

Shiraz School of Manuscript Illustrations: A Synthesis of Innovation and Expansion

Dr. Samina Zia Sheikh

College of Art and Design, university of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study observes transitions and expansion in Shiraz manuscript illustrations that initially developed from tradition and inspirations from Tabriz and Baghdad Schools of manuscript illustrations. Evolution and expansion of Shiraz Manuscript illustrations appeared following a relentless process where literature and inner force of innovation in illustrations propelled the process towards ideal excellence. Initial style of Shiraz manuscript illustrations continued to be conventional but expanded by a synthesis of observation and innovation. Though, compositional structure of illustrations initially followed traditional practice but at the end of twelfth and commencement of thirteenth century compositions developed with new canons and resourcefulness brought varied styles and novel arrangements in compositions. Tradition played a significant role in process of evolution where customs and beliefs refined subject matters that were transferred from one generation of artist to another but in a more innovative way. Figures that were frequently arranged diagonally or one above the other were later set with more dynamism and validity in fifteenth century miniatures when closer associations developed among the painting styles of Shiraz, Tabriz and Baghdad. Shiraz artist consciously implemented a process of gradual evolution following standards from Baghdad and Tabriz schools of Manuscript illustrations that further lead with new concerns based on interpretation of a simple language of metaphors intermingled with visual elements of illustrations. This novel process made each illustration more and more illustrious. Exodus of artists during Timurid period brought more style in miniatures and a mature Shiraz style developed that lasted long and influenced the development of miniatures in later years.

Keywords: Shiraz paintings, Innovation, Metaphors, literature, Tradition, Dynamism.

Introduction

Shiraz paintings indisputably reveal a devout aptitude away from reason. Writings, lyrical unfolding and metaphors get a higher significance and give basis to notable impact when these are amplified with expression in the variety of painting. The miniature paintings of the school of Shiraz, capital of the province of Fars, offer an excellent example of change through process of maturity and innovation over a period of more than three centuries.

Anything cannot be communicative, if not occupied of sensation or with visual cipher. Metaphoric representation augments thoughtfulness; it interprets legitimacy in a novel appearance which elucidates and controls visual. Metaphoric representation is a manner of incorporation as well as modification, in the organization of rational and imaginative idiom. It presents original substance in more speculative way, yet expressive in its formation that can suggest cordial reaction when image is consecrated by convention and belief.

From classic of Firdowsi to idealistic poetry of Nizāmī, the constituents of theology are the key in all Persian legendary works. Allegoric and metamorphic miniatures of Shiraz school not only followed tradition but also developed with new inventions and practices. Symbolic idiom of literature also gave foundation to the growth of Shiraz miniatures in a corporeal space that articulate the mysticism through melodic opulence of imaginative and lyrical terms, and offer meanings beyond illustrative depictions.

Shiraz school illustrations enjoy a peculiarity in the sphere of Persian art which is distinguished by passionate and epic stories with conscientious precision, insubstantial details and audacious, exciting and pleasant colours. An undemanding glimpse at any inventive effort of Shiraz school creates an urge to explore the evolutionary procedure of these paintings. Even the observer is an artist or an amateur, the very first observation cause intense inquisitiveness to comprehend the spirit behind the art and its roots from where it spawned. Artists of Shiraz school altered aesthetical principles while using brush on paper and discovered unrestrained excellence of dynamism. Pleasant and

*Corresponding author's ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5927-8830

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gratifying effects of colours when they are amalgamated with every additional colour are credits of Shiraz painters. Historical assortment of the region left an impact of dissimilar manipulations from around on manuscript illustration. An order of linkages is required to comprehend, the commencement towards any art and then careful analysis provided facts and reasons behind process of development and innovation. The Shiraz miniature accomplished an amalgamation amid the spatial quality of the Baghdad and Tabriz school of manuscript illustration and the planar character of Shiraz painting rewarded utility of demonstrating the surface of page without going in opposition to standards of inventive idiom of the miniature. Simultaneously, scheme of explicit compositional prototype appears as a result of the assortment and canonization of preferred work of art. This gives evidence to the fact that inventive idioms and advancements were being copied for the miniature in the beginning of the fifteenth century in which it would develop in subsequent years.

Shiraz School of Manuscript Illustrations: A Synthesis of Innovation and Expansion

Muslim art that is thought to be iconoclastic in western world, offers an assortment of subjects within and outside Islamic faith. Depiction of living beings in miniatures of Persian illustrated manuscripts rejects this prevalent myth about Islamic art. Many miniatures are produced under Muslim dynasties of Persia. Persia now Iran, unquestionably has been a land of diversity which was continuously torn by invasions, and suffered great loss of artifacts that were transported from Persia to other places during wars. Miniature paintings that were made on small scale and were part of manuscripts or pages from folios were also transported and now preserved in art museums or private collection are best paradigms. These preserved miniatures give diverse knowledge of the periods' as well as school with which they belong.

Another misconceptions about miniature paintings is that repetition in their design, format, small rudiments, make these miniatures undistinguishable from each other. This hypothesis is raised due to limited knowledge of the subject that appears with similar subjects repeatedly. Persian miniatures are based on great works of poets, scholars and historians and executed by masters who illustrated similar subject numerous times. Though a very careful analysis proves that with some conventional manners that are repeated such as isolated rudiments in vegetations, architectural settings, scenes, gestures and postures of human characters these miniature still provide diversity. The kind of repetition that brings uniformity that for unaccustomed eye is described monotony. Diversity in depiction of similar subject several times yet offers assortment in method, execution, use of spaces, selection of colours in familiar local style and one can easily distinguish miniature of one period from

another. Maturity with diversity is the foremost characteristic of paintings produced at Shiraz School of Miniature painting.

Development in manuscript illustrations involves creative exchange of previous accomplishments within and outside cultural centres. Existing tradition is always the result of refinement of previous traditions. All aspects of miniature painting such as image, margins, space divisions, text require a harmonious blend to narrate subject. Evolution in miniature paintings demand establishment of exceptional principles set with specific rules for all aspects. Artists' determination achieves harmony in elements and creates a rhythm that conveys the zest of evolution. This innovative approach of artists expands the styles and distinctions in produced art works. Miniature painting attained a spectacular degree of refinement during Ilkhanid period, predominantly during the sovereignty of Ghazan Khan. The *Jāmi al-Tawārīkh* and Demotte or Great Mongol *Shāhnāmā* of 1335 were two great illustrated manuscripts. *Jāmi al-Tawārīkh* with predominantly horizontal compositions and landscapes show developed level of observation. Colours frequently thinly applied with sometime unpainted backgrounds. Great Mongol *Shāhnāmā* was characterized with bright colours as compared to *Jāmi al-Tawārīkh*. Later miniatures created under Inju'ids of Shiraz 1335 to 1353 demonstrate free brushwork of bright colours with stylized larger flowers whose impact was more like *chinoiserie* motifs show early influence of central Asia. Under Muzaffarids, rounded hills added into landscapes rather flat backgrounds and high horizon line were prominent characteristics of miniatures. Very few miniatures from Jalayirid period survive though a few detached painting exist in album collections that can be distinguished by rich colours, spatial recession in interiors and landscape echo the influence from Demotte *Shāhnāmā*. During the reign of Sultān Aḥmad Jalayir (1410) painting continued to refine and manuscripts from Tabriz and Baghdad provide evidence of innovation and refinement that are painted in bright colours, full page illustrations, extension of illustration into margin was an innovative device of this time.¹

In the thirteenth century expansion of the miniature, in order of ethnicity, was brought to an end by the Mongol occupation of Central Asia and many of those affianced in creative activities such as artists, escaped to south of Iran. Manuscript illustrations continued to develop which is noticeable in Shiraz miniatures of the first half of the 14th century that correspond to a continuance of an identical way of expansion as the manuscript illustrations of *Warqā-u Gulshāh* of 12th and 13th centuries under Seljuk in Persia. (Plate.1) The illustrations of the manuscripts of the *Shāhnāmā* from 1330, 1333, 1335, 1341 and 1352 are distinctive paradigms from Shiraz school of painting.²

¹ Nasser D. Khalili, *Islamic Art and Culture, Timeline and History* (Egypt: Worth press, 2005), 65-67.

² Basil Gray, *Persian Painting: Treasures of Asia* (New York: Skira, 1961), 57.



Plate.1 Farewell of Warqa to Gulshāh under a cypress.
Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul. Early 13th century.
Source: http://warfare.ga/Turk/Romance_of_Varqa_and_Gulshah-4.htm?i=, accessed October 10, 2020.

The wide-ranging mode of the miniatures sustained to be epic and conceptualized. In the majority of cases, the configurations of the work of art still bear a resemblance to a frieze however much alike painting at the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century, the composition express traces of additional maturity, and attractively more wide-ranging. The figures were moreover set obliquely or in layers above each other. Colour was used in a manner to separate the surface into varied layers that became a favourite instrument in the Shiraz miniature.

Here the revealed features characterize the first traces of an innovative approach towards work of art which to some degree equipped the approach towards qualitative transform in the Shiraz manuscript illustrations at the end of the 14th century. Evaluating this approach towards settings in the miniatures of *Warqā-u Gulshāh* it may be notable that only inaccessible rudiments of the scenery are portrayed previously such as a tree, only branches, few flowers and sometimes small patches of grass appearing from the earth, however, in the illustrations for of Firdowsi's *Shāhnāmā* some maturity in the scenery is formerly evident. This maturity of rendering rivers, hills, trees can be observed where we can note the depiction of plants is additionally wide-ranging. Consequently, a school of painting comes into sight in the first half of the 14th century in Shiraz that upholds and sustained pre-Mongol miniature of the 12th and early 13th centuries.

Timurid princess who were recruited as governors at Shiraz, Baghdad, Isfahan and Herat were keen to call neighboring artists of outstanding skill who served in the courts of Inju'id, Muzaffarid and Jalayirid.³

Other schools developed in Tabriz from the end of the 13th century and afterwards in Baghdad where the artistic processes were very different from the ones that were opted for Shiraz miniature. The style of rendering was more inspired from Chinese art introduced by the

Mongols. Along with inspiration from Mongol style of painting, Byzantine influence also left its marks on Shiraz paintings.

Paintings of this period reveal that during the fourteenth century the schools of painting of Baghdad and Tabriz focused more on their own style and development of their own artistic vocabulary amalgamating from Chinese and Byzantine styles in a more creative manner maintaining their own traditions.

The effort of forming their own traditional manner of representing space in compositions at different stages of development the new style revealed in the series of miniatures of the *Shāhnāmā*, created in Tabriz from 1330 to 1340 and in illustrations of poem *Humay-u Humayūn* by Khwajū Kirmānī, in 1396 that was painted in Baghdad by master Junayd Sulṭān.⁴

Humay-u Humayūn by Khwajū Kirmānī is the best example of evolution in Baghdad school of miniature painting. Architectural structure is illustrated in a very romantic paradisiac environment. Surface decoration of architectural structures is shown with bright coloured glazed tiles following range of geometric and floral patterns. Rich vegetation with a variety of trees and flowers of course interpret a concept of garden of Paradise. Though, along with foreign trees such a cypress, local palms are also depicted in foreground of composition that present an amalgamation of various influences and an effort to employ ethnic observations. Concept of pavilion in miniature painting and depiction of detailed interior and exterior and from pavilion view of garden from particular angles are other notable characteristics of advancement in art of miniature. Vegetal and geometric patterns show contemplation of beauty. In short more pure Persian architectural elements are apparent in *Humay at the Gate of Humayūn's Castle* showing exterior and interior spaces and most distinct pavilion architecture of Persia. (Plate.2)

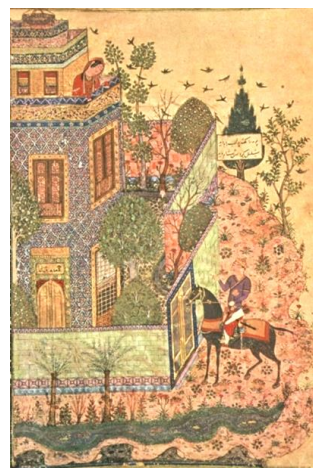


Plate.2 Prince Humay at the Gate of Humayūn's Castle.
Dīwān of Khwajū Kirmānī, 1396, Baghdad.

Source: <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2013/07/an-illustrated-14th-century-khamsah-by-khvaju-kirmani.html>, accessed October 10, 2020.

³ Nasser D. Khalili, *Islamic Art and Culture, Timeline and History* (Egypt: Worth press, 2005), 67.

⁴ Basil Gray, *Persian Painting: Treasures of Asia* (New York: Skira, 1961), 46–7.

Process of evolution and innovation in art of miniature followed a significant amplification of artistic vocabulary during fourteenth century, even when there were no significant influences from various schools of paintings from Central Asia except a practice of selection from specific literature. During second half of fourteenth century Chinese influence became evident that came from associations with Central Asia and numerous significant features appeared in Shiraz miniatures. Analysis of landscape rudiments can well describe elements that are incorporated as influences from Central Asia. Persian paintings well display a great deal of Central Asian influences including mythical creatures such as dragons and phoenixes, metaphors of evil and angelic forces, heroes with supernatural powers fighting with evil forces. On the other hand a variety of landscape rudiments include swirling clouds, pesky trees, lotuses, peonies, conical formation of mountains and palmettes all are influences from Central Asia represent connotation of paradise in a decorative manner. Two illustrations *The Mountain of India*, Folio from the Arabic manuscript of Rashid al-Din's *Jāmi al-Tawārīkh*, 1314 and *The Paladins of Kay Khusrāu Dead in the Mountains*, Folio from a manuscript of Firdowsi's *Shāhnāmā*, Shiraz 1331," (Plates.3, 4) are exceptional examples of early Persian Manuscript illustrations with Central Asian influence. Both of the illustration one from Tabriz and the other from Shiraz have similar style of landscape depiction. Dry conical mountains with pesky trees at far end in the composition and existence of dead trees make it a representation purely on Chinese models. Variation in division of space is yet conventional of early miniatures with Central Asian influence.

Nonetheless, *Shāhnāmā* of 1370 appears with new principles regarding divisions of spaces in compositions as in some cases image spreading out from bottom to upwards and same devise of space division can also be noticed in miniatures from Baghdad and Tabriz schools of Manuscript illustrations. Throughout the process of evolution it is noticeable that a meticulous planar scheme was an integral component of development in Shiraz miniatures.⁵

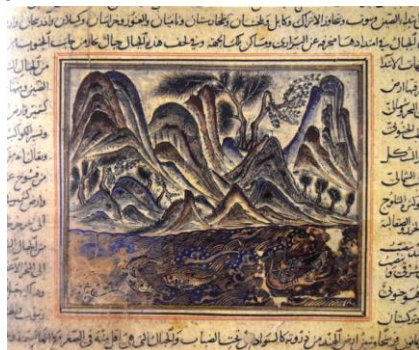


Plate.3 *The Mountain of India*, Folio from the Arabic manuscript of Rashid al-Din's *Jāmi al-Tawārīkh*, Tabriz, 1314.

Source: Sims, *Peerless Images: Persian Figural Painting and its Sources*, 155.



Plate.4 *The Paladins of Kay Khusrāu Dead in the Mountains*, Folio from a manuscript of Firdowsi's *Shāhnāmā*, Shiraz 1331, Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Museum, H. 1479, fol. 126r.

Source: Sims, *Peerless Images: Persian Figural Painting and its Sources*, 155.

In Persian Manuscript illustrations depiction of war scenes and fights or wrestling with mythical creatures are more dynamic in representation. Compositions show vitality, energy and enthusiasm between heroes and enemies. Subject matter also facilitates process of innovation in illustrations. This vitality can be enjoyed in two miniatures *King Minichīhr of Iran defeats Tur*, *Shāhnāmā* of Firdowsi, 1370 from Tabriz as well as *Bahrām Gur kills the Dragon*, *Shāhnāmā* of Firdowsi, 1371" from Shiraz.

Ornamental miniatures display scenes of hunt, gardens or royal audience. In early miniatures such scenes were enclosed in frames but a change came in observation from Tabriz school and can be noticed in manuscript illustration *King Minichīhr of Iran defeats Tur* from *Shāhnāmā* of Firdowsi, 1370. (Plate.5) Where battle scene is awkwardly cropped at edges rather scene set in centre of composition. Such advancement displays a consciousness of artist towards more real depiction of scene. Scene of *King Minichīhr of Iran defeats Tur* is set in an unusual division of space. Flag of war or 'Alam is extended on one side confining text in a rectangular space before edge. Unusual extension of image into border was addition of a new device that is seen in this miniature. All such innovative use of space from Baghdad and Tabriz transferred to Shiraz School. Proportions of figures are more apparent in comparison of horses they are riding but under a considerable size figures depicted look in synchronization with the rest of setting. Undeniably it is a skillful execution of a scene that shows dynamic movement in illustrated subject.

⁵ Basil Gray, *Persian Painting: Treasures of Asia* (New York: Skira, 1961), 63.



Plate.5. King Minichih of Iran defeats Tur.
Shāhnāmā of Firdowsi, 1370, Tabriz.
 Source: Gray, *Persian Paintings*.

Early miniatures were closed in frames but Shiraz school provides departure of such device and space divisions were more artistically divided. *Shāhnāmā*, produced in Baghdad and Tabriz with super natural marvels, romantic adventures and victories of heroes were great source of inspiration for Shiraz artists. Process of evolution takes time but follows continuity with a conscious determination. Components of evolution are line, colour, patterns, and likeness with subject and symbolism that gained maturity with conscious efforts of artists.

A leaf representing illustration from *Shāhnāmā* of Firdowsi, 1371, Shiraz *Bahrām Gur kills the dragon* is notable example of amalgamation of tradition and innovation intact in one composition. (Plate.6) A very conscious effort of breaking the frame can be analyzed, spotlighting the legs of horse and its tail and a petal of arabesque motif entangling body of dragon in a very rhythmic way on its left. In this miniature division of text along with image, divide the whole page keeping the weight of composition unwavering in a subtle and balanced manner.

Shiraz artists always headed towards innovation in miniatures in a very mindful and subtle manner that brought gradual change in the process of execution of miniatures. Nonetheless, Work of miniature art has been produced with intentions including aesthetical concerns, appeal for viewer pragmatically purposeful or recording some historical facts or narratives. To cater these intentions art of miniature incorporates symbolic elements as well as some traditions that well convey intentions behind creation of these miniatures. Tradition that developed through observation, inspiration or dialogue between artists in guilds or the patrons, so by all means such art is based on cultural context and extends life of its own with existing influences that play pivotal role in formation of taste and escalation.

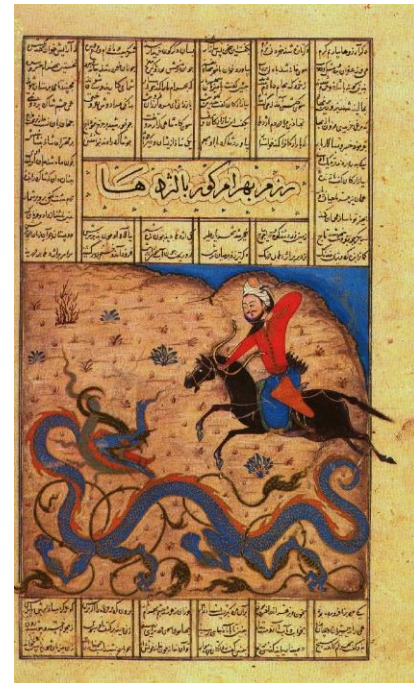


Plate.6 Bahrām Gur kills the dragon, *Shāhnāmā* of Firdowsi, 1371, Shiraz.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bahram_Gur_Kills_the_Dragon._Firdawsi,_Shahnameh_1371_\(Shiraz,_Muzaffarid_dyn.\)_Topkapı_Palace_Library,_Istanbul.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bahram_Gur_Kills_the_Dragon._Firdawsi,_Shahnameh_1371_(Shiraz,_Muzaffarid_dyn.)_Topkapı_Palace_Library,_Istanbul.jpg), accessed October 10, 2020.

Patterns originated from visual system, symbolism, rhythm, or intuition all get mature, modified or refined participate into development of this art. Dynamism of development is not possible without a continuous process of progressive and sophisticated creativity with recognition to subject and its demand. Artists working entirely from imagination and visual memory can bring revolutionary changes into art with a consciousness of involving together cultural inheritance or some established practices. This practice in Shiraz miniatures is continuously noticeable, where process of expansion is appearing gradually along with a conscious practice of tradition from past.

The course towards the revitalization of the Persian school of manuscript illustration at Shiraz occurred in 1400 was lined during its first half when Timur's sons, Iskandar Sulṭān (1409-1414) and Ibrāhīm Sulṭān (1414-1434) governed Fars. After Timur's death *Shāh Rukh's* accession in Herat these two princes who were enthusiastic patrons of artists and writers successively ruled Fars.⁶ Auspiciously, like many other offspring of Timur, they were fascinated and absorbed in Persian culture and arts. Painting and book design obtained great admiration in their courts. The illustrations of the most important manuscripts prepared under Iskandar Sulṭān. The style of Shiraz school can be seen in two Anthologies of poetry 1410-1411. Two Anthologies differ in size and script and cover Shiite laws, Sufism and mysticism.

⁶ Sheila R. Canby, *Persian Painting* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 51.

In the beginning of 15th century closer links developed between miniatures produced in Tabriz, Baghdad and Shiraz Schools. Many artists migrated during this time when Timur subjugated Baghdad in 1393 and 1401 and Tabriz in 1402.

Miniatures were transported in the new capital Samarqand in the court of Iskandar Sulṭān, Timur's nephew, who was governor of Shiraz at that time. Iskandar Sulṭān paid much attention to art of manuscript illustrations and devotedly focused to more development in miniature works produced under his patronization. Artists developed prevailing taste and standards by establishing elements from pure Persian tradition in which they were already skilled. The Shiraz miniature was to a great extent supplemented by the execution of notions from dissimilar schools of paintings and by and large artistic approach took illustrious appearance in expression of the Shiraz school manuscript illustrations.⁷

Distinctive advancements of Shiraz school are evident in the miniatures of two credentials of an Anthology of Poetry dated 1410–1411, which are key connotation in the narration of art.⁸ This period observes specific standards set by artists to establish exclusively individual style of Shiraz Miniatures.

The Shiraz miniature accomplished an amalgamation amid the spatial quality of the Baghdad and Tabriz school of manuscript illustration and the planar character of Shiraz painting rewarded utility of demonstrating the surface of page without going in opposition to standards of inventive idiom of the miniature. Simultaneously, scheme of explicit compositional prototype appeared as a result of the assortment and canonization of preferred work of art. This gives substantiation to the fact that in the beginning of the fifteenth century inventive idioms and advancements were being copied for the miniature in which miniatures developed in subsequent years.⁹

In Shiraz between 1409 and 1414 inventive miniature works done for Iskandar Sulṭān achieved ideal amalgamation of Jalayirid and Muzaffarid styles.¹⁰ Two Anthologies of poetry 1410-1411 are the example of further innovation in the art of miniature. Distinct rock formations, innovative space divisions, architectural details, pure Persian architecture and decorative details, perfect geometry, linear perfections are major characteristics of Shiraz paintings of that time. Animals and birds are no more static, flora and fauna in a rhythmic harmony all contributed to notable evolution of Miniature art in Shiraz.

To discover pattern of growth in Shiraz miniatures the stages of evolution help analyze freely evolved transitions

in every illustration. Evolution that is a persistent process with its own logics and inner strength ideally propels towards perfection though, in tradition of art there is never any reflective formal transformation that change the convention entirely. Consequently evolution is restricted to the process of development from previously evolved forms in a spatial conception and then the art is known as 'growing' from merely being made. Shiraz miniatures represent fully incorporated creative expression absolute in numerous ways through profundity with furthest attention to detail any other art of painting ever achieved.

In Shiraz miniatures regularity in general is not the result of traditional application of space or replication but it is due to aesthetic declaration on conscious grounds. Spaces provide mystic experience due to its spiritual value and manner. If we compare space and perspective of contemporary paintings with miniatures we can find certain connection applied in regard of space in miniatures. Space is categorized or divided in a range of dissimilar ways. Each level of scene is cut up into sections over layered or set in a way that it develops its significance and individuality. These miniatures do not cater spatial realism rather spiritual connotation. *Durab took prisoner by Iskandar*, Shiraz, 1410 (Plate.7) portrays a composition set in three sided border and odd cropping of scene from both sides shows an effort of playing with space in a more persuasive way. Set in three planes visually compelling composition of a war scene creates a sense of continuity of battlefield and prisoner in the centre is focal point of whole image, is all set in an incredible way. Dealing with innovative division of spaces is not the only intention of Shiraz artist rather metaphoric elements and settings are also principal concerns and credits of artists.

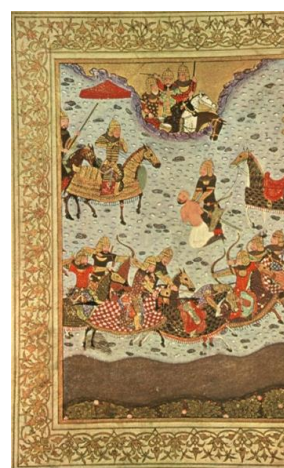


Plate.7 *Durab took prisoner by Iskandar*. Shiraz, 1410. Anthology of Iskandar Sulṭān. Gulbenkian Collection, Lisbon.

Source: Gray, *Persian Paintings*, 166.

Miniatures that are created into a mysterious world of metaphors have their own distinct style that is opted to

⁷ Sheila R. Canby, *Persian Painting* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 50-1.

⁸ Basil Gray, *Persian Painting: Treasures of Asia* (New York: Skira, 1961), 73–79.

⁹ Sheila R. Canby, *Persian Painting* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 53.

¹⁰ Nasser D. Khalili, *Islamic Art and Culture, Timeline and History* (Egypt: Worth press, 2005), 67.

represent complex world revealing the artistic expression in a sense that is the most multifaceted. Nevertheless, creation of miniatures in Shiraz School is consistently conventional and innovative in style and compositions though fluctuate most commendably in preference to space divisions, incorporated motifs and colour schemes while fabricating a formal appearance. Shiraz miniatures have validity afar though changes in the process of evolution from time to time do not apply to distinct progress but still recreate a revolutionary spirit.

Another significant manuscript illustration from Anthology of Iskandar Sulṭān, *Haft Paykār*, *Bahrām Gur introduced into the Hall of Seven Images*, 1410 (Plate.8) is set in a geometrical mode in which architectural structure appeared lavishly adorned with geometrical patterned tile work. Metaphoric mysticism is the very essence of this painting, where blue sky in contract of day light from windows depict at the same time presence of day and night in one image. A broad range of concepts provided by mystical literature in form of epic or moralistic gave way to innovation dealing with metaphors. *Haft Paykār*, a narration of perfect man who going through various stages of life leaves this world to access spiritual realm and meets with divine. In composition seven domes, seven souls direct towards metaphor of process to reach seven heavens. Artists of Shiraz School are credited for extraordinary efforts of execution of geometric device so playfully in form of decorative patterns of tiles and space divisions. Very consciously this device of geometry is employed to put in depiction a metaphoric spiritual experience of space proving expansion of Shiraz manuscript illustrations.



Plate.8 *Haft Paykār*. *Bahrām Gur introduced into the Hall of Seven Images*, 1410, Shiraz. From Anthology of Iskandar Sulṭān, Gulbenkian Collection, Lisbon.

Source: <https://www.artforum.com/print/201204/hans-belting-s-florence-and-baghdad-30568>, accessed October 10, 2020.

Another most significant example of Shiraz school is *Rustam's third Khwan: He Slays Dragon* from *Shāhnāmā* of Ibrāhīm Sulṭān that belongs to 15th century. (Plate.9)

Metaphoric depiction of fight with evil is the most favoured subject matter in Persian paintings. Metaphoric interpretation of holding a grip on evil is shown by slaying a dragon with sword is frequently depicted to interpret daring abilities of heroes overcoming the evils. Composition of painting follows the innovative effort of dealing with space somehow in an unusual manner. Left leg of figure spreading out of border line and on the other side oddly cut body of horse are efforts to transact space in a dissimilar way in composition.

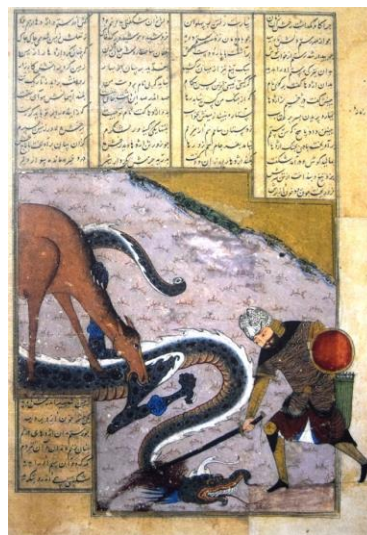


Plate.9 *Rustam's third Khwan: He Slays Dragon*. From *Shāhnāmā* of Ibrāhīm Sulṭān, Shiraz, 1432-35.

Source: Sims, *Peerless Images: Persian Figural Painting and its Sources*, 54.

Some artists active in the court of these two princes, Iskandar Sulṭān and Ibrāhīm Sulṭān had come to Shiraz from Samarqand and Herat, contributing their experience to the local school of art. This resulted in a far greater maturity which is clearly noticeable in these miniatures. These manuscripts possessed more abridged symmetrical compositions with more refined landscape. A strong relationship between text areas and illustrative component were main characteristics of these manuscripts. Lighter palette and use of decorative elements were also astonishing. Masterly arranged characters and refined silhouetted rocks add to the features of development.¹¹

Dealing with human form one can analyze a variety of dissimilar ways of handling the representation of the human form in Shiraz miniatures. In an illustration *Timur Hawks near Bukhara after the spring campaign of 1389* from celebrated *Zafarnāmā*, approach toward depicting human body is somewhat different from earlier examples and long-bodied, graceful figures are emerging at different angles in the entire composition. (Plate.10) Later, the long-bodied, graceful figures of the early part of the century are replaced by short, muscular men with

¹¹ Sheila R. Canby, *Persian Painting* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 50.

outsized round heads. The Timurid artists also used more figures: where space and subject allow, large groups of people are deployed to create rhythmic patterns of shape and color all across the page.



Plate.10 *Timur Hawks near Bukhara after the spring campaign of 1389*, painting from a new dispersed manuscript of Sharif al-Din 'Ali Yazdi's *Zafarnāmā* Shiraz, 1434-36.

Source: Sims, *Peerless Images: Persian Figural Painting and its Sources*, 109.

Process of art appreciation or criticism refines with understanding of role of metaphors used in art. Apart from quality of line if it is gentle, delicate or harsh, colours pleasing or sedative or creating tension or harmony, the role of metaphors involved in creation of any art work is also of greater significance. Specifically, when metaphors incorporated are in accord with elements followed in that creation. Metaphors leave an impact to the viewer in thought provoking process. Appreciating metaphors one's intellectual abilities offer a great deal of enjoyment while interacting with that creation. In Shiraz illustration brilliantly incorporated metaphors execute a somber atmosphere and sometimes disclose imaginative diversity to a literary distinction that provides foundation to evolution, description or interpretation.

Metaphors reveal nature of aesthetics employed in creation. Persian literature offers a great deal of metaphoric interpretations that Shiraz artist transferred to illustrations of literary works. Every Shiraz manuscript illustration demands distinctive aesthetic understanding and critical visual language of metaphors that certainly give way to a persuasive approach when message is perceived from these visuals.

Role of metaphors in aesthetic understanding of Shiraz manuscript illustrations is deep rooted to critical discourse. Philosophical metaphors are impossible to eliminate on the other hand some critical metaphors may

be prone insufficient to preserve the real context that is relevant to describe the purpose of illustration. Universal metaphors reveal aspect of phenomenology such as significant incorporation of landscape rudiments, water, clouds etc in illustrations. Universal metaphoric interpretations in Shiraz illustrations play crucial role to recount regional diversity and when such observation is vague bold and somber colours create an atmosphere that leaves an unavoidable impact on emotional and psychological sense of viewer.

Shiraz Manuscript illustrations are rich with metaphoric interpretations; metaphors frequently depicted include peonies, lotuses, garden settings, clouds, water, mythical creatures such as *Simurgh* and dragons. Every image is constructed with dynamically interacting elements and metaphors that enhance quality of liveliness. Garden settings in Shiraz illustrations is metaphor of paradise, strikingly rendered in *A Princely Banquet in the Garden* (Plate.11) and all such scenes are delightfully rendered with bold colours and amusingly dynamic compositions. An illustration composed of lines, colours, textures certainly caters to distinctive aesthetic qualities that are further loaded with metaphorical descriptions are indeed very conscious efforts of evolution behind such delineations of Shiraz miniatures.



Plate.11 *A Princely Banquet in the Garden*, double page frontispiece removed from a manuscript of Shāhnāmā of Firdowsi Shiraz, 1444.

Source: Sims, *Peerless Images: Persian Figural Painting and its Sources*, 109.

The characteristics of the school of Shiraz are at its peak during Timurids which is best represented in the illustrations of *Khāwar-nāmā* of Ibn-i Husam, '*Ali Slaying the Dragon*', 1480. It is the first known copy of Ibn-i Husam's *Khāwar-nāmā* inspired by the *Shāhnāmā*, but replacing Muhammad's son-in-law 'Ali for the Sasanian hero Rustam. A metaphoric representation of 'good overpowering the evil' is represented in fight of Imām 'Ali a.s. with dragon. Subject of fight of heroes with dragons is profoundly well-established in Persian classic literature where dragon is considered as a metaphor of evil, *Azhi Dahaka*, a three mouthed, three headed and six eyed monster mentioned in Avesta.

Designs in the whole atmospheric composition are conceived on a large scale, figures are powerful and full of vitality. Colorful and dramatic scenes are illustrated and are counted among the most successful achievements of fifteenth century art. Richly illustrated manuscript, an epic life of Imām 'Ali a.s., is composed with a rich conceptual landscape that represent a tendency to symmetry and decoration. Use of bold colours makes it a Tapestry like miniatures in which Principal figures stand out in epic splendor and Imām 'Ali a.s. as a consecrated figure in Islam is shown with flame like halo. (Plate.12)

Consecrated figures which once were represented with halos from behind their heads are considered a metaphor of light or *nūr*, which spreads out from that holy person. That *nūr* or holy light is of goodness, purity and sanctification. In Shiraz paintings disc like halo is transformed into flame rising from back which is originally based on influence from Chinese and Central Asian prototypes. Halo in Persian is known as *far* which means light of magnificence. Though in later Islamic paintings halo was again represented like a disc behind the Islamic rulers till 14th century.¹²



Plate.12 'Ali Slaying the Dragon, *Khāwar-nāmā* of Ibn-i Husam, 1480, Shiraz.

Source: Papadopoulos, *Islam and Muslim Art*, 148.

Same flame like halo can be observed in a sixteenth century manuscript illustration *Yusūf entering Zulaykha's Apartment*, from a *Yusūf and Zulaykha* of Jāmi, Shiraz, 924/1518. Sacred image of Yusūf is shown with *far*, a flame of light rising from the back identify Yusūf as superior from other figures. (Plate.13) Highly adorned architectural structure, with arabesque and geometrical patterns in one piece all looks engaging. A very fine selection of palette proves perfection of rendering a scene with remarkable details.

In eccentric figural setting Yusūf stands distinguished with flame like halo Whereas, rest of the figures are

looking stunned gazing towards him as if they all are frozen in that moment. Dissimilar adornment of walls with a variety of patterns is making whole composition striking. Composition's planes emphasize, explicate the focus on Yusūf due to *far* though set in foreground whereas overlarge Zulaykha sitting high on throne is yet not the focal point of composition.

Geometric stylization along with a blend of symmetrical and asymmetrical incorporation in this visual and a mix of somber and vibrant colours make this visual entirely gratifying. A sense of power and beauty rendered through stylistic change though makes it a representation of principle of continuity of tradition but with powerful innovation and marks it fully integrated artistic expression. This visual carries depth with utmost empathy, mysterious world of metaphors and forceful continuity of symbolization with ambitious narrative approach. All these observations prove the process of evolution in Shiraz painting astoundingly noticeable.



Plate.13 Yusūf entering Zulaykha's Apartment, from a *Yusūf and Zulaykha* of Jāmi, Shiraz, 924/1518.

Source: Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art: 1510-1722*, 35.

The Shiraz manuscript illustrations accomplished an adaptation, linking the spatial dissimilarity of the Baghdad as well as Tabriz school. Methodical character of Shiraz illustrations rewarded the value of demonstrating over layered planes of compositions in an incredible way that is free from going against the standards of the inventive expression of the miniatures. On the other hand unequivocal compositional prototypes appeared as an outcome of the assortment as well as an admission into a standard of fictional or imaginative works of preferred compositions. All this give authentication to the veracity that a creative expression and evolution was being offshoot for the miniature at the beginning of the fifteenth century within which it would expand in following years.

¹² J. Pedersen, *The Arabic book* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 95.

Conclusion

Shiraz manuscript paintings are benefited from distinctive identity in the sphere of art. These illustrations are based on passionate and heroic stories from literature, depicted with conscientious precision, as well as insubstantial trivia and audacious, pulsating and melodious colour palettes. An undemanding momentary look at any creative effort of Shiraz painting creates an aspiration in the observer to analyze over and over again the spirit behind these visual creations. First observation cause strong inquisitiveness to comprehend the character of visuals following skills. Persian artists altered aesthetical notions throughout process of exploration to render unlimited excellence of dynamism. Melodious and gratifying effects of colours once they are amalgamated amazingly are indeed recognition to painters of Shiraz school of manuscript illustrations. Evolutionary characteristics with innovation were handled with determination throughout exploration with medium, space or emblematic representations. Exponent of evolution in art deals with influences; technique as well as intrinsic and extrinsic phenomenon and visual formed in between rationales and inherent beliefs. Aforementioned process leads this art towards progress and excellence. Shiraz manuscript illustrations offer stylistic and technical changes and each creation distinguish from the other as Shiraz artists submerged convention with developed and premeditated their own idiom of art. Motifs, designs, metaphors indicate an unbroken continuity which is schematic as well as symbolic.

Concepts incorporated also passed through same process of evolution as the term 'evolution' is indeed restricted to the process of development from previous tradition and appearing into new forms by means of innovation. Proportional contents express constitutional structures of concepts. In Shiraz manuscript illustrations vibrancy of colour palette, subdued images, contrasts, eccentric compositions with a sense of fluctuation in pictorial depth with intrinsic and extrinsic character connected with metaphors, give way to radically congenial perceptual experience.

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