

Persian Miniatures

شیراز
تبریز

Authors: Vladimir Loukonine and Anatoli Ivanov

Page 4:

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

Gouache on paper, 7.4 x 10.4 cm.

The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg.

Page 7:

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

Gouache on paper, 12.5 x 22.3 cm.

Museum of Western and Oriental Art, Kiev.

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“Epigrams succeed where epics fail.”

— Persian proverb



در دایره سلطنت مرانه
بیاختش سر از افق
رضا

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 revitalization 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

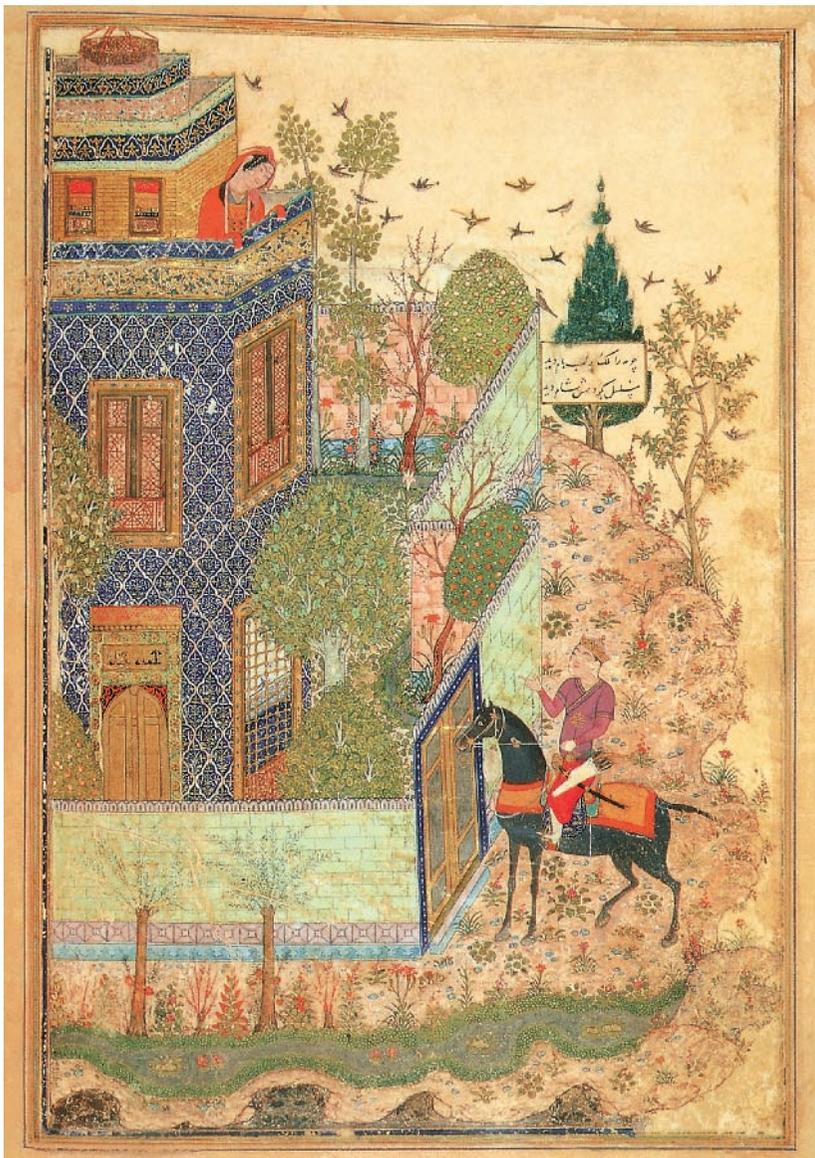
Illustration from Khwaju Kirmani's masterpiece

Three Poems

1396

38.1 x 24.7 cm (folio)

The British Library, London



چو مرا گفتند که ای پادشاه
سینا که در این شهر است



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

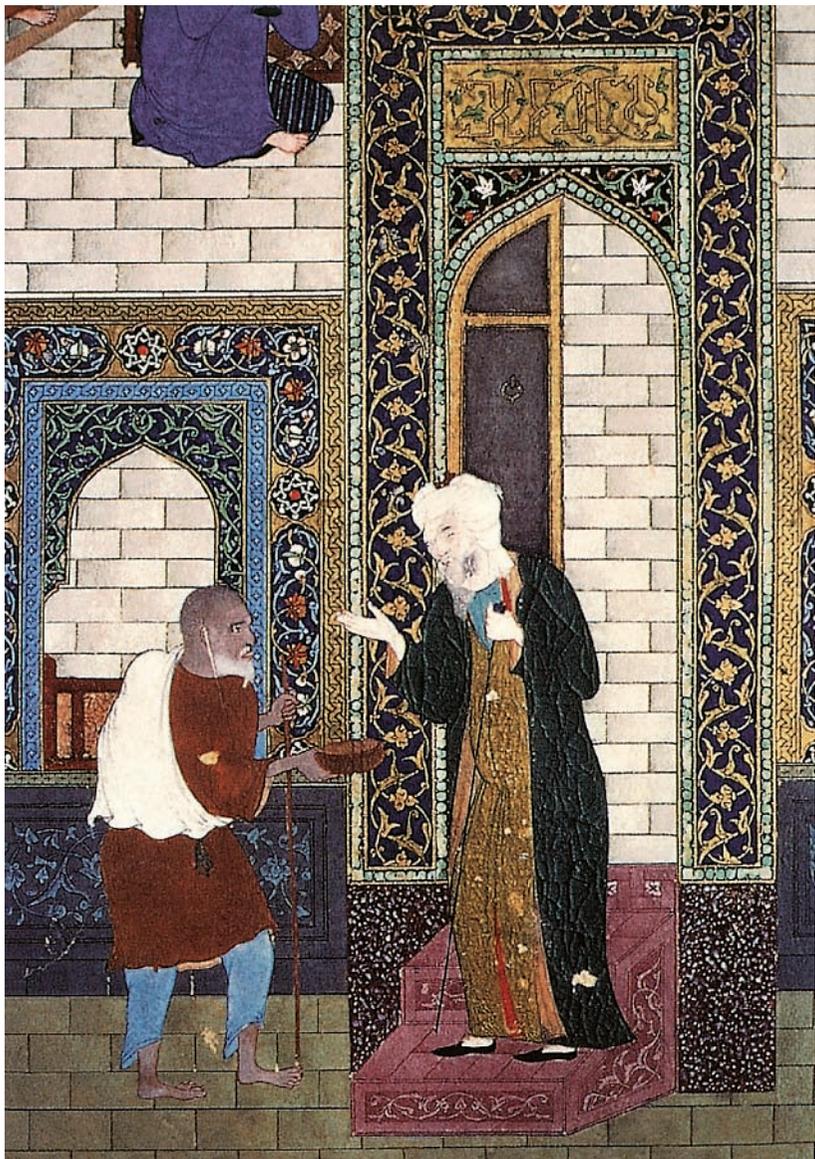
A Muslim Giving Alms

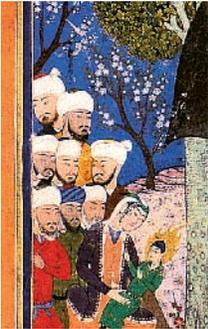
Illustration by Bihzad from Sa'di's masterpiece

Bustan (The Orchard)

15th century

National Library, Cairo

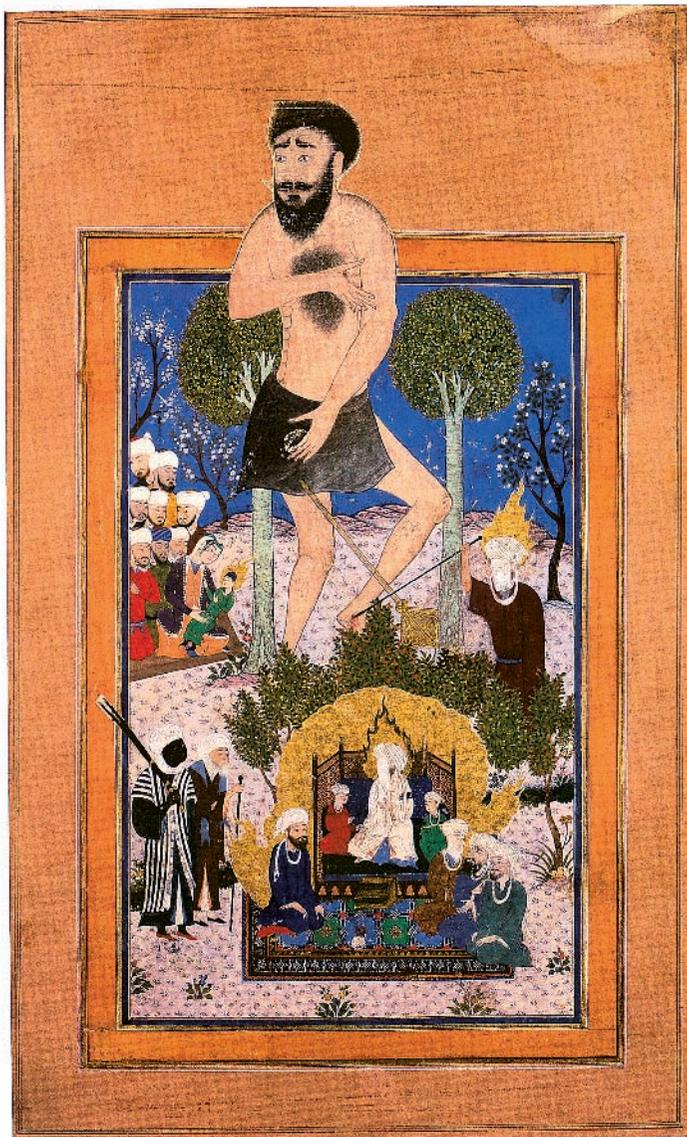




acacis gum: it was on this primer that the artist drew and painted. The paintings on some sheets are so thick that they could pass for a type of relief. Some jewels were made of superimposed layers of gold sheets reworked with a stylus, as in some Venetian paintings. Should the artist append his name,

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.



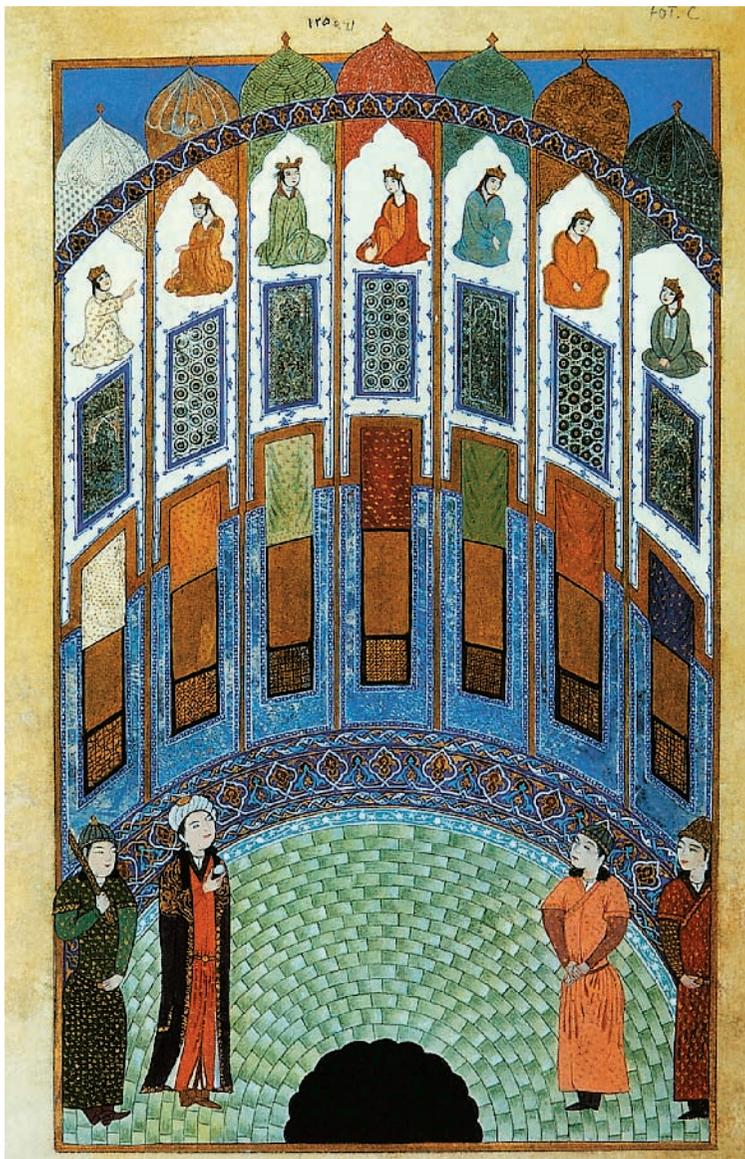
Bahram Discovers the Hall with the Seven Portraits

Illustration from Nizami's masterpiece

Haft Paikar (The Seven Idols)

1410-1411

Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon

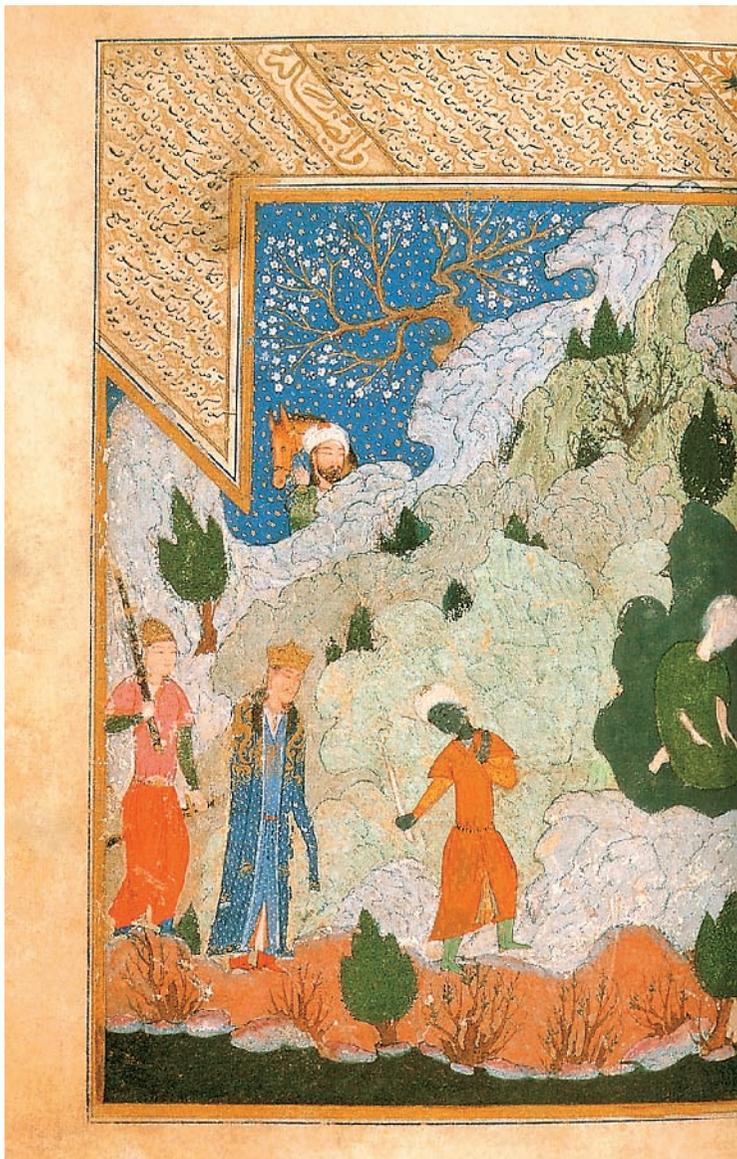




However, miniatures often were added after the manuscript itself was created. A mastery of these works and an attempt to classify all of them according to their countries of origin and schools is a very daunting task, as very few of the manuscripts are dated and signed by the painters.

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' al-Tavarikh*

c. 1425-1430

33.8 x 23 cm (folio)

The British Museum, London

جبوی ازان نفع بدن ولایات رسیدن و درین وقت که بادشاه اسلام خلفا لله سلطانده و اعلامشده فرموده که تا دینج
 مبارک را تالیف کند و بنویسد چون مالک سزگ کرده را در قدیم لایام هیچ بادشاه بیگانه سزگ کرد این بود و در آن
 مخالفت نیافد چیک بزخاں و اروق نام دارا و اوستیخلص کرد اینند و در تحت تصرف خویش آوردند و بمان سبب
 حکما بابت آن درین تاریخ آوردن ضروری بود بادشاه اشلام خلفا لله ملکه فرموده که تو تاریخ احوال آن مملکت و بادشاهها
 آنجا برنسیل بجان و اختصار آنجا کرده شود بروفق فرمان نافذ لازل با فنا و مطاع از چیک یخنای بساحی و مگو
 نام هر دو بر علم ط و نجوم و تاریخ خنای و اف اند و بعضی ازان کتب خنای با خود آورده و آن معانی را مستخرج کن تا تاریخ
 که داشتند حاضر کرده اند و تقریر کنند که هر چند تاریخ اصل خنای عظیم قدیم است و عدد سالها را دوازده نشان بوسی
 که پیش ازین با خواص شهر آذین فر کرده اند لیکن تاریخی که انسانی بادشاهان ایجاد ران شروع و مفصل است و بنیاد چکا یا
 بران نهاده اند و درین وقت میان اهل خنای شهرتی دارد و تاریخی درست و محقق است و تمامت چکا و دایان بران آغناد





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 خط زیر که پیود و در جهل بر نبتد که بر تر سپید از خط باز آید کارکان

و در سر کار غرض شوان کرد مگر برعت صمت و قوت طبع عمل سلطان و باز ز کافی در بیا و بنا لغت
و مغایرت دشمن و علما گویند مقام صیاح مروت بد و موضع پیوسته آید در خدمت یا دشنامان

کاران و مکر م یاد رسان ز نایاقان و مختصرم **شعر**

اِذَا مَا لَمْ يَكُنْ لَكَ مِثْلًا مِثْلًا فَادْعُ عِبَادَ اللَّهِ لِيُقَاطِعُوا
وَأَنْ تَمْلِكَ الدُّنْيَا جَمِيعًا نَهْوَاهُ فَاتْرِكْهَا جَمِيعًا

کلیله گفت ایزد تبارک و تعالی خیر و جنت و صلاح و سلامت بدین غنیمت و صیرت بر خد خالت
مزون دارد در دنیا برفت و بر شیر سلام کرد شیر از تر دیگان خود پر سپید که گیت کسند فلان رفیق
گفت آری پریش را ششتم او را بخواند و گفت کجایمی باشی گفت بدرگاه 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

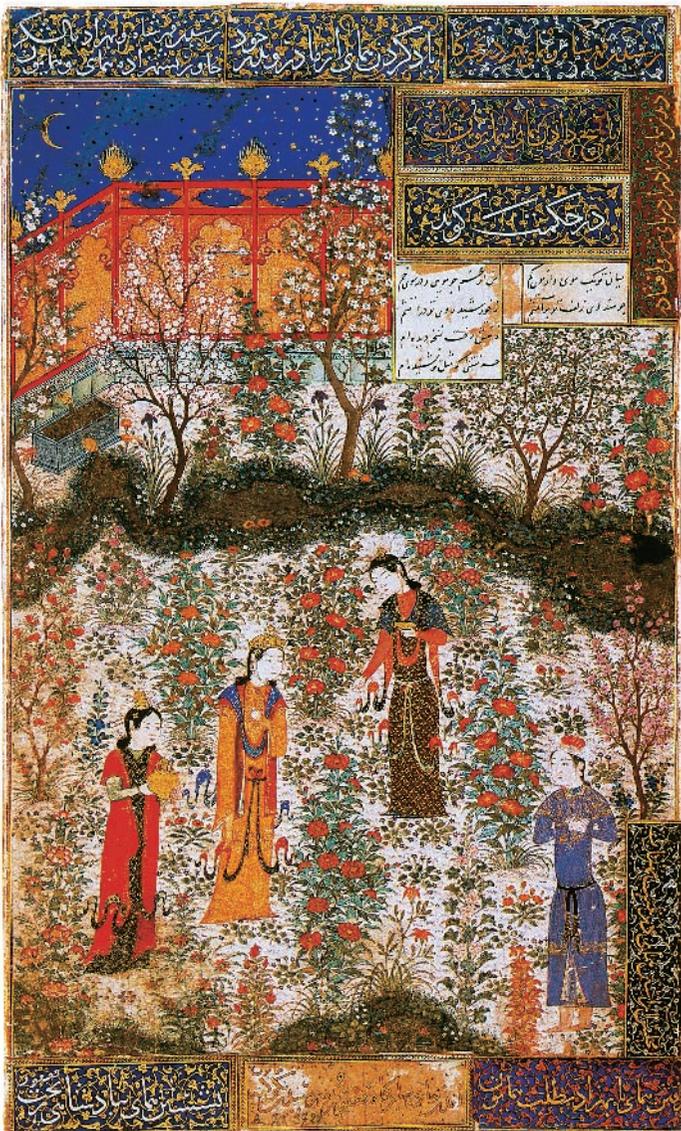
The Persian Prince Humay Meeting the Chinese Princess Humayun in a Garden

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

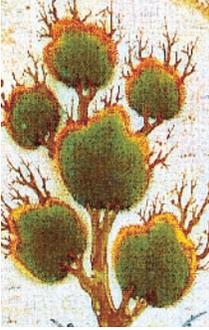
سپه دار کرد و تختی نالان
من نهی پر چانه تو ایام
تو باشی چو کبک و سپهر
باید که در دواش برزده
چشم در نام از آن روزگم
چو چاد و در پیش پای کنگ

مگردد راه کجا جانان
ز چسب که داد خوار پیغم
تو با کنگه دار ازین زنده
بر نام خود با شخت سگوه
ز خون نماند ایستایان
عمود می ز فولاد سپهر کنگ

کوه ای بر زار ز دامن دریا
از افسون و از ز یاد و سر
از زینت سر با بند چرسا
که آن جانان از زینت بود
ز ره دواش از زهر برگر

تو ای کنگه ای که در کوه
جست خدای در بره اولون
خاریم چسب ز کنگی ز کس
با نسون و قفس بر آن کوه
یاد و یاد بر آن کوه سپهر





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 کاوش سپهر کوی
ور مملکتش دو کون سوی



کوی سپهر نیا را بادش
خاک رهشت و جا را 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 دماغه بر سوس باد اول برش سالیان اراسته در نماز آید ی آید ن روی او چینی چون شد جان کوشش</p>	<p>گفت آن چه مهار بود کوی بودیت غیلم نسنه و کوی خواهی که نخازد مارت آید</p>	<p>بهر نشین و خوش آید بوی سر زلف آن نکارت گنگا که خطاست این چو پای</p>	<p>چون موش نمنز او در آید این روی ز موی ز بخت است سراسر 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

مستش از غایت روشن ملی
رفت ولی ز محنت پایی نماند
پرده بر انداخته دست حوال
آیت نوری که زوالش نبود

آمده در منزل بی منزلی
بست ولی ز محنت جان نماند
از در تعظیم پسر ای جلال

خیرت ازین پرده میانش گرفت
چون سخن از خود بد را آمد عام
پای شد اندک سپر انداخته

چهرت از آن گوشه غافل گرفت
با بخشش یافت قبول سلام
جان نخواستی خطی بر سینه
دیدم چو چشمی که نیایش نبود



دیدن او بی عرض و چو سر
دیدن آن پرده مکانی نبود
کفر بود نفی صفاتش مکن
دیدم ز بخششی و کسر
است خرد را ز خدا چه بسته
پشت قوی گشته از این گنا
ای بخش مهر با نهایی ما

گر عرض از او را از اسود
رفتن آن راه ز ما نمی نمود
جای بود و وقف چهارتن مکن
بل همین چشم هر آن شوم
لب بسکه خنده پیرا بسته
روی در او رده با من کار گنا
بوی نوجوان داردی با نهایی ما

دیدن معبود پس ندیده
سر که در آن پرده نظر گنا
سنت و لیکن ز مغرب گنای
خورد و شربای که حق است
سنتی از کج تو انکس شده
زان سخن حشری نماند
و در سخن را بجاست سنان

دیدن او دیدنی و دیده نیست
از بهت چینی راه یافت
سر که خین نیست نباشد خدای
جر جان در دل مار نخواست
جمله مقصود میسر شده
در نفسی رفته و باز آمده
ضمخ 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



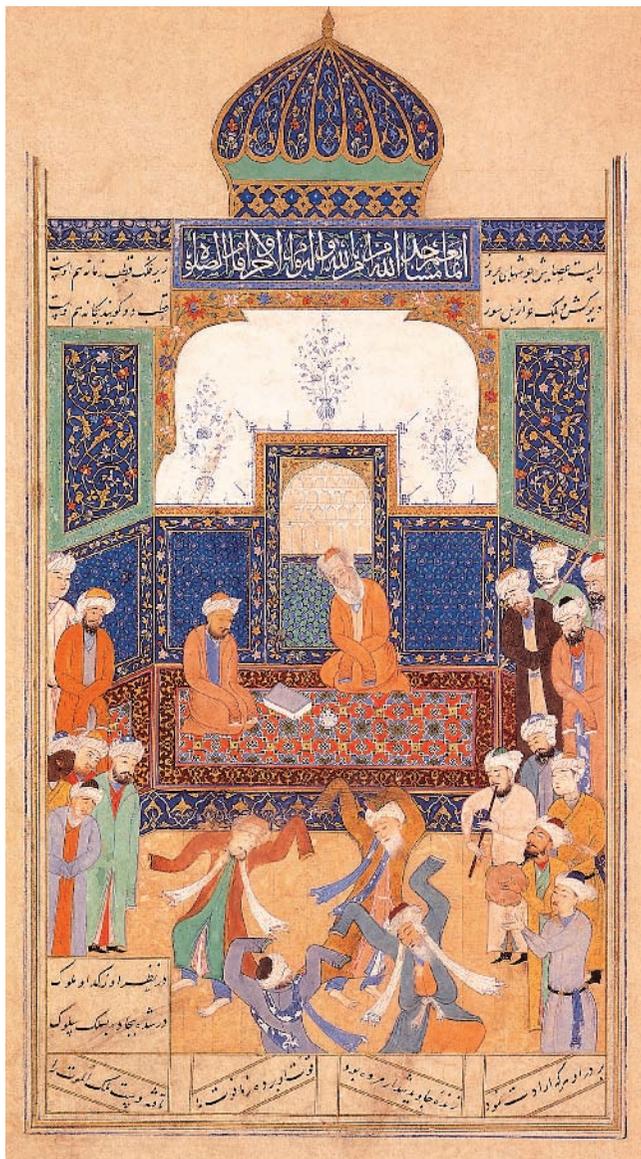
Sufis Performing Sama before Shaykh
Nizam al-Din Awliya

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

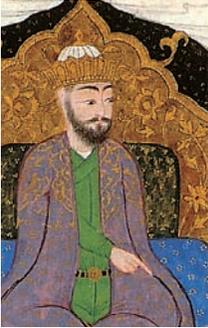


An Arrogant Clerk Engulfed under the Weight of His Own Beard

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 نامداران بر خاستن بج
 یکی پیشه دیدند و آهسته بود
 به پیشه دیگر که بر سبزه
 رفته و آهسته سر کشوری
 چون گشت از آن داستان دور
 کس آید بر ساه ایران سبزه
 پذیره شد آن شاه و کدواور

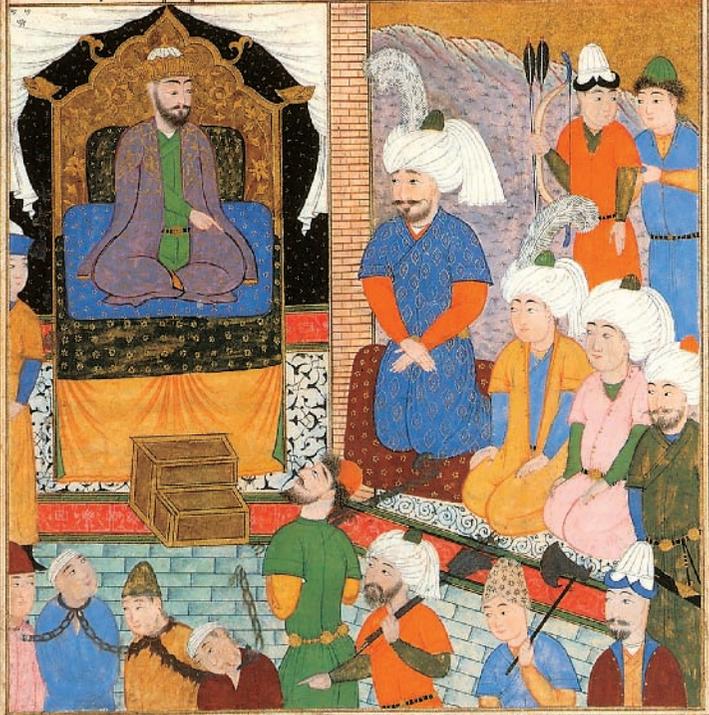
سبزه اردو زین سبزه است
 با بر اندر آمدی گشت و گوی
 سبزه شد ز کنگر داشت بود
 بنجید یک تن از آن جایگاه
 زمر نامداری و بر سروری

من اورا چنان است پیش کنم
 دو منزل رفتند از آن دوگاه
 سران چند کمان از در شاه بود
 می بود بار امش می بدست
 بسی پاییز و جزو چشمتن شاه

شش ماه گذر سبزه گشت
 که گشتند سبزه گشت
 نویسه ز راه دست گناه بود
 یکی شاه دو خرم کی خنده است
 بر دند ز کبک آن تنزایار
 بزرگش با سپود جرج بلت
 که آه ز پیر ز کافیر کاه و پیر شاه
 سیوان و پیلان و آن شکنان

رسیدن فرینرز دگیخسرو

ایا بونی و کورن سپاهی کران
 کند رو خمر و بدان بستن





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

9.5 x 18 cm

The British Library, London

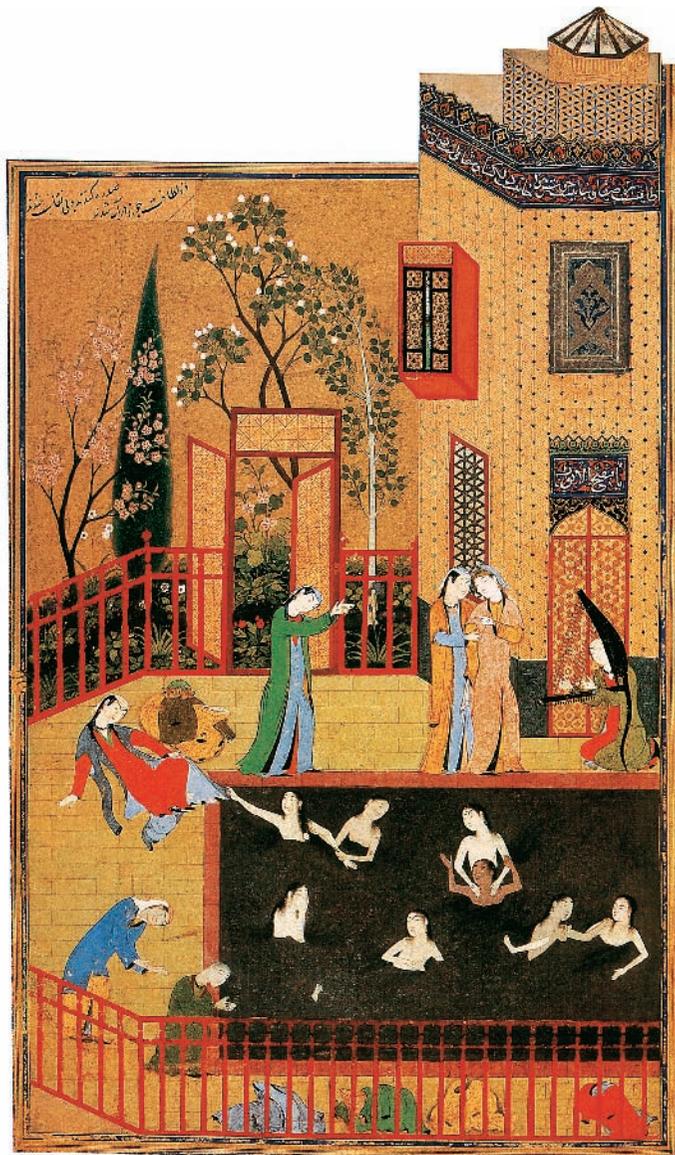


There are the accounts of the “official portraits” of the Sassanid rulers in the book of Sassanian history kept at Estakhr (Fars province) during the early 10th century and there is the information that the collection of fables, *Kalila wa Dimna*, translated in the eighth century from Middle Persian 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

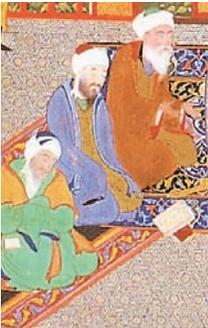
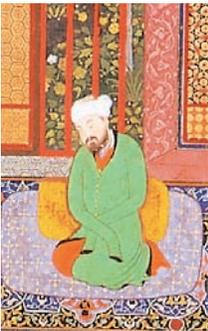
Artist and source unknown
1494-1495
The British Library, London





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

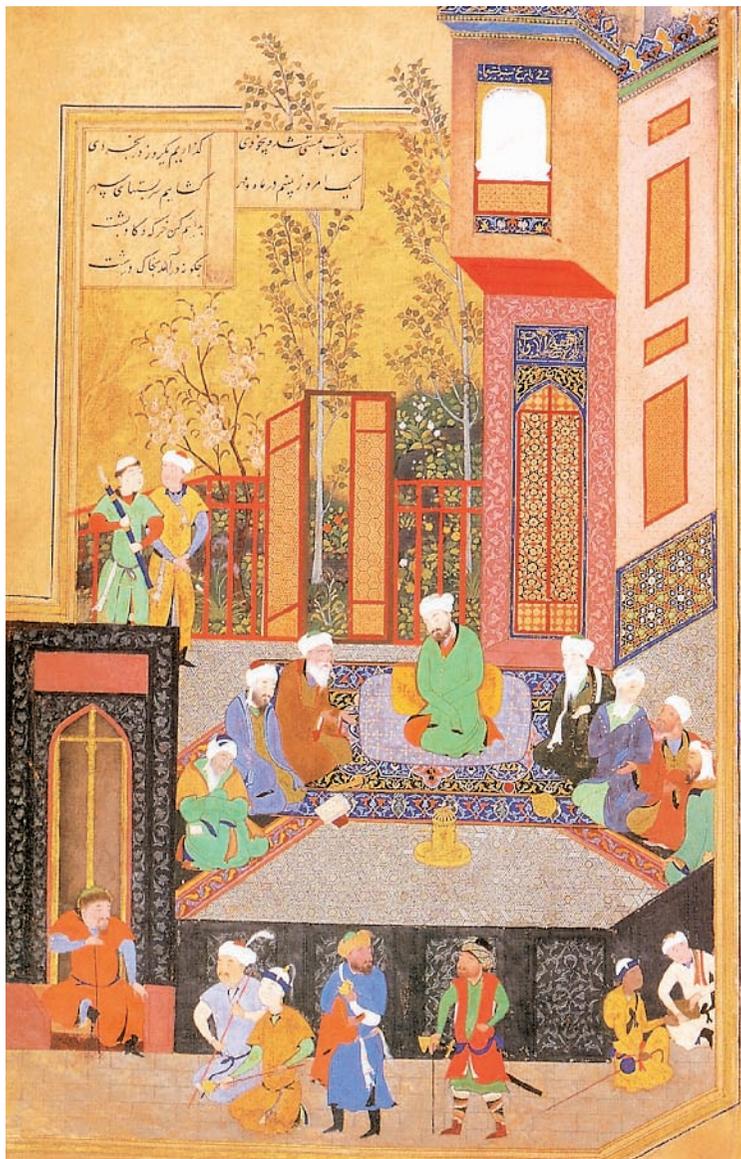
Illustration attributed to Bihzad from Nizami's masterpiece

Khamsa (literally "collection of five")

1494-1495

24.1 x 16.8 cm

The British Library, London



بنی بستن شش و پنج و نه
کجا از کیم کرد و ز بخت روی
کشایم بر سیمای سپهر
باز کون ترک کرد که گاه و بخت
بکنم زو آمدن کاک و بخت



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 northeast and beyond the borders of Iran;

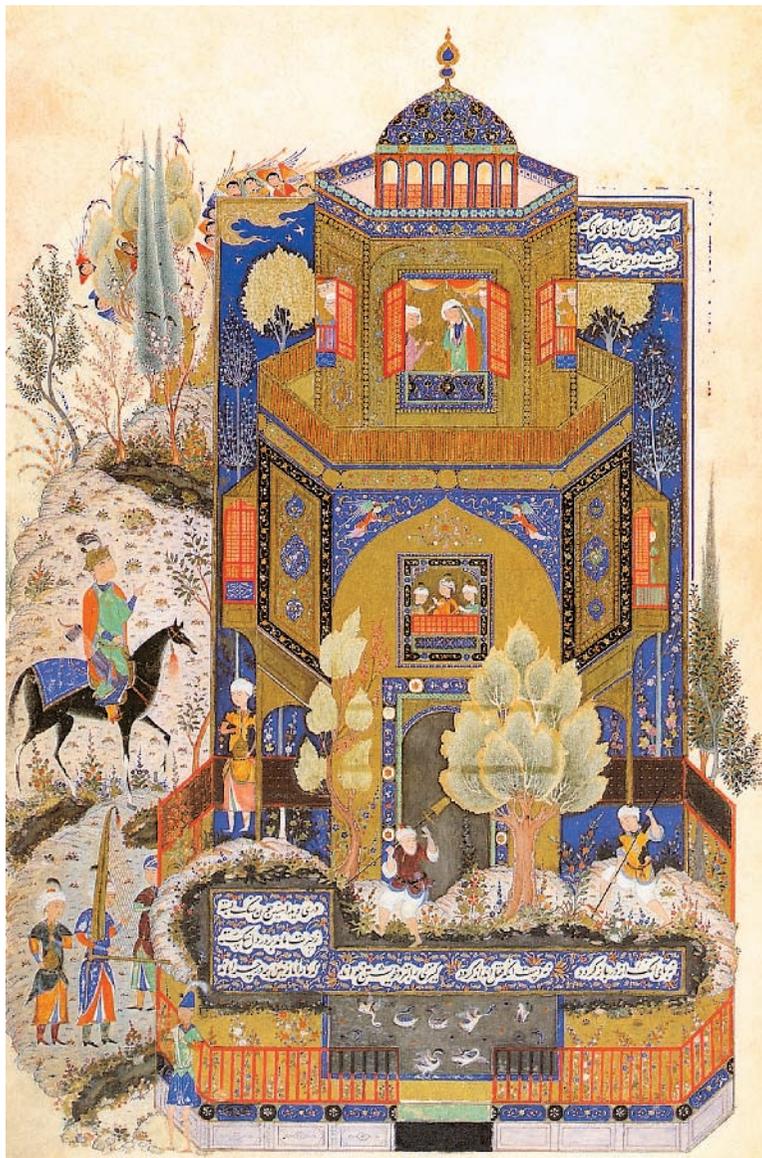
Khusraw at Shirin's palace

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

آه رخ گش خسر در خون
 چه باق تو کلاسته گلشن نام
 سستی غلبه من آه خود دیدار پس
 مکن سیرت شوب پست ایله
 آئی بزم می شیر در آن پیمان

غایت قلیب پرودی نین
 آلا درین کیم اول بلا مشر ای دی کلم
 کرب کرگت تیز سوره اندکی پس
 ساپ سبیل دینیزه فرست اول
 آتین انجن ایلی شیران پیمان
 تو کا کج دغا چای بیرون تدرتیز

بولور کیم پاسه رودان لگا کای
 رودان بولدی سیدانه قانل شیشه
 آئی نسیلیدین کیم شرایر ارب
 حایل دانی پسته سجاوه کرک
 چه سندان طایقین ایله ایلادی
 ایکا دانی باق بولوب ترن خیز

یکایکت بارین امتحان ایلا کای
 تورن دیکت غیظا اوست کیم کرسی
 بلا ابریدین ک اوئی جانلیب
 قول ایچسره سناکی کلک پناور دیک
 تور رب خسر مرف دغا ایلادی

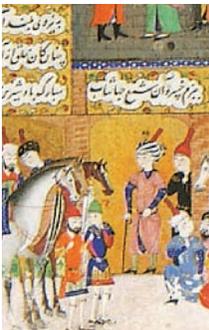


هرمی سپر کا میده ایزدیه کشتی لار
 هم خسر چه باق ایلی شایست

بسی سپر هریرین قاپک شتی قلد
 شان پر لور کسبیدر کجی ش

امیج اورا ایتمیش آری لوب کوه
 سیر اراق سالدی اندکی خیز چن

اودوب کیم شان اوچی کورهای بزمه
 سندان دوقولوب ویدی آفرین

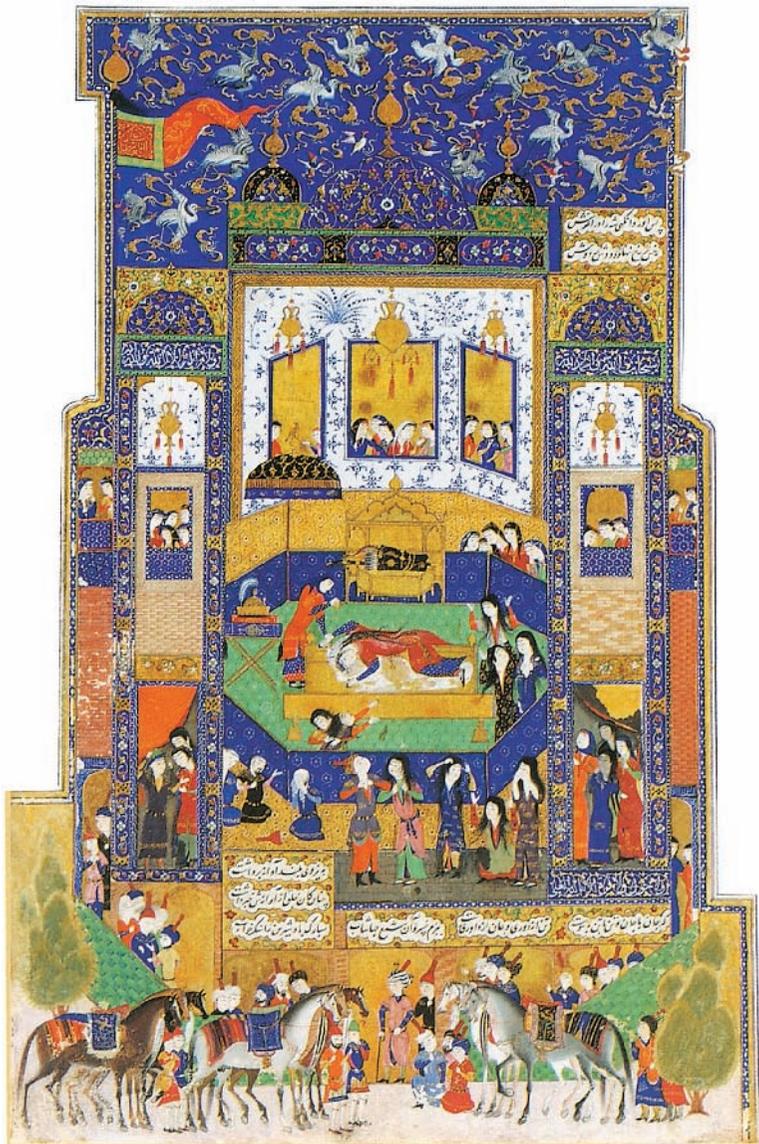


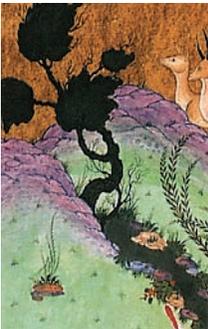
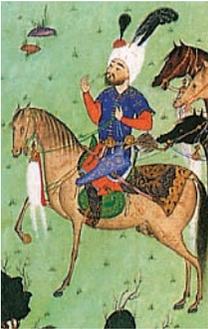
Gulshah and the Shiraz *Shahnameh*) bear witness to the influence of fresco paintings and the decoration of ceramics. One can assume that the illustrative, narrative quality, which had already been present for a long time in Persian art – in wall-paintings, metalwork, stucco and textiles – became

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 Firdawsi's masterpiece *Shahname* (*Book of Kings*)
c. 1522-1525

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

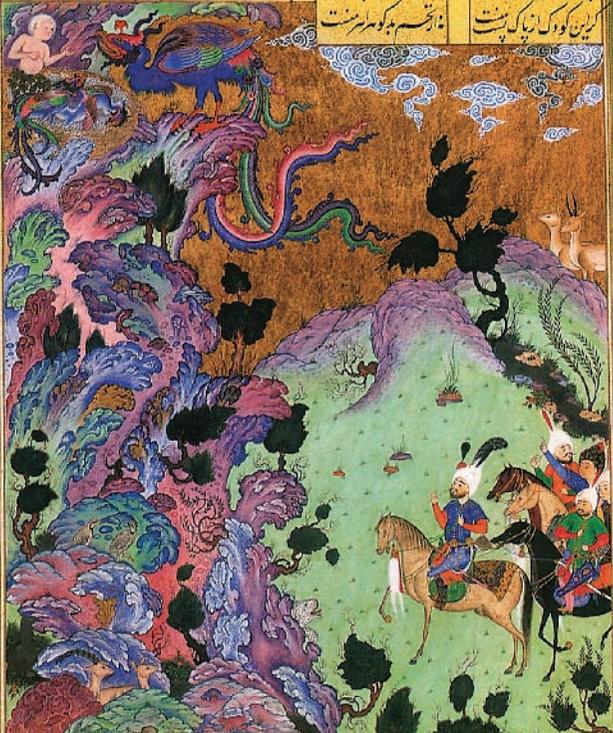


و آنگاه بر برتران سرزاست
 ز روشن گان و ز نورشید
 بر این کپست را لگو کن ای پسر

بداشت کو و او کرد او راست
 کمی گفت کای برتران چنان
 این بر شدن بنده را و دیگر

بد پیش کی کشت کرد کف نام
 و دو دام را بر جان یکجا
 ز ترس قح قحان پر کند دام
 یا ز ترس هم که گوید سر مست

پیشین و این کردار سام
 بر شدن شبه کی بود
 پویش بر تو سپرد کف نام
 کزین کو و کز اینک نیست



بر این برده پورا گفت ز راه
 نشانیست همگام که بدست

بر دست برافسند از این بر
 جویا داد و این از باغ شد



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,

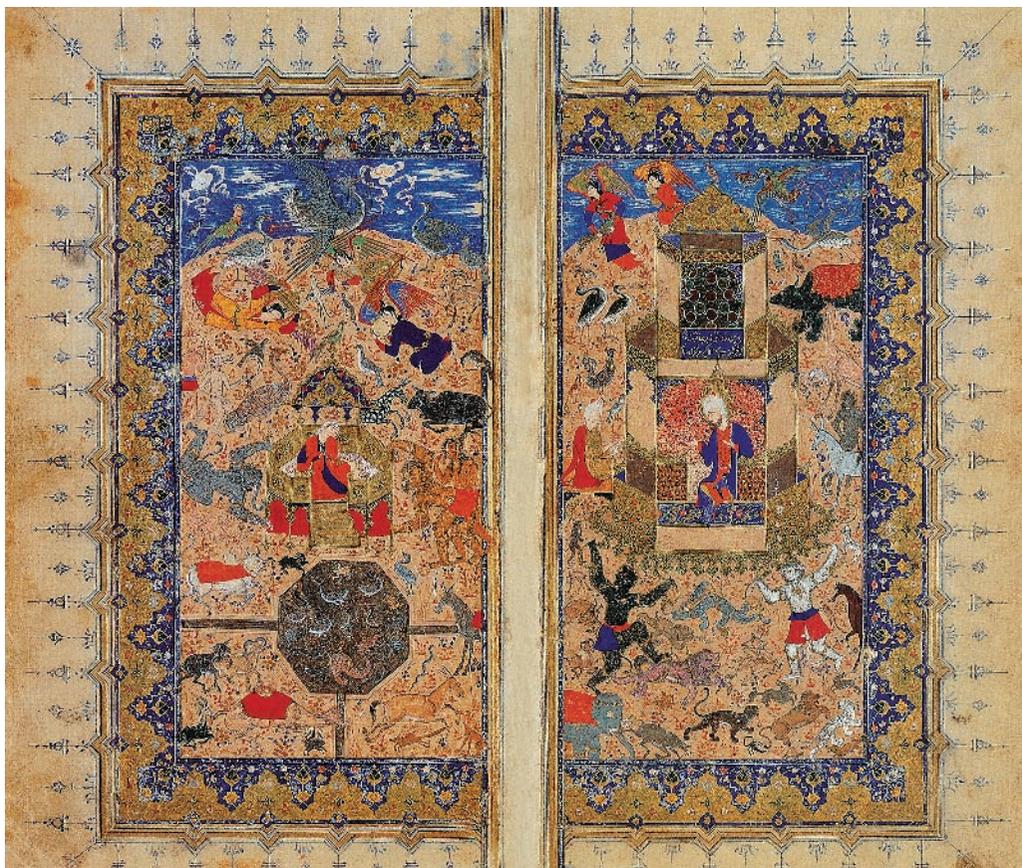
Solomon and Bilqis

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.

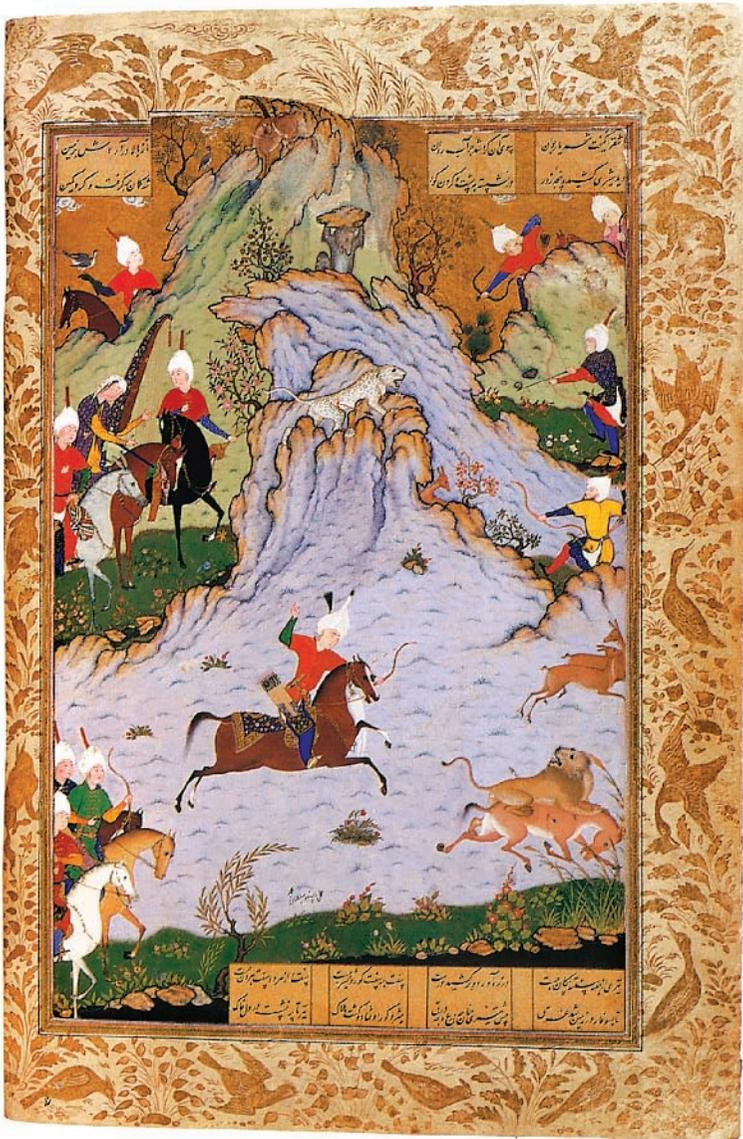
Thus, the actual circumstances of reading poetry take on another sense: the participants of the scene are no longer surrounded by everyday objects, but by



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





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



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مرکز برین سرشتی او درگاه
 دیت زود و امن کن گرفت
 قانقنه دای خود آه کون
 پرنی راسپتی کن گرفت

کایک آرم کون بیدام
 زورک نیب این بیدام



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

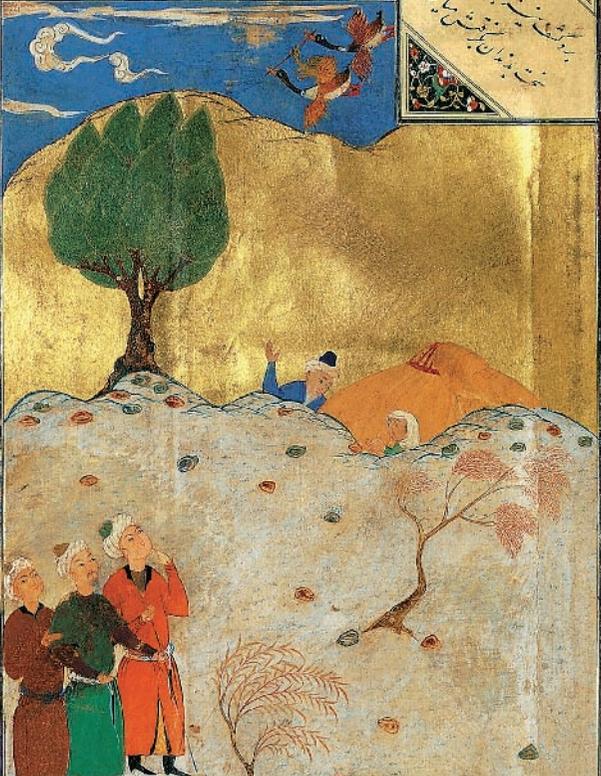
28.2 x 18.2 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

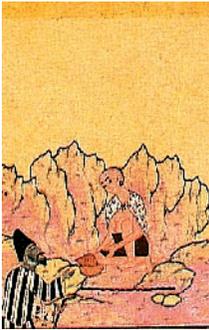
مخ سوخت طبل بلان
بر پس چمن کده آقا و شان

میل پشنگرد به پسر بلان
چون سوی خشکی سقا آقا و شان

برگشتند به انجان و دوان
مخت بزبان کز عشق بلان



بایک برادر و کاما حاج
یک شایه یک دیو طراوت



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

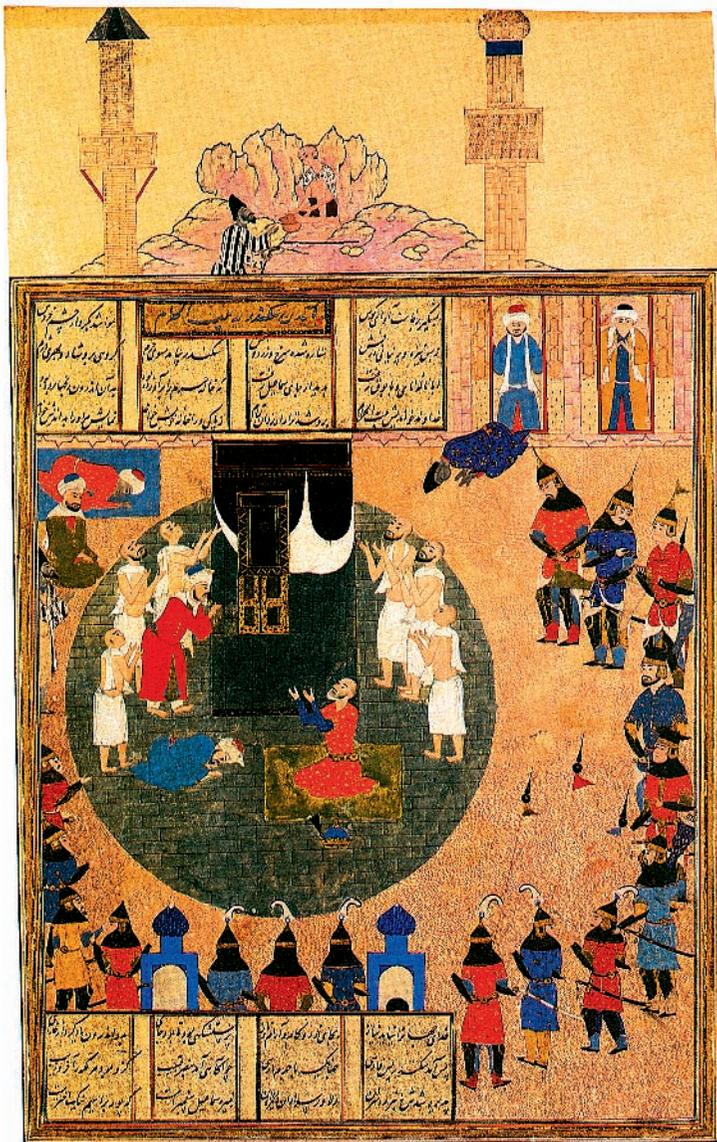
Illustration from Firdawsi's masterpiece

Shahnama (*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

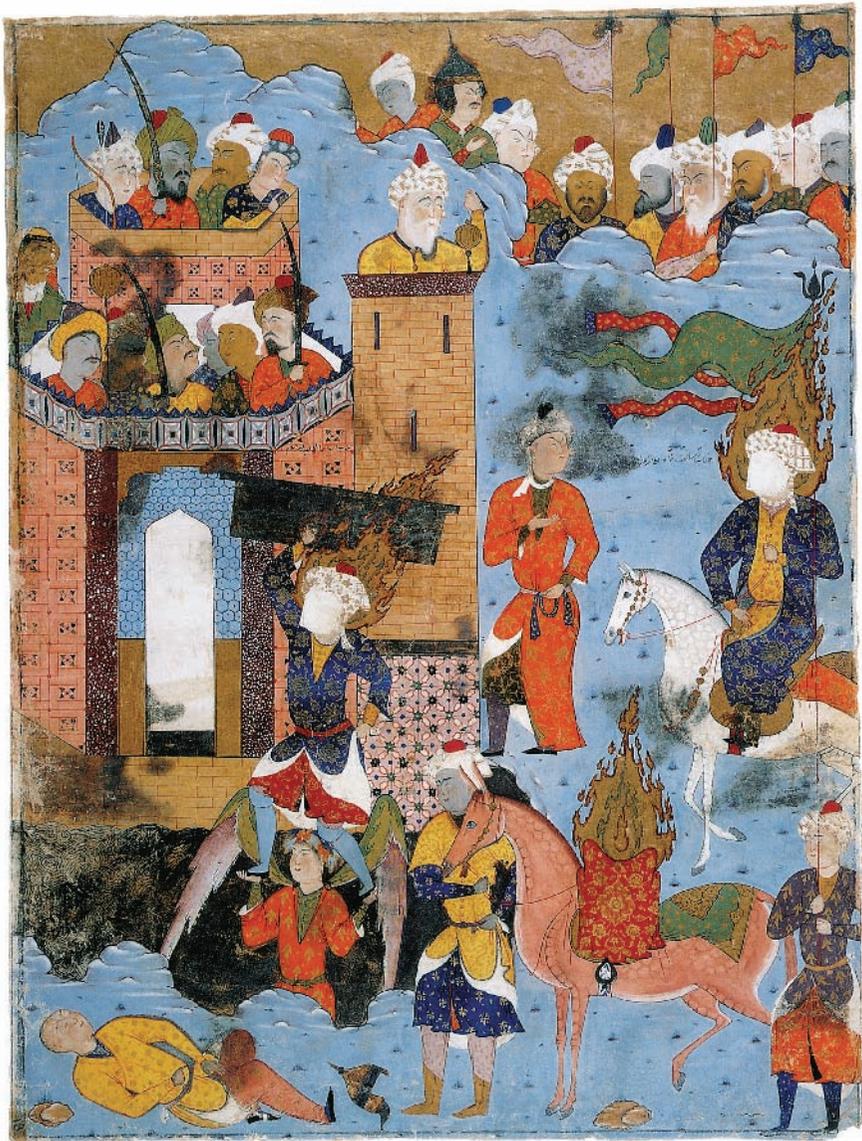
Illustration from the masterpiece

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



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





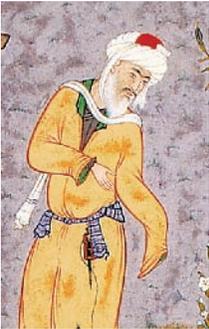
At the same time, from the middle of the century, it was the age of individual rulers each striving to create their own magnificent court, with their own poets, scholars and artists. But the “prestige” of such a ruler, which he could flaunt to his rivals and subjects, was no longer a matter of precious

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 awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

14.6 x 13 cm (painting)

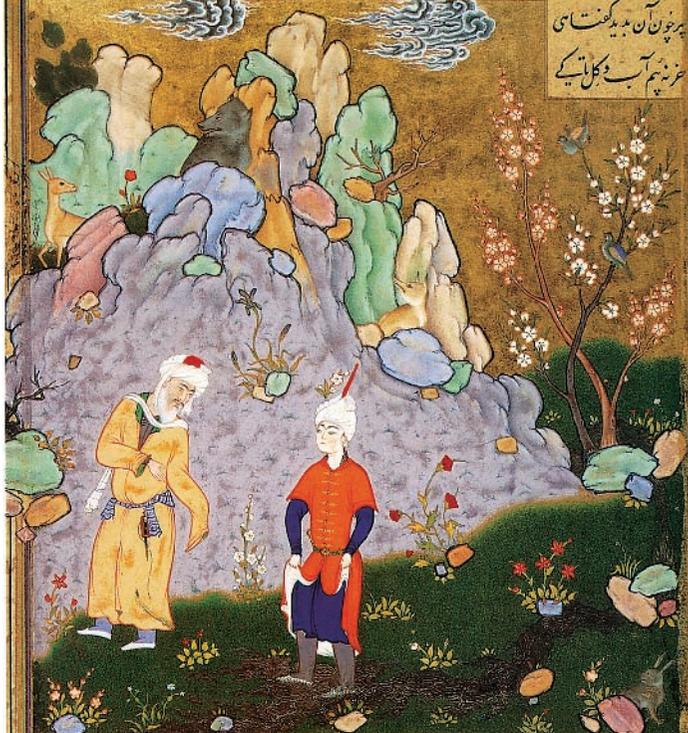
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.

بر پستان ز می نهاد قدم
 بر چون آن بدید گفت سی
 عزیزم آب و گل استیکه

وان جوان از بی پستان در شرم

کشید و اسود در آن

از گل آلوده جامه پایشین



چند واری که جامه بر گل
 بیکست چون دل غفلت آید
 مرد عارف که در وفا مرد
 بیکه پیش و پس نه کرد
 نامش فانی و لیل غیب
 شده امروزه می فرویش

دل بگرداری منقل دل

از گل آب جامه توانست



نیت چشمه نوشش
 نقطه حال کشته اویش

می کند از پیر شعور و وقت
 شغل حالش پسته لب پندل

که شود پاکتر ز بار چنست
 خست از دیدگان پالایید
 کار خود بر نه پیش بنا کرد
 شد خود جز پیشین می شرد
 من پیش با بخی آن مصوب
 ذکر ماضی فکر پست قبل



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.





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

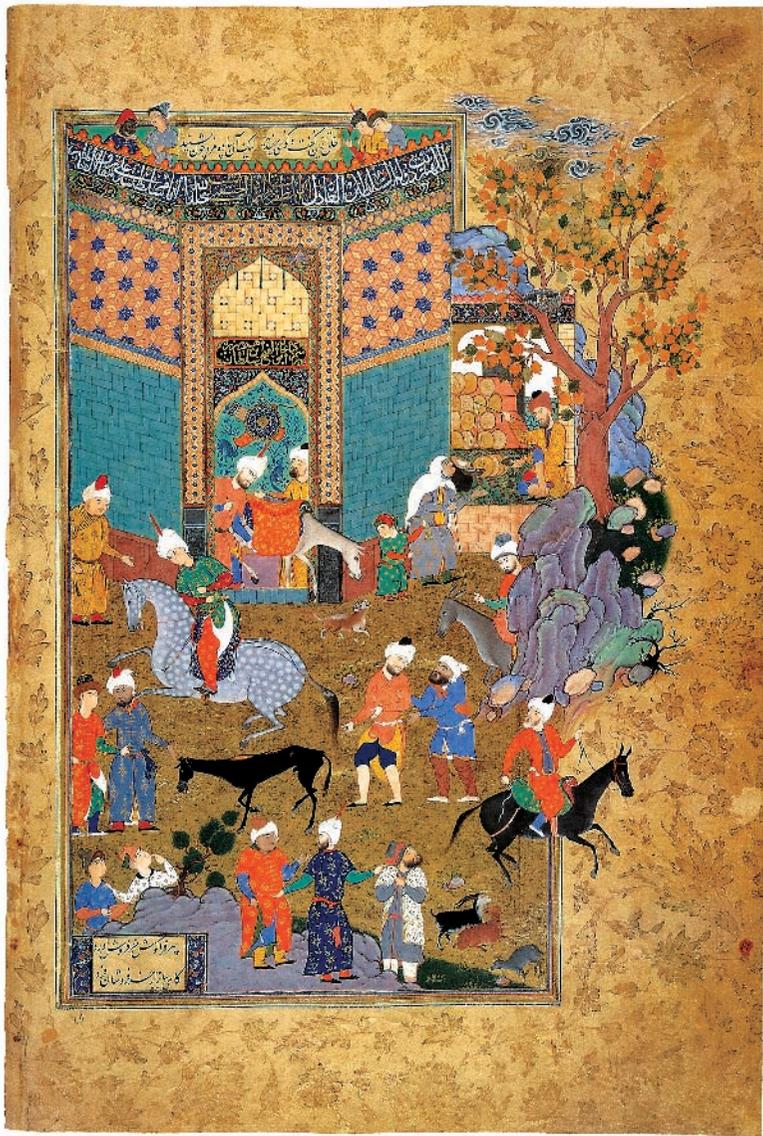
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

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 awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

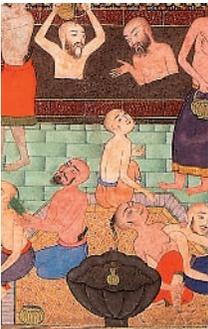
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





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

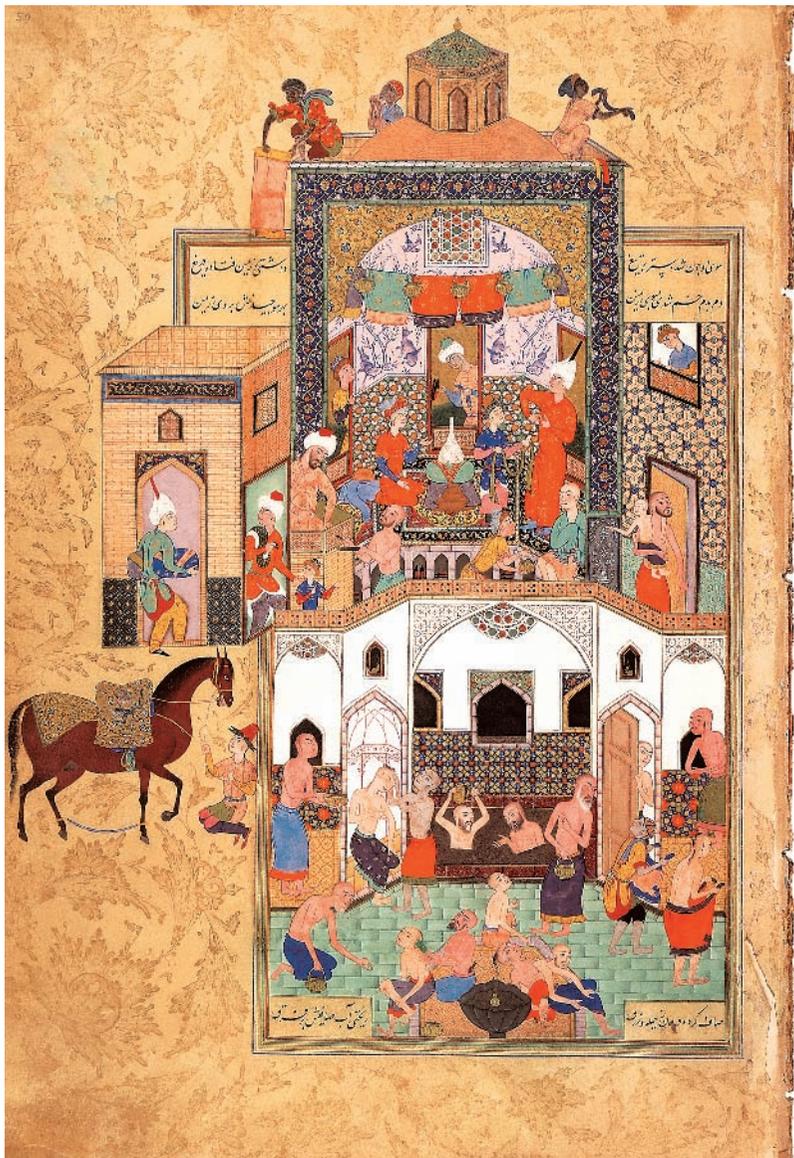
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

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

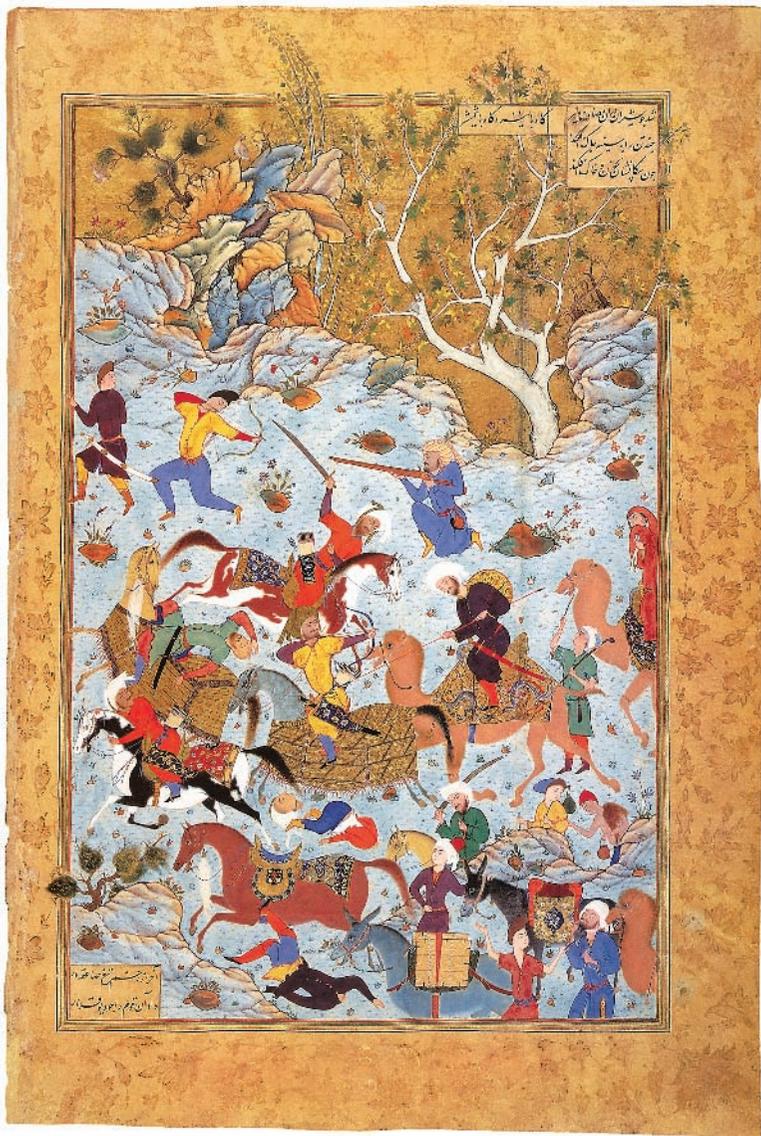
Illustration from Jami’s masterpiece

Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

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



کامیار پهلوان کا دروغ
سینا در دست بول کا
جن کا کائنات کا کائنات

کامیار پهلوان کا دروغ
سینا در دست بول کا
جن کا کائنات کا کائنات



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 30 out of 52 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

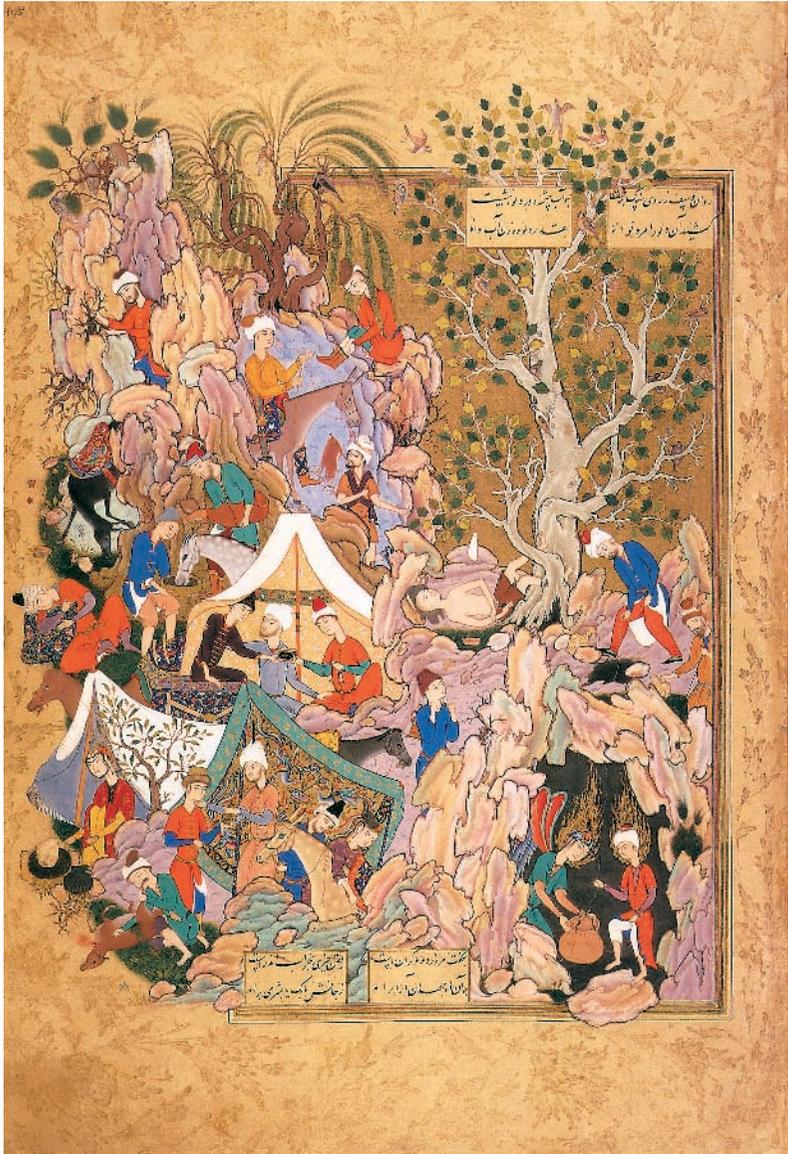
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

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





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 awrang (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

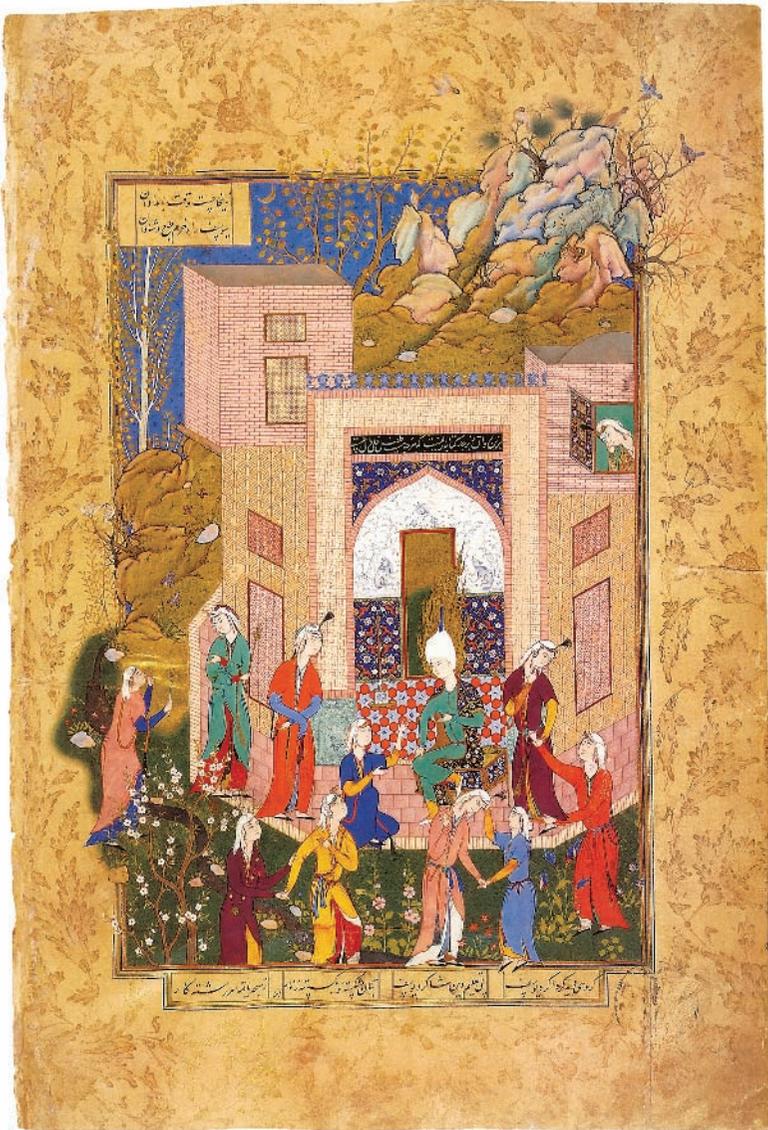
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

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



بیتابست بست درون
بیتابست از درون شادان

بیتابست بست درون
بیتابست از درون شادان
بیتابست بست درون
بیتابست از درون شادان



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

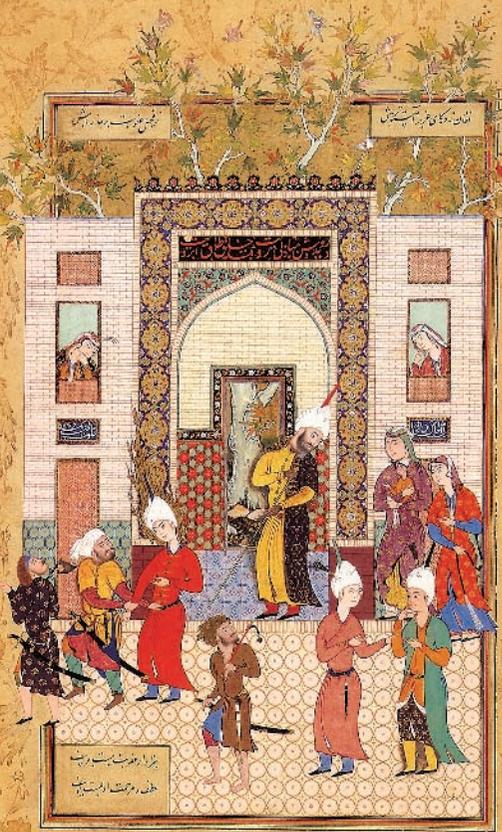
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

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



نور محمد شاه در آستان
 نور محمد شاه در آستان



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 Honor of His Marriage

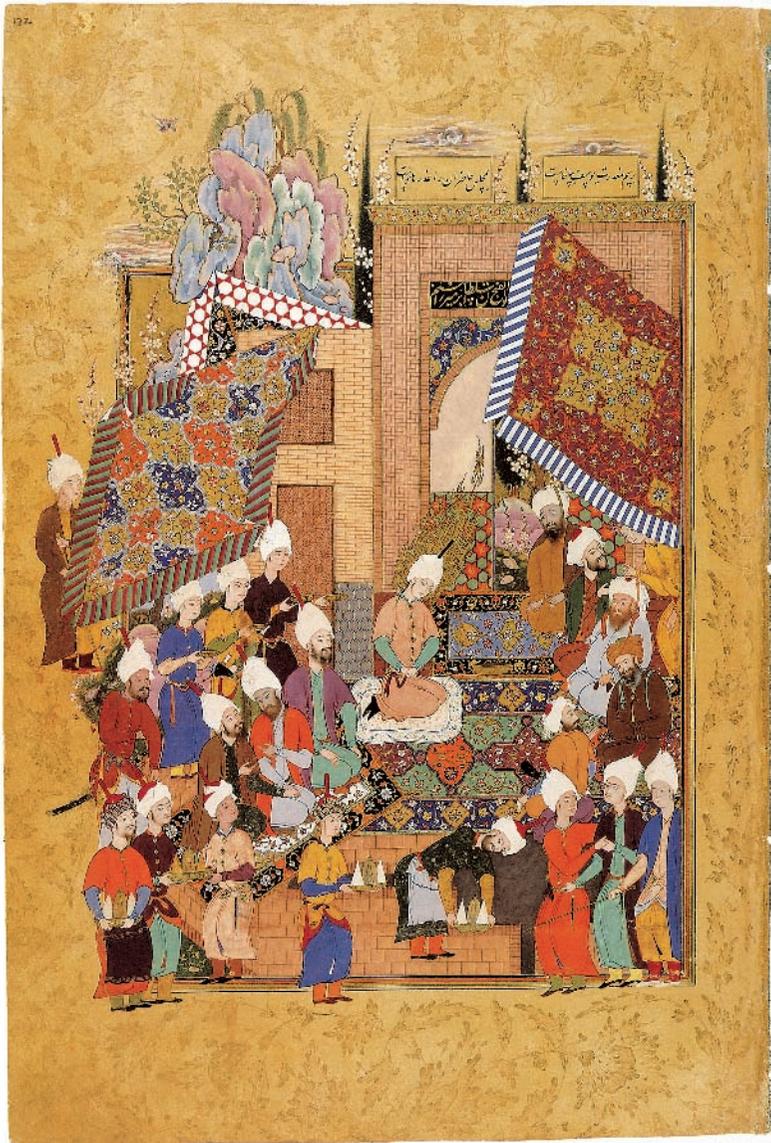
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

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





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.

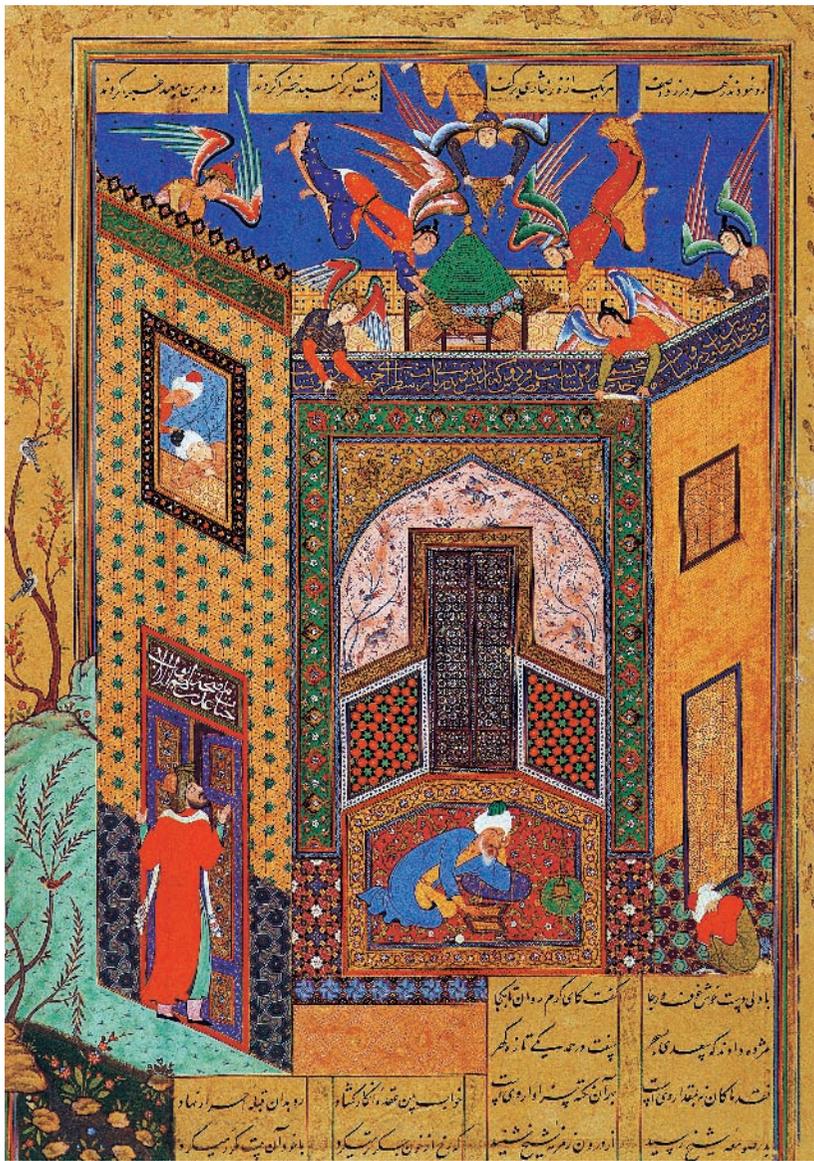


The Gnostic Has a Vision of Angels Carrying Trays of
Light to the Poet Sa'di

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.

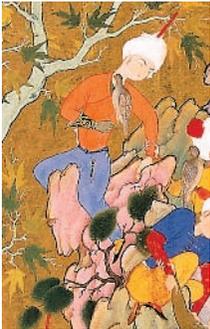


داود و زور هر روز بخت / کمبخت از زور شاد بخت / پشت کز شمشیر کزانه / دو دین بجهت بجا کزانه



بادی پست خوش خفت برینا / گشت کای کرم روان کجا
 شزوه دادند که پسند کجا / پست در جوی که تا ز کمر
 گشت مکان بر بخت اوی آید / بر آن کج که پس اوارده ایست
 بد سوخته شیخ سپید / از روان بر غریب شمشیر

دو بران قیل اسرار نامو / فرارسیدن همه آنگاه گشاد
 باغ و آستان پست کرم سپید / کرم از زورین بجا کزانه



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.

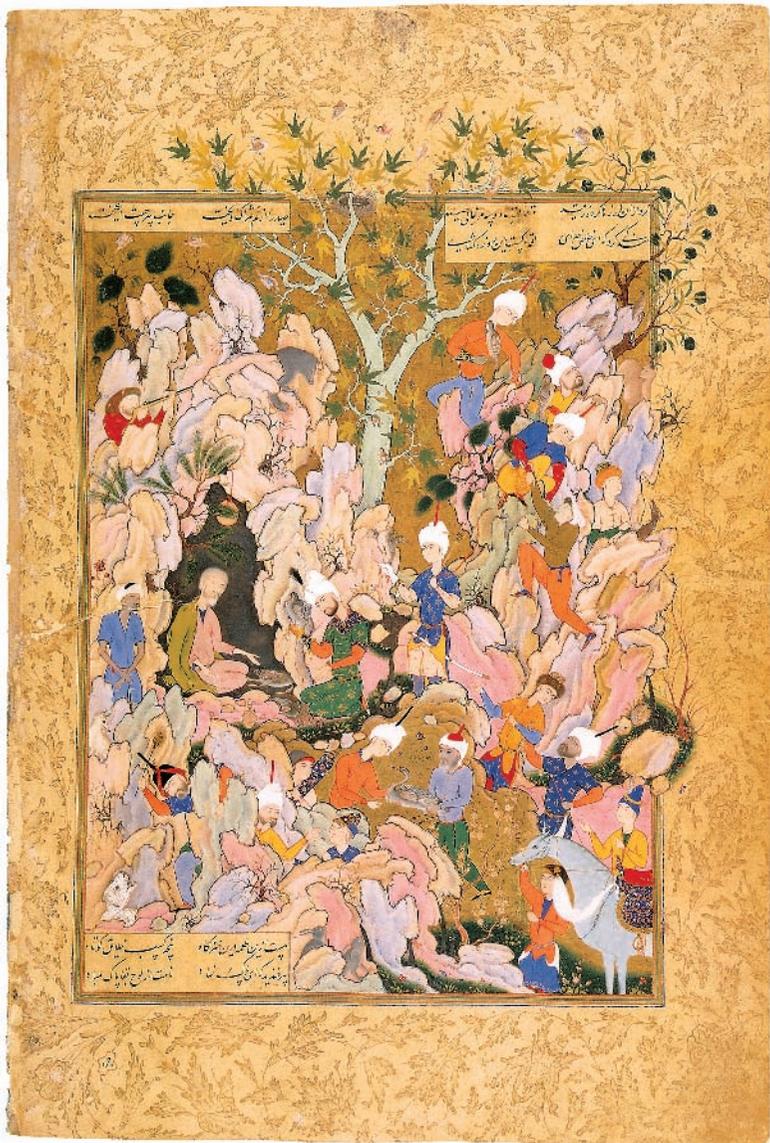


The Pir Rejects the Ducks Brought as
Presents by the Murid

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

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

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



بدره ای که در آنجا است
بسیار از مردم که در آنجا است

بدره ای که در آنجا است
بسیار از مردم که در آنجا است

بدره ای که در آنجا است
بسیار از مردم که در آنجا است

بدره ای که در آنجا است
بسیار از مردم که در آنجا است



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 awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

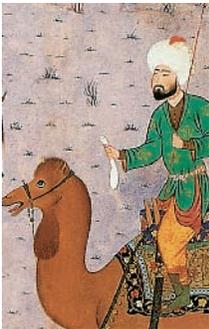
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





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.

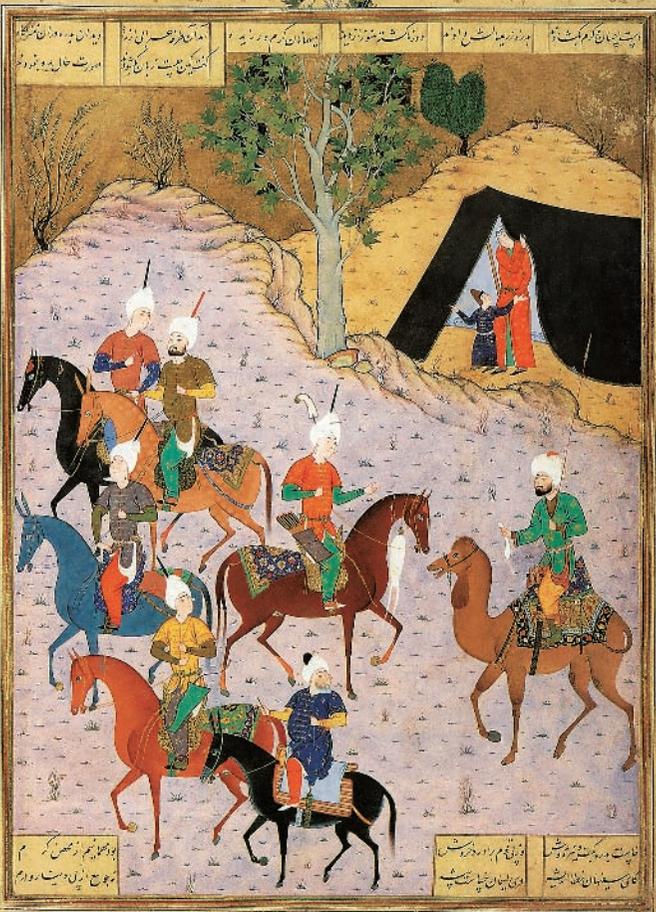


The Arab Berates His Guests for Attempting to Pay
Him For His Hospitality

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

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

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





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

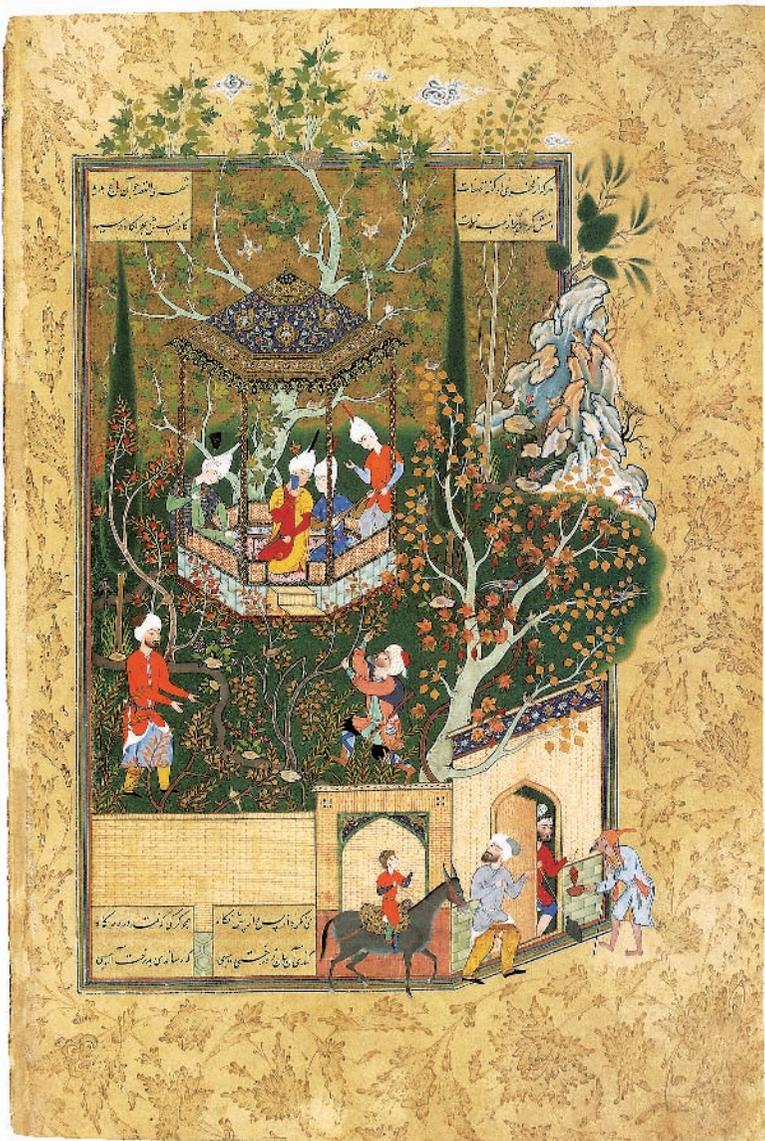
Illustration from Jami’s masterpiece

Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

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





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

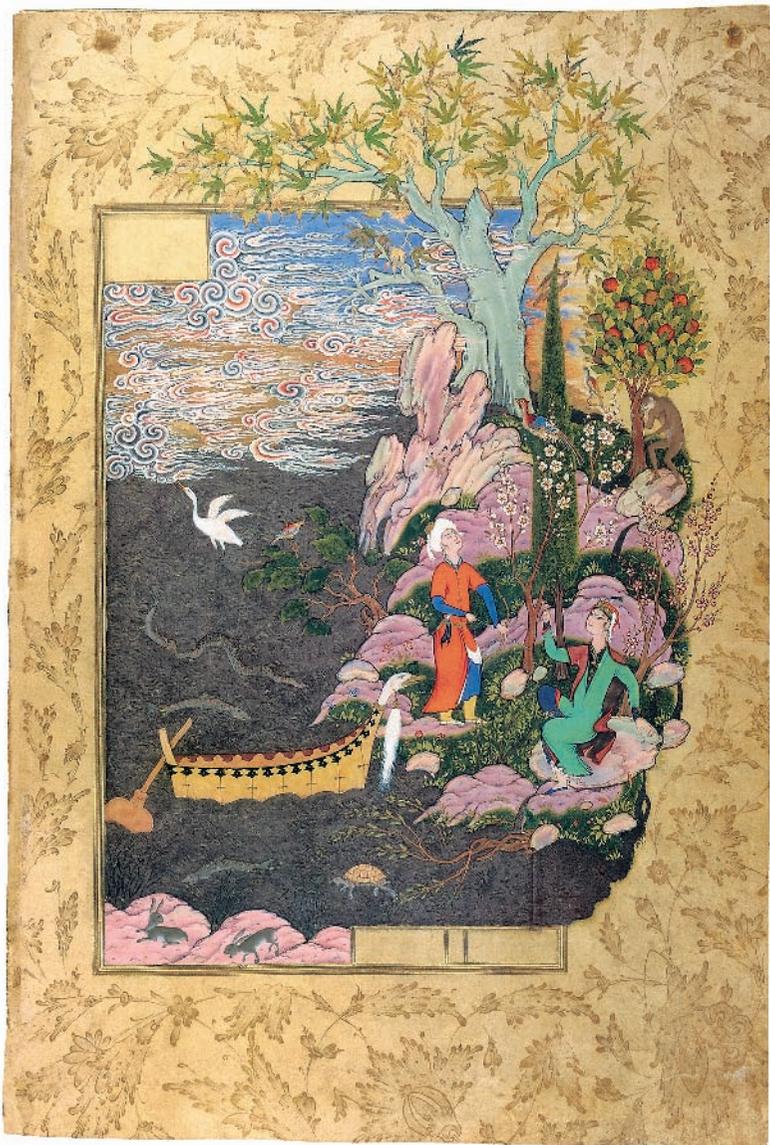
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

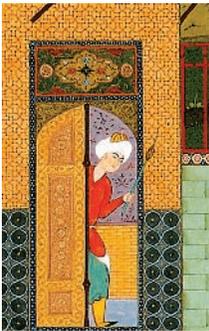
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.





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

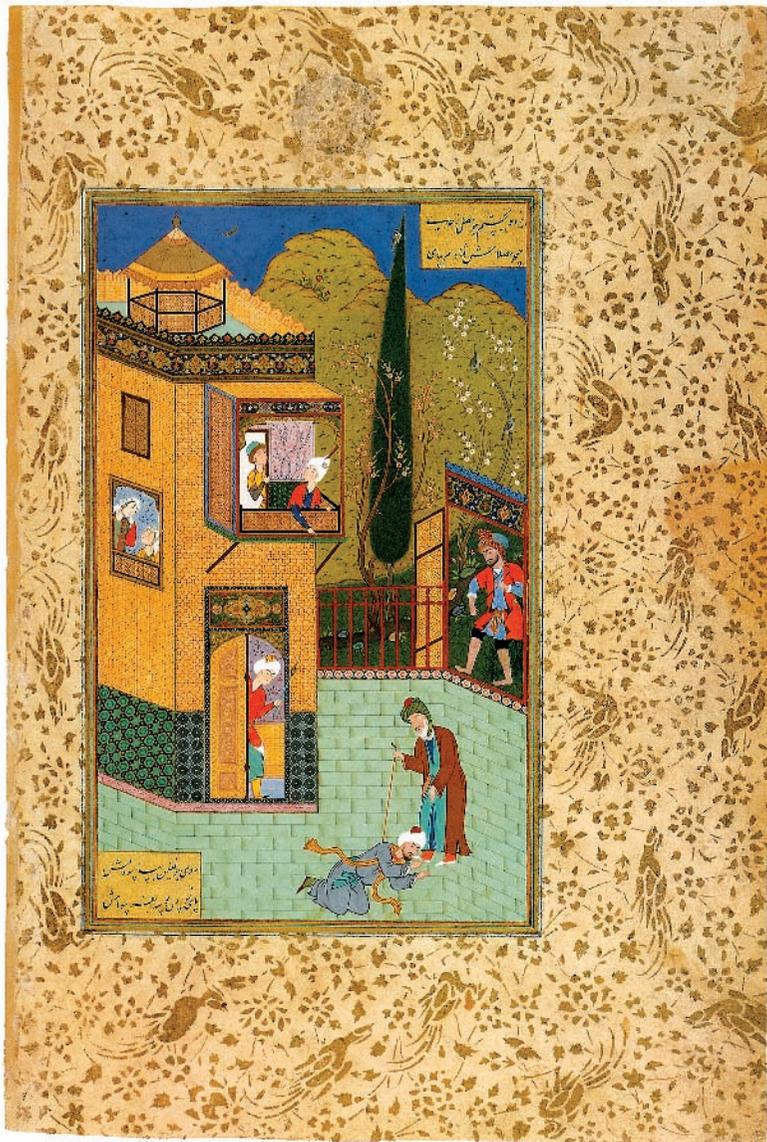
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (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

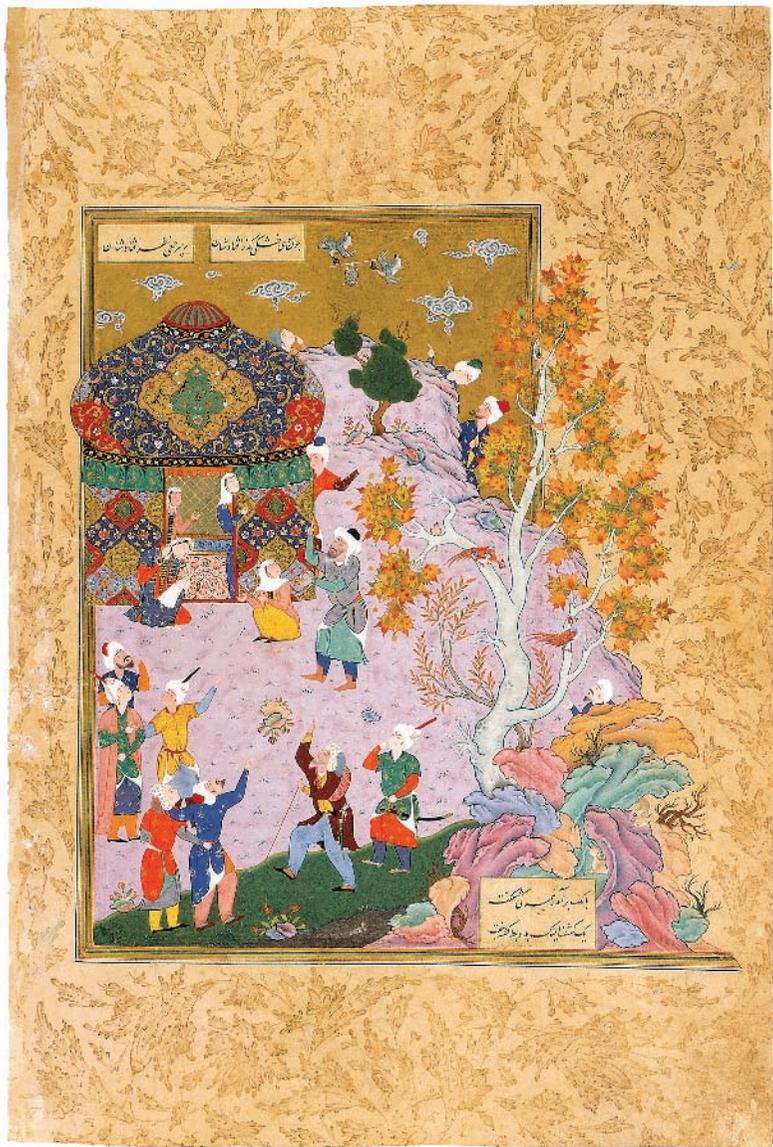
Illustration from Jami’s masterpiece

Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

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



بر من و شکر و انوار شادان
بر من و شکر و انوار شادان

بست را در کوهستان
بست را در کوهستان



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

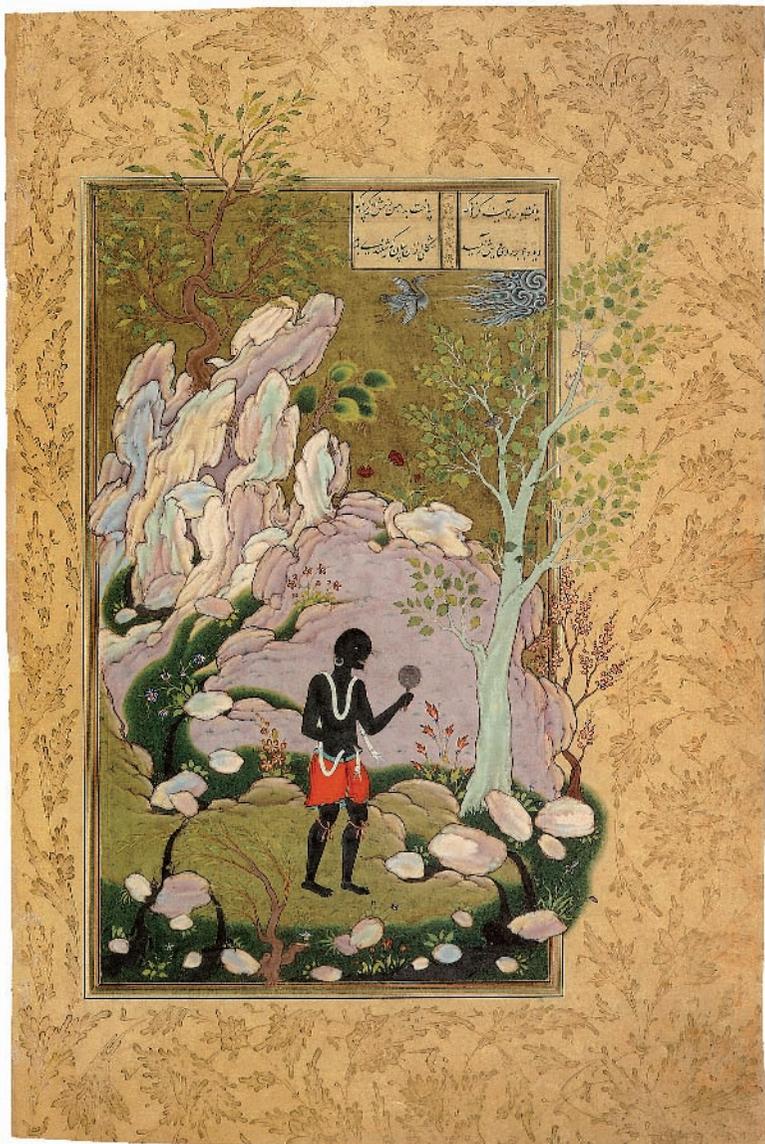
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

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



بناست بر صخره کوه کوه
و کوه را بر کوهستان کوه
و کوه را بر کوهستان کوه
و کوه را بر کوهستان کوه



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

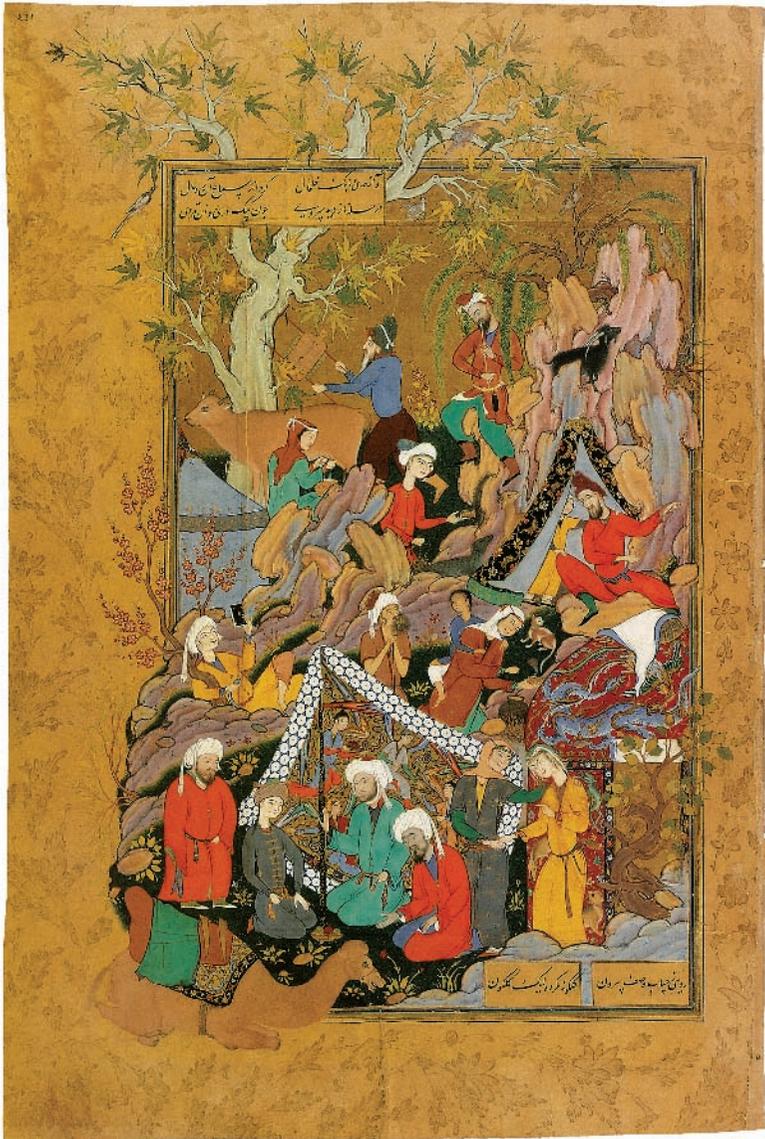
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

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



و کوه در پیشگاه خندان
 در آن کوهستان و در آن
 در آن کوهستان و در آن

در آن کوهستان و در آن
 در آن کوهستان و در آن



“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

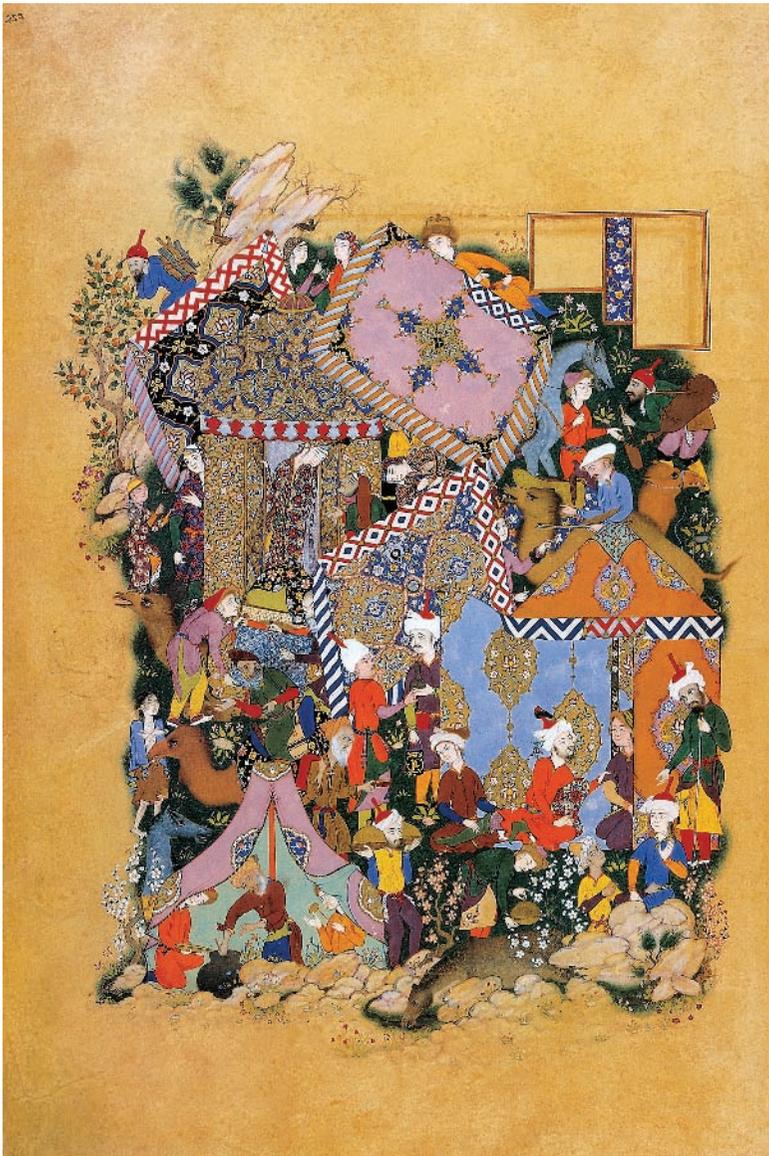
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.5 x 23.4 cm (folio)

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





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

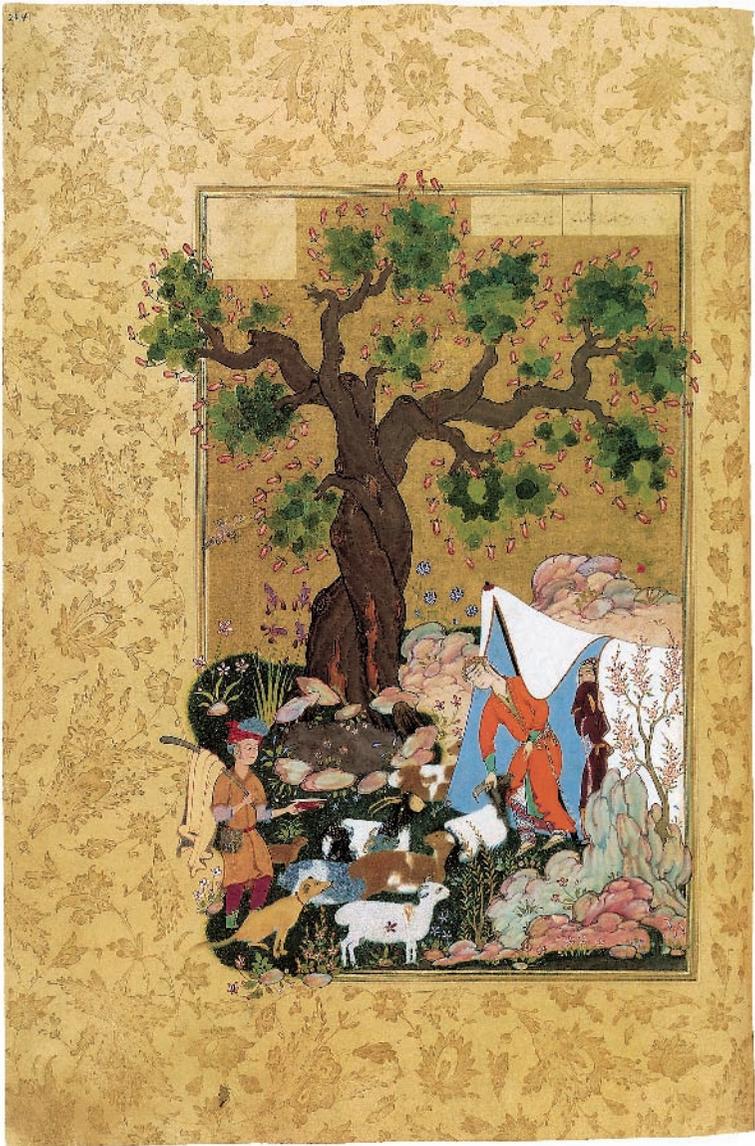
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (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

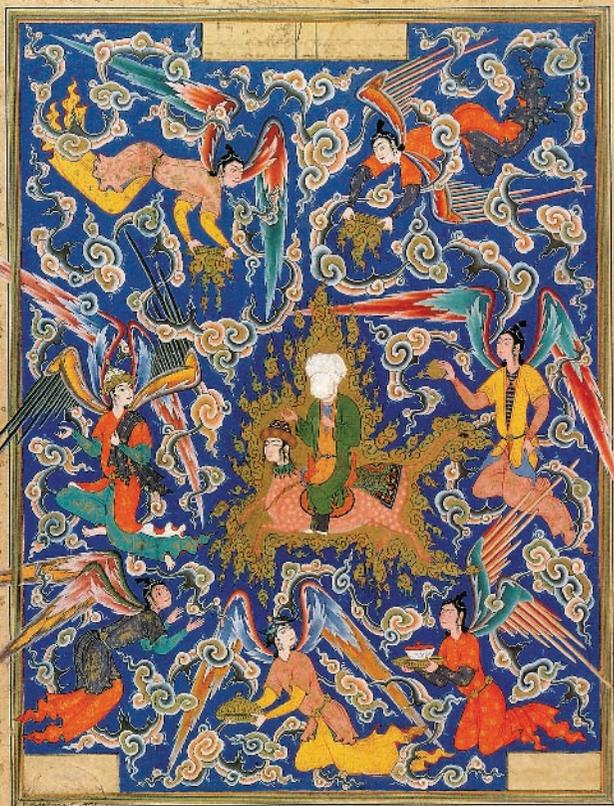
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

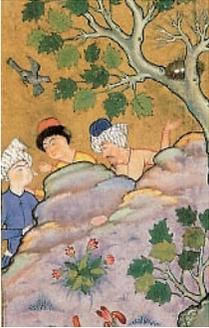
Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

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 awrang (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

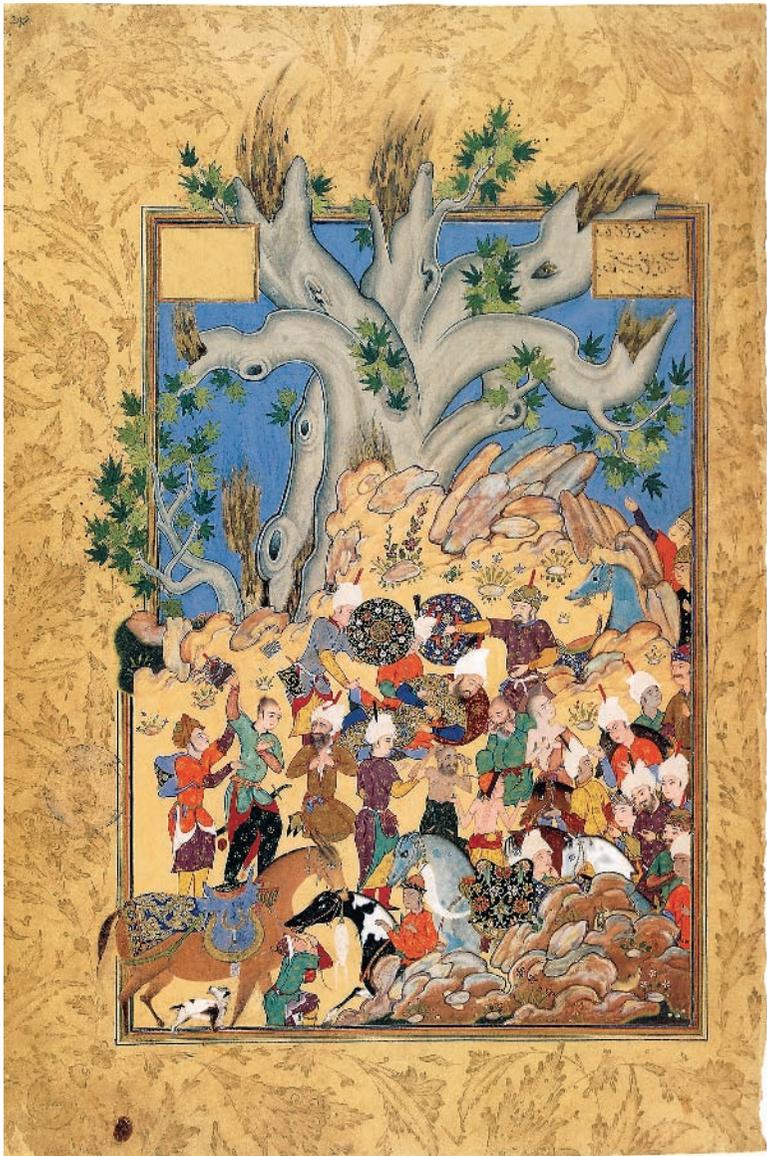
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (*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

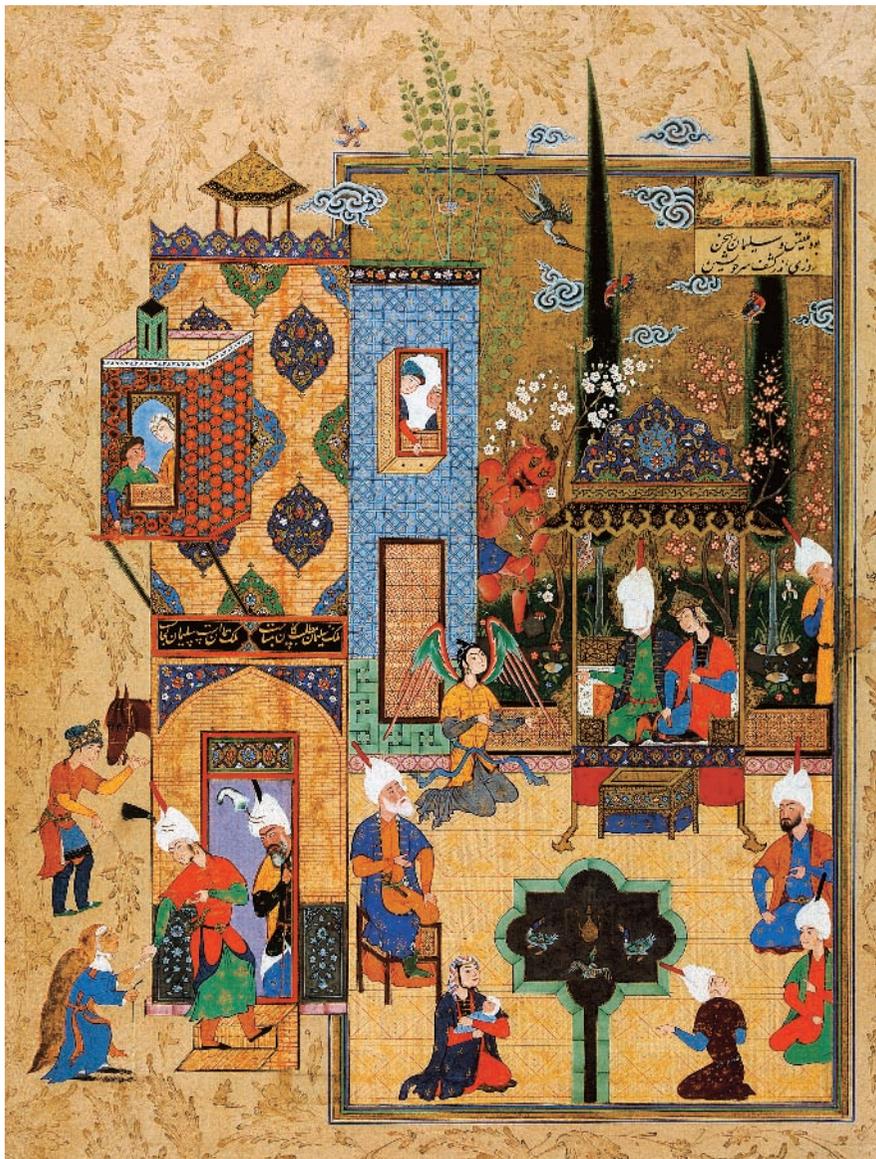
Illustration copied by Ayshi ibn Ishrati from Jami's masterpiece

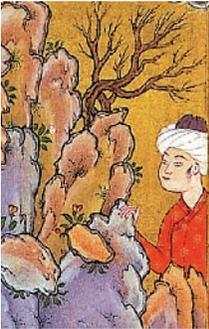
Haft awrang (Seven Thrones)

1556-1565

34.4 x 46.8 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

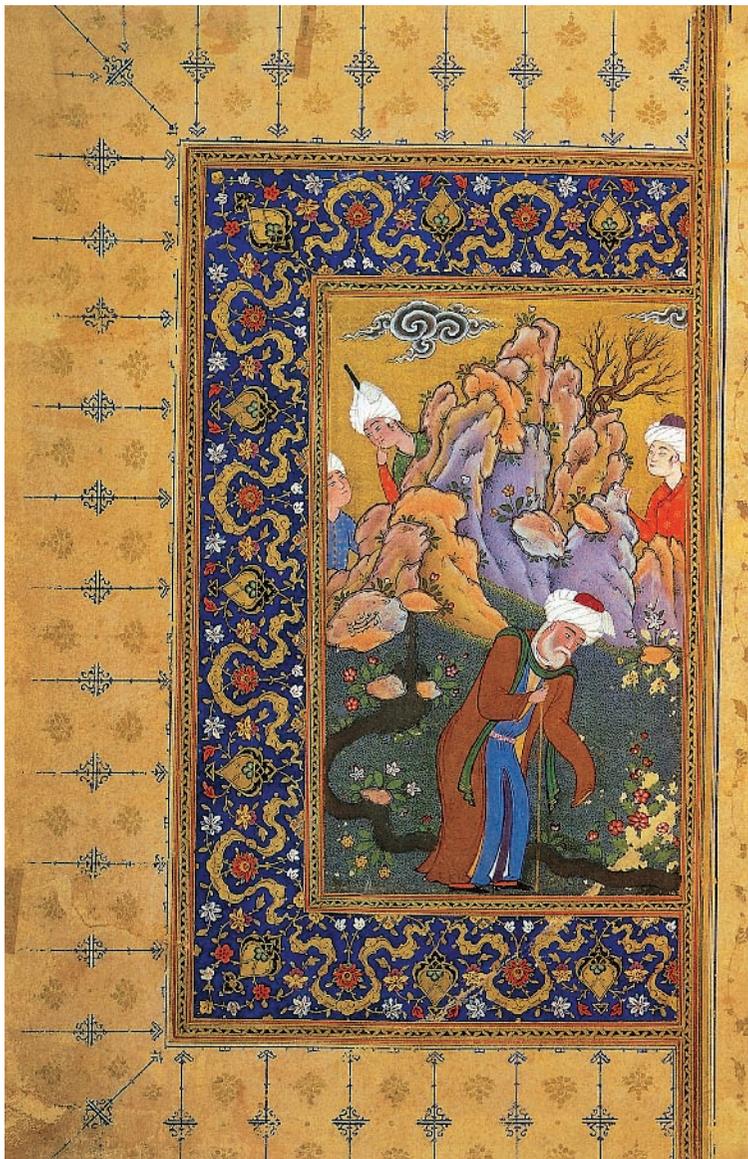
Illustration signed by Abdullah al-Shirazi from Jami's masterpiece

Haft awrang (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.

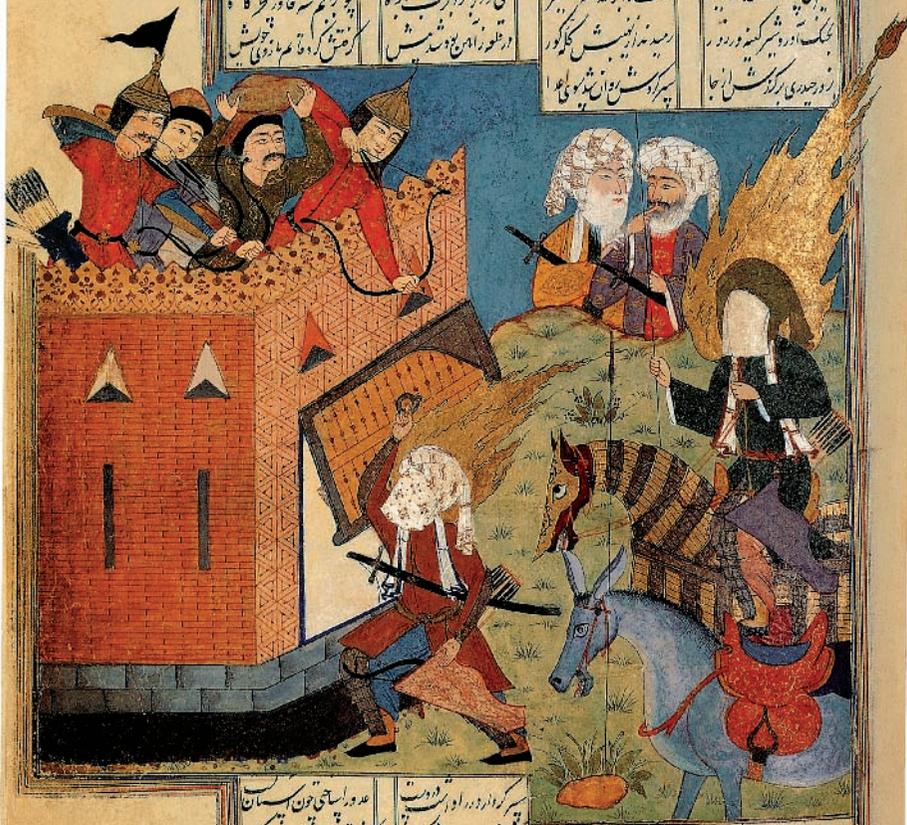
Ali Fighting to Take the Fortress of Qamus

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

26 x 17.8 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

<p>ایستادین من کجاست چو راغش خاور خور کجا گرفتیش که تا غم زلفش</p>	<p>براه شعله آرزو بر آسمان علی خود را زده زلف بر خواجه در غم زده ایچ و شدش</p>	<p>سپاه سترگان ز پست کمانک ز بر زنده زلف ریدند از اینش کجا کور پیرانش زان شد بوی ا</p>	<p>و دودی بر روی خاکست و دهبان پیشند خور ز کجاست آدود پیشند ورد ز زودیدی از کشتش ا</p>
--	--	--	--



<p>عد و راستی بین افسان گرفته پیشند سترش کرده</p>	<p>سپه کور زده را و در پست گرفته پیشند از دایمش کرده</p>	<p>گمانا در حق چون نوم بوده</p>	<p>رواسته آهسته ایچ بیخوده</p>
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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

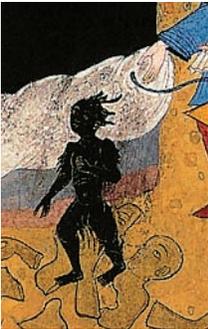
26 x 17.8 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin



چندی در کوه سمرقند
 در میان سزایان
 کوه طبرستان در پیم
 کوه طبرستان در پیم
 کوه طبرستان در پیم
 کوه طبرستان در پیم

که در دست سحر است
 که در دست سحر است



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

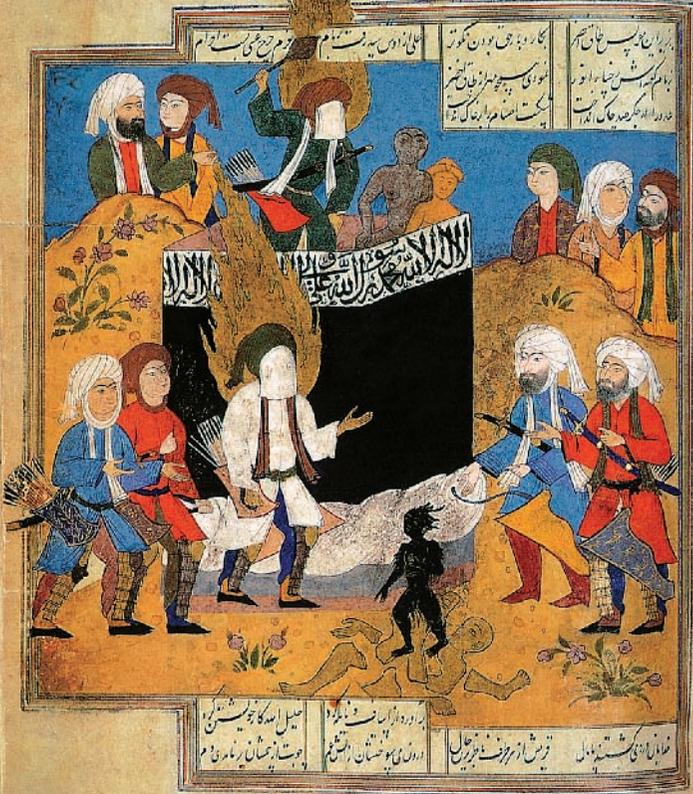
Muhammad and Ali Destroying the Idols of the Ka'ba

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

1567

26 x 17.8 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin



در این روز پس از آنکه
 بر او شمشیر نهادند
 در روز آنجا که در آنجا
 کجا رو باقی بودن کوه
 کوهی که در آنجا
 یک شمشیر بر او نهادند

نمازهای گشته به دل
 قریب از هر نفس با جز حال
 بر او در آن روز
 درونی بوستان از این
 عیال اسکا تویش
 چوستان برمانی م



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
 حوا و ابلیس و طاووس و مار همه دشمن یکدیگر بخانه خدا می
 تبارک و تعالی در قرآن مجید و سفران حمد خبر میدهد



و قوله انما جعل الجنة ليعرض لكم فيها الارض مستقر
 و متاع الى حين فتمتعوا بها من لاداء الله العنت لمن يشاء



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)

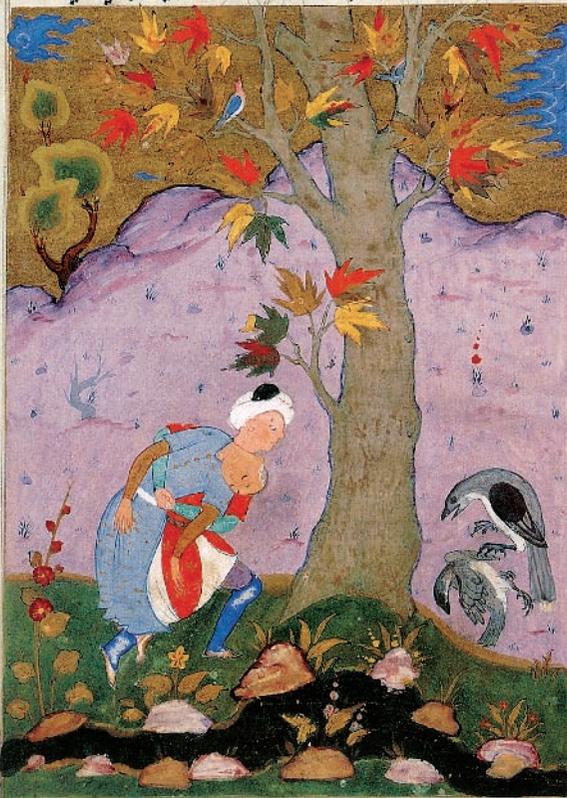
Illustration from the masterpiece
Qisas al-anbiya (The Tales of the Prophets)

1570-1580

31.7 x 19.9 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

268
 او میان آن بود چنانکه خدای تعالی فرمود و قَبَعَتْ اللَّهُ عِزْرًا بِأَسْمَاءَ
 بِنْتِ أَبِي سَهْلٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهُ كَيْفَ يُؤَارِي سَوَاءَ أَحْيَاهِ
 خدای تعالی کلاغی را بر فراز پستو و تازمین را بجا وید که نماید ویرا مرده



پنهان کردن بعد از آن برادر خویش را بپوشید و پشمان شد و گویند



This important work was written twenty 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 درین سخنبران بودند و لیکن بچگدام صاحب شریعت نبودند تا آنکه



که نوح بیرون نیاید و نوح از سر زلزله پیل بود و بعد از او در

علیه السلام بجا رصد و خست او سال بود و الله اعلم بالصواب



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 بشنود یک عت
بداشت فرمان امد از خدای تعالی که کرد آن جبرئیل علیه السلام بگردانید



بر زمین آمدند جمله ناپسند شدند و هر کسی از آن قوم پراکنده بودند بشهر
دیگر خدای تعالی سنگ بفرستاد تا بر ایشان فرو ببارد و بپراکند 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

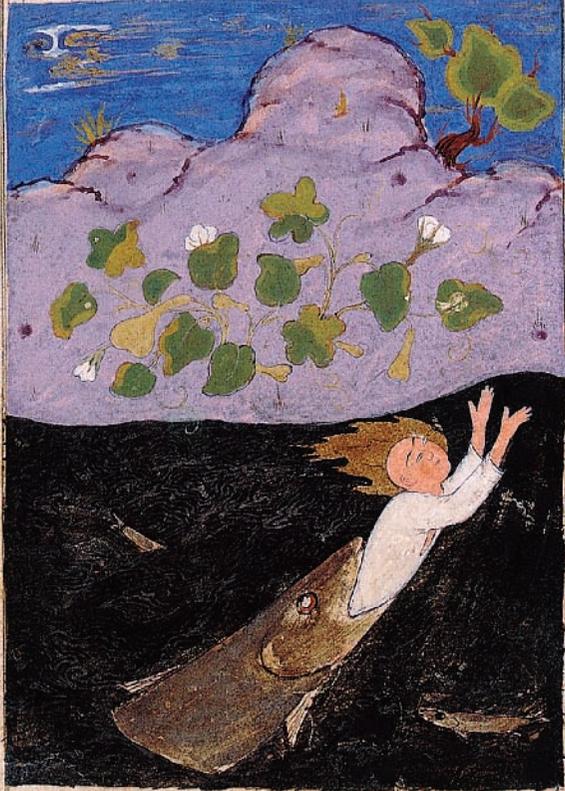
Illustration from the masterpiece
Qisas al-anbiya (The Tales of the Prophets)

1570-1580

31.7 x 19.9 cm

The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

نماز و بیکر بود که خدای تعالی مانی را الهام داد تا بکراته دریا آمد و پیوست
علیه السلام بسلامت از شکم بیرون انداخت و همه اندام وی



چون کوشتی گشته بود و ضعیف شده و جهل روز طعام نخورد بود
خدای تعالی در مساعت درخت کدو را برویانید و بزرگ و برکنار



At the end of the twentieth 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 Reza Abbasi,

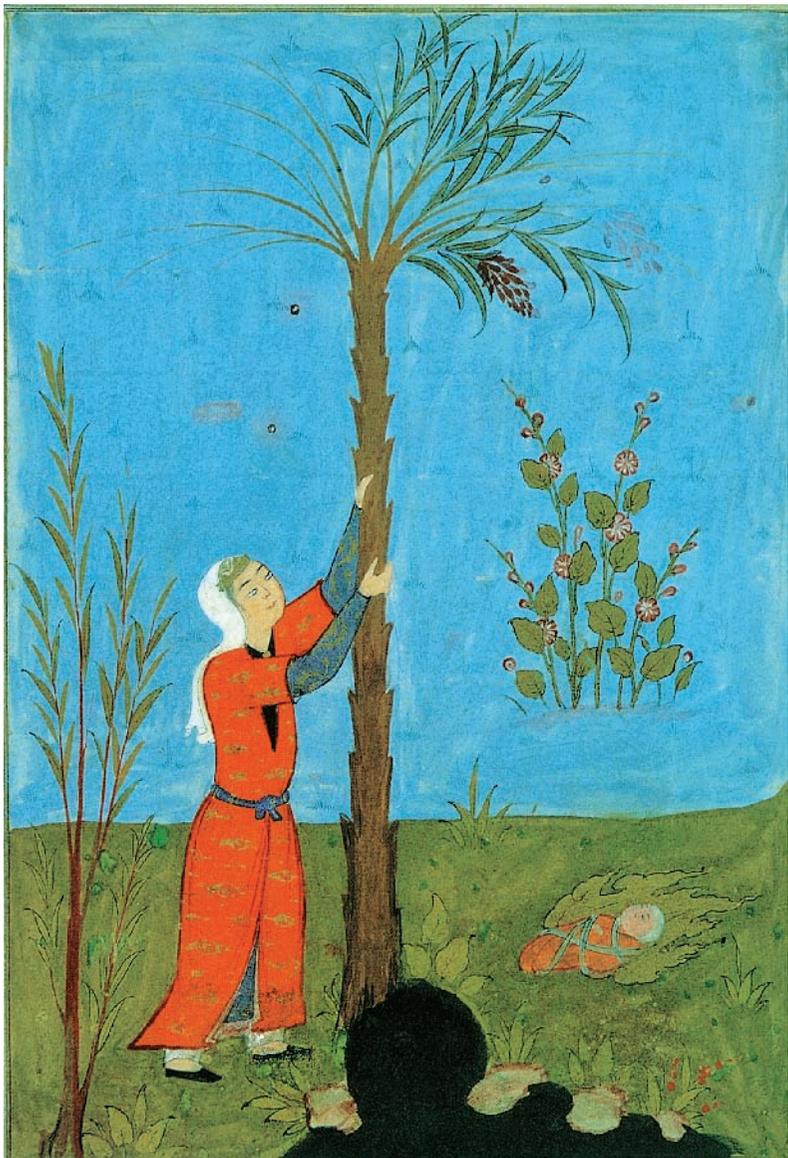
Mary Shakes a Palm Tree to Provide Food for Baby Jesus

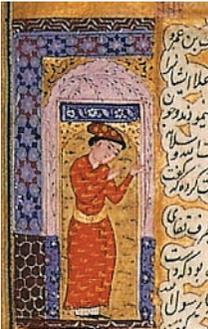
Illustration from the masterpiece
Qisas al-anbiya (The Tales of the Prophets)

1570-1580

31.7 x 19.9 cm

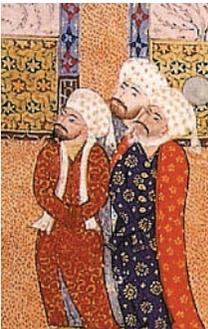
The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin





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

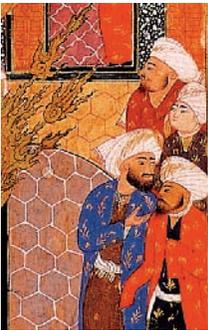
Illustration from sultan Husain's masterpiece
1590

Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin

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



با طلبید یا نه او جز پروای پسنداشت جمعی چاییدن
 با حکیم گفتند 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 nineteenth 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*)

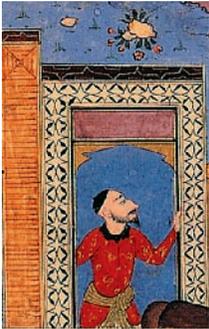
1595

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 nineteenth-century Persian art began to thrive only in the middle of the twentieth century and at first was only concerned with painting and lacquer ware.

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 Fat'h Ali Shah Qajar (1797-1834) experienced something of a renaissance. This affected painting, miniatures, lacquer ware – 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 Fat'h Ali Shah,

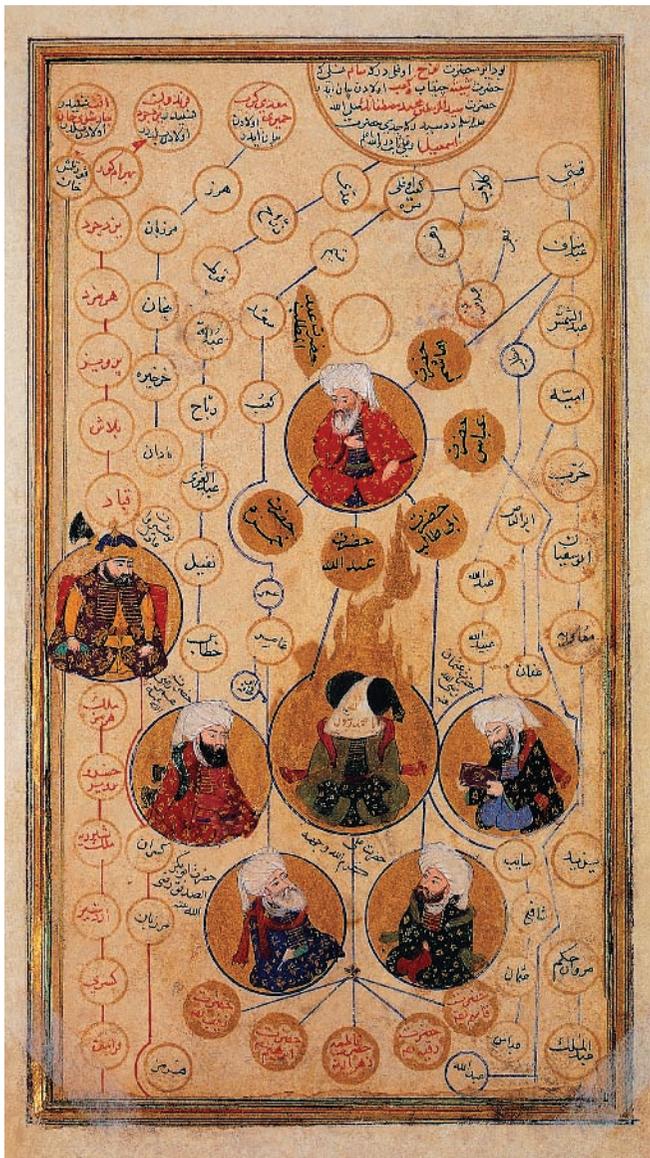
Muhammad and the Rashidun

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 nineteenth century took the 17th-century Isfahan School as its model.

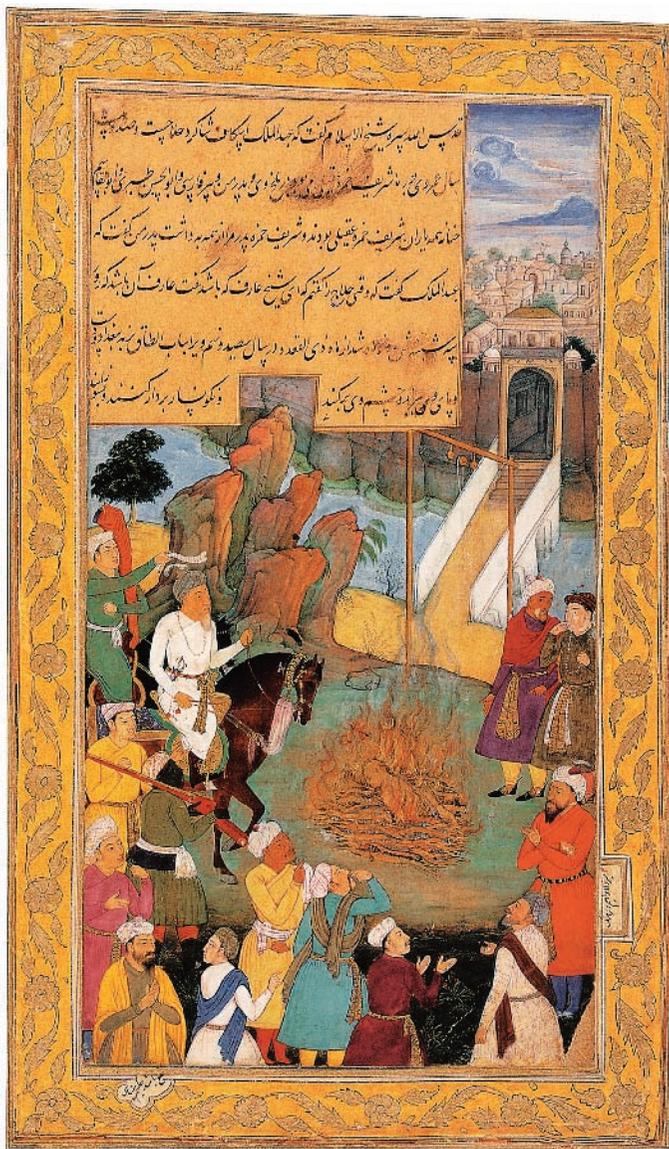
The Martyrdom of al-Hallaj

Illustration from Jami's masterpiece
Nafahat 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 twentieth 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

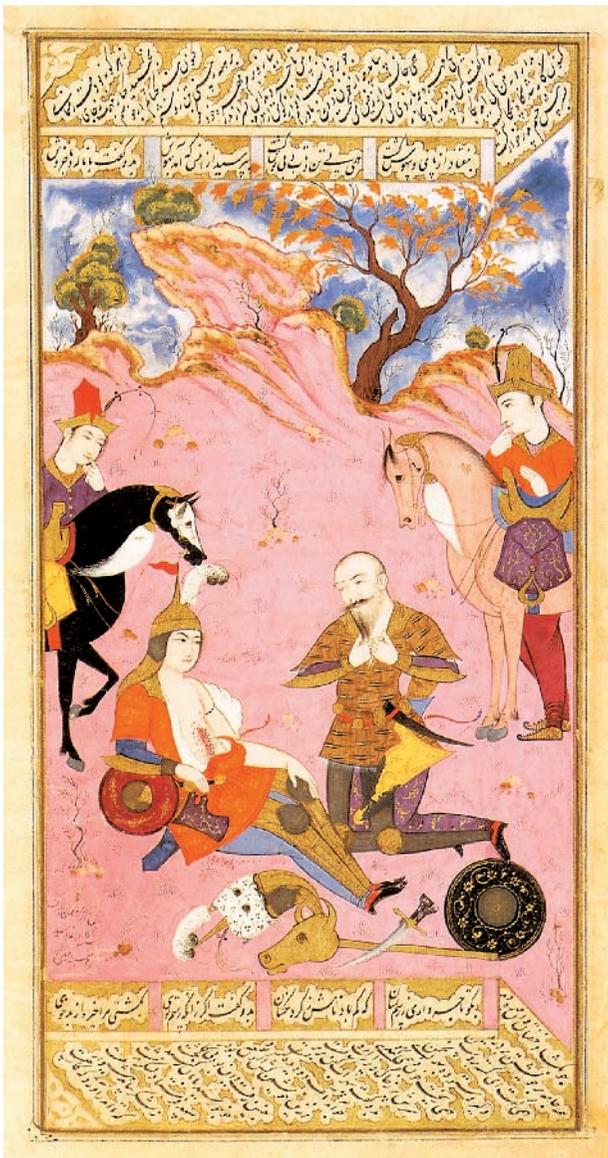
Illustration signed by Mu'in Musavvir from Firdawsi's masterpiece

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

بر تو بر سر خنجر کوه بر او نشسته بر جان چو پست چه در حدیث و در بیان سخن است برین مزار ای برین دست زلم نمی کشد که در میان برین آفرین در هر دو پاس برین نشان شد در آن که در کوه برین	سینه صفت زده و کوه کرد سرافش با و در صورتی است چه که در روی سینه کرد کوه پیش این که در میان بیان را در آن که در کوه کرد که در کوه کرد در آن که در کوه کرد	چه در این نه که در کوه کرد کوه آن شاه در میان است کوه آن در آن که در کوه کرد کوه پیش این که در میان کوه پیش این که در میان کوه پیش این که در میان کوه پیش این که در میان	جنگی که در کوه کرد برین دست که در کوه کرد بر این که در کوه کرد کوه آن در آن که در کوه کرد
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بر این دست که در کوه کرد بر این که در کوه کرد کوه آن در آن که در کوه کرد	سوره ای آواز سنا کوش کجاست کین پنج پانگانه کین در آواز گشت که گزین سینه گزین که در آواز گشت بر این دست که در کوه کرد بر این که در کوه کرد	کوه آن در آن که در کوه کرد کوه آن در آن که در کوه کرد	کوه آن در آن که در کوه کرد کوه آن در آن که در کوه کرد
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در این صحنه



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

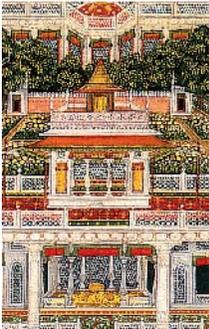


in effect reducing to banalities – or to excessively speculative categories – all the complexity and colour of the “motion” in the history of a culture; they would eclipse a multitude of unelucidated questions and unproved assumptions. Consequently we shall only allow ourselves one generalisation – a 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

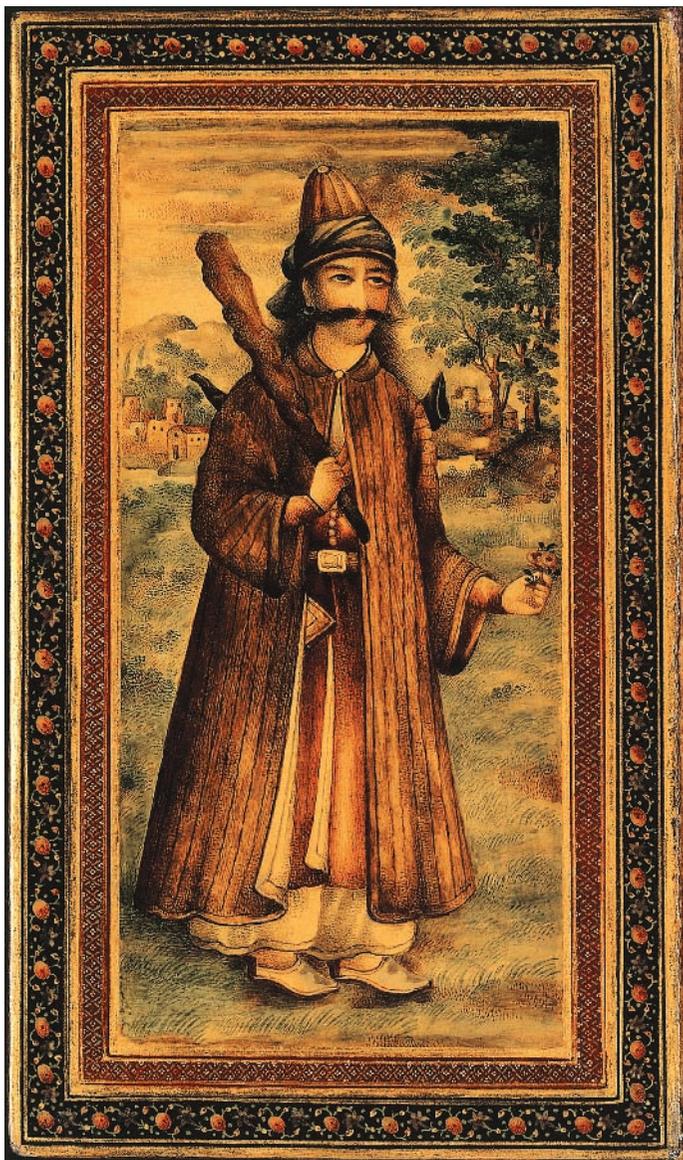
Illustration from Hafiz's masterpiece

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)

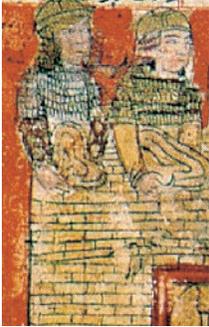
Illustration from Al-Ghazzali's masterpiece

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

گندی سلاخ بر روی
 جنب تا بر روی سلاخ
 بد تا به جوار خاری
 جوتوف و زلف بر سر
 برادر از زبان فوس
 بیست و نه مردان
 بند کسوزان
 بیست و نه مردان
 اگر سالها زلف و رخ اوری
 بیازد بر زبان بر سینه

بیست و نه مردان
 بزک از رخ زلف پلا
 کسلیق یا سه
 زه کوبه داند کار
 با زرخ و نهی
 زین با که در
 بزین رخ بر
 بزبان و زبان
 باشد بد
 زافسوس

محمودی بز سر
 بلند کای
 در بیست
 بیار آفتند

که هر تکش
 برین کوبه
 که در آن
 برین کوبه



جوشنم ستم و زلف
 بی کوز و زلف
 بیست و نه مردان
 با مغز کاس
 سونو نهان
 ز و زلف
 دوان از
 در لایان
 در لایان
 بیست و نه مردان
 زین و کسوزان
 جوار از
 قیل و قون
 قاسر زخم

در زنجو
 بیست و نه مردان
 هر دین
 بد ساکاری
 پا لود
 زه و سوسا
 میان ازی
 سیرها
 عزمت
 سوز و غلام
 مران
 بران
 رای
 تجمعی

بی زرم
 بیست و نه مردان
 هر ایا
 بی باره
 جویم
 زه و سوسا
 همه
 بره
 از ایش
 نهین
 بز و
 که
 نه
 بهیو

سیاه اند
 زه دار
 زانه
 زه و زلف
 جویم
 کرا
 پیش
 در
 سش
 نه
 مرد
 یکی
 سیر

سوزان



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 skillfully 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, 8.7 x 12.8 cm
The Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Tashkent

هر خاکی که سوخت لرزشتاد
 بر آن که بود دست جیتی در میان
 شاه میدان کی به بی زدنش بگو
 بر آن خطاها سوار تا به دست
 تا که از پیش بجای آمد تنگ
 در شاه نیز ددنی کی را

کور کیند ز دور حد تک افتاد
 موختی بود که شکاف
 در نانی شود در صومعه کوه
 چینه می بندد بر شست شست
 در فتاد ننداشت کرد در تک
 دست در چاه که کوه کرد



آنکه در میل از آن دور نیست در
 آن قصه که شد که پیش نه
 هست در پر مخ کجای این که
 کور پریان که سوخت چاه آسود
 آنکس از چاه کور شود افتاد
 آن چه کور کس بندد ست
 ازین شهر چه کرد رخسار سیاه
 در دهه شده خیل آسود
 آنکه که کشت خاک
 آنکه چه خیل ماه کشیده
 آنکه چه بر بلکه غارت

هر که در میانه تلب زود
 چاه از پیر بانی خویش نه
 بهر سببی اولی آسود
 کور بود آنکه سوخت شاه آسود
 عاقبت هر چاه کور افتاد
 کور کور چاه که کور
 به نطفه بود در وین چاه
 بر نیامده شده غور شوم
 ادنی کن بر اندوشن
 ماه بهمان زبان چاه کشیده
 تاب چاه و پیل رادی



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



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



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

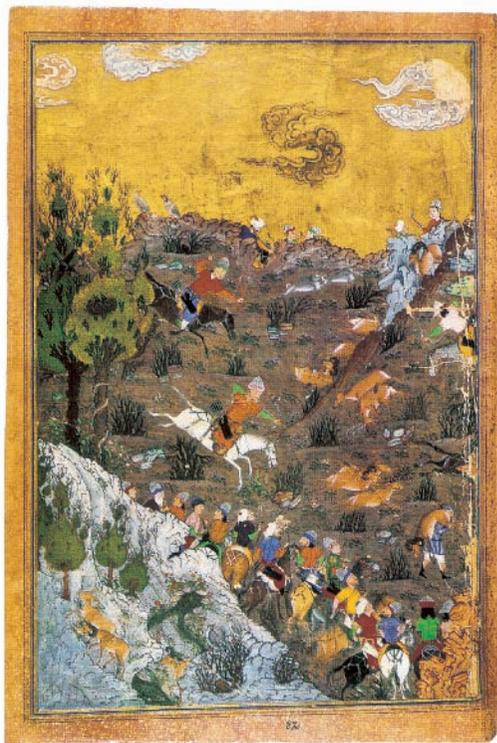
Illustration by Shah-Mahmud al-Nishapuri from Jami's masterpiece

Silsilat al-dhahab

1460s-1470s

Gouache on paper, 27 x 37.5 cm and 25.5 x 37.8 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, 11.7 x 16.5 cm

The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg



<p>شده زرق بر لبش دردم خرد و به شامی است کرد از رخ کوه کاشی خاند از حد ترشش شامه</p>	<p>بود شسته چشم بر راه کرد و شامی شمش هر که نو از شمش ز سران</p>	<p>بیان شسته ز دینک در حد شامی خورش سر سپس دل ریبه و پونا او دل بولایت و کرک فاند و ذوق کرک و خیر و</p>	<p>شده زرق بر لبش دردم خرد و به شامی است کرد از رخ کوه کاشی خاند از حد ترشش شامه</p>
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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, 7.3 x 12.8 cm
Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of
Sciences, Saint Petersburg

سرفایا کن ز سادیک کچھ عین شکرین



کو نکلو یہ کر سچ دیہ کہ تم تھانہ کیا سنا سنا دیو



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, 20.5 x 24 cm

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

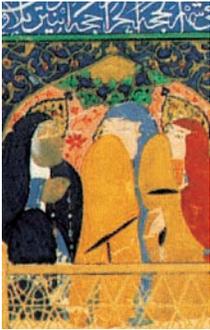
خون و پاینج که ز راست کج
 که شمش کشته گنج شمش پاره
 سینه پاشه ای که که در سینه
 بنفشه بود که مسکون آورده
 کج و مسکنه نیم قرون
 ز بس کشوری دانشی میگرد

بشهر شاه مارمندی و پنج
 ز توده ز راه او غنیمت و گوار
 پیارند جنبه ای که باید کار
 دود و دیوار که زار و میپوشی

بیدم من این ارادت ن برآ
 ز همه صبه تو ای همه نیدام
 چنانکه از به بردند چیزی که تو
 ز بس تا سر تیغ بالای او

ببیند روی کبکی که کفایتی
 بستند بیایم تا زنده ایم
 پاور و از آن فیلسوفان کرد
 مسکن روی و بنگه از آن آمد
 جوشه شسته کار و لاله پاشه
 دو صد شاه رسیده بینای





The miniatures in this manuscript were executed over ninety years after the copy had been completed. There are 39 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, ie 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, 21 x 15.8 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)

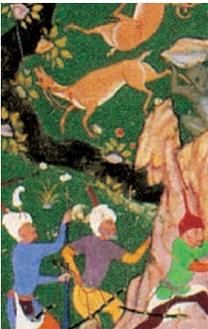
Illustration from Jami's masterpiece *Silsilat al-dhabab*

Mid-16th century

Gouache on paper, 21 x 31.7 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, 21 x 31.7 cm

The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg





This sumptuously decorated example of the *Lava'ih* 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, 9.3 x 16.3 cm

The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg

مرصورت دگش که تزار روی نمود



خواهند فلک شین و ذر چشم تور بود



The miniature *Youth with 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





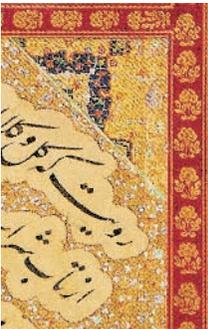
In the late 16th to early 17th century, new trends appeared in Persian painting, linked above all with the endeavour to convey a visual impression of the surrounding world. One of the artists who dealt with these problems was Reza Abbasi, considered the founder of the so-called Isfahan School of painting 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



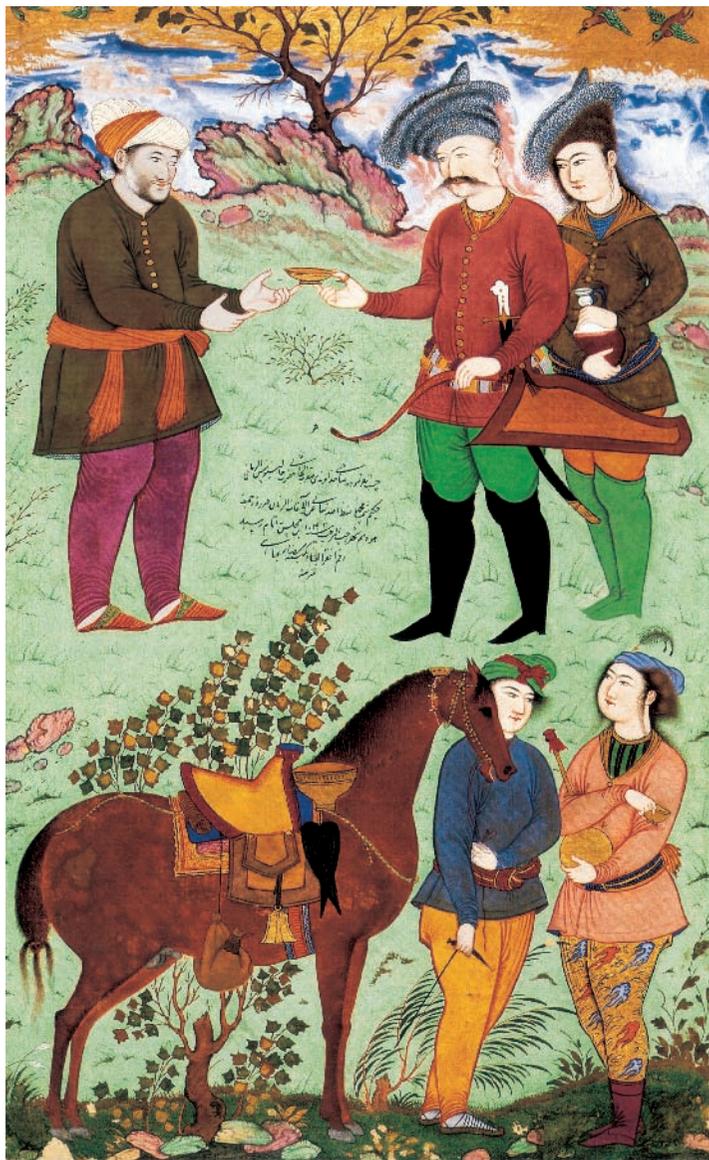


The art of the last great Iranian miniaturist, Reza Abbasi, is fairly well represented in this book. A well-known scholar of the Iranian miniature, I. S. Shchukin, has distinguished three periods in the artist's work. The majority of the miniatures reproduced in this book belong to the last (third) period 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, 17.5 x 28.5 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

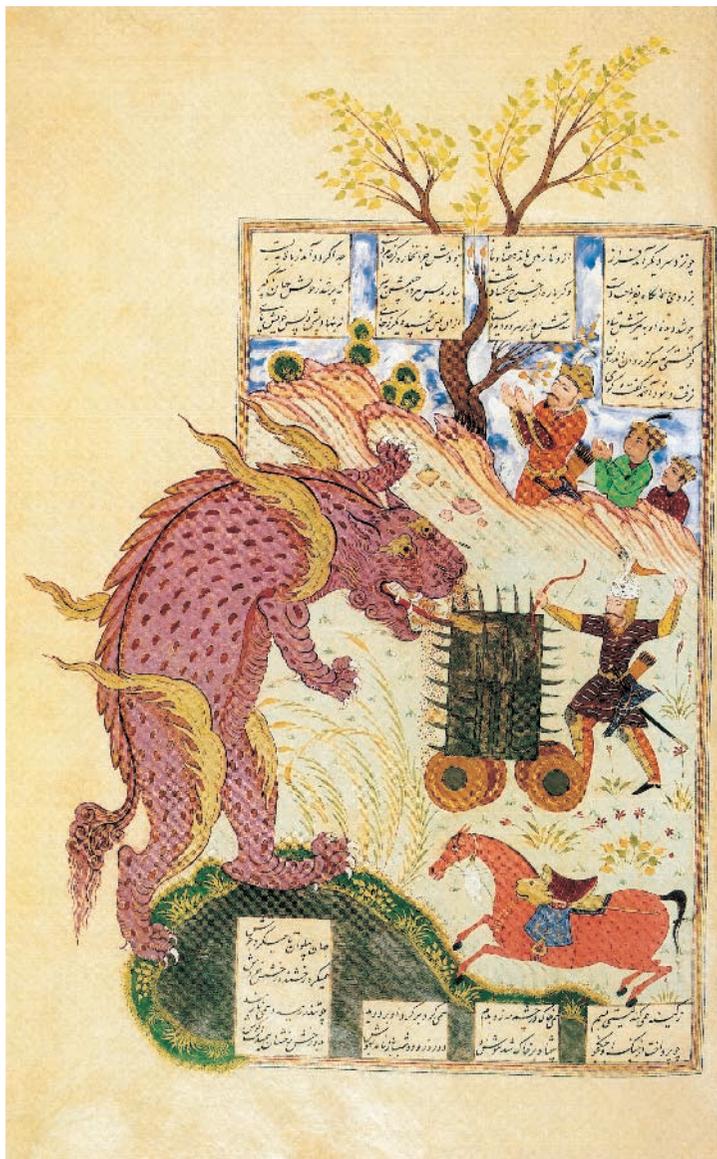
Illustration by Riza-i Musawwir from Firdawsi's masterpiece

Shahnama (The Book of Kings)

1640s

Gouache on paper, 25 x 39 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

12.7 x 16.3 cm

Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow



شیرین لاله نام
سپیدان ماوراء النهر
رقم گیسو خدای مودت
صورتی در



An enormous copy of the *Shahnama* 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 55 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
Shahnama (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.

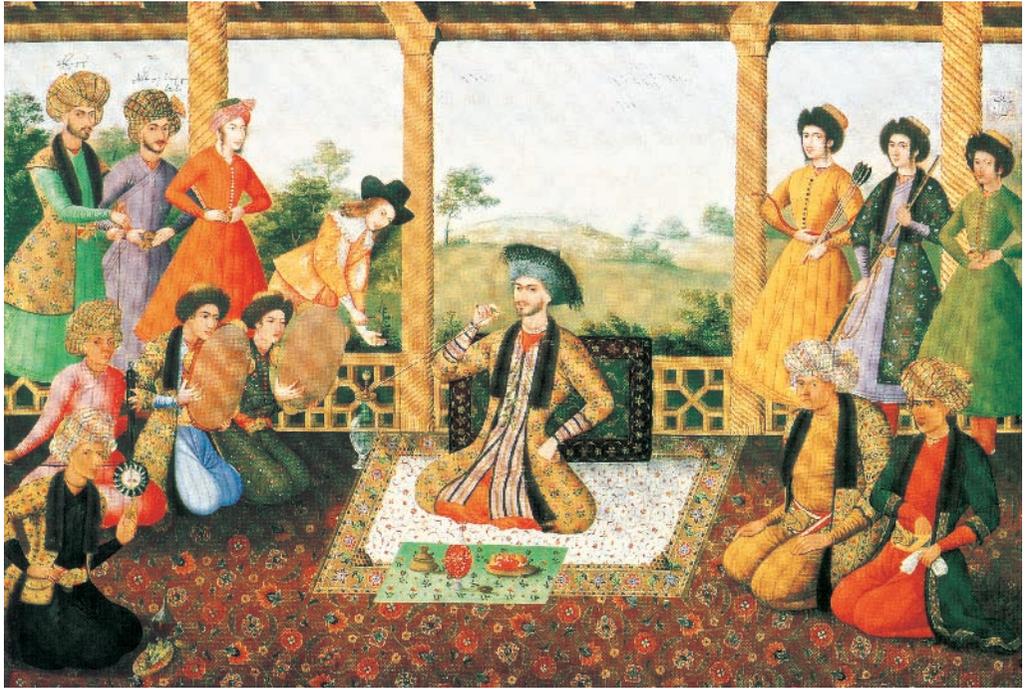
Shah and Courtiers

Illustration by Ali-Quli beg Jabbadar

Second half of the 17th century

Painting on paper, 42.1 x 28.2 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, 17.9 x 24 cm

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



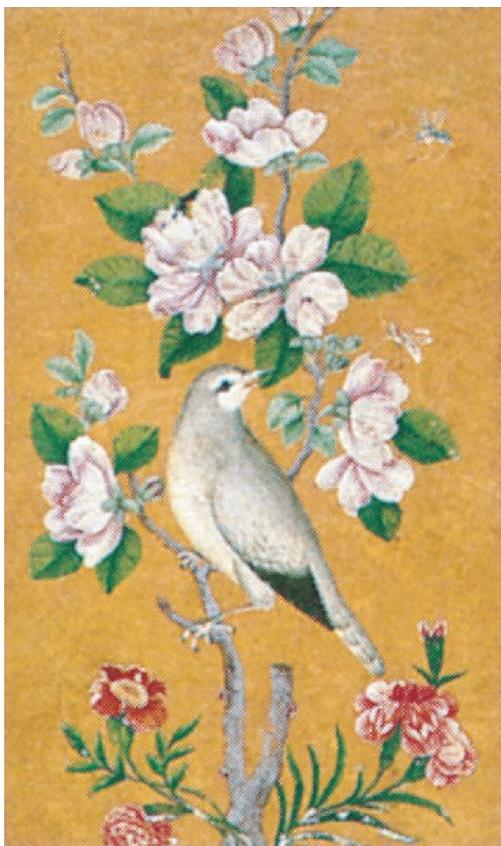


Persian miniatures depicting flowers and birds appeared quite frequently in the mid-17th century. The miniature reproduced here is executed in the European style, which had become established in Iranian painting during the second half of the 17th century. The figure of the bird is rendered three-dimensionally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





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 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
 ناله و آه بجز رفت
 کز دستار در دست
 خورشید برین بزم رفت
 خاطر او دست در گنج رفت
 کز کدورت برین رفت
 و بسته بر او در رفت
 پست کرد کرد با بصورت
 بر او بعد از او رفت
 هنر و شکر کانی رفت
 تا کسین از این رفت
 پله ز پله رشتا باز کرد
 پسر و دوازده بازرگان



چون جهان را که سوز
 رفت ازین مژگان کی در
 اندر آتش بر کرد کویب
 نه از آتش شد بر آید
 کفایت کرد بر کانی که هر
 کرد به دست بر کسکه
 با نظر جنت با شوه
 کار به غمزه دور تابه
 کس که از آتش خورشید دای
 ار که از کیم بر کانی است
 سطره کفش فرود است
 مکتوبه در دو جان است
 حال در پونت این است
 پیشه در پیش است

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