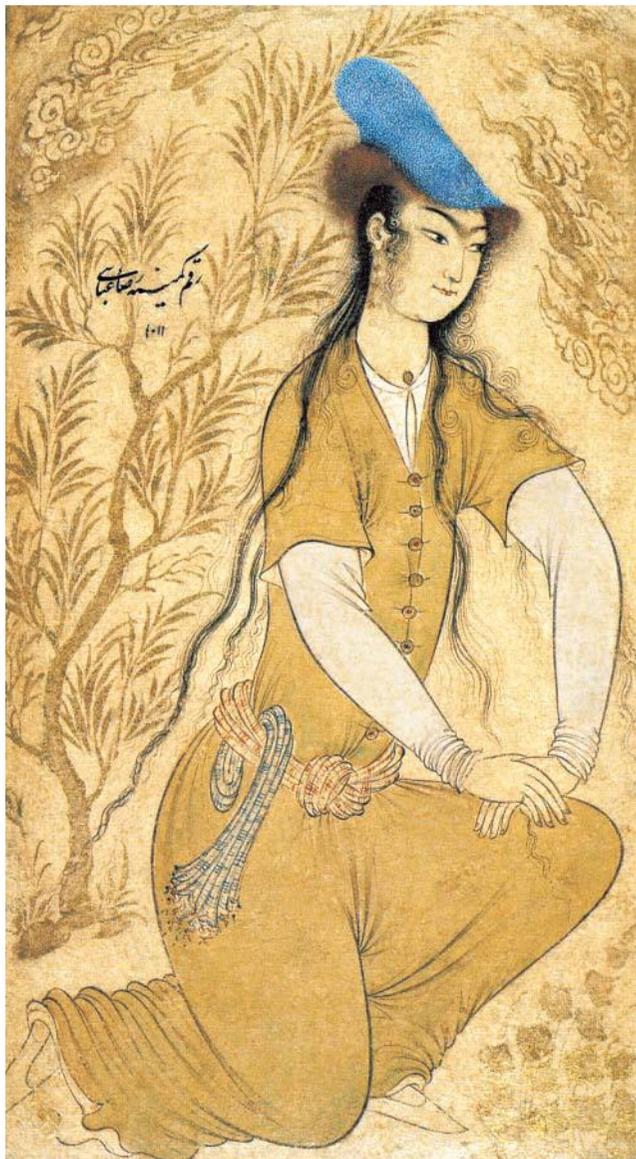


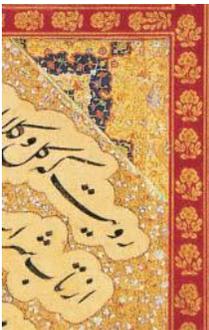
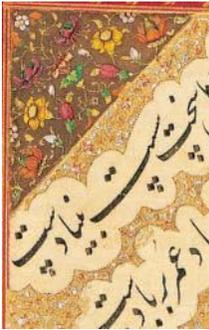
In the late 16th to early 17th century, new trends appeared in Persian painting, linked above all with the endeavour to convey a visual impression of the surrounding world. One of the artists who dealt with these problems was Riza-i Abbasi, considered the founder of the so-called Isfahan School of painting formed in the early 17th century. The artist's full name was Aqa Riza ibn Ali-Asghar Kashani.

Girl in a Fur Hat

Illustration by Riza-i Abbasi
1602-1603

Indian ink, watercolour and gold, 19.3 x 16 cm
The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg



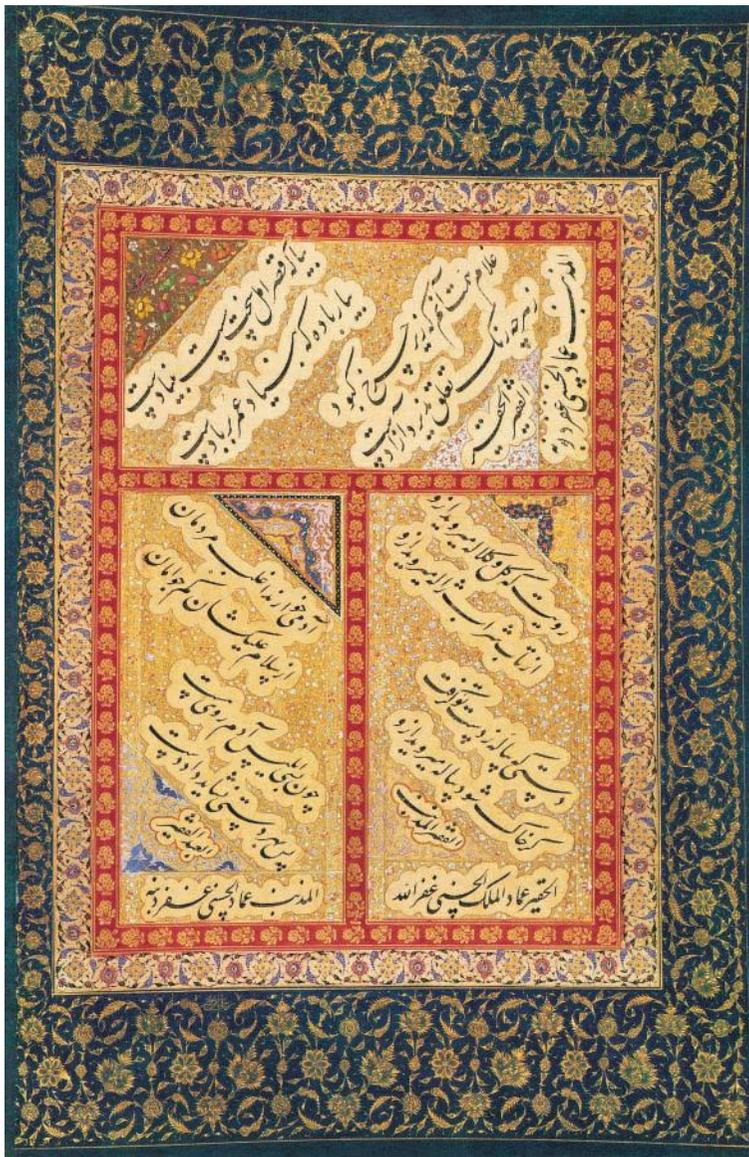


The outstanding master of artistic calligraphy Mir Imad was a pupil of the famous calligraphers Malik Dailami and Muhammad-Husaini Tabrizi. He was the last reformer of the *nastaliq* script style and was famed for his art in writing samples of large and medium *nastaliq*. He worked for many years at the court of Shah Abbas I.

Three Samples of Calligraphy

Illustration by Mir Imad
Before 1615

Indian ink on paper, 45 x 29.5 cm (folio)
Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of
Sciences, Saint Petersburg



دردی که در دل من است
دردی که در دل تو است
دردی که در دل خداست
دردی که در دل من است
دردی که در دل تو است
دردی که در دل خداست

آدمی از غایت کرم و ارادت
زین عالم کجاست که بر جان
پیش ازین کس که در راه تو
پیش ازین کس که در راه تو
پیش ازین کس که در راه تو
الذین سبوا علیهم فی حرمه

دردی که در دل من است
دردی که در دل تو است
دردی که در دل خداست
دردی که در دل من است
دردی که در دل تو است
دردی که در دل خداست
ای خدایا و الملک است یعنی غیر الله

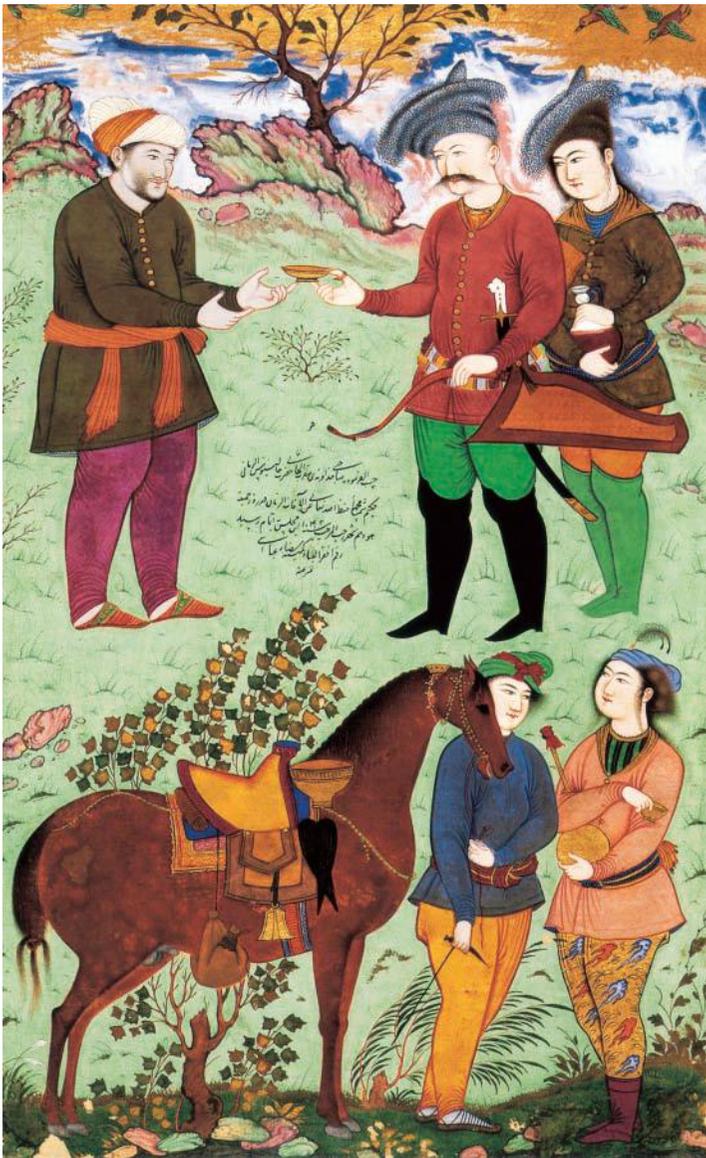


The art of the last great Iranian miniaturist, Riza-i Abbasi, is fairly well represented in this book. A well-known scholar of the Iranian miniature, I. S. Shchukin, has distinguished three periods in the artist's work. The majority of the miniatures reproduced in this book belong to the last (third) period in the art of Riza-i Abbasi. The large miniature *Shah Abbas and Khan Alam* is exceptional among his work; possibly it represents the genre of official ceremonial portraiture.

Shah Abbas and Khan Alam

Illustration by Riza-i Abbasi
1633

Gouache on paper, 28.5 x 17.5 cm
The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg



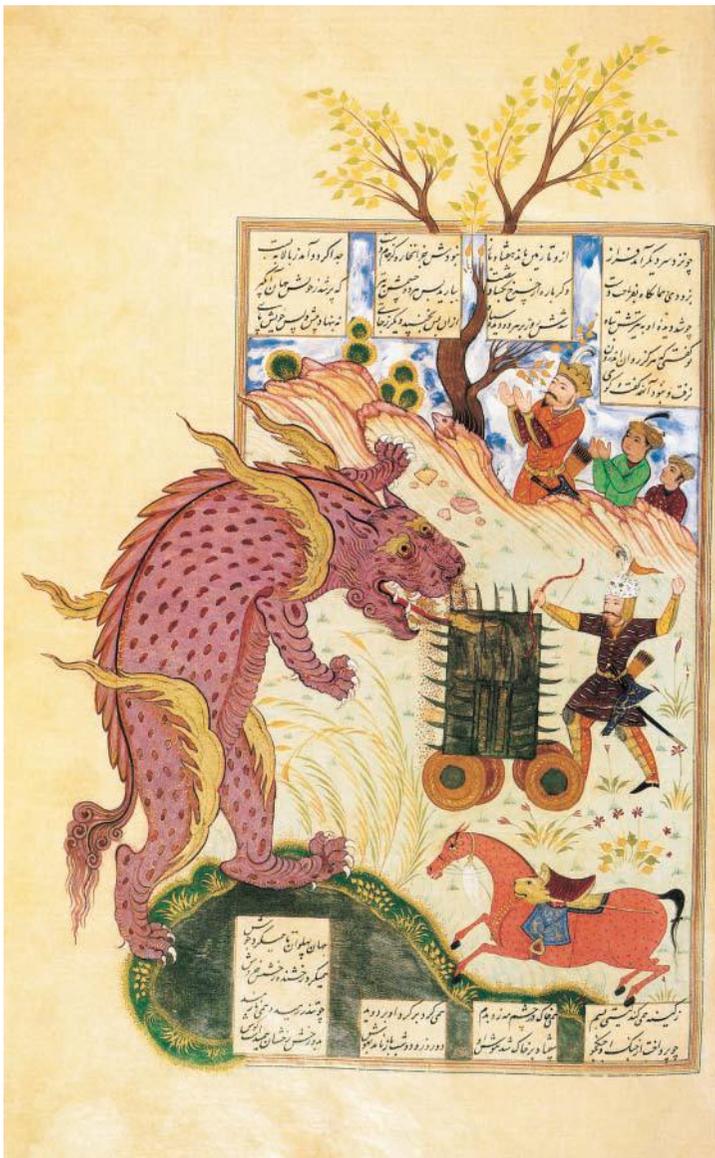


Reza Musawwir was another of the artists who worked on the miniatures for the copy of the *Shahnama* made for Abbas II. Although this miniature bears no signature, all the characteristics of the artist's style are present here – the use of light colours and the treatment of the sky in the form of blue-white patches – and this allows one to attribute the work to him.

Rustam Battles with the Monster

Illustration by Riza-i Musawwir from Firdawsi's masterpiece
Shahnama (The Book of Kings)
1640s

Gouache on paper, 39 x 25 cm
The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg





This portrait of the ruler of Bukhara, Imam-Quli Khan, is the only surviving picture of him. It was during his stay in Iran that this portrait was painted – a typical example of the Isfahan School of 17th-century miniature painting, as can be clearly seen in the treatment of the vegetation and clouds and the figure of the Khan himself.

Portrait of Imam-Quli Khan

Illustration by Muhammad Musawwir

1642-1643

16.3 x 12.7 cm

Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow



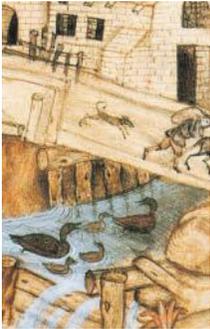
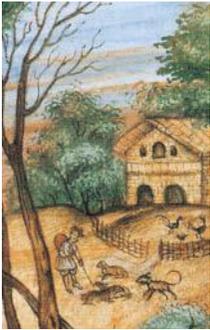


An enormous copy of the *Shahname* was prepared as a gift to Shah Abbas II: it was illuminated with 192 miniatures. A group of artists worked on the illustrations of this copy, although not all of them left their signatures. Afzal al-Husaini was one of them and signed fifty-five miniatures (some of the unsigned works may also be attributed to him). A muted grey-blue palette and a somewhat grotesque treatment of human figures are the characteristics of his style.

Girshasp Kills Afriqi in the Battle Against
the Kirvan Padishah

Illustration by Afzal al-Husaini from Firdawsi's masterpiece
Shahname (*The Book of Kings*)
1645-1646

Gouache on paper, 31 x 22.5 cm
The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg



European works were copied regularly in Iran from the 1670s on, but during the first half and middle of the century only isolated cases of Persian artists turning to European examples are known, one of them being this particular miniature. It is well known that “pure landscape” was never an independent genre in Persian painting, which is probably why the miniaturist supplemented the landscape with figures absent in the original.

European Landscape

Illustration by Ali-Quli ibn Muhammad
1649

Gouache on paper, 9 x 12 cm
The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg





The miniature *Shah and Courtiers* bears the signature: “He [i.e. Allah] ! Son of an ancient slave Ali-Quli Jabbadar”. Although the term *ghulam-zade* signifies “son of a slave born in the master’s house”, it hardly follows that one should understand it literally in this instance. It is most probably simply a humbling formula. Above the two figures, to the left, are two Georgian inscriptions, greatly distorted. Although the draughtsmanship of the miniature is Iranian, it shows evidence of Ali-Quli’s close acquaintance with the techniques of European painting.



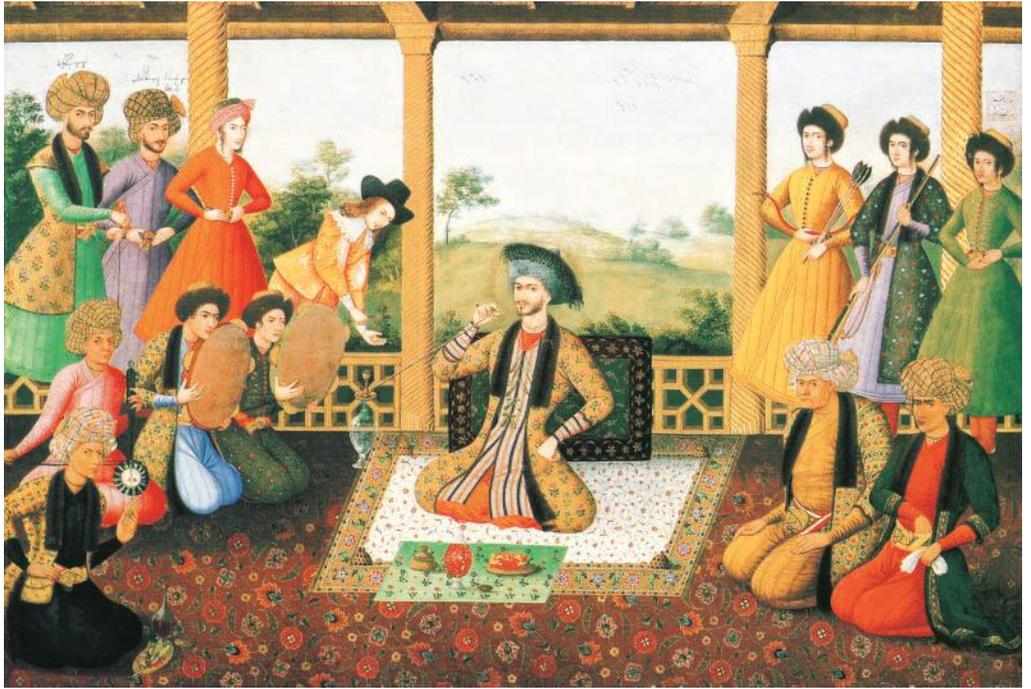
Shah and Courtiers

Illustration by Ali-Quli beg Jabbadar

Second half of the 17th century

Painting on paper, 28.2 x 42.1 cm

Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg





The subject is borrowed from an engraving by R. Sadeler. A comparison of the miniature and the print shows that Muhammad Zaman did not slavishly copy the subject but only transferred to the miniature the figures of Venus and Cupid, meanwhile completely altering the background. He also left out the figure of a satyr, without which the posture of Cupid remains inexplicable. Meanwhile the painting technique remains purely Iranian.

Venus and Cupid

Illustration by Muhammad Zaman
1684-1685

Painting on paper, 24 x 17.9 cm

Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of
Sciences, Saint Petersburg





Persian miniatures depicting flowers and birds appeared quite frequently in the mid-17th century. The miniature reproduced here is executed in the European style, which had become established in Iranian painting during the second half of the 17th century. The figure of the bird is rendered three-dimensionally by means of chiaroscuro modelling.

Bird Perched on a Blossoming Branch

Illustration from Yusuf Zaman from an album of miniatures
and samples of calligraphy
1696-1697

Painting on paper, 14.3 x 8.7 cm
The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg



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The miniature illustrates an episode from the poem *Rawdat al-Anwar* (*Meadows of Light*) written in 1342 by Kamal al-Din Khwaju Kirmani (1281-1352): the great Seljuk Malik-Shah, accompanied by his retinue, sets out from his residence at Isfahan to go hunting; on the way he is stopped by an old woman who complains that his hunting pleasures are inflicting irreparable damage on the fields of his subjects. This incident was a favourite theme of medieval Iranian poets and artists.



Old Woman and Shah Malik

Illustration from the Isfahan school

Last quarter of the 18th century

Painting with golden highlights on paper, 36.5 x 35.5 cm
Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of
Sciences, Saint Petersburg

ششم کلنگ بسین رفت
 لاله چراغی ز رفت
 کوزه سار در رفت
 خوش برین بزم رفت
 خضر او دست او رفت
 که کدورت فریشت
 و بسته پیش او در رفت
 پست کردم کرده باصدا رفت



چون جهان را که سفر
 رفت ازین منزل کی در
 دیدم ز کیش هر که کوب
 اندر ز چشمه فرزند است
 گفت که در کوه گرانده در
 کردی بهشت در سنگید
 کاغذ منمزه کوه تپانه
 کار که بر کوهستان است
 کشت که از سر خورشده ای
 ار که تو بر کوهستان است
 سواد ز چشمه است
 صال ز پست این است
 پست از چشمه است
 سواد ز چشمه است
 صال ز پست این است

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