# THE CHANGING ICONOGRAPHY OF NIZAMI MANUSCRIPTS IN OTTOMAN, SAFAVID AND MUGHAL BOOK CULTURES

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in the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Book Cultures

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# DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

The Changing Iconography of Nizami Manuscripts

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This thesis scrutinizes illustrated manuscripts of Nizami's *Khamsa* produced or refurbished in Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal realms between 1450-1600, in order to understand how the iconographic pool, the illustrative programs and approaches to illustration of the book cultures of these realms were inspired by and responded to the Timurid manuscripts of the same book. To this aim it studies ten manuscripts from the aforementioned four dynasties and compares their illustrative programs and thematic agendas. The main argument of the thesis is that each of the three early modern Muslim empires constructed their relationship to the Timurid heritage in a different way determined by their chronological and geographical position vis-à-vis the Timurid dynasty and their divergent cultural trajectories. The study reveals that the relationship of Safavid painting to Timurid painting developed in terms of a relationship between practitioners of the art and their tradition, while Ottoman and Mughal gaze to Timurids was largely dynastic. Whereas Ottomans aspired to Timurid cultural prestige and competed with them in their products, Mughals' genealogic relationship to the latter led them to emphasize the relationship in their painting and proclaim it with a sense of pride. The study contributes to the existing scholarship in its nuancing of the relations among these dynasties and approaching the matter through illustrations to a single text, of which illustration was in itself demonstrative of a specific relationship to Timurid legacy, and of which content deepened the intellectual aspect of the paintings with its discussions of visual arts.

ÖZET

Osmanlı, Safevi ve Babürlü Kitap Kültürlerinde

Nizami *Hamse*lerinin Değişen İkonografisi

Bu tez, 1450-1600 arasında Safevi, Osmanlı ve Babürlü İmparatorluklarında üretilen veya tamir edilen resimli Nizami *Hamse* yazmalarını incelemekte ve bu imparatorlukların kitap kültürlerinde ikonografik havuz, resimleme programı ve resimlemeye yaklaşımları açısından aynı eserin Timurlu yazmalarından nasıl esinlendiğini ve onlara nasıl karşılık verdiğini anlamayı amaçlar. Bu amaçla bahsi geçen dört hanedan için üretilen on el yazması eser incelenmiş ve resimleme programları ve tematik gündemleri karşılaştırılmıştır. Tezin ana argümanı, bu üç erken modern Müslüman imparatorluğun her birinin Timurlu mirasıyla kurdukları ilişkiyi farklı bir şekilde inşa ettikleri ve Timurlu hanedanı karşısındaki kronolojik ve coğrafi konumlarının ve farklı kültürel ve siyasi dinamiklerinin bu ilişkide belirleyici olduğudur. Çalışma, Safevi resim sanatının Timurlu sanatıyla ilişkisinin sanatçılar ve gelenekleri çerçevesinde geliştiğini, Osmanlı ve Babürlülerin Timurlulara bakışının ise hanedanlık perspektifinde oluştuğunu ortaya koyar. Osmanlılar Timurluların kültürel prestijine hayranlık duyuyorlardı ve kendi ürünlerinde onlarla rekabet halindeydiler, Babürlüler ise Timurlular ile aralarında bulunan soy bağını vurgulayarak resimlerinde bu bağı vurguladılar. Çalışma, bu hanedanlar arasındaki ilişkileri detaylandırması ve bu ilişkiyi tek bir metnin resimlenişi üzerinden ortaya koymasıyla mevcut literatüre katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bu metnin resimlenişi bizatihi Timurlu mirasıyla belirli bir ilişkiyi gösteriyordu ve metnin içeriği, görsel sanatlar üzerine sürdürdüğü tartışmalarla resimlerin entelektüel boyutunu derinleştiriyordu.

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DEDICATION

To my family

for their immense patience in relieving me of other responsibilities,

their unconditional support in every decision I make,

and their endurance to my endless chattering on the paintings that I studied.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| BnF | Bibliothèque nationale de France |
| BL | British Library |
| f. | folio |
| ff. | folios |
| HSAL | Hacı Selim Ağa Library |
| TPML | Topkapı Palace Museum Library |

# A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Localization and simplicity are regarded as the main principles in the transliterations throughout the thesis. Therefore, Ottoman words and names are transliterated according to the rules of modern Turkish. In the transliteration of Persian words and names, the sound of the words is kept essential rather than their spelling in Arabic letters. Thus, for instance, instead of writing *khwajah*, which is based on the spelling, *khaja* is preferred, which is based on the pronunciation. 'W' is not used at all, as neither Turkish nor Persian has this sound. Instead, 'v' is preferred. Throughout, the Arabic letter *ayn* is represented as '. The Persian or Arabic words that are common in English, such as 'sheikh' and 'Firdausi', are written in the common spelling in English and are not italicized.

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

This thesis will be an inquiry of the changing perspectives and approaches to the illustration of the *Khamsa* of Nizami manuscripts produced, restored, and preserved in the domains of Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Empires; and the main question it will attempt to answer will be on the ways in which the arts of the book in general, and book illustration in particular, of these three early modern Muslim empires were inherited from and responded to the Timurid illustrations of the *Khamsa*.

## 1.1 The text and the author

The *Khamsa* of Ilyas b. Yusuf Nizam ad-Din, more commonly known as Nizami Ganjavi (c. 1141-1209) has had an enormous impact on the Persian literature that came after it, changing the path of poetry from heroic epic, traditionally written in the line of Abu al-Qasim Firdausi (c. 940-1020), to psychologically deep and complicated romances, and opening the possibilities of the *masnavi* narrative form to Sufi poetry which would make use of it immensely afterwards.[1] Hence it is not surprising that Nizami's *Khamsa* was the second most illustrated book in the premodern Iranian world after Firdausi's *Shahnama*.

His works were so influential that the very form of Nizami's book, being a *khamsa*, became one of the main formats in the literature continuing at least for six or seven hundred years, although this specific form may not have been planned by Nizami himself in the process of his writing, as he wrote each of his *masnavis* as

[1] Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World: Tales from the Khamseh of Nizami*; Thackston, *A Millennium of Classical Persian Poetry: A Guide to the Reading and Understanding of Persian Poetry from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*.

individual works.[2] A *khamsa* means a quintet, or a book containing five distinct *masnavi*s. A *masnavi*, in Persian poetry, is a poem composed of unlimited number of couplets each of which rhymes in itself, with no overarching rhyming scheme. The complete poem shows coherence in its meter rather than in its rhyme, and thus it is convenient for the writing of long narratives such as romances.[3] But the *masnavi* form is not limited to narrative poetry, and it can be used for any subject.

Indeed, Nizami's *Khamsa* starts with a didactic poem titled *Makhzan al-Asrar* (Treasure House of Mysteries). It is a poem segmented into twenty discourses on theological and philosophical matters. Each discourse ends with a parable aimed at the exemplification of the main arguments. Some of these discussions revolve around the issue of just rule and are directed at kings, which bring them close to the mirror-for-princes genre, but the others address humankind in general.[4] It is the parables at the end of the discourses which are illustrated in this *masnavi*.

The main concerns of Nizami in this work are centered on the importance of self-knowledge, living a balanced life without worldly greed, and the emphasis on peace and contempt of violence. Although there may be resonances of Sufism in these discussions, modern literary scholars are cautious in ascribing a Sufi perspective to Nizami, as I will elaborate below. Christoph Bürgel even suggests that Nizami's worldview is better explained as a monotheistic one than a Muslim one, based on his argument that Nizami was not strict about religious rules of Islam.[5]

Since *Makhzan al-Asrar* does not have a narrative coherence, I will not attempt to summarize it here, but each illustration to this *masnavi* will be supported with a synopsis of the short story it depicts in the later pages of the thesis. The other

[2] Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods", 584
[3] Thackston, *A Millenium of Classical Persian Poetry*, xxiv
[4] Ganjavi, *Makhzanol Asrar*
[5] Bürgel, "Nizami's World Order", 21-29

four *masnavi*s are organized around a main narrative thread respective to each, and thus I will provide here brief summaries of them. Nevertheless, since a detailed account will not fit here, the discussion of each illustration in the later chapters will be accompanied by the summary of the particular episode that it depicts. My account of the three romantic *masnavi*s, *Khosrau va Shirin*, *Layla va Majnun*, and *Haft Paykar*, will be based on the summarized translation in Peter Chelkowski's book on the *Khamsa*.[6] I will also make use of English or Turkish translations published separately of the *masnavi*s.[7] Here and throughout the thesis, unless otherwise stated, the references to the text of these *masnavi*s will rely on Chelkowski's summary.

The second poem is the romance of *Khosrau va Shirin* (Khosrau and Shirin), narrating the love story of Khosrau Parviz, the historical Chosroes II (c. 570-628), a king of the Sassanian Empire, and Shirin, his lover and later consort, our historical knowledge about whom is more limited. Their story is narrated in the *Shahnama* of Firdausi as well, but unlike Firdausi's epic, Nizami's version takes the romantic aspect of the story to the center.

Hurmuzd, a great king of Iran, is beset with the grief that he has no son. Finally, his prayers are responded to with the birth of Khosrau, who was called Parviz (Victorious), a beautiful son talented in everything that a prince should be educated in. Although one day he commits a fault that meets a grave punishment from his father, he proves himself in the virtue of apologizing humbly, and is eventually forgiven. After this incident Khosrau sees his grandfather in a dream, who heralds the beautiful lover and the throne that await him in his fate. Soon his loyal friend Shapur, who is a talented painter, mentions to Khosrau Shirin, the princess of

[6] Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World: Tales from the Khamseh of Nizami*
[7] Ganjavi, *Makhzanol Asrar*, English trans. Gholam Hossein Darab Khan; Ganjavi, *Hüsrev ve Şirin*, Turkish trans. Sabri Sevsevil; Ganjavi, *Leyla ile Mecnun*, Turkish trans. Ali Nihat Tarlan

Armenia who lives with her aunt Mihin Banu, the Armenian queen, and praises the unparalleled beauty of Shirin. Khosrau falls in love with his description and asks Shapur to put in her heart the love of Khosrau. Shapur goes to Armenia, and as Shirin does not reveal herself to men, he takes her attention by the portraits of Khosrau he paints and hangs on trees. Shirin immediately falls in love with the latter. Upon learning the identity of her beloved from Shapur, Shirin secretly sets on the road to Iran to see Khosrau.

In the meantime, Khosrau is forced to escape the kingdom because of the rumors that are being circulated about him which make the King Hurmuzd suspicious that his son schemes to dethrone him. Khosrau moves towards Armenia, and on the road he encounters Shirin bathing in a lake, but the two do not recognize the true identity of each other. Shirin arrives at Iran, Khosrau arrives at Armenia, both are welcomed by their hosts, but they cannot see each other. Shapur arranges for Shirin's return to Armenia for their meeting, but when they leave Iran Khosrau receives the news of his father's death and he moves back to Iran to claim his throne. He becomes the king, but the lovers keep missing each other until when Bahram Chubin, one of Hurmuzd's generals, usurps the throne from Khosrau and forces the latter to flee again.

When he goes to Armenia, Khosrau finds Shirin in one of her hunting parties. They spend some days in festivity and entertainment together. During these festivities, Shirin never lets Khosrau approach her physically, but upon his insistence, she finally urges him to go and regain his throne and to take her as his wife. Khosrau is put to shame and leaves Armenia for Byzantium where he asks for the help of the Byzantine emperor in defeating Bahram Chubin. He is offered the support forces in return for a diplomatic marriage with the Byzantine princess

Maryam, who makes him promise not to take any other wife. He agrees and marries Maryam, and with the help of her father, Khosrau is once more enthroned as the king of Iran.

Soon Mihin Banu dies and Shirin becomes the queen of Armenia, but due to her longing for Khosrau she feels forced to leave government to an advisor and moves to her castle near Madain, Khosrau's capital. Khosrau attempts to convince both Maryam and Shirin for a reconciliation that would enable him to be together with both, but receives bitter response from both women. The bad climate around Shirin's castle increases her need for fresh milk. Shapur suggests to her his friend Farhad, a sculptor and an engineer, who could carve a milk channel to her castle from green pastures. Farhad accomplishes the task, but has fallen in love with Shirin at first meeting. His unconditional and desperate love becomes famous and makes Khosrau jealous, who calls Farhad and tries to discourage him. After the failure of all his attempts, Khosrau challenges him to carve a passageway for his armies through the Mount Bisutun, an impossible task which if he can succeed he will be entitled to claim Shirin as his own.

Farhad starts on his work. After hearing this, one day Shirin visits him, which encourages him even more and brings him near success. Khosrau starts to worry, and sends Farhad false news of the death of Shirin in the hope that he will stop working, which results in Farhad's suicide. Shirin grieves a lot for Farhad. Soon, Maryam also dies. Khosrau, during a festivity, hears the account of a beautiful lady called Shakar in Isfahan, and is attracted to her. He dallies for some time with her, leading Shirin to feel left aside and pray desperately for his return to her. Khosrau visits her castle after a hunting party. Shirin, learning of his coming beforehand, makes preparations for him but does not accept him inside. Instead, she talks to him bitterly from the

roof of her castle and expresses her feelings. Khosrau returns to his encampment in grief. Shirin regrets her bitter words and secretly follows him into his encampment. There they communicate their love through the songs of their musicians, and finally Shirin reveals herself, they both apologize and soon after they get married.

They spend good years together, and Shirin helps Khosrau to be a better king. But he has a son named Shiruya from his former wife, Maryam. Shiruya is an immoral person scheming to take both his father's throne and his wife from him. He succeeds in taking the throne, imprisons his father and stepmother, and secretly has Khosrau assassinated. Shirin commits suicide on Khosrau's tomb.[8]

Most modern scholars pay attention to the unconventional nature of this *masnavi* in that it is more of the tragedy of Shirin, a virtuous, dignified and beautiful woman, who is an ideal lover but whose beloved is not ideal. Modern literary scholarship on *Khosrau va Shirin* seems to agree that this romance is actually the story of Shirin's educating of Khosrau, who is a fallible human being with weak and strong sides, into a better person, a better lover and a better king.[9] Scholars also dwell on the fact that Shirin as a character is like the embodiment of Nizami's view of women, whom he valued greatly and stated explicitly that they should not be considered inferior to men.[10] Apparently, he was inspired in his characterization of Shirin by his former wife Afaq, whom he loved dearly but who died at a very young age.[11]

[8] Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World: Tales from the Khamseh of Nizami*, 21-45
[9] Bürgel, "Nizami's World Order", 22; Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods", 580
[10] Ganjavi, *Hüsrev ve Şirin*, 349; Bürgel, "Nizami's World Order", 22-24; Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, 4
[11] Ganjavi, *Hüsrev ve Şirin*, 354-355; Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, 3; Sevsevil, Sabri, "Önsöz" in Ganjavi, *Hüsrev ve Şirin*, ii; Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods", 580

The third *masnavi*, that of *Layla va Majnun* (Layla and Majnun), is also a romantic tragedy, but a completely different one. The original story comes from Arabic folklore based on the legend of a poet named Qays ibn al-Mulawwah who wrote about his desperate love for a Layla, who both apparently lived in the second half of the seventh century A.D. in Najd Desert in Arabian Peninsular.[12] It was Nizami's *masnavi* that organized bits and pieces of the legend about them into a coherent narrative and popularized their story in the Persian literature.

A good sheikh of an Arab Bedouin tribe has a brilliant son named Qays, who is very wise for his young age and talented at poetry. At school, Qays meets Layla, a little girl from another tribe, and the two instantly fall in love with each other. Distracted by their love, the children cannot focus on their classes, and soon their feelings are discovered by the other children who start to mock them. Layla's father enrages upon hearing the rumors, fearing it may stain his daughter's reputation, and takes Layla away from school. Qays, with grief of the loss of Layla, starts to run in the bazaars madly, shouting her name, and soon he is given the nickname Majnun, the madman.

His father feels upset about the condition of his son, and he asks for Layla's hand in marriage to Qays from Layla's father, which is rejected due to Majnun's craziness. Then his father advises Majnun to forget Layla, but in vain. He takes his son to Ka'ba for him to pray for forgetting Layla, Majnun goes with him, but instead he prays to God to increase his love for Layla even more. Apparently his prayer is accepted, because after this event Majnun goes madder and madder and cannot fit into the social life anymore, forcing him to go to the desert and cry out the poems he composes for his love.

[12] Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, 66

Although his love is an occasion for mockery among the people, his poems enchant everyone hearing them. Some of them reach Layla's ears as well, who has to suffer silently due to her role as a woman. His father cannot stand the pain of his son's condition, and begs Majnun to return to his tribe, eventually convincing him. Majnun goes back, but returning to his tribe does no good to him, and after once secretly visiting Layla's camp, he goes even madder and deserts social life once again, finding solace among the animals in the desert. Gradually, wild and tame animals surround him and start to live peacefully around him.

One day Nawfal, a prince, encounters Majnun during a hunting party, and sympathizes with his deep love. He decides to help him by battling and subjugating Layla's tribe and forcefully taking her as Majnun's bride. Initially Majnun follows him eagerly, but when the battle starts, his love for Layla causes Majnun to side with her tribe, which enrages Nawfal and leads him to leave Majnun alone. Thus, even if Nawfal's tribe wins the battle, Nawfal consents to Layla's father's pleads to spare his daughter, and agrees that she should not be given to such a madman.

In the passage of time, Majnun's father dies in agony, and Layla is betrothed to another man named Ibni Salam. Even after they get married, she never yields herself to him, and secretly continues to weep for Majnun. Majnun's madness, poetry, and his harmony with wild animals attract many visitors who are both afraid of his animals and respectful to his love. Soon Majnun's mother also dies, and Layla's husband, Ibni Salam, follows the suit. Mourning of his husband finally gives Layla an excuse to cry out loud openly, in appearance for her husband, in reality for Majnun. All this suffering is too much for Layla, and soon she falls ill.

At this point in the story an episode which Chelkowski and many other literary scholars consider an interpolation in Nizami's text takes place, which is

popular for illustration. Accordingly, in her sickbed Layla confesses her love for Majnun to an old man, asking him to bring Majnun near. The old man fulfills her wish and arranges a meeting in a palm grove. The two come very near of each other and immediately fall unconscious due to the force of their love. When they come to, they can never look face to face, Majnun recites some of his poetry for her, and then they leave in fear that they would cross the boundaries of what is legitimate for them. With or without this interpolation, soon, Layla dies. Majnun cries at her tomb for some time, extinguishes himself, and he also dies in agony.[13]

As in *Khosrau va Shirin*, in *Layla va Majnun* too, the most striking achievement of Nizami is the psychological depth of his characters and the richness of their emotions, as most scholars agree.[14] Chelkowski suggests that Majnun's fate is "to a large extent, self-imposed", and Rypka agrees with him.[15] Oleg Grabar and Mika Natif, also, finds a peculiarity in this *masnavi* in that the tragedy of the characters does not come from outside, but from within them: The social and economic status of their families are not at odds with each other, and there is no other real external factor separating them. The only thing that separated them was their love and their "emotional and psychological make-up".[16] Layla's father did not want to give his daughter to Majnun precisely because of his mad love for her.

The fourth *masnavi*, *Haft Paykar* (Seven Portraits/Beauties) is also a romance, but it is much more lighthearted and eroticism weighs more in it than romantic love. It revolves around Bahram Gur, historically Bahram V (406-438) of the Sassanid Dynasty. Accordingly, all the sons born to Yazdigird, the king of Iran,

[13] Ibid. 49-65
[14] Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods", 581
[15] Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, 68; Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods", 581
[16] Grabar and Natif, "Two Safavid Paintings: An Essay in Interpretation", 184

die at young age. Thus, when Bahram was born, advisors suggest to send him to Yemen until his raising. The amir of Yemen builds a castle named Khavarnak for the child, and Bahram grows to be a strong young man talented at hunting. He loves hunting *gur*s, meaning wild asses, and hence is called Bahram Gur. He especially proves himself in killing a ferocious dragon.

One day Bahram Gur finds a secret room in his palace, and sees on the walls of that room portraits of seven princesses from the seven climes of the world. There is also a portrait of himself in the middle. Bahram Gur immediately falls in love with each one of the princesses, and when he asks the meaning of the portraits, he is answered that he is destined to meet them someday.

Later, he learns that his father died, and that the nobles of the court have chosen someone else as the king since Bahram Gur was raised in Yemen and he is considered foreign to Iran. Bahram Gur challenges his rival that whomever can take the crown from two strong lions and kill them should be the king. He becomes successful in this, and becomes the king of Iran.

Often he takes a slave girl named Fitna with him to his hunting parties. Once, when he tries to impress her with his marksmanship, Fitna instead comments "Practice makes perfect." Bahram Gur is enraged and throws her under the feet of horses. Fitna does not die, and hides with the help of a servant in the countryside. Later when Bahram Gur visits the countryside, she appears veiled, carrying a large ox on her shoulders up the steps of the pavilion he is resting. Amazed, Bahram Gur asks how she manages that, and she replies again "Practice makes perfect."

During festivities following a victory over the Chinese forces, a craftsman suggests Bahram Gur to build a marvelous pavilion complex. Bahram Gur consents, and the complex is built with seven pavilions, each in a different color associated

with another day of the week and with a different planet. Bahram Gur visits every day of the week another pavilion associated with that day and the related planet, and in each pavilion a princess from a clime associated with that color, planet, and day of the week resides. Thus, Bahram Gur spends each day with another princess, takes pleasure, and listen to a story from each of them. Most of the *masnavi* is comprised of Bahram Gur's visits to the pavilions and the fairytale-like the stories he listens from each princess. I will not go into the details of these stories here, but when they are illustrated, I will briefly summarize them in the following chapters.

After Bahram Gur's time of entertainment in the pavilions end, he realizes that his vizier has been betraying him, and *khaqan*, or king, of China is getting ready to attack Iran. With inspiration he derives from a shepherd, he executes the vizier and defeats the *khaqan*. The *masnavi* ends with Bahram Gur's mysterious disappearance into a cave one day.[17]

Haft Paykar is often seen as Nizami's greatest literary achievement.[18] Amy Landau sees it as the story of Bahram Gur's evolution from a ferocious, pleasure-seeking hunter into a wise king, through the stories he listens from his brides, with lessons on different virtues.[19] Christoph Bürgel explains the end of the story as one with mystical connotations. He dwells on the pun with the word 'gur' which means both a wild ass and a grave, and clarifies that in the end of the *masnavi*, Bahram Gur reaches to an understanding that in all his life he was pursuing *gur*, with the guidance of a wild ass, he was moving towards his grave. "Bahram is aware that he is no longer hunting an ass but himself".[20]

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[17] Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, 69-112
[18] Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods", 581-582
[19] Landau, "From Poet to Painter: Allegory and Metaphor in a Seventeenth-century Persian Painting by Muhammad Zaman, Master of Farangi-sazi", 107; Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, 69-113
[20] Bürgel, "Nizami's World Order", 21

The last *masnavi* of the *Khamsa* is named *Iskandarnama* (Book of Alexander), narrating the life and deeds of Alexander the Great, Iskandar in the Islamic tradition.[21] Nizami's *Iskandarnama* is sometimes divided into two parts, *Sharafnama* (Book of Honor) and *Iqbalnama* (Book of Fortune), the second sometimes called *Khiradnama* (Book of Reason); but it is not known whether Nizami himself really divided his *masnavi* into two like this.

While the first part, *Sharafnama*, gives an account loosely based on historical facts, the second part, *Iqbalnama*/*Khiradnama*, narrates Iskandar's prophethood and includes the story of his visits to the Indian islands and other fairytale-like stories, which, with the depiction of fantastic creatures and places, gives the *masnavi* some flavor of the *ajaib* genre. Chelkowski does not give a summary of *Iskandarnama*, and I will mainly make use of Barbara Brend's account for its summary.[22]

Nizami's narrative of Iskandar is largely based on the account in Firdausi's *Shahnama* among other sources, but unlike the latter, Nizami does not associate Iskandar with an Iranian genealogy and introduces him as the son of Faylakus, the king of *Rum*, meaning Rome, or Greek lands in general. Iskandar is a brilliant prince taught by Arastu (Aristotle). After becoming the king of Rum, his first considerable success is the defeat of the Zangis, a black people disturbing the kingdom of Egypt. He sends some of the war spoil to Dara, the king of Iran, as the usual tribute, but this success worries the latter.

Dara is not wrong in his concerns, as Iskandar soon decides that he should not pay tribute to Dara anymore since they are equals now, after such a success. The two exchange envoys with increasing tension, which eventually breaks out into a war.

[21] Montgomery, "al-Iskandar"
[22] Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*

Iskandar defeats Dara's army, and in the meanwhile gives consent to the assassination of the latter by two Iranian soldiers, but when Dara is dying Iskandar is filled with remorse. Dara leaves his kingdom to Iskandar as inheritance, and Iskandar takes his revenge by executing the treacherous soldiers. Thus, Iskandar becomes the king of Iran as well.

After this he takes Armenia and Abkhazia following his pilgrimage in Ka'ba. When his campaign ends, he visits Nushaba, the Queen of Burda', but does not reveal his real identity and disguises as an envoy sent by Iskandar. Nushaba becomes suspicious of his royal demeanor, and explains that she knows the truth by showing him a portrait of himself. Iskandar has to admit his real identity. Nushaba entertains him with many festivities and presents him gifts, and the two make a peace treaty.

Later he reveals to his men that he intends to conquer the whole world, and engages in an extensive war campaign. Iskandar is a wise king, and many important Greek philosophers as well as Khizr are present in his entourage. He often consults them in making his decisions. During his campaigns too, whenever they hear of a hermit residing in proximity, Iskandar visits them and tries to benefit from their wisdom. This practice helps him in taking a fortress unconquerable by brute force.

After meeting and spending some time with Kay Khosrau, a former king of the Kayan line, he moves eastward to Rayy, Nishapur, Marv, Balkh and Ghur, and finally arrives at Hindustan. He sends a request to the Indian Kayd, or king, for his submission, and receives peerless gifts in return. Iskandar then returns to correspondence with the Emperor of China, who submits to his rule with equal willingness. During Iskandar's entertainment of the Chinese Emperor, the painters of Rum and the painters of China enter into a contest of talent, and in the end it is decided that Rumi painters are better painters and Chinese painters are better

polishers. After receiving gifts from the Emperor, Iskandar hears the news that the Russian army invaded Abkhazia and Burda', took Nushaba captive, and are soon to move towards Rum and Khorasan. Iskandar's army soon meets the Russian army, and he defeats a monster fighting on the side of the Russians with a lasso. After this victory, Iskandar rests for some time and dallies with his slave girl.

During a drinking party, an old man mentions to him the Water of Life that gives immortality to those who drink from it, and is found on the northern edge of the world in the Land of Darkness. Eager to gain immortality, Iskandar sets on the road to acquire it with a small retinue including Khizr. In the end, they get lost in the darkness, only Khizr finds the Water of Life and drinks from it, and Iskandar decides that he is not destined to become immortal. He returns to Rum, and is welcomed with rejoice. This is the end of *Sharafnama*.

The second half of the Iskandarnama, titled *Iqbalnama* or *Khiradnama*, has a less organized structure. Since this part is more of a conglomeration of anecdotes than a coherent narrative, and the scenes illustrated from this section vary greatly from one manuscript to another, I will be content with establishing the main skeleton of it here, and give the description of individual incidents in it in the following chapters for each illustration.

The second part starts with an account of how important wisdom and learning are for Iskandar. Under his patronage are philosophers, translator, poets, ascetics and other knowledgeable people, and he often discusses the nature of the creation with the seven philosophers in his court. One day, the angel Surush brings a message from God to Iskandar, and informs him that he is selected to be a prophet. He is supposed to travel the world to announce his message, encourage people in good ways and

warn them to shun the evil. Iskandar leaves the state matters to his family, and departs from his capital with a small retinue.

Thus they travel to many wondrous lands, he converts the Emperor of China, and they explore many islands of the sea in marvelous adventures. After returning to land, he travels north and "builds a wall to keep out a savage people of horrible appearance called Ya'juj" and Ma'juj.[23] Soon, he learns in a mysterious message that he should move towards Rum and his death is near. On the way he dies, which is an occasion for great mourning. Brend adds that Nizami attaches to the end the description of the deaths of each of the philosophers, and Nizami's own death is added to the last pages.[24]

As *Haft Paykar* was interpreted as the evolution story of a king by Amy Landau, *Iskandarnama* is seen in a parallel line by both Bürgel and Rypka. Both scholars point at the three aspects of kingship that Nizami constructs in *Iskandarnama*: As a statesman and conqueror in *Sharafnama*, as a wise man and a philosopher in *Iqbalnama*, and, finally, as a prophet again in *Iqbalnama*.[25]

According to Bürgel, Iskandar starts his life journey as a conventional conqueror king with great worldly ambitions. The events of his life, narrated in *Sharafnama*, gradually teaches him his shortcomings and limits. The incident about the Water of Life is the pinnacle of this realization. Already in *Sharafnama* he learns to appreciate the company and knowledge of wise men and philosophers, and in the beginning of *Iqbalnama* the love of wisdom is his characteristic, which distinguishes him above the status of an ordinary man/king.

[23] Ibid. 62
[24] Ibid. 39-62
[25] Bürgel, "Nizami's World Order", 26-28; Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods", 582

Eventually he reaches to the point that he is selected as a prophet by God, but even this is not the final point of his evolution. Bürgel interprets the scene, towards the end of the *masnavi*, in which he encounters an ideal society which never received a prophet and reached the perfection of virtue solely by the power of their reason, as the moment that Iskandar realizes the vanity even of prophethood and gives up all claims to greatness.[26] I have never encountered an illustration of this scene, perhaps pointing at the differences of interpretation by medieval and post-medieval patrons and artist, and maybe, more importantly, at the different concerns underlying the selection of the subjects in the illustration of a book.

Bürgel sees resonances of Platonic philosophy and the notion of philosopher king in Plato's *Republic* in Nizami's *Khamsa*, especially in *Iskandarnama*.[27] Indeed, in all three of his *masnavi*s with royal protagonists, namely *Khosrau va Shirin*, *Haft Paykar*, and *Iskandarnama*, scholars observe a line of progress in the souls of the rulers from a merely pleasure seeking violent conqueror to a wise and just ruler.

Many scholars also point out that Nizami did not refrain from criticizing the violent politics of his time. Having lived towards the end of the Seljukid rule and in the wake of Mongol invasions, he witnessed fragmentation of power and power struggles among countless petty amirs and even among court poets. He almost never left his hometown, Ganja, and never worked in a court. Although he dedicated his poems to certain rulers in anticipation for appreciation, he did not write panegyrics, and his *Khamsa* is full of advises to rulers on just rule and the vanity of worldly pursuits.[28]

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[26] Bürgel, "Nizami's World Order", 26-28
[27] Ibid. 27-29
[28] Bürgel, "Nizami's World Order", 22, 38; Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, 4-6; Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods" 583; Sevsevil, Sabri, "Önsöz" in Ganjavi, *Hüsrev ve Şirin*, iv

Deriving from the picture that Rypka paints of the historical context of the Persian poetry of late Seljukid and early Ilkhanid period, in the harsh political and social climate Sufism constituted a major path of escape for the distressed masses, and Sufi poetry increased in popularity in this period.[29] Nevertheless, although agreeing on the strongly religious nature of Nizami's stance, literary scholars seem to be in dispute in whether Nizami's poetry can be ascribed a Sufi character or not.

Rypka suggests that he was "not an adherent of Sufism". About Nizami's *Layla va Majnun*, a story that was going to be one of the major venues for the expression of Sufi ideas in the writings of later poets, he argues: "The whole conception is entirely psychological without any trace of Sufism."[30] Both he and Chelkowski mention the possibility that Nizami was associated with an Akhi branch.[31] Chelkowski is also cautious in aligning him with Sufism, but he contends that Nizami purposefully made use of an ambiguity between mysticism and worldliness in his metaphors and allusions.[32]

Bürgel summarizes Nizami's worldview in several aspects organized around a focus on humanity as the main subject of interrogation, with a unique and deep understanding of the human psyche, and with a plead for rationality, responsibility, and self-awareness. The transience of the world and the human being was a major concern for him. This meant that the use of power was licit only when it derived from divine power, and thus he advocated non-violence and justice. He paid attention to people from all levels of the society, with specific care on artists and artisans, and

[29] Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods"
[30] Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods" 581
[31] Ibid. 578-579; Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, 4-5
[32] Ibid. 5. At any rate, medieval or early modern Sufi perspectives on Nizami is outside of the confines of this thesis.

also on women. As a poet he was aware of his own position, which he considered in high esteem.[33]

These matters that were so intensely discussed in Nizami's poetry, on the other hand, did not reflect with same intensity and often shifted in emphasis in the illustrations painted on its manuscripts, extant copies of which were produced only starting from a century later than his death.

## 1. 2 Early manuscripts of the *Khamsa*

The oldest extant complete copy of the entire *Khamsa* is dated 1362 (Bibliothèque nationale, Supplément persan 1817).[34] The earliest extant illustrated copy of the *Khamsa*, which is incomplete, gives the date of completion for the transcription as 1318 (Tehran University Library, Ms. 5179). Norah Titley attributes this *Khamsa* to a provincial Muzaffarid atelier, and as she explains with her analysis of the paintings of this manuscript, there seems to be an already established iconography for the illustration of Nizami's *masnavi*s in this manuscript.[35]

Indeed, the black and white images she publishes in her article, all, except one or two, depict scenes commonly seen in later *Khamsa*s, such as *Majnun Visited in the Wilderness*, *Majnun at Layla's Tent*, *Iskandar Defeats the Zangis*, *Battle Between Iskandar and Dara*, *Majnun Dies on Layla's Grave*, and *Majnun Mourns His Father*.[36] There is another scene of unknown subject identified as *Indoor Scene* by Titley. The manuscript apparently contains many unusual scenes that are illustrated as well, which, she suggests, is a shared feature of all fourteenth century

[33] Bürgel, "Nizami's World Order", 48
[34] Parello, "Kamsa of Nizami"
[35] Titley, "A 14th-Century Nizami Manuscript in Tehran"
[36] All from Ms. 5179 in Tehran University Library, but Titley does not provide their folio numbers.

manuscripts of Nizami. *Layla's Father Begs Nawfal for Mercy* is the unusual example she publishes from the manuscript.

Titley did not publish all the illustrations of this manuscript, so we cannot be sure of its illustrative program, but five paintings allocated to *Layla va Majnun*, out of sixteen for the whole *Khamsa*, indicates the importance given to this *masnavi*. Although the selection of subjects reflects later practices, the emphasis on *Layla va Majnun* may be seen in contrast to early modern copies of the book, as in few of the manuscripts included into my sample from Timurid, Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal manuscripts demonstrate such a strong emphasis on this *masnavi*.

Priscilly Soucek discusses three Jalayirid manuscripts in her doctoral dissertation. These Jalayirid copies seem to have been foundational in the iconography of later manuscripts. The distribution of paintings to *masnavi*s seems to also have been in line with Timurid and later approaches; as *Makhzan al-Asrar* and *Layla va Majnun* was scantily illustrated, *Khosrav va Shirin* was given the primary focus, and *Haft Paykar* was somewhere in the middle between *Layla va Majnun* and *Khosrav va Shirin* in terms of the number of illustrations. Yet, that *Iskandarnama* was not illustrated at all in either of the three Jalayirid copies is completely at odds with the later practices.[37]

Many of the immediate later copies are from the Timurid realm. Among these can be counted a manuscript dated 1435-36 in the British Library, (BL Or. 12856), which was discussed by Basil Gray in an article.[38] Gray publishes all the eight illustrations as well as some illuminated pages in black and white in his article. This manuscript distributes illustrations more or less evenly among the *masnavi*s, with

[37] Soucek, *Illustrated Manuscripts of Nizami's Khamseh: 1386-1482*. Soucek also discusses early Timurid manuscripts of the *Khamsa* in her dissertation, but since many of these are the subject of the next chapter, I will not go into them in this introductory section.
[38] Gray, "A Newly-discovered Nizami of the Timurid School"

one illustration for *Makhzan al-Asrar*, one for *Khosrau va Shirin*, and two for each of the next three *masnavi*s. The fewer number of illustrations allocated to *Khosrau va Shirin* is at odds with later generations of manuscripts, as this *masnavi* would be among the most popular in the future.

Again, the selected subjects are in line with early modern copies, with no illustration depicting an uncommon scene. It is difficult to detect any particular theme in only eight illustrations, but apparently issues of rulership were not prioritized. Rather, the most memorable moments of the narrative, along with some scenes that were possibly found interesting, were illustrated. Thus, among others, *Shirin Visits Farhad on Mount Bisutun* from *Khosrau va Shirin*, *Battle of Tribes* and *Majnun in the Wilderness* from *Layla va Majnun*, and *Iskandar and the Dying Dara* from *Iskandarnama* are represented.[39]

The most common subjects for illustration of the following centuries had thus evidently been established by the fifteenth century, but the iconography of the individual illustrations changed starting from the later Timurid manuscripts. For example, the composition for the illustration of *Bahram Gur Kills the Dragon* in this manuscript is not followed in later copies. This illustration may be following the iconography of this subject adopted in *Shahnama* manuscripts.

In addition to these manuscripts, B. W. Robinson has speculated that there may have been a Nizami comissioned by Baysunghur b. Shahrukh saved to this day, based on some fragmentary manuscripts in several collections.[40] Also, Priscilla Soucek has discussed an unillustrated but lavishly illuminated copy of *Makhzan al-Asrar* produced under Aqqoyunlus, and which shows Timurid and Chinese

[39] All are from BL Or. 12856. Gray does not provide their folio numbers.
[40] Robinson, "Prince Baysonghor's Nizami: A Speculation"

influences, in an article titled "The New York Public Library 'Makhzan al-asrar' and Its Importance".[41]

## 1. 3 Hypothesis, method, and primary sources

It was Timurid painting and arts of the book that initially set the standards for the painting and other arts of the book of three early modern Muslim empires, namely, Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals. The relationship of these three empires with the Timurid past and cultural heritage, as well as the degree of exchange and interaction among them have recently been subjects of scholarly attention, and during the last few decades many publications studied these realms within a common frame.[42]

This thesis will also work within this framework. The primary argument of the thesis will be that each of these three empires were influenced by and responded to the Timurid heritage in a different way determined by the nature of the relationship that each dynasty had with the Timurid dynasty, which, in turn, was contingent on the historical and geographic position of that dynasty vis-à-vis the Timurids.

Safavid painting was the product of a synthesis between the Aqqoyunlu Turkoman style in Tabriz and the Timurid style in Herat. The fact that Herat was taken from the Uzbeks, who were the political terminators of the Timurid dynasty, rather than from the Timurids themselves, meant that there had never been a direct military confrontation between the Safavids and the Timurids. As the Safavids

[41] Soucek, "The New York Public Library 'Makhzan al-asrar' and Its Importance"
[42] Blake, "Fathpur Sikri and Isfahan: The founding and layout of capital cities in Mughal India and Safavid Iran"; Necipoğlu, "L'idée de décor dans les régimes de visualité islamiques"; Necipoğlu, "From International Timurid to Ottoman: A Change of Taste in Sixteenth-Century Ceramic Tiles"; Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Arts of India and Turkey*; Uluç, "The Common Timurid Heritage of the Three Capitals of Islamic Arts"

inhabited the lands that Timurids ruled during the previous century, they found themselves as natural inheritors of the Timurid cultural and artistic legacy. Thus, Safavid responses to Timurid precedents in Nizami *Khamsa*s were in the nature of responses of a painter to his tradition, and did not have explicit dynastic connotations.

Mughals were direct descendants of Timur, and this lineage was an important part of their discourse of legitimacy. By the time the Mughals were able to take a hold on their territories in India, Timurid dynasty as a political power was long gone. Thus, the Mughal gaze on Timurids was retrospective and was focused on dynastic connections. Although their painting first started to develop as an offshoot of Safavid painting with Safavid painters whom Humayun brought with him to Kabul with the courtesy of Tahmasp, pictorial references to Iran and stylistic quotations from Safavid painting in a Mughal literary manuscript like Nizami's *Khamsa* carried messages more on the relationship of Mughals with their Timurid past, rather than about their relationship with Safavid contemporaries.

Ottomans were contemporaries with Timurids from the beginning. Timur himself almost brought an end to the Ottoman state with his victory over Bayezid I. When the Ottoman power took an imperial form with the conquest of Constantinople, Timurids were gradually diminishing as a political and military entity due to succession crises within the dynasty. The at first belligerent and military, and later friendly diplomatic relationship between the Ottomans and the Timurids was largely effective in determining the nature of Ottoman responses to Timurid artistic and cultural productions. The enormous cultural prestige Timurids had in the Iranian world compelled Ottomans to both admire them and compete with

them. Their responses to Timurid products were conceived in competitive terms and in aspiration to the models presented by them.

In the end, a rupture from Timurid influence took place in all three cases. As each empire started to give up claims to world-rulership, began to centralize its political organization, and constructed a more well-defined identity for itself clearly distinguished from others, participation in an "international" Timurid aesthetics gradually diminished in relevance. This gradual solidification of individual identities inside and borders with others outside coincided in the artistic sphere with a process in which each of the three early modern Muslim empires found for itself a unique voice in art and architecture after a period of experimenting and synthesizing with different influences, whose timing varied from empire to empire.[43]

Thus, the main time frame of the research will be roughly from the late fifteenth to early seventeenth centuries, but this time frame is not strict and some earlier as well as some slightly later works will also be included. I will scrutinize a number of illustrated manuscripts; some being complete *Khamsa*s and some singular *masnavi*s out of it, produced, restored, or amended in each realm to be discussed (namely, Timurids, Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals) for the research.

The main method that I will utilize will be the comparison of the illustrative programs of different manuscripts. I will try to trace the changes in the iconographic pool of Nizami's *Khamsa*, accumulated through centuries and interpreted and added

[43] A note should be made about the case of the influence of Turkoman, meaning Aqqoyunlu and Qaraqoyunlu, painting on the three early modern Muslim empires. Although Timurid and Turkoman painting traditions were deeply interrelated, and Turkoman painting was a foundational influence in the shaping of Safavid and Ottoman painting, I completely excluded it from the discussions of my thesis, mainly due to the fact that its relationship to Mughal painting was indirect, and responding to Turkoman productions, coming from a distant land with no urgent ties to the present, was not as explicitly relevant to the thematic and ideological agenda of the Mughal patrons and painters as was Timurid products. Thus, including them would stretch the scope of my study to an unsustainable degree, as, admittedly, the interrelationships among the four dynasties included in the thesis are so nuanced and varied that deriving a general, overarching scheme from them means taking enough epistemological risks.

upon by manuscripts produced in the vast geographic scope that I will look at. I will also make use of compositional and stylistic analysis when the situation calls for it. Yet my approach will not be formal: I will not chart the iconographic or stylistic evolution of the painting traditions of these empires. The methodological tools that I will make use will serve mainly in the interpretation of meaning in an illustration and establishing the overall thematic concerns of a manuscript. The discussions on form, therefore, will be there only for a better understanding of the content.

## 1.4 The sample of the research

The unit of analysis of the research will not be the individual paintings, but the manuscripts as complete wholes. Thus, although many of the manuscripts that I will deal with may have been composed of materials produced in diverse times and places and by diverse people, I will take each manuscript as a single unit, as I believe paintings cannot be evaluated apart from the book that they are a part of. By this approach, I will nevertheless keep in mind that a manuscript is often not a homogenous unitary entity, but a patchwork of different elements separated, brought together, altered and restored in different times and places.[44]

As a result of this approach, some manuscripts of historical and artistic importance will be excluded from my sample. Because my unit of analysis is the manuscript as a whole and not the individual paintings, I held it a principle to include into my sample only the manuscripts whose all pages as well as the covers I was able to see in the course of my research. This means that I was able to compare not only the illustrations but also the illuminations, marginal and other decorations, bindings,

[44] Soucek and Çağman, "A Royal Manuscript and Its Transformation: The Life History of a Book"; Soucek and Waley, "The Nizāmī Manuscript of Shāh Tahmāsp: A Reconstructed History"; Soucek, "The New York Public Library 'Makhzan al-asrar' and Its Importance".

and more importantly, the general design concept of the manuscripts in my sample to one another.

Thus, manuscripts whose paintings were published in books and catalogues had to be excluded, and I studied in detail only the manuscripts that I could either see in person in the institutions where they are currently hosted, or, in the case of a great majority of them, from the complete, high resolution digital copies published in the websites of those institutions. I will touch upon two manuscripts in the following chapters whose paintings I could see only from scholarly publications, but these are considered as supportive material;[45] they do not take place in the Appendices and I did not study them in detail as I did for other manuscripts. I admit that this makes my sample a somewhat arbitrary one, but I believe the virtues of its organizing principle outweighs its shortcomings.

I will scrutinize, in total, ten manuscripts, individual details about which can be found in the Appendix A. I had to study most of the manuscripts included in this research from their digitized versions published in the websites of the institutions in which they are hosted, as most of them belong to the collections of British Library or Bibliothèque nationale de France, and I did not have direct access to them during the course of research for this thesis. The remaining two manuscripts are from Istanbul collections to which I had access, one from the Topkapı Palace Museum Library and the other from Hacı Selim Ağa Library in Üsküdar.

As can be seen in the Appendix B, there is not a balance among the manuscripts in respect to the dynasties that they are connected to. The number of manuscripts associated with the first three dynasties are more or less equal: There are

[45] One of them is Shahrukh b. Timur's copy of the *Khamsa,* now in the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, and another is a *Khosrau va Shirin* of Hatifi produced by an Ottoman artist, now in New York Metropolitan Museum of Art.

three or four manuscripts connected to the each of the Timurid, Safavid, and Ottoman domains, but the nature and quantity of the contributions from the workshops of these dynasties to the manuscripts in question varies. In contrast, there is only one manuscript which was produced in the Mughal library within the time frame of this thesis and that was available to me. Yet, I did not want to force the material to fit into a balance in an artificial manner, as I believe the very fact and the nature of the production of Nizami's text in itself tells something about the relationship of these dynasties to the Timurids, under whom the illustration of romantic *masnavi*s reached to an unprecedented degree.

In suggesting the connection of a manuscript to a dynasty, though, in most cases I considered being a part of the imperial library a connection with the dynasty as well. Thus, the study includes an analysis of the reception as well as the production of Nizami *Khamsa*s in the realms in concern. For instance, since a Timurid manuscript included in this thesis remained for a long time in the Mughal workshop, it is possible to explore the relationship of the Mughal *Khamsa* to its Timurid precedents. In the same vein, since there is no extant *Khamsa* completely produced in the Ottoman realm within my temporal scope, my discussion of the Ottoman case was mainly based on a Muzaffarid copy with Ottoman paintings.

Nizami's text changed the course of Persian poetry, and hundreds of poems were written in response to it, emulating it, or loosely translating it into other languages. Some of the authors who wrote in artful imitation of Nizami were as celebrated figures as Abd ar-Rahman Jami, Amir Khosrau Dihlavi, Khaja Kirmani, and Fuzuli. Since including them would stretch the scope of my thesis to an unrecognizable point, I strictly limited my sample to Nizami *Khamsa*s.

The only exception to this is a manuscript of Şeyhi's *Hüsrev ve Şirin* (HSAL, MS 906), because its text follows Nizami's poetry so closely that it may be considered as a loose translation by an Ottoman court poet. As the court language of Ottomans was Turkish unlike Safavids and Mughals, I believe Şeyhi's text may be considered as a response both to Nizami and to the Timurids, who also had a policy of promoting Chagatai Turkish as the court language in their later decades.[46] Additionally, I briefly discuss the frontispiece of a manuscript of *Khosrau va Shirin* of Hatifi,[47] a Timurid poet, in the Ottoman chapter for similar reasons, although I did not study this manuscript as I studied others, and it is not included into my sample.

One last point about the manuscripts that needs clarification is that although my sample includes examples produced under the patronage of individuals of lower rank, almost all the manuscripts that constitute the focus of each chapter were produced or restored under royal patronage. This is certainly not because of an assumption that the royal copies merit a deeper study whereas provincial or commercially produced examples are less worthy. Rather, I had to focus on royal manuscripts due to their practical conveniences such as the certainty of date, provenance, patron, and sometimes even artists. Moreover, it is easier to identify these manuscripts' thematic agendas, as their owners were figures about whom we have enough historical knowledge. This situation also makes it possible to compare them with each other and with the Timurid precedents.

[46] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 262-271
[47] New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Acc. no. 69.27

## 1. 5 A final theoretical note

An important point of discussion in any account of "Islamic"[48] painting is related to the ontology of painting in these Muslim dominated realms. One often encounters in the scholarly literature on "Islamic" painting an expressed feeling of surprise at the apparent contradiction between Islam as a religion that frowns upon figurative representation and the historical reality of the enormous body of artworks that contain figurative representation.[49] Although there is no statement in the Qur'an itself that bans figurative representation, and the authenticity and the exact meaning of the traditions of the Prophet that condemn the act of painting have always been controversial, there is a substantial body of writing by '*ulema* which does propose that painting living beings is a sin.[50]

I find this topic important as it opens a door to the discussion of how painting was understood and functioned in these societies, and has the potential to lead the way towards a reconstruction of an indigenous theory of painting. Of course, within the immense scope of territories brought together under the rubric "Islamic lands", each society would have its own view of painting, and painting would acquire different meanings and functions in each culture. Nevertheless, dwelling upon the issue of iconoclasm for a while may be a good starting point as Islam *was* a common denominator of the societies with which this thesis is concerned.

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[48] Use of this sweeping rubric for the art of societies dominated by Muslim dynasties from the seventh to the nineteenth century, from Spain to Southeast Asia has been increasingly criticized by scholars, as there is no political, social, cultural, demographic, and even religious coherence within the bulk of territories summarized by the term "Islamic lands". The variety that forms of art take in these territories is striking especially because the temporal scope of the standard definition of Islamic art suggests a continuity throughout the last one and a half millennium. A thorough discussion of the artificial nature of the term can be found among others in Blair and Bloom, "The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldy Field", 152-184; Shalem, "What Do We Mean When We Say 'Islamic Art'? A Plea for a Critical Rewriting of the History of the Arts of Islam", 1-18.

[49] An example can be found in Porter, "From the 'Theory of the Two Qalams' to the 'Seven Principles of Painting': Theory, Terminology, and Practice in Persian Classical Painting"

[50] Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum", 641

Finbarr Barry Flood, in his article on the Taliban's destruction of Buddha statutes in Bamiyan in February 2001, and the relationship of this event to Islamic iconoclasm and to the modern institution of the museum, reminds us that Islamic iconoclasm would be more accurately portrayed not as an "essential cultural pathology" but rather as a type of lingering behavior in Muslim societies that has come to the surface in certain times and places depending on the proclivities of some individuals and on the political, social, and economic circumstances that surrounded the society. [51]

Flood draws attention to the complexities of the notions of iconoclasm and idolatry, and how diverse forms these phenomena took in different contexts. Indeed, iconoclastic behavior in Muslim societies could show itself variously, from individual initiatives of erasing the faces or eyes in the paintings of a book, drawing of a line on the necks of the painted people to neutralize them by symbolically rendering them dead, lifeless; to state-sponsored, calculated and goal-oriented actions of public idol-smashing, degrading the idols of another religion by putting them on the thresholds of the doors of a Friday mosque to be trampled under feet, defacing murals etc. It is noteworthy that these actions rarely included the obliteration of a statute or an image in total, but they were most of the time partial and symbolic acts of neutralizing.[52]

Moreover, as Flood demonstrates, these actions were also varied in their purposes and motivations (individual iconoclasm aside, public acts rarely stemmed from theological motivations but most of the time they were directed towards giving a political message), as well as their target, which could be the sacred images of

[51] Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum", 654
[52] Ibid. 647

another religion, the secular works of other Muslims, as well as the wealth of a previous Muslim dynasty. He points out that most of these behaviors could, with similar intensity and frequency, be observed in the practices of the believers of other religions as well, notably Christianity, and with different purposes and patterns, also by the believers of the Indic religions.[53]

Last but not least, Flood also emphasizes that all these patterns of behavior always existed side by side with an admiration, fascination, and production of images by the believers of the same religion. He stresses the importance of historicizing such events and looking at the motivations behind them, rather than naturalizing them as an inherent cultural "pathology", as different times and places created different circumstances for different kinds of iconoclastic behavior.[54]

Indeed, the attitudes taken by different actors depended so much on the political, social, economic, and cultural circumstances that a ruler of a Muslim society could create for himself the image of a relentless idol-breaker, as Mahmud of Ghazna did, and another ruler of another Muslim society living in another period could calculate the profit that he would make by selling the idols that his soldiers acquired in Sicily to the idolaters in Sind, like the Umayyad caliph Muawiya b. Abu Sufyan did,[55] totally at odds with Mahmud of Ghazna's famous line that he would rather be known as a breaker of idols rather than a broker of them. In the end, although the actions were completely opposite, in both cases economic considerations played their role, as looting the Indian kingdoms brought great fortune to the Gaznavids.

[53] Ibid. 641, 650
[54] Ibid. 654
[55] Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter*, 27

Moreover, iconoclasm included, before smashing an idol, a public exhibition of it, most of the time in sacred places such as mosques or even Ka'ba, as an object of contempt but also of awe and fascination.[56] This complicated relationship between iconoclasm and idolatry is exactly what W. J. T. Mitchell digs for very masterfully in the writings of some important modern Western thinkers on the relationship between text and image.[57]

Through the investigation he conducts in the writings of Nelson Goodman, Ernst Gombrich, Lessing, and Edmund Burke in reverse chronological order, Mitchell suggests a tension between what he calls iconophobic and iconophilic (or iconoclastic and idolatrous) tendencies in the conceptualizations of these scholars of the image-text distinction. He contends that in modern Western thinking, the relationship between text and image is almost always conceived politically, in terms of hegemony and superiority of one form of expression over the other, and that in the "political unconscious"[58] of these scholars, the matter is almost always connected with broader political and social issues.

Especially telling for the purposes of this thesis is the last chapter of Mitchell's book, which deals with Marxist views on commodity and ideology. With his meticulous analysis of the figurative language that Marx and the later Western Marxist critics employ when dealing with commodity and ideology, and their relationship with art, Mitchell arrives in the writings of those thinkers at what might be termed as the quantum of bourgeois commodity culture where the distinction

[56] Ibid. 28-29
[57] Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*.
[58] The term belongs to Frederic Jameson, and it is often utilized by Mitchell in his book.

between the mental illusions of ideology and the enslaving quality of material commodity blurs.[59]

Mitchell detects that the "concrete concept"[60], or an extended figure, an analogy, that serves to make an idea easily conceivable and memorable, which Marx used for explaining ideology was the "camera obscura", and for commodity it was the "fetish". The twisted and paradoxical interactions between these two figures that Mitchell observes in Marx's and later Marxists' writings reveal a very interesting pattern of dialectics where the ideological camera obscura produces reversed and distorted images of the world, claiming an objective and scientific quality; and commodity, on the other hand, hidden behind the veil of mundaneness and ordinariness, seduces the bourgeois consumer into a primitive and obscene fetishism, being at odds with anything scientific or objective.[61]

But the fetish is never only an object: with its worshipper extending part of his or her soul into it, it becomes alive, leaving the worshipper himself or herself partly deprived of his or her own soul, own humanity.[62] The images produced in the camera obscura are projected on and by the fetish, and the commodity, ceasing to be a tool in one's life, becomes the thing itself. Thus, the bourgeois, with all his iconoclastic claims that he derived from the Enlightenment and positive science, is at the same time the idolater par excellence. Yet the same is valid for all iconoclasts, including Marxists themselves, as the hostility to idolatry is there not only because it is foolish to worship images as they are impotent, but also because it is a vice, as the

[59] Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, 160-208. The title of the chapter is "The Rhetoric of Iconoclasm: Marxism, Ideology, and Fetishism"
[60] A term used by Marx himself. Mitchell, *Iconology*, 160-161
[61] Ibid. 160-172
[62] This was, Mitchell contends, the interpretation of fetish and the practices surrounding it in the religions of the so-called "primitive" societies from the perspective of the nineteenth century anthropology, in which Marx was highly interested.

images are the carriers of evil, they contain a mysterious and uncontrollable, obscene and dark power, as they are, in fact, potent.[63]

It is at this point that Mitchell's analysis finds surprising resonances in Nizami's own poetry. In this regard Priscilla Soucek makes an invaluable contribution by putting Nizami's own works under scrutiny in order to derive his views on painting, as she sees poetry as a rarely used source of information with great potential for a reconstruction of the conceptualization of art in premodern Iran. Nizami's *Khamsa* is one of the first places to look at, as he discusses painting, painters, and figurative arts on a number of occasions in it.[64]

As Soucek's analysis reveals, the deepest point of these discussions takes place with the scene where Shirin encounters the portraits of Khosrau painted by Shapur. The reaction she gives vis-à-vis these portraits is a complete state of worship, and at one point she actually kisses the ground in front of one such portrait while at the same time drinking wine. Her handmaidens, seeing their mistress as enchanted by these portraits, interpret the portraits as a work of mysterious evil power and they try to take them away from her.[65]

Shirin's passionate fascination with the portraits contrasts starkly with Shapur's disaffected and calm observation of all these events. When Shirin's love for the portraits reaches an unresolvable point, Shapur finally reveals himself as their painter and explains to her that no mysterious power is involved in their production, but they are painted through a combination of a background knowledge of geometry

[63] Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, 190-208
[64] Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World : Tales from the Khamseh of Nizami*, 4*;* Soucek, "Nizami on Painters and Painting"
[65] Serpil Bağcı discusses this scene, and some illustrations made of it, in an article and points out that falling in love with images turned into a literary topos in Persian as well as Turkish literature after Nizami, and as a notion it took diverse forms in the works of later authors, many of which, in turn, was illustrated with well established iconographies. Bağcı, "Surete Aşık Olmanın Resmi"

and mathematics, a careful observation of nature and people, and a skillful work of hands.[66]

It is obvious from this discussion that Nizami sought for a demystification of painting and portraiture of human beings, thus justifying the act of painting from a theological point of view. Or to put it more accurately, he seems to have been trying to shift the discussion from a theological to a practical or scientific venue.[67] Yet the very attempt of demystification and the manner in which it is done attests to an implicit admittance to the inexplicable power of images which take the viewer so strongly under their enchantment.

The dialectical play we see between Shapur's calm, "scientific" reception of images and Shirin's "idolatrous" worship of them weaves together all the discussions of painting in Nizami's account. Worthy of being renowned as "Hakim", the scholar, Nizami was in command of many scientific theories of his time and he used them in his poetry.[68] Apparently optics was one of them. Engaging in a discussion of how the faculty of sight was explained in medieval Arabic and Persian scientific treatises, Soucek follows the traces of those theories of optics and neurology in Nizami's poetry.

The episode where Greek and Chinese painters compete for the claim to superiority in skill is one of the scenes where Nizami's interest in optics is observable, as, in the competition, the Chinese do not paint but polish the wall

[66] Soucek, "Nizami on Painters and Painting", 18. This episode parallels Mitchell's account not only with its tension between the rational and the obsessive attitudes towards images but also with its alignment of irrational idolatry with the feminine and the rational disaffected appreciation with the masculine. Shapur was in the first place sent by Khosrau to "conquer" Shirin's heart, and Shapur not only does that but also conquers her brain by educating her here. Mitchell's book offers more on how gender comes into play with the image text distinction and the tension between iconoclasm and idolatry.
[67] Soucek, "Nizami on Painters and Painting", 19
[68] Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers of the Late Saljuq and Mongol Periods" 578

assigned to them, and when the curtain between the two walls facing each other, one painted by Greeks and one polished by the Chinese, is lifted, the polished wall reflects the other and the two walls look exactly the same. Soucek takes attention here to Iskandar's experimental attitude in ordering the curtain put in place and lifted again several times to understand what is going on.[69] There is also an episode in *Iskandarnama* where Iskandar sponsors the invention of mirrors.

But the same *Iskandarnama* also includes another episode where Iskandar's armies, when on a campaign, run into a land where women do not have the habit to veil themselves. Concerned that they will distract his soldiers, Iskandar asks the men in town to advise their women to cover themselves. After the failure of this advice, the solution is found in a kind of magic: A statute or an image is placed in a certain location, which magically affects women and they start to veil themselves.[70]

Soucek mentions the case of Mani painting a very realistic dead dog on a crystal river to prevent thirsty travelers to hurt themselves by trying to drink from the illusion of water. Apparent from this discussion as well as many other expressions scattered throughout the *Khamsa*, realistic, illusionistic depiction was highly valuable in Nizami's eyes. Indeed, centuries after him in Timurid lands realistic depiction protected its privilege: Painters were praised for depicting birds that seem to be about to fly away and trees with fruits that can be reached and eaten.[71]

Use of such expressions for praising realistic depiction, and comparison of successful painters with Mani, as Soucek observes, is often encountered in later accounts of early modern Iranian writers too, Qazi Ahmad being an example[72]. As

[69] Soucek, "Nizami on Painters and Painting", 12
[70] Brend, The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami, 50
[71] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 290; Soucek, "Nizami on Painters and Painting", 10
[72] Soucek, "Nizami on Painters and Painting", 10-11; Qazi Ahmed, Calligraphers and Painters: *A Treatise by Qadi Ahmad, son of Mir Munshi (circa A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606)*, 174-188

can be seen in Shapur's abovementioned description of his own work, who also praises himself for bringing images to life, a realistic image is conceptualized by Nizami in relation to calculation, geometry, and the knowledge of the physical world. The sculptor Ferhad's knowledge of geometry and astronomy is also emphasized. But what is striking in these cases is that realism is always thought together with animation, the image taking a life of its own, leaving the onlooker in awe and fascination.

What gives Ferhad the power to be able to undertake the enormous task of carving a channel through the Mount Bisutun is the images of Shirin, his beloved, and Khosrau, his king, that he carves on the entrance of the channel. Shirin's lively image encourages him to do what is impossible. Bahram Gur falls in love with the images of the princesses of the seven climes before seeing them in person. In the story told by the Russian princess to Bahram Gur in the Red Pavilion, the self portrait of a princess which hangs on the outer wall of her castle drives hundreds of thousands of people to doom with the love it creates in them, and when the prince who will eventually win the heart of the princess sees it first, he thinks that the portrait must be the work of a dark magic that enslaves men into a journey with a disastrous end.[73]

All these examples demonstrate the vast diversity of attitudes that are shown by human agents vis-à-vis images narrated in Nizami's poetry. Still, despite all their nuanced variety, it is possible to categorize these attitudes into two main conflicting streams of thinking about images; one that sees them as merely prettily painted surfaces that is the work of a skillful human hand and a human brain which

[73] Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World: Tales from the Khamseh of Nizami*

conceives the laws of optics, and another that sees them as enchanting, fascinating, enslaving sources of power which drive people to do incredible things.

A quotation Soucek makes from the episode in the *Khamsa* about Shirin and the portraits is revealing: "In that mirror (ayina) she saw her own reflection (nishan), when she seized it, she fainted."[74] How familiar this sounds after reading Mitchell's account of Marxism and the figure of the fetish with the transfer of the selfhood to the object is incredible. And Shapur's explanation to Shirin of the nature of the portrait is just as familiar: "Every painting (sura) made by a painter (surat-gar) has a reflection but no soul (jan). They taught me painting, but the garment of the soul is sewn in another place."

Thus, Nizami's approach to scientifically explain the background of what is visible keeps clashing with the mysterious aspects of the images that lurk beneath. And just as Mitchell suggests that the dialectic between iconoclasm and idolatry is productive in the writings of the thinkers when it is self-critical,[75] maybe it is this tension between the two strands of approach to images in Nizami that makes his account so beautiful.

[74] Soucek, "Nizami on Painters and Painting", 18.
[75] Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, 206-208

# CHAPTER 2

## NIZAMI IN LATE TIMURID HERAT: LOVE, DEATH AND MYSTICISM

The increased prominence of Nizami's *Khamsa* and other romances in book illustration started in the fourteenth century, especially under Jalayirid patronage.[76] In the case of the Timurids, the gradual shift in demand from mainly history and secondarily heroic epic to romances reflected internal changes within the structure and the needs of the dynasty itself. The transformation the dynasty underwent during the course of the fifteenth century brought with it enormous sophistication in the illustration of romances, to an extent that was never encountered before. This sophistication of Timurid book illustration, Thomas Lentz and Glen Lowry argue, followed a line parallel to the diminishing of the dynasty's political and military power.[77]

It is known that Timur (d. 1405) had already established a *kitabkhana* during his own time, as several manuscripts were produced for him. The products of this time still showed effects of Mongol painting with their horizontal frames and more naturalistic approaches, reflecting an experimental character occasionally mixed with diverse influences from western Iran. Synthesis of these elements into a coherent new whole that was characteristically Timurid took place during the reign of his son, Shahrukh (1377-1447).[78]

The painting produced in this period in the first half of the fifteenth century was shaped for the greatest part by Jalayirid painting of Shiraz and Baghdad, and under the patronage of Timur's grandsons. In this phase two different, though

[76] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 115.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid. 69, 74, 78-79

related, strands of Timurid painting emerged. One was developed in Shiraz, especially under the patronage of Iskandar Sultan b. 'Umar Shaikh (1384-1415), and also later with the governorship of Ibrahim Sultan b. Shahrukh (1394-1435), and benefited a large deal from the earlier Shiraz traditions of Muzaffarid and Jalayirid paintings.[79] The second strand developed in Herat, pioneered especially by the patronage of Baysunghur b. Shahrukh (1397-1434), and to a lesser extent by his brother Muhammad Juki (d. 1444).[80]

The princely *kitabkhana*s in Herat and Shiraz developed a kind of painting that was vertical and full page, marginalizing the text, emphasizing decorated surfaces, and full of small, elongated, static and elegant figures, largely based on the Jalayirid mode. However, it was different from the Jalayirid tradition in that the book illustration had turned into a kind of mask for the Timurid elite to project a refined, stately, perfect, stiff and idealized image. Shahrukh's lack of the power that Timur previously had immensely amassed under his monopoly, and the decentralized nature of government was thus covered under a veil of unification, centralization and power.[81]

Main issues that were dealt with in illustration of this period were representations of typical princely and royal themes that had been prominent in medieval Iran, such as enthronements, battles, hunts, feasts, and love.[82] These themes also reflected the dynasty's concern for integration into the Iranian urban tradition of kingship as opposed to nomadic steppe understandings of Turkic-Mongol kingship. This was partly a result of the diminished size of the empire after the internecine

[79] Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Arts of India and Turkey*, 44-46
[80] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision,* 119-124; Gray, "A Newly-discovered Nizami of the Timurid School", 220
[81] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 112, 114
[82] Ibid. 116

fighting for the throne following Timur's death. The wealth of the dynasty was immensely reduced and Timurids had lost most of their eastern territories, feeling the necessity to integrate better with what they had in western Iran.[83]

Shahrukh's death brought similar results: When Sultan Husayn Bayqara (r. 1470-1506) established himself on the throne in 1470, the grandiose steppe empire of Timur was reduced to a few cities in Khorasan governed under precarious conditions with threats coming from amirs and begs within, from Uzbeks to the north, and from Turkomans to the west.[84] The Timurid existence was so fragile and dependent on playing of one threat against another that the elite circles turned inward and lost any interest in wars and conquests.[85] Illustration of history turned into a means of establishing a link with the earlier glory of the empire,[86] and illustration of heroic epics was almost completely abandoned.[87] Instead, romance illustration flourished as was never before.[88]

In these circumstances patronage of arts and architecture was almost the only way of asserting an imperial identity and upholding a façade of greatness and safety. The small and extremely exclusive circle of Sultan Husayn included the best poets, authors, and artists of Iran and Central Asia. Extreme refinement and sophistication took profound importance both in the social life and etiquette of the elite and in the art and poetry they patronized.[89] An obsession with the perfection of form rather than content, an interest in quotidian life, and experiments with illusionistic devices such as linear perspective were among the characteristics of the painting of this period.[90]

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[83] Ibid. 74-79
[84] Ibid. 244
[85] Ibid. 298
[86] Ibid. 262
[87] Ibid. 296
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid. 298-299
[90] Ibid. 259, 297-298

With the image of ultimate refinement and sophistication they projected, the Timurid elite of the late fifteenth century were successful in claiming cultural power over an immense geography from Anatolia to North India. Anything related to Husayn Bayqara, his statesman Mir Ali Shir Nevai (1441-1501), or the Sufi scholar and poet ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414-1492) carried enormous prestige in the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal courts of the sixteenth century, starting already in the fifteenth.[91]

## 2.1 Literature review

This brief survey of the development of the Timurid book illustration should nevertheless not mislead us to overlook the importance of individual differences in the patronage of different Timurid princes, as the Timurid legacy as understood by patrons and artists of the three early modern Muslim empires was not a homogenous entity, rather, different approaches of different Timurid patrons found varying echoes in each empire. Eleanor Sims, in her article on the *Shahnama* manuscripts copied for three sons of Shahrukh, draws attention to the varying approaches even among the three brothers to the illustration of the same text.

She suggests that while Baysunghur’s patronage relied on the depiction of uncommon stately scenes to stress princely responsibilities and privileges in the illustration of the epic, Ibrahim Sultan’s *Shahnama* focused on family bonds and traditional emblems of royalty such as hunting and feasting. As the youngest brother, Muhammad Juki’s manuscript, with the palette and style it used, interpreted the

[91] Ibid. 271, 299

events of the *Shahnama* not as immediately relevant history as his brothers' copies did, but as distant fairytales.[92]

A short article by Basil Gray, on a Nizami *Khamsa* produced in Shiraz during the governorship of Ibrahim Sultan there, is mainly concerned with situating this then newly discovered *Khamsa* within the larger history of Timurid painting reconstructed by the modern scholarship.[93] The article is dated 1963, and significant in a number of ways.

First of all, it attempts to reconstruct the development of Shiraz painting with the links it establishes between the earlier Shiraz-based dynasties such as Muzaffarids and Jalayirids and the Timurid governorships of Iskandar Sultan and Ibrahim Sultan. In the timeline he establishes, Gray suggests the patronage of Iskandar Sultan as the peak of Shiraz painting. Muzaffarid and Jalayirid examples then are evaluated as primitive attempts that were perfected with Iskandar Sultan. Ibrahim Sultan's patronage marked a slow decline for Gray, with grand examples but deteriorating quality. This period witnessed an increasing rivalry from Herat. After Ibrahim Sultan, and after the Timurid loss of Shiraz, Gray contends, Shiraz painting continued as simple decorative pictures akin to diagrams.

The importance of Iskandar Sultan's patronage is observable in the historiography of later Timurid painting as well as in the manuscripts themselves, as I will suggest below through the example of one manuscript dating to Sultan Husayn's reign. Thus Gray's article is valuable for the basic scaffold of Shiraz painting it constructs. But it is also significant in its demonstration of the early scholarship's intimate relationship with modern connoisseurship. This is vividly seen

[92] Sims, "Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausi's Shahnama Comissioned by the Princes of the House of Timur"
[93] Gray, "A Newly-discovered Nizami of the Timurid School"

in the fascination of early scholarship with patronage issues (explained by David Roxburgh as a reflection of modern connoisseurs' deeming themselves somewhat as successors of the 'enlightened patrons' of the premodern Persian realms[94]), and its manner of evaluating manuscripts in a way somewhat similar to modern art criticism, based on their perceived aesthetic qualities and solely in pictorial terms rather than social or political.

This kind of earlier historiography is even more visible in an article by Basil Robinson, speculating the existence of an illustrated Nizami *Khamsa* produced for Baysunghur. The article is dated 1957, and the fascination of scholars especially with Baysunghur's patronage in particular but Timurid painting in general is openly admitted in it:

> All lovers of Persian painting must needs have an affectionate regard for that dissolute young prince Baysonghor Mirza b. Shah Rokh … [Timurid painting in Herat] set a standard of Persian painting and the art of the book for all time. There can be little doubt that this was due to the presiding genius and exquisite taste of Prince Baysonghor himself.[95]

Thus, the secondary literature on Timurid *Khamsa*s of Nizami poses questions that set some of the lasting themes that will be dealt with throughout this thesis. As seen from the three articles mentioned above, the question of patronage and the agency of the artist vis-à-vis the patron is one of them. The articles by Gray and Robinson also demonstrate the haunting effect of Timurid art not only on its successors in Turkey, Iran and India, but also on the modern viewer as well, indicating the great success of Timurid dynasty's image-making efforts not only in mythologizing its founder Timur, but also in projecting itself as the ultimate peak of refinement and sophistication to its peers and to the posterity.

[94] Roxburgh, "The Study of Painting and the Arts of the Book", 3
[95] Robinson, "Prince Baysonghor's Nizami: A Speculation", 383.

The issue of repetition and tradition is another one of the questions that the literature sets as a theme with which this thesis also concerns itself. Ada Adamova so insightfully engages with this problem in one of her articles, where she scrutinizes a *Khamsa* produced for Shahrukh in 1431, which is now in the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg. She contends that the close repetition of some of the paintings of Iskandar Sultan's *Miscellany* (BL, Add MS 27261) in the corresponding scenes of Shahrukh's manuscript attests not to an uncreative act of copying due to lack of inspiration or effort, as suggested by the earlier literature on the manuscript, but to a certain pattern in the illustration of royal manuscripts in general.

The observations she makes on the relationship of this manuscript to the *Miscellany*, and between other pairs of manuscripts, demonstrate that there were certain rules and regulations that determined the relationship of a manuscript to its predecessors. Accordingly, every manuscript reproduced a few paintings from an earlier manuscript to the degree of exactitude, included some other paintings that were modifications of an earlier model, and yet others that followed a completely different approach. Moreover, she suggests, in every manuscript there are some subjects that were never illustrated before and invented completely new compositions as suggestions to be followed or dropped by the later generations.[96]

According to Adamova, this was how Persian –or at least Timurid- painting maintained its traditions while at the same time staying inventive. In this way, although many manuscripts included responses and/or homages of the later masters to their predecessors, no manuscript was exactly the same as another, and all

[96] Adamova, "Repetition of Composition in Manuscripts: The Khamsa of Nizami in Leningrad", 72-74

invented something new in accordance with their capabilities. As will be seen below, this pattern is followed in the Timurid sample of this thesis.

Adamova's contribution is invaluable with its emphasis on the agency of the artist over the patron and the intentions behind a practice that at first sight seems unfruitful to the modern viewer. Thus, Adamova helps to balance our view of the painting of the period towards the indigenous and towards the practitioner. On the other hand, the eternal and mechanical quality that her article appears to assume for the pattern of reproduction may necessitate questioning.

Indeed, Lentz and Lowry, although they do not notice the systematic nature of the collaboration between reproduction and invention that Adamova discovered, suggest that the practice of pictorially quoting paintings from earlier manuscripts started with Shahrukh's reign. They also emphasize that this practice took unprecedented importance in the time of Sultan Husayn, and became "almost an end in itself". Their description of book illustration during this period is reminiscent of a jazz musician, who always refers to the past in his pieces in increasingly complicated ways, but also always feels compelled to add something more to the tradition. [97]

This mode of working paralleled, Lentz and Lowry remind us, the poetry of the time which made use of a great variety of forms of imitating/ emulating/ responding to/ quoting the precedents in a purely formal and increasingly complex exercise. But they also take a note that the complex references made to the tradition were a way of establishing a link with the glorious past of the dynasty.[98] Therefore, the practice had assumed different meanings in Sultan Husayn's time in contrast to

[97] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 281
[98] Ibid.

when in the mid-fifteenth century; as Shahrukh's *Khamsa* responded to the *Miscellany* of Iskandar Sultan, who was his nephew and a contemporary.

In short, historicization of the practice seems critical. When not taken as a general, unchanging pattern with stable numeric rules but taken as a form of communication whose details can change depending on the context, one can start to look for the motivations behind each case and follow the development of this communication with the past and contemporary masters. Then the pattern Adamova reveals can become even more critical in understanding the working of tradition and self-renewal of Timurid, and, perhaps, the larger Persianate painting. Thus question will be scrutinized in the later Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal manuscripts as well.

## 2. 2 A *Khamsa* from the reign of Sultan Husayn

The rest of the chapter will deal primarily with the Timurid manuscripts of the *Khamsa*. There are four manuscript connected to the Timurids that this thesis is concerned with. These are Or. 6810, Add 27261, and Add MS 25900 in the British Museum, the latter being connected by attribution; and H. 781 in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library, which is attributed to Timurids with a few Ottoman paintings added later. My focus here will be on Or. 6810; but other manuscripts will also be kept in mind during the discussion. The manuscript on which Adamova based her study, mentioned above, the one that was produced for Shahrukh, and which is now in the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg (VP-1000), will be briefly touched upon for the purpose of comparison.

Or. 6810 is attributed to the late fifteenth century, and one of its paintings is dated to 900 AH (1494-95 AD). It is thought to be produced for Ali Farsi Barlas, the ruler of Samarqand. Its pages measure 170 mm x 243 mm. The text is written in

*nastaliq* script, arranged in four columns with 25 lines for each full text page. It has a double page frontispiece and twenty single page illustrations. The binding it currently has is of modern European origin.

The manuscript starts on folio 1a with librarian notes and stamps from the Mughal imperial library remaining from the time when it was a part of that library. On the next two pages is a double page frontispiece which will be discussed below with the other illustrations. The back of the frontispiece on f. 2b is empty. There is a *shamsa*, literally meaning a 'sun', or a round illuminated medallion customarily placed on the initial pages of a book, on f. 3a (fig. 1). The illumination of the *shamsa* is consistent with the other illuminations throughout the book.



Figure 1 Shamsa. Or 6810, 3a, BL

On ff. 3b and 4a, just behind the *shamsa*, the text starts with nine lines in two columns on each page, situated in the middle of large rectangular frames of lavish illumination (fig. 2). Lapis lazuli, green, gold, brownish red, and black dotted with white, red, and purple floral decorations dominate the illumination, which is conceived in frames within frames and in lobed medallions. In every aspect, the illumination looks expensive and is very masterfully, intricately rendered.

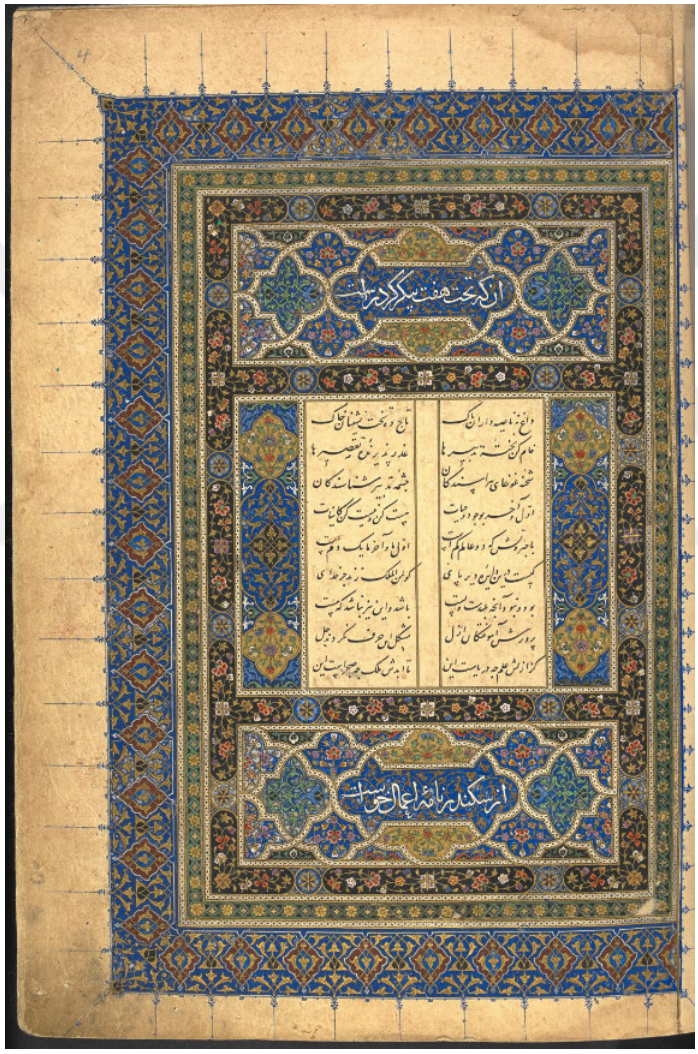

Figure 2 Illuminated page. Or 6810, 4a, BL

The ‘*unvan*s, which are the illuminated title panels at the beginning of each *masnavi*, follow the same color scheme and vocabulary, although they are all individually designed. The subsection headings within the text are illuminated in a plainer manner with only gold and blue inks. The text is written in four columns and

twenty-five lines to each full text page and in *nastaliq* script. There are no decorations on the margins of the pages.

2. 2. 1 The illustrations of Or. 6810

The frontispiece (ff. 1b-2a, figs. 3-4) is a little curious in that it looks as though it was inserted into the manuscript at a later point than its initial production. Such a probability would change its patron, as it is the frontispiece that connects the manuscript to Ali Farsi, because the ruler depicted in it is receiving a piece of paper with his name written on it.



Figures 3 and 4 Double page frontispiece. Or. 6810, ff, 2a-1b, BL

The back sides of the frontispiece, namely ff. 1a and 2b, are empty pages except for the stamps and inscriptions on f. 1a by Mughal librarians when the manuscript was kept in the imperial library. There is only a single *shamsa* on f. 3a, as mentioned above. Commonly such a *shamsa* would be accompanied by another one,

symmetrically placed on the opposing page. Yet this one faces f. 2b, which is empty except for the traces of half of the frontispiece on the other side of the folio. Stylistically too, the frontispiece is different than the paintings in the rest of the manuscript. Its line execution is not as precise as in the illustrations, the colors are not as bright, and the figures are relatively larger and rendered in a different manner. In general, the frontispiece looks simpler and less refined than the rest of the paintings.

Yet, one illustration seems to connect it to the rest of the manuscript. This is the illustration on f. 16r, depicting *Sultan Sanjar and the Old Woman* (f. 5). The imprecise quality of the line, the shape of the hills on the horizon, relatively larger sizes of the figures in relation to the picture frame, some of the faces, and the paler colors than those in the rest of the manuscript are common in both cases. These paintings differ from the others in that they move slightly away from the Jalayirid mode focused on elaborate construction of space, minute surface decoration and very small and elongated figures. Perhaps they might be interpreted as harking back to a mode of painting more akin to that of the Ilkhanid era.

Adamova's analysis reveals that smaller numbers of paintings with an archaic style, especially in the frontispieces, were common in many manuscripts, and were not necessarily painted by a different hand. The conventions she reveals include sparing of a few paintings for responding to the masters of earlier generations.

The subject of *Sultan Sanjar and the Old Woman* will be popular for illustration in the Safavid and Mughal manuscripts as well, and the iconography adopted here is the one that was already established in the fourteenth century, with the old woman, to the left, holding the skirt of the sultan demandingly, and the

sultan, to the right, looking down his horse and extending one of his hands to her. [99] The attendants and the parasol are also the common components of this iconography.



Figure 5 Sultan Sanjar and the Old Woman. Or 6810, 16a, BL

The episode in the narrative revolves around the encounter of the Seljukid Sultan Sanjar with an old woman who approaches him and accuses him for her mistreatment in the hands of his soldiers. She bitterly argues that a ruler's conquest of distant lands is of no use if he does not treat his subjects in the proper way.[100] To express her complaints visually, the painter depicted the background as a barren land

[99] Çağman, "Sultan Sencer ve Yaşlı Kadın Minyatürlerinin İkonografisi", 92-94
[100] Brend, The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami, 10

with dried tree stumps, suggesting the sultan's neglect of his duties, leading to the deterioration of the country. According to Filiz Çağman's study of the iconography of this subject, the surroundings of the main figures in the representations of this scene traditionally involved either vibrant spring scenes suggestive of a royal hunt or featured the figures before the splendidly depicted palace of the sultan.[101] Thus, the barren land surrounding the main figures in this illustration, aiming to translate the message of the parable into visual terms, can be considered quite original.

If the frontispiece is original, there are other aspects of the manuscript that confirm Adamova's suggestions. In terms of invention versus repetition, the manuscript follows a line similar to the pattern she describes: There are three illustrations that copy three paintings from Iskandar Sultan's *Miscellany,* Add. MS 27261 in British Library, which is an anthology that also includes Nizami's *Khamsa*. Although none of the three illustrations in Or. 6810 repeating compositions from it are completely the same as the ones in Add. MS 27261, the resemblances strike the viewer at first glance.

First one of these paintings are the first paintings in both *Khamsa*s, the scene of *Mi'raj*, f. 5b in Or. 6810 and f. 6a in Add. MS 27261 (fig. 6). In Muslim belief, *Mi'raj* is the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad to the heavens on the back of a mount named Buraq. It is believed that one night he woke up from his sleep and was escorted by the archangel Jabrail (the Biblical Gabriel) from Mecca first to Jerusalem in a night journey, and then to the heavens, at the end of which he had a direct dialogue with God. This is an event very popular for manuscript illustration, and narrated several times in Nizami's text, in the beginning of several of his *masnavi*s. Here the one in *Makhzan al-Asrar* is represented. As an old convention also seen in

[101] Çağman, "Sultan Sencer ve Yaşlı Kadın Minyatürlerinin İkonografisi"

Ilkhanid painting, Buraq is often represented as a composite mounting animal with a human head.

The composition and the iconography in our cases are exactly the same in both paintings, except for the fact that in Or. 6810 the composition of the corresponding painting is mirror reversed (fig. 7). In both cases, the Prophet is located in the middle, riding Buraq, talking to the angels surrounding him, and he is enveloped along with angels in a large, serpentinely spreading cloud of fire. The fire is designed in a very similar way to Chinese clouds but in a bulkier manner, and it is painted with gold. Below this, in a narrower portion of the painting is the landscape of Mecca with Ka'ba and surrounding structures and mountains.



Figure 6 Mi'raj. Add MS 27261, 6a, BL

In general, the painting in Or. 6810 looks like a more refined and larger version of the one in Iskandar Sultan's *Miscellany*. Yet there are a few alterations. Some alterations are in the way of elaboration, such as the more defined shape of the cloud in the later painting and the extended and more nuanced rendering of the city scape and the mountains. Other alterations look more like commentaries on its model; such as how the painter introduced in his version two angels, to the above left of the Prophet, who pour the fire cloud down from the vessels in their hands. It is as if the painter wanted to reveal the forces behind the mystery of the cloud by showing its initiators.



Figure 7 Mi'raj. Or 6810, 5b, BL

The design of the angels is also different in the later version, where they do not wear crowns and their hair style is not so obviously Mongolian unlike in Iskandar Sultan's version. Since Jabrail does not have anything differentiating him/her save for triple wings in Or. 6810, it is difficult to recognize him/her. Also, curiously, the lower parts of angels' bodies are not shown, unlike in Add. 27261. Lastly, the painter in Add. 6810 introduced four very tiny men and a *mihrab* in the courtyard of Ka'ba, to emphasize the height in which the main characters soar. The last point indicates an increasing attempt on the use of illusionistic devices such as perspective, that we will see throughout the manuscript.

The second painting which is closely modeled on its counterpart in Iskandar Sultan's *Miscellany* imitates f. 131b in the latter (fig. 8), and is on f. 137b, in Or. 6810 (fig. 9). This is the scene of *Layla and Majnun Fainting at Their Meeting* of which narrative summary I gave in the introduction. The relationship between these two paintings is less striking than the one between *Mi'raj* paintings, but in fact the degree of modification is lower in this case. All the alterations serve only to refine the model, and there appears to be almost no "comments" on the earlier painting.



Figure 8 Layla and Majnun Fainting. Add MS 27261, 131b, BL



Figure 9  Layla and Majnun Fainting. Or 6810, 137b, BL

The composition is exactly the same, and the positions and expressions of the figures are exactly the same except for minor changes such as the direction in which Majnun lies. Especially the cooking objects left untended on the ground are the same and the little boy reaching to his mother in the tent to the upper left is strikingly similar with his position. Here a little change is made inside of this tent, and instead of a colorful patterned carpet, a plain dark blue and black background is preferred. Majnun's animal companions are given more visibility in the lower left corner, and the figures in general are more refined and well-defined with their gestures and facial expressions.

It is worth noting that Shahrukh's *Khamsa* in the Hermitage also represents the same scene with almost the same composition and details (f. 222b). It remains more loyal to the illustration in Iskandar Sultan's *Miscellany* than does Or. 6810, but nevertheless makes some changes such as the omittance of the tent with the little boy. Perhaps it could be suggested that Or. 6810 stood in a chain of succession constituted by the two earlier manuscripts; but since it contains elements from the composition in Iskandar Sultan's book that Shahrukh's copy omits, the painter may as well have had consulted the former only. The same composition is also adopted in the illustration of the same subject in H. 781 in Topkapı Palace Museum Library (f. 128a), the fourth Timurid manuscript in my sample.

The only significant change between the paintings in Or. 27261 and Or. 6810 is the background. Instead of adopting the flat brown color for the ground and blue for the sky that we see in the earlier painting, the painter in Or. 6810 chose to furnish the ground with more details like little grasses and roots, and dry tree stumps above, along with a more well-defined line of horizon and a novel rendering of the texture of the ground. The color of the sky is changed from blue to gold. Gold gives a gloomier look to the painting and seems to work better for the color scheme of this painting in general. Throughout this manuscript, the backgrounds are manipulated very successfully to set the mood for the subjects. The color of the sky is telling in some cases. The gloomy look and dead landscape of this painting almost presages the two lovers' tragic end.

The last painting in Or. 6810 with close resemblance to its counterpart in Add. MS 27261 is the scene of *Bahram Gur Kills the Dragon*, f. 157a in the former (fig. 10) and f. 148a in the latter (fig. 11). The same composition in these two illustrations is also present in the third manuscript in British Museum, Add. 25900 (f.

161a, fig. 12). This latter manuscript is suggested to be later than Or. 6810, but its date and provenance is unknown. Most of its paintings are attributed to late Timurid Herat, and four of them seem to be added in Safavid Tabriz.



Figure 10 Bahram Gur Kills the Dragon. Add MS 27261, 148a, BL

The relationship between the paintings of this subject in Or. 6810 and Add. MS 27261 is closer than their relationship to the one in Iskandar Sultan's copy, but they all have the same composition with changes in the backdrop. In Iskandar Sultan's copy the figures are larger in relation to the picture surface, and significantly all the figures have Mongolian hairstyle, which is lacking in the two later manuscripts. Unlike Iskandar Sultan's Bahram Gur who uses a sword to crush the

head of the dragon, the later Bahram Gurs use a bow and look exactly the same as each other except for the coloring, bringing to mind the possibility of a use of pouncing. This may follow the illustration of *Bahram Gur Hunting with Fitna* (f. 263a) in Shahrukh's manuscript; because although the subject is different and there is no dragon in this illustration, and the hand gestures of Bahram Gur are not exactly the same as the ones in the two later copies, his position, the bow he uses, and the composition of the page in general have a great deal of affinities with them.



Figure 11 Bahram Gur Kills the Dragon. Or. 6810, 157a, BL

The later two manuscripts also give a more logical execution to the dragon, by eliminating the awkward front leg clutching a tree brunch in Iskandar Sultan's

copy, and by defining where the dragon comes from via adding a hole to the rock formations. Another change among the three illustrations is the varying color and texture of the ground and the shape of the horizon line. The sky is a flat golden surface in all three paintings.

But the most significant difference among the different illustrations in the three manuscripts in my sample is in the observing figure(s) behind the horizon line. In Iskandar Sultan's copy, there are two male figures discussing Bahram Gur's feat. In Or. 6810, we have Fitna playing harp, mounted on a horse, between two male figures one on a donkey and the other pedestrian. Behind them is another mountain, not precisely drawn, maybe to suggest distance. The inclusion of Fitna here, which is at odds with the narrative, may be a result of a model like the image of *Bahram Gur Hunting with Fitna* in Shahrukh's copy, mentioned above, as, in that illustration too, Fitna is placed behind the hills with two attendants.

The illustration in Add. 25900 is the most interesting among the three illustrations of *Bahram Gur Kills the Dragon*: there, the only figure behind the horizon is a wild ass. This is logical in terms of the narrative, because in the text it was a wild ass that drew Bahram's attention to the cave where the dragon lived.[102] Nevertheless, considering that Bahram Gur took his nickname from his love of hunting wild asses (*gur*), this addition of a wild ass, almost smiling, to observe Bahram Gur's killing a dragon is also slightly gives the flavor of a pictorial joke.

[102] Bürgel, "Nizami's World Order", 21



Figure 12  Bahram Gur Kills the Dragon. Add MS 25900, 161a, BL

Besides these three illustrations in Or. 6810, which follow the by then classic manuscript of Iskandar Sultan closely, there are some illustrations that look completely new. Numerically, the uncommon paintings in the manuscript are much more than the quotations from earlier models. Since there are five instances that appear to illustrate new subjects, I will discuss here only the most striking ones of them, and since I want to turn from this discussion to the content, or, the “agenda” of the manuscript, my examples will have a common theme.

One of the outstanding illustrations in Or. 6810 features *The Suicide of Farhad* (f. 72b, fig. 13). In the narrative, the humble sculptor Farhad's platonic and unconditional love for Shirin is heard everywhere, leading Khosrau into jealousy. He challenges Farhad to carve a channel through Mount Bisutun for the passage of his armies. If he becomes successful, King Khosrau promises, Farhad may claim Shirin for himself. Khosrau is initially sure that this impossible task will eliminate Farhad from his way, but the latter works very hard; and Shirin's visit to him in Mount Bisutun encourages him even more. Soon Khosrau hears that Farhad is about to complete his task, and he starts to worry. After consulting his advisors, he sends a man to Farhad to give him false news of Shirin's death. Khosrau was only hoping that Farhad would stop working with this news, but Farhad's love is beyond that. Deciding that there is no meaning in a life without Shirin, he flings his working tools on the ground, and commits suicide by throwing himself down the mountain.



Figure 13  Farhad's Suicide. Or. 6810, 72b, BL

Compositionally the painting is simple, Farhad lies on the ground with his head bleeding and his working tools surrounding him. The man who brought him the news, standing to Farhad's right, is an awestruck witness of the event. Behind them is a vast array of gray and brown rock formations punctuated with dead trees. To the lower left corner, two mountain goats and a snake observe the event. The flat golden sky occupies a large portion of the picture surface.

The scene has a heightened drama accentuated with the dead, harsh landscape, large, empty sky, the terrified expression of the man and the calmness on

Farhad's face. Even animals stop and watch such a tragic event. The attempt of shading on the rocks makes them look like reflecting the gold shimmer of the sky. Maybe over-interpreting, one could suggest that the calmness on Farhad's face points at his innocence and the fact that finally he found rest, united with his love only in death. His bulky body serves only to amplify the effect of innocence on his face. Similarly, one could suggest leaving such a large space for the sky, and its reflection on the mountains hint at another witness of the event, silently observing. The animals in the bottom left corner repeat the animals in the *Layla and Majnun Fainting* compositions mentioned above, in a gesture of meaningful quotation. This small but recognizable detail connect the two episodes, as well as the two lovers together. It stresses that both Majnun and Farhad are true lovers who extinguish themselves for their beloveds.

Indeed, love and death are two main themes in the illustrations of this manuscript. Farhad's suicide is as far as I know a rare subject to be illustrated in a Nizami *Khamsa*, and many uncommon paintings of this manuscript are on the subject of death.

The next illustration in the manuscript is *Shiruya Murders Khosrau* (f. 93a, fig. 14). This subject is not particularly rare, but its selection is surprising considering that the only other painting featuring Khosrau in the manuscript is *The Elders Pleading Before Hurmuzd on Behalf of the Khosrau* (f. 37b). These two paintings are the first and the last illustrations to the *masnavi* of *Khosrau wa Shirin* in this manuscript. One from the beginning and the other from the end of his life, these paintings also frame the life of the main protagonist, not dwelling on his person but on human life in general. We do not see Khosrau's feasts, loves, or battles in this manuscript, staples for most Nizami *Khamsa*s.



Figure 14  Shiruya Murders Khosrau. Or. 6810, 93a, BL

Representing him as an old man in this one and a young boy in the other painting, the painter does not attempt to construct an identity for Khosrau, whereas he does for Farhad, who is interpreted as *the* genuine, loyal lover, unlike the fickle Khosrau. Farhad is individualized to the smallest detail of his garbs, and there is a continuity in his figure between the two paintings featuring him, whereas Khosrau is

a generic type and none of the paintings featuring him show him in his usual clothing.

Farhad's paintings, which are in succession, first, his meeting with Shirin (f. 62v) and second, his suicide for Shirin, may also be interpreted as framing his life, so to speak his 'real' life starting when he falls in love with her and ends when he kills himself for her. In this manner, the manuscript elevates the humble sculptor Ferhad to being a real personality who does what is really significant, and reduces Khosrau, with all his royal splendor and festive mood, to a simple man who does not have anything particular about him.

Khosrau's death amplifies this message: The bedchamber in which he and Shirin sleeps, ignoring the text's description of a prison, is one of the gaudiest and wealthiest architectural structures in the illustrations of this manuscript. Richly and colorfully decorated on all surfaces, this structure hosts Khosrau and Shirin in their bed; he is an old man, wearing simple clothing and not having any regalia around him. Shiruya, Khosrau's son, sits on his father's body, strangling him with one hand and stabbing with the other.

Again betraying the text, Shirin is awake in the painting. Yet she does not even lift a finger. With his love lying unmoving on his side, all his wealth and splendor does not save Khosrau from dying in the hands of his own son in misery. He looks vulnerable and in agony, trying but not succeeding to save himself. His face is in stark contrast to Farhad's dead face, completely lacking his peace and self-contentment, ironically repeating the contrast between the environments in which they died. The only sleeper in this painting is the doorkeeper, visible through the open door under the night sky.

The last painting from this group that I will discuss in detail is *Mourning the Death of Ibni Salam*, on f. 135b (fig. 15), another one of the uncommon scenes. In *Layla va Majnun*, Ibni Salam is Layla's husband to whom she was married without her consent. She never lets him approach her, and keeps weeping for Majnun in secret. Towards the end of the *masnavi*, he dies. Finally, this is a moment that Layla can cry out openly for her love, under the guise of mourning her husband. Soon after she falls ill.



Figure 15 Mourning the Death of Ibni Salam. Or. 6810, 135b, BL

Since Ibni Salam was in no way one of the main characters of *Layla wa Majnun*, the preference for his mourning in illustration could be explained only by either as it is providing an opportunity to portray Layla's psyche or because it is about death. In this case the second explanation is more likely the valid one, as Layla is difficult to identify in the illustration. In fact, the only painting in which she is identifiable among the four paintings featuring her (one in a coffin) is *Layla and Majnun Fainting at Their Meeting*, which, I presume, is chosen not because of Layla but because it represents Majnun's psyche.

Turning back to the mourning scene, this is a commentary on death which omits the representation of the dead. Ibni Salam, either in his coffin or with his body, is absent in the painting, and the only figures are the anonymous mourners. According to Lentz and Lowry, this preference resulted in shifting the focus from the person of the dead person himself to the concept of death, departing from the conventions in the Ilkhanid representations of mourning which were centered on the dead body and the pain that death caused.[103]

Our illustration is a powerful statement. It depicts a modest sandstone house, its courtyard, and outside of it, with mourners distributed around. There is a quotidian aspect to the mourners, in which different types of mourning is portrayed with crying men and women, those who dry their eyes with handkerchiefs, two men who hug each other seeking comfort, a boy on his knees, tearing his clothes, a woman tearing her hair, another fainting, a man praying and another in deep thought. On the right corner below is a beggar and a standing man talking to him, probably another common scene in funerals of the time. The palette is pastel and favors browns and sand colors, with a bright blue exploding in little portions here and there.

[103] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 296-297

Unlike the tragic scene of Farhad's suicide and the terrible death of Khosrau, this painting does not seem to convey so dark feelings. The mood of mourning is limited to the figures and the mourning colors of blue and black, but the colors of the architectural setting is light, and the green leaves gives a hint of hope. Botanic elements of Persian paintings are often interpreted in scholarly literature as a reflection of the state of being in the image. Ferhad's suicide aptly incorporated dead tree stumps, but here, the green lively plants make one think that death is suggested in this painting not as an end but the beginning of a new life. If this is considered as a fact by the painter, apparently he views the mourners as in oblivion to this fact.

There are two other death scenes in the manuscript, the most notable of which being *Majnun's Death on Layla's Grave* (f. 144b), which has an immense expressive quality to it. The other one is about the story that the Tartar princess tells to Bahram Gur, illustrating *Bishr Feeling for the Body of His Dead Companion Malikha with a Branch* (f. 175b), a very uncommon subject again, as if the painter did not want to miss any single opportunity to portray death, as long as it is the death of men rather than women.

Another common point uniting all these illustrations is that they all have an association to the themes of either love or vanity. Indeed, love is the most common theme illustrated in this manuscript, with at least seven paintings on the subject. Following it are themes denoting a mystic, spiritual, or religious concern to which five or six images are devoted. These three themes, namely death, love, and mysticism are the facets of a single whole for the manuscript, a whole embodied by a Sufi view of the world and of human life.

As Lentz and Lowry's analysis confirms, there was an increasingly closer relationship between the ruling elite and Sufi orders in late fifteenth century Timurid

political and cultural life. For Sultan Husayn, legitimacy to rule came mainly from the virtues of a ruler from a Sufi perspective and the degree to which he heeded the words of prominent sheikhs. One of the most prominent and respected figures of Sultan Husayn's court was 'Abd al-Rahman Jami, a poet and the leader of the Naqshbandi order in Herat at that time. His poetry was revered in his own time across a very large geography.[104]

Lentz and Lowry explain how the famous *Yusuf and Zulaikha* painting by Bihzad in a *Bustan* of Sadi did not illustrate the event in accordance with Sadi's account but in accordance with Jami's interpretation of the story. Thus, they conclude that illustration was not a practice strictly tied to the text, but it could add new layers of meaning to a book.[105] The same may well be operating in our manuscript, in which Lentz and Lowry observe Sufi inclinations. This may also explain why deaths well of men are preferred over those of women: In Sufi poetry the lover is always a man and the beloved is feminine if not female. Portrayal of the death of the beloveds would not be appropriate with the agenda of the manuscript, and this is why the illustrations do not dwell upon the love the women in the text feel for their beloveds.

A less emphasized but nevertheless common theme in the manuscript is just rule. But just rule is always thought in relation to and identified with a confirmation from the mystics, and hence the two themes often overlap in one illustration. Two paintings in the three illustrations to *Iskandarnama*, for instance, feature Iskandar consulting wise men (ff. 214a and 273a). The paintings in the *Iskandarnama* section are the most complex, most elaborately rendered ones in the whole manuscript, and it

[104] Ibid. 271-272, 292-297
[105] Ibid. 292

is in one of these paintings which features a portrait of Sultan Husayn himself (figs. 16-17). The illustration repeats an extant portrait of him to the degree of exactitude with the same posture, same position of the hands, the same face and the same clothing. The subject, *Iskandar Visits a Sage in a Cave* (f. 273a) seems to have been selected with attention to the image Sultan Husayn was bent onto creating of himself: A wise ruler always in contact with ascetics, mystics, and wise men.[106]



Figure 16 Iskandar Visits a Sage in a Cave. Or. 6810, 273a, BL

[106] Ibid. 292-297



Figure 17 Portrait of Sultan Husayn Bayqara. Harvard University Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift of John Goelet, 1958.59.

Source: Necipoğlu, "Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation", 37, 2012

Other aspects of kingship, such as enthronements, battles, feasts, and hunts are completely absent from this manuscript. Significantly, for example, we do not have *Iskandar's Battle with Dara* illustrated here, reflecting the shift Lentz and Lowry mention that occurred between the patronage under Shahrukh and his sons and that under Sultan Husayn: "right rule became associated with religion and piety rather than battle and conquest".[107] The single illustration of heroic content in the

[107] Ibid. 295-296

manuscript is *Bahram Gur Killing the Dragon*, and its inclusion may perhaps be explained on the grounds of it being modeled on earlier examples. Thus it may be included not because of its content but because it provides an occasion for the painter to display his skills of interpretative quotation.

Lastly, another, secondary theme is quotidian life, the focus of three or four paintings. According to Lentz and Lowry, giving increasingly more space to daily life of the subjects was another prevalent inclination in the book illustration of late Timurid Herat.[108] This interest in the quotidian may or may not be interpreted in connection to the concern for just rule, as his care for his subjects had become part of the rhetoric used by Sultan Husayn in legitimating his rule.

The interest in Sufism that was so central in Or. 6810 would not keep its prominence in the pictorial traditions of early modern Muslim empires. But all the other themes and approaches that we have observed in it will find echoes in the manuscripts that will be discussed in the next chapters. Particularly, intricate plays on the form, an understanding of rulership reliant on relationships with wise men, and an interest in quotidian life will be the most significant aspects of the Timurid heritage for the later empires.

[108] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 289-290.

# CHAPTER 3

## NIZAMI HOSTED IN THE SAFAVID COURT

It is possible to suggest that Safavids were the most immediate inheritors of the Timurid legacy. As Timurid aesthetics was part of the culture of the lands that they ruled, it was not seen as a foreign influence in the Safavid court, and Safavid responses to Timurid painting was more of a response of a painter to his tradition, rather than the response of a patron to another patron or the artistic response of a dynasty to another. This was unlike the nature of the dialogue with Timurid cultural production that the Ottomans and Mughals entered, in both of which cases, a more dynastic concern was present, in different ways, as I will elaborate in the following chapters.

Nevertheless, the direct involvement of the Safavid workshops with the Timurid legacy occurred with a slight delay. Until Shah Ismail I's (1487-1524) conquest of Herat in 1510, Safavid painting was hardly distinguishable from the Turkoman painting, especially from that of the Aqqoyunlus with whom Safavids were relatives. This was primarily due to the fact that Safavids took over Aqqoyunlu *kitabkhana* in its entirety after taking Tabriz, and this *kitabkhana* continued to produce books from Aqqoyunlus to Safavids almost uninterrupted; although, according to Sheila Canby, the prior socialization of Ismail I in the cultural milieus of Gilan and Ardabil might have played a role on his tastes and patronage as well.[109]

A decade after Ismail I was crowned, Herat was acquired from the Shaybanids with a battle, and the personnel of the Timurid *kitabkhana* of Herat was

[109] Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722*, 11-17.

transferred to Tabriz, along with the by then highly famous painter Bihzad.[110]All the sources on the matter agree that this marked the birth of the Safavid painting which was a synthesis between the Aqqoyunlu painting of western Iran and Timurid painting of Khorasan.[111] Nevertheless, no royal Nizami *Khamsa* produced in this period remains to our day, except a manuscript that now is in Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Istanbul (TPML, H. 762), which was produced and illustrated in Aqqoyunlu Tabriz, but refurbished by artists working for Ismail I.[112]

The effects of this synthesis could be seen more visibly during the reign of Shah Tahmasp (1514-1576), whose fifty-two-year reign allowed for a substantial amount of patronage of arts, producing the most famous examples of Safavid painting. The painting of the first half of his reign was characterized by perfectly precise lines, brilliant, vivid colors, a wealth of details and a marginalization of the main subject with a focus on side activities.

In these respects, the painting produced under Tahmasp's patronage may be considered as a continuation of that produced under the patronage of Sultan Husayn and his circle in Herat. Aqqoyunlu and Timurid productions were already in exchange and interaction before the Safavids,[113] and the direct meeting of personnel and products of the two *kitabkhanas* in Safavid Tabriz must have enlivened these traditions further. But in the end, even though the agenda of the manuscripts, probably set by the patrons, changed –the Sufi emphasis decreased and the stress on

[110] Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures*, 66.
[111] Welch Jr., *Five Royal Persian Manuscripts*, 15-18; Uluç, "The Common Timurid Heritage of the Three Capitals of Islamic Arts", 39-40; Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Arts of India and Turkey*, 71-76; Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures*, 66; Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722,* 29-31
[112] As Aqqoyunlu painting is excluded from this study, this manuscript is not included into the sample of the thesis. Instead, a Timurid manuscript refurbished possibly in Tahmasp's reign (BL, Add. MS. 25900) will be discussed briefly below.
[113] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 245-247

royal splendor strengthened-, artistic tendencies in Sultan Husayn's *kitabkhana* kept their flow with some modifications in direction, which was probably more in the initiative of the painters. Tahmasp's *Khamsa* of Nizami is a good exemplification of this.

But before that, I want to touch upon a Timurid manuscript with four paintings added in the Safavid *kitabkhana*.[114] This is Add MS 25900 in the British Library, from which one painting was discussed in the previous chapter. The website of the library attributes the Safavid contributions to circa 1535-40, Tabriz. All the four paintings are in the *Iskandarnama* section. I believe these paintings make a good example on how Safavid *kitabkhana* learned from and responded to Timurid precedents (fig. 18).

[114] The paintings actually seem to have been cut and pasted on the pages of Add. MS. 25900. When one examines closely the contours of the painting, especially the areas going outside the borders of the rulings, one notices a different color of paper constituting a slightly visible outer contour around some figures, such as the one surrounding the lone bird perched on a dome in figure 18, or around the man who appears behind the cubical structure to the top left in the same illustration. Nevertheless, since I did not the see the manuscript in person and could not examine the texture of its paper, I cannot be sure.



Figure 18  Nushaba Recognizes Iskandar from His Portrait. Add MS 25900, 245b, BL

One of these represents *Nushaba Recognizes Iskandar from His Portrait* (f. 245b). The event takes place when Iskandar decides to visit Nushaba, Queen of Burda', in the disguise of his own envoy. Nushaba becomes suspicious of his royal behaviors, and orders a portrait of Iskandar to be brought. She recognizes him and tells him that she knows his real identity. The logic of composition and the construction of space in this painting relies heavily on Timurid precedents, such as

the paintings in this very manuscript. The enclosed space with rock formations outside denotes an exclusive, intimate area. The focus on the main event as it is narrated in the text, the limited number of the characters and their roles are among the other features that we also observe in Timurid painting.

On the other hand, though, the elements that are redundant from the perspective of the narrative, such as the caller to prayer, the boy who looks down to the court from the roof, and the man in the background who seems to be feeding the birds are indicative of a certain Safavid taste that we will see more closely in Tahmasp's *Khamsa*. As a speculation, perhaps the desire to add illustrations to a Timurid *Khamsa* which lacked most of the illustrations for *Iskandarnama* may have been be related to a desire to assert political superiority of the Safavid rule over the preceding dynasties in Iran.

Unlike the Safavid contributions (whose subjects are *Iskandar Comforts the Dying Dara* (f. 234b), *Nushaba Recognizes Iskandar from His Portrait* (f. 245b), *Iskandar Visits a Sage in a Cave* (f. 250b), and *Iskandar Captures the Champion of the Russians with a Lasso* (271b), the Timurid parts of the illustrative program do not specifically highlight themes of rulership. Apparently the spaces for the Safavid paintings were already reserved for illustrations in the Timurid copy, but the stately manner in which they were painted seem to be in contrast with the approach of the Timurid paintings in the manuscript.

### 3.1 Tahmap's *Khamsa*(s) of Nizami

This chapter will, sometimes briefly, discuss three manuscripts connected with Safavids. Tahmasp's copy of the *Khamsa*, now identified as Or. 2265 in British Library, seems to be the earliest among them (in the sense of beginning of its

production). It will serve as the classical example of sixteenth century Safavid book illustration in this thesis, and it will be the manuscript to be most thoroughly discussed among the five Safavid copies. I chose this manuscript as my primary case due to three reasons: First, this is the only royal manuscript in my Safavid sample. Second, this manuscript hosts some of the most famous examples of Safavid painting today and it often finds a place in modern scholarly discussions.

Last but not least, the manuscript is also appropriate as the primary focus of this discussion because it is not solely made out of sixteenth century materials. According to Soucek and Muhammad Isa Waley, there were two Nizami *Khamsa*s connected with Tahmasp, the text of one of which, transcribed by the famous calligrapher Shah Mahmud Nishapuri, constitutes most of the text pages of Or. 2265, while the illustrations of the other were used in it. Moreover, extra text pages possibly from the eighteenth century were added to combine the two Tahmasp *Khamsa*s seamlessly. In addition, the manuscript currently hosts three paintings by the seventeenth century painter Muhammad Zaman, and its binding is from the Qajar period, nineteenth century.[115] Thus, Or. 2265 in its current state envelops material from a span of four-hundred years, and more importantly, enables us to discuss some seventeenth century paintings as well.

The difficulties entailed with studying a manuscript that shows such collage-like features as a single entity, as if its illustrative program reveals uniform concerns of a single patron or artists working together, are obvious. Nevertheless, I find this manuscript important from the perspective of this thesis as it still demonstrates a selection of certain scenes over others, both on the part of the creators of its current state and on the part of Tahmasp and his painters. And, except for the paintings by

[115] Soucek and Waley, "The Nizāmī Manuscript of Shāh Tahmāsp: A Reconstructed History".

Muhammad Zaman, all the paintings seem to have been made for Tahmasp. Also, it is possible to explore the illustrative program of his other *Khamsa*, copied by Shah Mahmud Nishapuri and of which only text was used in Or. 2265, although no such attempt will be made in this thesis.

The manuscript opens with identical *shamsa*s on facing pages in ff. 1b-2a (one of which in fig. 19), which have large empty gilded spaces, possibly composed for inscriptions, in their middle. The *shamsa*s are dominated by gold and lapis lazuli, adorned with floral scrolls of bright primary colors. On ff. 2b-3a the text starts with full illumination framing it (one of the pages in fig. 20). The vocabulary of illumination in these pages is largely based on Timurid examples, maybe ones similar to Or. 6810 or Add. MS. 25900. This is especially apparent in its use of interlocking lobed cartouches and the use of a framing band that has colorful floral scrolls on black. But overall, the colors of the initial illuminated pages of Tahmasp's copy are much brighter and warmer than Or. 6810, which features a cool palette.



Figure 19. Shamsa. Or 2265, 1b, BL



Figure 20. Illuminated page. Or. 2265, 2b, BL

According to Soucek and Waley, these illuminated initial pages were part of the same copy of the *Khamsa* from which the sixteenth century illustrations were taken. Thus, they contend that the following few pages are what they call "replacement pages", produced in the eighteenth century to connect the text pages of the one copy of Nizami's *Khamsa* with the illustrations and the initial illumination of the other copy. After these, the text pages that were transcribed by Shah Mahmud Nishapuri start.[116] The transition from one kind of page to the other is almost seamless and one can easily miss them, but when looking at them carefully, one can

[116] Soucek and Waley, "The Nizāmī Manuscript of Shāh Tahmāsp: A Reconstructed History", 203

see the difference between illumination and marginal decoration of the "replacement pages" and those of Shah Mahmud Nishapuri's copy.

Soucek and Waley also believe that Shah Mahmud Nishapuri's text was mostly intact in the initial parts of the book whereas towards the end of the book the creators of the current manuscript had to consult to "replacement pages" more and more.[117] Thus, the *masnavi* of *Makhzan al-Asrar* was mostly written by Shah Mahmud Nishapuri and punctuated by three illustrations from the other copy of Tahmasp. I will not go into further details of the codicological condition of the manuscript, but the fact that the initial parts of the manuscript are mostly sixteenth century material while the later parts mostly consist of eighteenth century pages will be important in the following discussion.

### 3. 1. 1 The sixteenth century illustrations

The illustrative program of the manuscript demonstrates a surprising level of coherence despite its codicologically incoherent condition. Overall, the themes of kingly entertainment, festivity, hunting, the beauty of nature and pleasures of quotidian life dominate the manuscript. These themes are pursued in expense of any strict ties of the illustrations with the narrative, rendering many of the illustrations quasi-portraits of courtly life that happen to include a few characters from Nizami's text.

This situation brings the manuscript both closer to and farther away from the Timurid precedents, hinting at the complex relationship of the manuscript with the Timurid legacy. It is difficult to define this relationship in one sentence, but one could suggest that the logic of illustration and main themes to be chosen were

[117] Ibid. 200, 203

roughly the same in the Timurid and in Safavid contexts. What differed was how they approached their common aims. Still, one should keep in mind that the Timurid legacy was not a uniform monolith but was a heterogeneous accumulation, and it is possible to find in the sixteenth century illustrations of Or. 2265 elements of approaches that we observe variously in works of Baysunghur's and Sultan Husayn's patronages.

The common points between my Timurid sample and Or. 2265 can be summarized in three aspects, one compositional and two thematic. First of all, there was an emphasis on the formal qualities of a painting sometimes overriding the content, just like in Timurid painting during Sultan Husayn's reign. Secondly, the most striking themes of the sixteenth century illustrations in the manuscript were kingly prerogatives and occupations such as holding a court and hunting, in conformity with Baysunghur's patronage among others from Shahrukh's reign. Thirdly, there was an interest in the quotidian life of the subjects of the ruler, whether of the servants in the court or of the nomads outside on the mountains, again like in Sultan Husayn's time. Before going into the difference between the approaches I observed between Timurid and Safavid examples, let me briefly exemplify the points I made in this paragraph.

#### 3. 1. 1. 1 Text-image relationship

*Sultan Sanjar and the Old Woman* (f. 18a, fig. 21) is a good example to start with. The central part which features the main characters is iconographically based on earlier examples with the postures of the woman and the sultan as well as of the attendants discussing the event. But these figures take a relatively small area of the

picture space and most of the surface is occupied by rocky hills, big green trees, blossoming bush-trees, flowers, a sunny sky and courtiers ready to hunt.

Although in most earlier precedents the depiction of the nature does take such a large space, representation of the environment in a lively portrayal of springtime is perfectly in line with the earlier Jalayirid and Aqqoyunlu traditions as well as some Timurid manuscripts.[118] On the other hand, this is in contrast to the two of the Timurid manuscript that this study focuses on, where the background of the conversing characters featured deserted spaces, dried tree trunks and signs of poverty and desolation overall, contributing to the critical message of the narrative (Add. MS. 25900, 18a; Or. 6810, 16a, fig. 5).

[118] Çağman, "Sultan Sencer ve Yaşlı Kadın Minyatürlerinin İkonografisi"



Figure 21. Sultan Sanjar and the Old Woman. Or. 2265, 18a, BL

Thus, in this painting, the narrative becomes an excuse for the representation of the greatness of a king with his entourage, preparing to the kingly leisure of hunting in a beautiful forest in a bright day. The beauty of the forest appears to be hinting at the just rule rather than injustice. Çağman also notices that the rich environment in this painting absorbs the characters in it and draws the primary attention to itself, causing the painting to "los[e] its dramatic value".[119] She adds that

[119] Ibid. 101

the hunting scene here is represented in a way suitable to the actual Safavid rulers of the time.[120] This contradiction with the main concerns of the narrative, which belongs to the *nasihatnama* genre,[121] and portrays an unjust king who neglects the desolation of his subjects in order to give a lesson about rulership, signifies a shift away from the text in the text-image relationship.

Focus on the environment in expense of the narrative message is paralleled in the other two illustrations to the *Makhzan al-Asrar*. *Anushirvan and the Owls* is one of them (f. 15b, fig. 22). King Anushirvan, who in his youth did not attend to state matters very well and neglected his subjects, runs into the ruins of an old village during one of his hunting parties. His attention is taken by two owls that look like they are in conversation, and asks his vizier to explain to him what they are talking about. The vizier tells him that one of the owls is asking for the other's daughter's hand in marriage, and the father asks for this village and one or two others as dowry. The first owl says that it would be easy and he could give a thousand more such ruined villages as dowry as long as the king continues to indulge in hunting and festivity neglecting his subjects. Upon hearing this Anushirvan is ashamed, and becomes a very good king afterwards.[122]

[120] Ibid. 101-102
[121] Ibid. 87-92
[122] Welch Jr., *Five Royal Persian Manuscripts*, 70



Figure 22. Anushirvan and the Owls. Or. 2265, 15b, BL

In the representation of this story too, the iconography is not new and the subject is often illustrated with compositions similar to this. The two woodsmen below and their grazing donkey do seem to call attention to the situation of Anushirvan's subjects, although they do not look particularly poverty-stricken. Yet the blossoming foliage, the little stream of water to the right, and even the animals inhabiting the ruins give the painting an air of serenity and nostalgia rather than desolation and collapse.

This suggestion is especially strengthened by the delicate view of the gazelles seen through the door behind the ruins and the two lines of poetry written on the inside wall, right next to the gazelles. Welch translates this inscription as: "Erected in the heart of those deprived of happiness, there is no better edifice than this. Written by Mi… Musavvir, 946 A.H."[123] Apparently written by (one of the) painter(s) of the illustration, the inscription imbues the view of the ruins further with nostalgia and a slight sadness, which does not have much to do with politics. The light and elegant movement of the king, gesturing to the owls, adds on this slight sadness a hint of pleasure taken from a stroll in the woods.

Another case in point is f. 48b (fig. 23), originally depicting the scene of *Nushaba Shows Iskandar His Portrait*, but here intended to represent *Shapur Explains Shirin About the Portraits of Khosrau*.[124] Here we see a further marginalization of the main subject to open space for extraneous details of courtly life. Although Shirin/Nushaba and Shapur/Iskandar are placed centrally, the attendants and servants around them are so busy and so full of motion and expression that the viewer's attention is easily taken away from the standard rendition of the main characters towards the bustling movement surrounding them.

[123] Welch Jr., *Five Royal Persian Manuscripts*, 72
[124] Soucek and Waley, "The Nizāmī Manuscript of Shāh Tahmāsp", 204. Neither Soucek and Waley, nor Welch offer an explanation for the apparent discrepancy between the iconography of the painting and the surrounding text.



Figure 23. Shapur Explains Shirin About the Portraits of Khosrau. Or. 2265, 48b, BL

Here are all the elements of an informal garden party; quiet talks of some attendants with the others, a gardener urgently but silently calling the superintendent of the *majlis* to discuss a pressing matter, boys carefully carrying meals and drinks, and ladies throwing curious looks towards the portrait in question. As some of the faces are given individuality, Welch suggests that there may be portraits of actual

Safavid courtiers among the personages in these kinds of illustrations.[125] Indeed, it is as if the two main characters sit as guests in this world of daily life of the Safavid court, rather than portraits of real personages lurk in the world of Nizami's poetry.

Besides calling attention to the pleasures of courtly life, as I will elaborate below, all these paintings reveal a parallel between this manuscript and late Timurid book illustration in that the form is placed on equal footage with the content. In all the cases mentioned above, the perfect precision of the line, brilliant colors, variety of activities portrayed, increased confidence in the use of illusionistic techniques such as perspective and shading, and the compositional mastery with the number of details that the painters can insert into a painting without disrupting its focus are so captivating that it may be possible to suggest that a display of virtuosity is given more emphasis than the narrative subject of a painting.

In fact, these paintings make one think that a lack of focus on the narrative subject that allowed for a multiplicity of side subjects, beneath which lied the main agenda of the manuscript, was more demandable. In fact, the last example given above is also closely related to the other two aspects that I see common between Timurid precedents and the sixteenth century illustrations of Or. 2265. The second common point between them is the priority given to representations of courtly gatherings and hunting.

3. 1. 1. 2 Representations of court and royal prerogatives

With six illustrations for each, *Khosrau wa Shirin* and *Haft Paykar* are the most densely illustrated *masnavi*s in Or. 2265, but since three of *Haft Paykar*'s illustrations were painted by Muhammad Zaman, *Khosrau wa Shirin* has the greatest

[125] Welch Jr., *Five Royal Safavid Manuscripts*, 80.

number of sixteenth century illustrations. Except for the scene of *Khosrau Watches Shirin Bathing*, all the illustrations to this *masnavi* depict scenes of courtly entertainment (ff. 48b, 57b, 60b, 66b, 77b), as if the artists did not want to miss any opportunity to paint pictures of royal splendor.

F. 60b (fig. 24), depicting *Khosrau's Enthronement*, is interpreted by Soucek and Waley as a reference to the enthronement of the young Tahmasp, due to the inscription including the shah's name and titles on the architectural frieze over Khosrau's throne.[126] If the moonfaced young Khosrau here is a reference to the shah himself, then it may be possible to interpret all the paintings of *Khosrau wa Shirin* as eulogies to the royal splendor and courtly life, five out of six of which feature the same young prince (fig. 25).

[126] Soucek and Waley, "The Nizāmī Manuscript of Shāh Tahmāsp: A Reconstructed History", 203



Figure 24. Khosrau's Enthronement. Or. 2265, 60b, BL



Figure 25. Khosrau Listening to the Musician Barbad. Or. 2265, 77b, BL

This also explains why *Khosrau wa Shirin* and *Haft Paykar* are chosen as the most intensely illustrated *masnavi*s of this manuscript: from the perspective of narrative they are very convenient for the depiction of royal themes; Khosrau as a character has a weakness for festivities and often indulges in them, and Bahram Gur is known for his love of hunting. Thus, illustrations to these two *masnavi*s outnumber those of *Layla wa Majnun* which has two illustrations and *Mahzan al-Asrar* that has three illustrations, all three of which in the latter also featuring royal activities. Three

out of six illustrations to *Haft Paykar* consist of scenes depicting Bahram Gur hunting various animals.

The traditional understanding of kingship in Iran underlined a few activities as privileges of kingship, and these were hunting, feasting, and battling, collectively known as *bazm u razm*, and maybe with the addition of polo playing and sensual pleasures of love.[127] All of these activities had well established iconographies. A great number of illustrations to Or. 2265 depict such themes, and make it tempting to suggest that the main agenda of these illustrations was to assert the royal splendor of its patron.

In this respect, Tahmasp's *Khamsa* had affinities with the products of Timurid patronage in the reign of Shahrukh, most notably of Baysunghur, but also of Ibrahim Sultan.[128] However, unlike the stiff, dignified and idealized image that this period's painting projected,[129] the illustrations of courtly life in Or. 2265 are very lively and allow some space for informality marked by extraneous details of playing children, birds on tree branches, conversing servants, and mothers playing with their babies (figs. 24-25), which are again in line with Sultan Husayn's patronage.

Another painting connected to the issue of rulership is the *Mi'raj* illustration on f. 195a (figs. 26-27). Loosely based on precedents all deriving from the *Mi'raj* painting in Iskandar Sultan's *Miscellany*, (Add MS 27261, f. 6a, fig. 6), the representation of *Mi'raj* in Or. 2265 originally gave the prophet a *taj-e haydari*, the distinguishing headgear of a *qizilbash*. This automatically rendered the prophet a supporter of the Safavid cause, and confirmed the Safavid claim of descent from the prophet, a source of tremendous legitimacy. Apparently this was unacceptable to

[127] Sims, "Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausi's Shahnama Commisioned by the Princes of the House of Timur" 46
[128] Ibid.
[129] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 112, 163

someone dealing with the manuscript at a later date, and they covered the green baton rising from the middle of the Prophet Muhammad's turban with gold, making it almost invisible among the golden fire surrounding him. Nevertheless, its shape and its green root on the top of the turban are still discernible when looked at closely.



Figure 26. Mi'raj. Or. 2265, 195a, BL



Figure 27. Close-up of figure 26

### 3. 1. 1. 3 Quotidian life

Yet, the concerns of Or. 2265 are more complicated than they first appear to be, which brings us to the third aspect that connects this manuscript to its Timurid precedents. In the courtly scenes, the royal figure is always located to the center of the composition and captures the attention of the viewer first, as the illustration is always composed around him. Yet, after dwelling some time on him, the eye starts to wander around. After the initial encounter, the main point of attraction in illustrations of royal activities in the manuscript is not the royal figure anymore, but the retinue and even the natural environment surrounding him.

The book demonstrates a marked interest in the activities of people from lower ranks such as servants and peasants. These people are always in action and most of the time they are given individuality, while the royal figure is often given a standardized representation. This iconographic standardization of the royal figures of

course serves to imbue them with a certain aura of dignity and maybe iconicity, but at the same time it pushes the viewer away to the surroundings, which are much more surprising.

This argument is further reinforced by the illustration of *Majnun Brought in the Guise of a Beggar to Layla's Camp* (f. 157b, fig. 28). The main figures, Layla and Majnun, being tucked into a corner, the bulk of the picture surface is occupied by nomads busy at work in their daily activities such as milking and herding the sheep, preparing noodle, kindling the fire below the cooking cauldron, childcare, embroidery, taking water from a stream, and gossiping, as well as kids ready to throw stones at Majnun. The textures are executed in painstaking realism, especially in the wool on the sheep, the surface of the goat-hair tent, and the half-transparent fabric of the underskirt of one of the women in the tent in the middle.

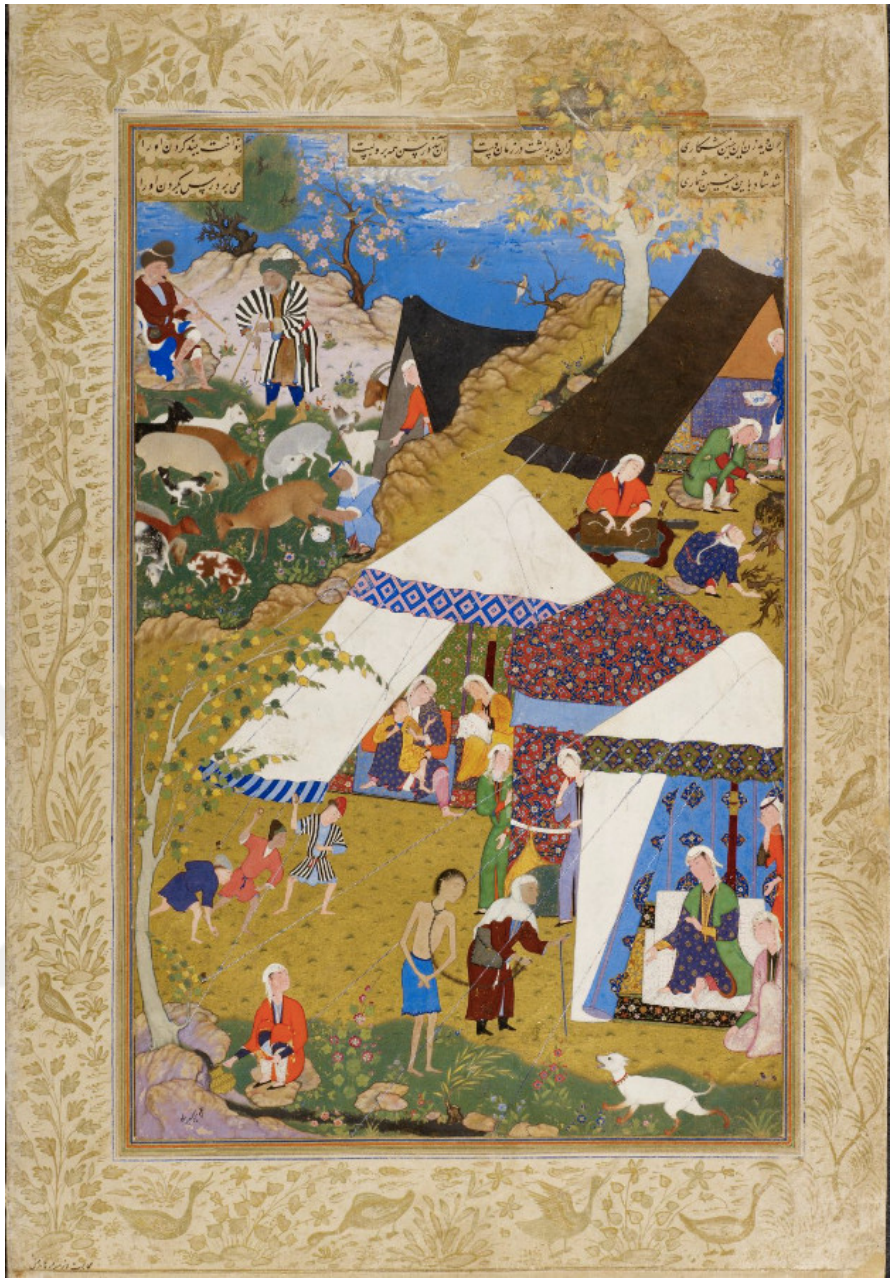

Figure 28. Majnun Brought in the Guise of a Beggar to Layla's Camp. Or. 2265, 157b, BL

There may or may not have been other illustration to this *masnavi*, which does not have a royal subject but revolves around Arab Bedouins, in the original manuscript for which the sixteenth century illustrations in Or. 2265 were painted. What we can understand from the painting of *Majnun Brought in the Guise of a Beggar to Layla's Camp* is that the characters of the story were not depicted with the type of turban featuring a strap of cloth let loose behind the head or going below the chin and connecting with the other side, conventionally marking a character as

Arab,[130] but as Iranians, possibly contemporary nomads who were the subjects of Tahmasp. This interest in the quotidian life of people from lower ranks is another quality that Lentz and Lowry observe in late Timurid painting especially centered around the court of Sultan Husayn.[131]

3. 1. 1. 4 Differences between Timurid and Safavid approaches

According to Lentz and Lowry, complicated plays on the form and sophisticated references to works of earlier masters were highly prized in the late Timurid Herat.[132] Like in Timurid manuscripts, in Or. 2265 too, a great number of paintings that introduce new things into the iconographic pool are present side by side with a few illustrations that closely follow earlier models, in a similar pattern observed by Adamova.[133]

What differs between the Timurid precedents and Tahmasp's illustrations is that the new contributions introduced in the Safavid examples are not iconographic, in contrast to the Timurid examples. In Timurid illustrations, the novel contributions of a painter would be in the iconographic pool: They would come up with new iconographic formulas for frequently illustrated subjects, or would invent novel compositions for altogether new subjects to be illustrated. All the three examples from my Timurid sample remained largely connected with the narrative, even in manuscripts occupied with formal pictorial exercises and visual quotations. Or. 6810 in British Library was such a manuscript, for instance. It made use of earlier compositions referring to Iskandar Sultan's *Miscellany* (Add. MS 27261, BL) and gave them new meanings by manipulation of subtle details. It had a thematic agenda

[130] Grabar and Natif, "Two Safavid Paintings", 180
[131] Lentz and Lowry, Timur and the Princely Vision, 289
[132] Ibid. 281-285
[133] Adamova, "Repetition of Composition in Manuscripts"

as well, it was highly concerned with Sufi interpretations of life, love, and death. But despite all these, the statements it made from this point of view were strictly tied to the text and they all set out from it: The paintings were interpreting Nizami's *masnavi*s from a Sufi perspective.

In contrast, the painters of the illustrations to Tahmasp's Nizami do not seem to be interested in inventing new iconographies. The standard compositions are executed without change in the core, and even if the book includes subjects that are rarely illustrated, their rendering is not novel and derive from conventional compositions. But the conventional iconography of the main event is very often marginalized, and many of the illustrations demonstrate a marked interest in the peripheries of a painting.

These extraneous details, as I elaborated above, rarely were connected with the narrative, and they formed the bridge between the world of Nizami's *Khamsa* and the Safavid court. Thus, in some respects, most of the illustrations to Tahmasp's Nizami consisted of references to earlier precedents surrounded by novel extraneous elements, which gave them the aura of very lively court portraits hosting a few characters from Nizami's text, as mentioned above.

The distinguishing feature of the illustrations that did not fit to this pattern among the sixteenth century illustrations to Or. 2265 is that they illustrate nothing but the main event and remain more connected with the narrative. These illustrations are *Khosrau Sees Shirin Bathing* (f. 53b, fig. 29), *Bahram Gur Trying to Impress Fitna with His Marksmanship* (f. 211a, fig. 30), *Majnun in the Wilderness* (f. 166a, fig. 31), and Mi'raj (f. 195a, figs. 26-27).

The composition of *Khosrau Sees Shirin Bathing* is a standard one repeating the same formula that most manuscripts employ.[134] The illustration is straightforward and there are no other human beings represented except for Khosrau and Shirin. In terms of narrative this choice for simplicity makes a lot of sense as the scene requires intimacy by its nature, since it illustrates the first face to face meeting of the lovers.

[134] Among which can be counted the one in Shahrukh's Khamsa in the Hermitage (VR-1000, f. 61a) and the one in H. 781 (f. 40a) in Topkapı Palace Museum Library from the Timurid domains. A Safavid *Khamsa* of Nizami now in Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, dated 1524-25 and attributed to Herat also features the same composition for the subject. The illustrations to the manuscript are published in Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, but unfortunately its inventory number and the folio numbers of the paintings are not provided. That the "Miniature 1" published here has exactly the same composition for this subject is important in that Priscilla Soucek in her chapter on the manuscript in Chelkowski's book, titled "The Khamseh of 1524/25" states that the paintings are in late Herat idiom and the calligrapher and the illuminator of the manuscript are artists trained in the late Timurid court (p. 11-15). Almost all of the Safavid manuscripts which will discussed below, as well as the Ottoman examples from the next chapter, feature the same composition for this scene.



Figure 29. Khosrau Sees Shirin Bathing. Or. 2265, 166a, BL

With the help of Shapur, Khosrau's loyal painter friend, the two lovers learn about each other and fall in love without seeing each other. Shirin decides to see Khosrau and sets on the road from Armenia to Iran, while Khosrau is forced to leave his country with the betrayal of one of the generals of his father, and decides to use this opportunity by going to Armenia to see Shirin. He comes across her when she is bathing in a lake, and without knowing her identity, watches her with admiration. With the soft colored rocks and the flowery vegetation, the illustration acquires a very lyrical quality suited to the event.

*Bahram Gur Trying to Impress Fitna with His Marksmanship* is in some respect close to the illustrations of *Bahram Kills the Dragon* in my Timurid cases. The page is more populated than the Timurid precedents, and the placement of the figures differs, but individually the figures seem to be inspired by a similar source like the Timurid paintings. Thus, although the position of his hands are different, Bahram Gur's figure and the movement of his horse is reminiscent of him in the Timurid paintings. Fitna playing harp on her horse and the surprised look of the attendants have points in common with those in Or. 6810, which I discussed in detail in the previous chapter.



Figure 30. Bahram Gur Trying to Impress Fitna with His Marksmanship. Or. 2265, 211a, BL

Lastly, *Majnun in the Wilderness* was a subject illustrated in all three examples from my Timurid sample (Or. 6810, f. 128b; Add MS 25900, f. 130b; Add MS 27261, f. 118a). The one in Tahmasp's *Khamsa* (f. 166a) does not exactly repeat any one of them, but the general idea of situating a young Majnun, half naked with a blue piece of clothing, in a rocky area sparsely dotted with trees and adorned with a river, with animals surrounding him, and a flat golden sky in the background is constant in all four cases. The gazelle that he is stroking in Or. 2265 is also present in Add MS 25900, although their postures are different. Depicting animals in couples, stressing Majnun's loneliness, is a device adopted in Or. 2265 probably deriving on models like that in Add MS 27261, Iskandar Sultan's book.



Figure 31. Majnun in the Wilderness. Or. 2265, 166a, BL

Nevertheless, the illustration in Tahmasp's Khamsa is much more densely populated and more elaborate than Timurid precedents. The space reserved for the painting, first of all, is considerably larger. The number and variety of animals are greater, the rocks are colored in different hues, and the painting overall has a soft, gentle effect akin to the one in *Khosrau Sees Shirin Bathing,* adding to the lyricism.

In short, in all of these three illustrations, the compositions and the subjects are not minutely based on the Timurid models. It is possible to say that they are visual quotations of earlier models, as the positions and movements of the characters

are typical of the subjects, and there are no distractions from the main event unlike in other illustrations in the manuscript. But the painters strived to improve on the precedents by contributing something more to them; in color, in additional figures, environment, or the general elaboration of the iconography.

This is again in parallel with my argument that the form was given priority in these illustrations over the content, as they provided evidence to the painters' knowledge of the works of earlier masters, their ability to interpret and contribute to them, and their mastery of the art, exemplified in the successful rendering of the wild ass whose ear and hind leg Bahram Gur pinned together with an arrow and the knowledge of color displayed in the paintings of Khosrau and Shirin and Majnun.

### 3. 1. 2 Illustrations by Muhammad Zaman in Or. 2265

One other element adding new layers of complication to the emotional and intellectual depth of the manuscript is the contribution of Muhammad Zaman. The three illustrations painted by him are all in *Haft Paykar* section, and their subjects are *Bahram Gur Kills the Dragon* (f. 203b), *Fitna Brings an Ox on Her Shoulders up Steps to Bahram Gur* (f. 213a, figs. 32-33), and *Fairy Queen Entertains the King* (f. 221b, figs. 34-45). Although the European influence on these paintings are immediately visible, the logic of their composition and the postures and placing of the figures still retain the legacy of the traditional Persianate illustration, and hence they form interesting examples of a fusion.



Figure 32. Fitna Brings an Ox on Her Shoulders up Steps to Bahram Gur. Or. 2265, 213a, BL. I cropped the page for a better view of the painting.

*Fitna Brings an Ox on Her Shoulders up Steps to Bahram Gur* is a great show off of the painter's skills in the use of linear perspective. But the most significant aspect of Muhammad Zaman's work featured in this manuscript seems to be the play of gazes carefully constructed to communicate with the viewer.

The painting illustrates the end of the episode about Fitna, a concubine of Bahram Gur, in Nizami's text. Bahram Gur often takes Fitna with him, who plays music with her harp during these hunting parties. One day in such a hunting party she presents him with difficult challenges such as pinning the ear and a hind leg of a game with an arrow, and he becomes successful in all of them. Yet, she fails to praise him, instead saying, scornfully, "Practice makes perfect." This greatly enrages Bahram Gur, and he throws her on the ground to be trampled under the hooves of horses.

In Firdausi's text, this is the end of her, but Nizami added a sequel. A long time after this event, when Bahram Gur was hosted by a dignitary in the countryside, a girl comes up the steps to the balcony he sits with his attendants, with a large ox she carries on her shoulders. Astonished by the view, he asks explanation. Fitna replies that she started to carry the beast when it was a small calf, and as it grew bigger, its burden was not too much for her. She finishes her words, again, saying "Practice makes perfect."[135]

In the illustration we see Fitna with her back turned to us in the lower half of the picture space. The large ox obstructs her head and we do not see her expression, but from her posture we sense a triumphal attitude. Bahram Gur sits frontally directly above her, his hand carrying a cup of wine suspended in the air and his gaze caught up by what he is seeing. His attendants and musicians, some sitting and others standing, flank him on two sides. There is a dramatic pause in the entire painting, everybody has stopped to turn their faces towards Fitna.

Yet, is it Fitna that they are looking at? A cursory glimpse on the illustration confirms yes, but when we look more closely to each figure, especially Bahram Gur,

[135] Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, 70-71

actually there is not a single figure looking at her. Instead, most of the personages look directly at us, the viewer (fig. 33). This is especially so in Bahram Gur, with a hint of smile on his lips, a slight look of surprise in his eyes, but no expression of astonishment or shock, and instead of it, a casual sense of familiarity. The other characters looking at us have similar expressions as well, as if they have known us for long, and are slightly surprised to see us in this moment, but the surprise is accompanied with an overall expectation, as if they are the ones catching us unawares, as if this is a friendly joke played on *us*.



Figure 33. Close-up of figure 32. Note the horns of the ox below; the characters do not look towards it.

Fitna, whose face is not visible, appears to contribute to this joke with her foot and skirt. This part is more intriguing than the gazes, as it is difficult to be certain of its intentionality. One of her feet, the one on the upper step, actually rests on the text box instead of the stair step. The spread of her skirt defines the contour of

the text box by tangentially brushing it. It looks as if she, like all the other figures in the painting, is aware of our presence, and plays with our relationship to her by defying the boundary of the picture surface, literally stepping out of it onto the narrative, on our domain.

One can object to this last point, as the text boxes might well have been placed on the illustration later, during the time of the creation of Or. 2265's current state, which possibly took place in the eighteenth century, many decades later than the date inscribed on these illustrations. The ruling frame around the picture is doubled by extra lines filling between the the text boxes and the outer frame, left unfinished when the text boxes end to open more space for the painting. The text box on which Fitna puts her foot has a part on the left strangely projecting upwards above its border, and partly mixes with the surface of the wall. These anomalies may be pointing at the artificialness of the text boxes.

Yet, if we ignore the text box and complete the stair steps in our imagination, it is very obvious that her upper foot is still not on the step, while the one below firmly steps on the stair, with half of it hiding behind the same text box. Could the movement of her upper foot be incomplete? May she be within the act of lifting her foot to place it on the upper step? It does not seem so, as the posture and the balance of her body suggests firmness on ground. Thus, it must be that her foot is indeed on the textbox, if the present one is refurbished, then another one that was there beneath this one, when Muhammad Zaman painted this illustration. The intentionality of the gazes is made clear with comparison to the next illustration painted by Muhammad Zaman.



Figure 34. Fairy Queen Entertains the King. Or. 2265, 221b, BL. I cropped the page for a better view of the painting.

*Fairy Queen Entertains the King* (f. 221b, fig. 34-35) represents an episode from the story that the Indian princess tells Bahram Gur in the Black Pavilion. An article by Amy Landau on this painting is critical in its identification of the real subject of this painting, which had previously been identified as *Bahram Gur in the Black Pavilion*, and in her undermining of the modern scholarship's biases against *farang-sazi*, the European style of painting in the Persian painting tradition in which Muhammad Zaman was operating. Landau not only helps in identifying some

European sources of inspiration for this painting, but she also re-orients the interpretation of this style from an understanding that sees it as a corruption of Persian painting tradition, towards a more open-minded approach that tries to explore the mechanisms of the new fusion of European and Persian artistic forms that *farang-sazi* represented.[136]

The story that this illustration represents revolves around a king who pesters one of his guests with questions of why he always wears black, the color of mourning. The man finally gives up and and instructs the king to go to a certain location in China to learn the whole story. The king, when he goes there, finds out by surprise that everybody wears black in the town, and bribes someone to tell the secret, who without explanation puts the king in a basket to set him out on a weird journey on the wings of a phoenix.

The king finally ends up in a lush garden in the night party of beautiful maidens led by the Fairy Queen. He enjoys all kinds of sensual pleasures among the fairies for several days, except for those of the queen who always eludes him. One day, finally, the queen gives way to his insistence and tells him to close his eyes. When he opens them again, he finds himself back in the black town. Afterwards, the king also always wears black in a mourning mood.[137]

In the illustration to this story too, Muhammad Zaman adds a layer of self-reflexivity. This painting is the largest among the Muhammad Zaman contributions to this manuscript, and there are no text boxes on it. The figures are placed in a veranda-like structure in the open air, against a background of cloudy night sky with fullmoon and a fully green forest surrounding a lake. The background seems to have

[136] Landau, "From Poet to Painter"
[137] Ibid. 73-79

been influenced from Mughal landscapes, especially in the rendering of the shapes of trees and individual execution of tree leaves. The lower part of the picture before this backdrop has the king and the Fairy Queen in the center, sitting side by side. Wine cups and fruits are displayed prominently along with candles with fire. Several ladies surround the couple, some playing music, some dealing with candles and wine.

In contrast to Bahram Gur in the previous painting, here the eyes of the king are completely fixed on the Fairy Queen, and the gazes of the attendants do not squarely meet our eyes, although most of them throw gazes that tangentially touch the surface of the picture plane (fig. 35). One woman in each of the main three groups of attendants seem to look at us, but each of them are placed in the back in the dark, as if hiding from us, glancing from behind secretly. Only the Fairy Queen, who, surprisingly enough, is undeniably a European woman, looks directly into our own eyes without reservation. Her necklace features a small portrait, but whom it depicts is undiscernible.



Figure 35. Close-up of figure 34. The gazes of the royal couple as well as the attendants.

Thus with the play of gazes the illustration constructs a visual dramatic irony, in which everybody except for the king knows what will happen in the next moment, and silently share the intimacy of this secret with the viewer, making us their accomplices in magic. The Fairy Queen with a wine pitcher in her hand, with which she either just poured wine in the king's cup or she will add more in the next moment, does not conceal from the viewer that she will deceive the king with her magic, in a similar way to the effects of intoxication. Only her eyes, who directly looks at the viewer, speak out openly.

The next moment, all that we see in the painting will disappear, leaving the unaware king alone in disappointment and regret. The dreamlike, elusive character of the fairies is extended to the whole painting, with which the viewer is intoxicated like the king and is half-unaware that all this will disappear in the next moment, that all the shapes that we identify as characters do not have any substance beyond that of a dream; although the gazes are openly conversing with us, conveying and denying this message at the same time, in a manner almost shivering the viewer. The dark background solidifies all this mysterious, dark, magical mood.

The implications of depicting the Fairy Queen as a European woman, while the narrative places the characters in China, is interpreted from the perspective of gender and the political dynamics of seventeenth century European-Safavid relations by Landau.[138] But maybe it is also possible to speculate that, from the perspective of cultural influence, what was China in Nizami's time was represented in the time of

[138] Landau, "From Poet to Painter". Landau also suggests interpreting the image of the king in this painting as a portrait of Shah Sulayman, under whose patronage Muhammad Zaman was working, based on his portraits and descriptions of him in contemporary sources, and, more importantly, on the placement of the painting facing a passage that alludes to Solomon and Belqis. Nevertheless, since Soucek and Waley's study reveals that the text and the illustrations, including the contributions of Muhammad Zaman, may have been brought together in the eighteenth century, Landau's identification may be risky.

Muhammad Zaman by Europe. Yet the influence of Europe on the works of Muhammad Zaman might have been a mediated one, as one can see elements akin to Mughal painting in his works, and Sheila Canby mentions that some of his paintings on Christian subjects may have been commissioned by Armenians.[139] It should also be kept in mind that Fitna's outfit in *Fitna Brings an Ox on Her Shoulders up Steps to Bahram Gur* is highly reminiscent of female costumes in Mughal paintings.

This is the last painting from this manuscript. For a manuscript with so much emphasis on kingship and *bazm u razm*, it may sound surprising that there is no single illustration to *Iskandarnama* in Or. 2265. Possibly the example of Alexander the Great as a king was considered important by Tahmasp, and there may have been *Iskandarnama* illustrations to the copy from which the sixteenth century illustrations in Or. 2265 were taken.

Or, of course, it is equally possible that that copy was left uncompleted, and lacked some of the *Haft Paykar* and whole of the *Iskandarnama* sections. As Soucek and Waley point out, further one goes through the pages of the current book the more likely one is to see less sixteenth century and more eighteenth century pages. The *'unvan* illuminations to *Khiradnama,* likewise, was a work of eighteenth century (f. 349b, fig. 36).[140]

[139] Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722,* 150
[140] Soucek and Waley, "The Nizāmī Manuscript of Shāh Tahmāsp: A Reconstructed History", 206



Figure 36. Unvan illumination for *Khiradnama*. Or. 2265, 349b, BL. I cropped the page for a better view of the illumination.

## 3. 2 After Tahmasp

The royal patronage saw a decrease after the move of the capital from Tabriz to Qazvin, due to a new lack of interest in painting whether connected with the shah's increasing religiosity[141] or because he saw painting only as part of his princely education which he decided to drop in his mature years.[142] In any case, Tahmasp's nephew Sultan Ibrahim Mirza became the primary sub-royal patron after 1550s, during his governorship in Mashhad.[143] The fact that Mashhad was the primary site of patronage of the arts of the book during this time confirms the potential power of

[141] Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art*, 45, 52, 71-72
[142] Uluç, *Turkmen Governors, Shiraz Artisans and Ottoman Collectors*, 74
[143] Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence*, 103-105; Simpson, *Sultan Ibrahim Mirza's Haft Awrang : A Princely Manuscript from Sixteenth-century Iran*

provincial[144] centers in the production of these arts in the Safavid realm. Indeed, Khorasan continued its own tradition while continuously changing hands between Safavids and Uzbeks, like other centers such as Shiraz and Mashhad.[145]

Two manuscripts that will be briefly touched upon in the rest of the chapter are such provincial works, one produced in Shiraz and the other in Herat. The one with Shiraz provenance is now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, where it is identified as Supplément persan 1956. The website of the library identifies its provenance as Shiraz and Qazvin, but what that exactly means is not made clear. The manuscript is dated 1560-61. As Shiraz was a great center for the production of commercial manuscripts in the sixteenth century, perhaps this *Khamsa* of Nizami, too, was produced for sale in the market, as its colophon seems not to give any name of a patron.

The manuscript is clearly designed to be a deluxe copy, as all the page margins are tinted with different colors, and its section headings are illuminated with care, along with all the three columns organizing the text pages. Eeach one of the five *masnavi*s is given its own double page frontispiece, and the manuscript ends with a single page finispiece. With sixty illustrations (counting the double page illustrations, double page frontispieces and the finispiece as one illustration each), this manuscript certainly does not demonstrate any of the tendency, which we had seen since the Timurid elite copies, to limit the number of illustrations to increase the quality in all of them. Yet this certainly does not mean in any way that the paintings in the manuscript lack quality. This is perfectly in line with Uluç's observation in her book on commercial Shiraz manuscripts of sixteenth century that a commercial

[144] Throughout the thesis, the word 'provincial' is used to denote the cultural products of any center outside of the royal capital in a realm. No qualitative or other judgment is meant by it.
[145] Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence*, 92-112

manuscript was not necessarily of lower aesthetic quality than royal products; and as the quality of a manuscript does not indicate by itself to the level of its patronage, Uluç reveals, having been produced for commercial purposes did not lessen the merit of a manuscript.[146]

The illustrations of Supp. pers. 1956 most of the time cover up to two thirds of a frame, not the whole page, and the page layout is often imaginative, with creative uses of the narrow spaces around text boxes (e.g. f. 75b, fig. 37). Although not as varied as in Or. 2265, illustrations do contain extraneous elements that enrich them. Nevertheless, the main event is almost always the main focus of an illustration, other details mostly serving to decorate it.

[146] Uluç, *Turkmen Governors, Shiraz Artisans and Ottoman Collectors: Arts of the Book in 16th Century Shiraz*. Uluç does not mention Supp. pers. 1956 in her study.


Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 37. Wedding of Khosrau and Shirin. Supp. pers. 1956, 75b, BnF

A certain thematic agenda is not immediately observable, as with such a large number of illustrations, all the popular scenes are illustrated. Some scenes are even illustrated redundantly, such as *Mi'raj*, which is illustrated in the beginning of three different *masnavi*s (ff. 3b, 88a, 185a), possibly illustrating every occasion that the event was mentioned in the narrative, and all of which in similar ways based on the one in Or. 2265, ultimately deriving from Iskandar Sultan's copy, Add. MS 27261.

Although the subjects chosen for illustration were very popular among Safavid manuscripts, few of them appear in my Timurid cases. The iconography and the selection of subjects of this manuscript do not have much to do with the Timurid manuscripts in my sample, but they seem to be inspired to a great deal from Shahrukh's copy in the Hermitage (VR-1000), especially in the *Khosrau va Shirin* and *Layla va Majnun* sections; and it is possible to trace stylistic influences to Timurid painting in general.

If it was really a commercial manuscript, this explains the lack of a discernible thematic agenda. The artists working on it must have found it their best bet to illustrate the most memorable and important moments in the narrative to appeal to as many customers as possible. Then perhaps it may be suggested that the multiplicity of *Mi'raj* paintings was intended to address the popular piety. In such a case, responding to Timurid precedents may not have been a primary concern, and it is understandable that any Timurid legacy to be observed in it must have been mediated by the Aqqoyunlu and Qaraqoyunlu past of the city.

After the death of Tahmasp, the reigns of Shahs Ismail II (1537-1577) and Muhammad Khudabanda (1532-1595/1596) did not witness substantial patronage, as the former's reign lasted only eighteen months and the latter was almost blind. Although one of Muhammad Khudabanda's sons, Hamza Mirza, commissioned a few books, this reign was also relatively short and there seems to be no extant royal *Khamsa* of Nizami from this period either.[147]

According to Sheila Canby, the nature of the royal *kitabkhana* changed with the reign of Shah 'Abbas I (1571-1629). She describes the previous structure as Timurid inspired, based on the fact that the *kitabkhana* of Tahmasp period was

[147] Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722*

responsible for a number of artisanal activities, supplying carpet and textile production as well as architecture with designs, inscriptions and ornamentations along with producing books and single page paintings.[148] This reflected the workings of the *kitabkhana* in Baysunghurid Herat, among others.[149]

With the reformulation that ‘Abbas I brought, the royal workshops were no longer designed to produce solely for the private use of the royal family, but some of their products were oriented towards internal and external trade. And after the moving of the capital from Qazvin to Isfahan, the *kitabkhana* ceased to produce designs for textiles and carpets, marking a departure from the Timurid practices where the functions of the *kitabkhana* were manifold and were not limited to the production of books.[150] This pattern confirms Necipoğlu’s argument that the artistic production of the three Muslim empires of Safavids, Ottomans and Mughals was based on the Timurid model only until the centralization of governments and the creation of a distinct imperial image and artistic style for each empire.[151]

The departure from Timurid models took place not only in the organization and the administration of the royal *kitabkhana*, but in the form and content of the works produced as well. Artistically, most significant development of the ‘Abbas I period was the increasing rise of the single page painting and albums as distinct forms. The influence of the new brush style and ideas that the painters of single page paintings brought about, most significant among whom being Riza ‘Abbasi, is observable in manuscript illustrations throughout the seventeenth century.[152]

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[148] Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722*, 120.
[149] Özergin, “Temürlü Sanatına Ait Eski Bir Belge: Tebrizli Ca’fer’in Bir Arzı”.
[150] Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722*, 120.
[151] Necipoğlu, “From International Timurid to Ottoman: A Change of Taste in Sixteenth-Century Ceramic Tiles”, 158.
[152] Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722*

In accordance with these developments, traces of a Timurid aesthetics in the manuscripts of early seventeenth century is increasingly difficult to follow. Even in a manuscript from Herat, Supp. Pers. 1980, now in Bibliothèque nationale, which was copied between 1612-1631, the paintings have moved far away from the old Timurid traditions of this city.

Illustration of the manuscript is not complete, some of the picture spaces are left blank, and one page has only the initial sketch of a painting (f. 218b). But with the present material, it is obvious that its approach to arts of the book are completely different than that of the Timurid as well as earlier Safavid precedents, not only with its illustrations but with its illumination and marginal decorations as well.

Its illustrations, eight complete paintings and one sketch, are straightforward, and every painting depicts only the central event and almost no side details. The subjects chosen for illustration are somewhat surprising in their emphasis. The three *Khosrau va Shirin* illustrations, the largest number among all the *masnavi*s, are all centered around the experiences of Shirin, and two of them are from the later, relatively minor episodes. These three illustrations are *Shirin Visits Farhad on Mount Bisutun* (f. 53b, fig. 38) *Khosrau Visists Shirin's Castle* (f. 60a) and *Shirin Follows Khosrau into His Encampment* (f. 65b) which takes place after she denies him entrance into her castle.


Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 38. Shirin Visits Farhad on Mount Bisutun. Supp. pers. 1980, 53b, BnF

When the illustrations to *Layla va Majnun* and *Haft Paykar* are also considered, which are three in total, it appears that the manuscript has a certain focus on the female perspective, which is extraordinary among the manuscripts included in this chapter. As the latter parts of the manuscript are increasingly incomplete, it is difficult to be certain of its illustrative agenda without studying the empty pages. But all of the complete ones except the two in *Makhzan al Asrar* feature female

characters prominently. It would be interesting to learn if it was produced under female patronage.

Stylistically too, this manuscript differs from the rest of my sample. I assume that it might be inspired by single page illustrations popular at the time especially in Isfahan, demonstrated in the way it takes advantage of the negative space, execution of the figures, and the style of brushwork, as well as its limited, warm, delicate palette of bright yellow, very pale blue, brown, gold, soft reds and greens, and an abundant use of white.

To conclude, in everything, the manuscript is a harbinger of the later development of Safavid painting which increasingly moved away from Timurid precedents and became gradually independent of narratives. A similar tendency in the seventeenth century would be observable in Ottomans and Mughals as well, as will be elaborated in the next chapters.

# CHAPTER 4

# OTTOMAN RESPONSES TO TIMURID MANUSCRIPTS: NIZAMI AND HIS FOLLOWERS

Considering that Timur's invasion of Anatolia, with his subsequent imprisonment of Bayezid I (1360-1403) in 1402 and division of the Ottoman lands among the latter's sons, brought the Ottoman principality nearly to an end, the profound interest that the later generations of Ottoman sultans demonstrated in Timurid aesthetics may sound incongruous. Yet, Uluç suggests that this sweeping defeat might have had benefits for the Ottomans in the cultural sphere.

After all, the principality recovered itself within a decade, and by the time when Mehmed II (1432-1481) was eagerly luring artists and craftsmen from Iran as well as Europe to his new capital in Constantinople, Timurid dynasty was no longer what it was when the great steppe empire of Timur was still intact.[153] Especially after the death of Shahrukh in 1447 and the internecine fighting that ensued, Timurids did not pose a threat to the Ottoman Empire anymore, and the new imperial image of the dynasty could not afford to fail to respond in their own way to the powerful cultural prestige Timurids had in the eastern Muslim world.

Uluç remarks that "many of the talented individuals Timur transported [from Anatolia] to Samarkand as captives returned after observing and being inspired by Timurid culture to put into practice the new ideas and techniques they had learned."[154] Future Ottoman campaigns to the east would bring more artworks and talented individuals to the court at Constantinople.

[153] Uluç, "The Common Timurid Heritage of the Three Capitals of Islamic Arts", 40.
[154] Ibid. 40

The earliest extant illustrated manuscript from an Ottoman provenance, an *İskendername* of Ahmedi (1330? - 1412-13), which is now hosted in Paris by Bibliothèque nationale, where it is identified as Turc 309, dates from 1416 in Amasya when Murad II (1404-1451) was the governor of that city as a prince.[155] As most of the illustrations to this manuscript feature a collage-like quality in which parts of different paintings were cut and pasted together on the illustration space in accordance with the subject, it is difficult to make suggestions about the style or iconography of Ottoman painting in this period.

Nevertheless, the fact that the reused paintings consisting parts of the illustrations of this manuscript often show an Ilkhanid style may be hinting at the popularity of Chingizid forms in the court of Prince Murad. If so, an interest in Chingizid Mongol Empire could be seen as a common feature tying Timurids and Ottomans together. At the same time, Bağcı et al. call attention to the three non-collage illustrations painted solely for this manuscript, and suggest that they show similarities to Anatolian Christian wall-paintings.[156] Thus, the Paris Ahmedi gives the first clues of the eclecticism of early Ottoman painting.

The act of physical reuse that we encounter in this first example of Ottoman manuscript illustration would continue to be a practice adopted occasionally in the Ottoman workshops during the eighteenth century.[157] Although Serpil Bağcı proposes that a "lack of an established tradition" must have been the main reason for this practice, as the sixteenth century comprised the period of most intense production of illustrated manuscripts in Ottoman workshops, during which we do not

[155] Bağcı et al. *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı*, 22
[156] Bağcı et al. *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı*, 22
[157] Bağcı, "Old Images for New Texts and Contexts"

encounter physical collage activities,[158] I would like to assume that the motivations of the practice may have differed between the fifteenth and the eighteenth century.

A similar practice was also present in the Mughal workshops in the eighteenth century,[159] and as Bağcı rightly points out, the act of making collages had affinities with album production, which increased in intensity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in both Ottoman and Mughal realms. Yet the eighteenth century remains outside of the concerns of this thesis. As for the fifteenth century example of Paris Ahmedi, collage illustrations perhaps can be seen in juxtaposition to repair and restoration of manuscripts of different origins present in the treasury. I shall return to this subject later in this chapter.

Paris Ahmedi's significance for the purposes of this thesis derives not only because of its status as the earliest extant example of its kind, but also from its subject. Ahmedi's *İskendername* was not exactly based on Nizami's *Iskandarnama*, but the latter was among the sources of the former, which it closely followed, along with the related parts of Firdausi's *Shahnama*. Equally significant is the fact that Ahmedi interpolated long sections in his text on the history of the Ottoman dynasty, which he situated in the larger world history. Ahmedi started this history section from the first ruler of Iran, partly repeating the account of the *Shahnama*, and continuing with the history of Islam.[160]

The history of the Ottoman dynasty came immediately after this account, subtly suggesting that the world history led up to the Ottomans, at the same time situating the latter in connection with and as a succession to the ancient dynasties of greater Iran. All this history, in the text, was put into the mouths of Aristotle and

[158] Bağcı, "Old Images for New Texts and Contexts", 31
[159] Aitken, "Parataxis and the Practice of Reuse, from Mughal Margins to Mîr Kalân Khân".
[160] Bağcı et al. *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı*, 28-35, Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 130-142

Khizr, narrating it to Iskandar. The selection of this work for illustration at such an early date indicates the importance given to the example of Alexander the Great as a ruler, and more significantly, to some Ottoman rulers' (among whom Bayezid I) aspiration to become the new Alexander, demonstrated with increased intensity under the patronage of Murad II's son and successor, Mehmed II, in whose reign several accounts of the life of Alexander the Great were produced and some were illustrated.

## 4. 1 Fusion of Persianate and European forms

In his aspiration to become the emperor of two continents, Mehmed II was bent upon creating a fusion of European and Iranian cultural and artistic forms, merged into a distinct Rumi style in concordance with the imperial project in his mind. The enduring legacy of the Italian masters that he invited from Venice and Florence could be seen on portraiture, a genre that was initiated under his rule, as well as in his patronage in architecture.[161] Maybe because portraiture and architecture were given more importance by the sultan as devices in the publication of his vision, narrative painting remained largely untouched by this approach until the reign of Bayezid II, and it is difficult to see a distinct Ottoman style in the manuscript illustrations of this earlier period.[162]

It is often accepted that the first known court *kitabkhana*, called *nakkaşhane* in the Ottoman context, was established in Edirne in Mehmed II's court.[163] The narrative painting produced during Mehmed II's reign was difficult to distinguish

[161] Bağcı et al, *Ottoman Painting*, 24-25; Kafescioğlu, *The Visual Arts*, 486; Necipoğlu, "Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation", 30-37
[162] Bağcı et al, *Ottoman Painting*, 26, 43; Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 254-255
[163] Bağcı et al, *Ottoman Painting*, 26, Kafescioğlu, *The Visual Arts*, 476-477

from the painting produced in Iranian centers, especially Shiraz, and what betrayed Ottoman provenance in these productions was mostly the localizing elements like the costumes of the figures and the architecture rather than stylistic characteristics or approach to illustration.[164]

Nevertheless, two paintings added to a Timurid Nizami *Khamsa* in the Topkapı Palace Library (H. 781) exemplifies a reflection on manuscript illustration of an eclecticism similar to the one favored in Mehmed II's patronage. These pages, one representing *Bahram Gur Fights Lions for the Crown* (f. 160a, fig. 39), and the other *Iskandar Searches for the Water of Life in the Land of Darkness* (f. 279b, fig. 40), are well-known and have been published frequently.

[164] Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 254-255



Figure 39. Bahram Gur Fights Lions for the Crown. H. 781, 160a, TPML.

Source: Necipoğlu, “Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation”, 45, 2012



Figure 40. Iskandar Searches for the Water of Life in the Land of Darkness. H. 781, 279b, TPML.

Source: Necipoğlu, "Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation", 46, 2012

Ayşin Yoltar places these paintings in the reign of Bayezid II (1447-1512), along with other refurbished manuscripts of the *Khamsa* that contain paintings added in this period, as it was mostly through his patronage that we start to see European painting techniques more seamlessly fused with Persianate forms in manuscript

illustration.[165] Zeren Tanındı, in an earlier article she wrote, bases this attribution on architectural and vestimentary details in the paintings and the binding bearing the name of Bayezid II.[166] Gülru Necipoğlu, on the other hand, although she finds Tanındı's attribution plausible, suggests that the stylistic features of the paintings bring them closer to the patronage of Mehmed II.[167] The exact date of the completion of the paintings notwithstanding, their highly visible Europeanizing features seem to bear the legacy of the fusion Mehmed II was intent on creating under his patronage.

The partial use of linear perspective, spatial recession, shading, and intense expressive gestures of the figures in these paintings are elements connecting them to contemporary European painting. According to Tanındı, *Tres Riches Heures* of Duc de Berry, works of Pisanello, and fifteenth century European tapestry seem to be among the sources of these elements.[168] Yoltar surmises that they must have been made by European painters that have remained in the Ottoman court,[169] whereas Necipoğlu makes room for the possibility that it was made with a cooperation of local painters with Europeans.[170]

In any case, the Europeanizing features stand side by side with Persianate elements in these paintings, such as the color scheme, the rock formations in both paintings, and rendering of foliage and the river in the Iskandar painting. The representation of space seems to owe to both European and Persianate conceptions. And of course, the paintings are given an Ottoman face by the representation of

[165] Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 489-492, 510-514
[166] Tanındı, "Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Workshops", 153-154
[167] Necipoğlu, "Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation", 44
[168] Tanındı, "Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Workshops", 153-154
[169] Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 510-514
[170] Necipoğlu, "Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation", 44-45

janissary soldiers, figures wearing Ottoman turbans, and the castle evoking the Topkapı Palace in the background of the Bahram Gur painting.[171]

Considering the fact that these paintings, among the most eclectic in the Ottoman productions, were made on the empty spaces of a Timurid manuscript, Necipoğlu sees these two paintings in the framework of the dialogue that Mehmed II's patronage was entering with both Italianate and Timurid forms in the same breath.[172] Yoltar, situating them under Bayezid II's patronage, interprets these paintings as reflecting the most important concerns of that sultan.

*Bahram Gur Fights the Lions for the Crown* represents a moment in the *masnavi* where after the death of his father, the young Bahram Gur returns to Iran to claim the throne only to find out that the grandees of the kingdom elected someone else as the king because Bahram was raised in Yemen and they thought he would be foreign to Iran. Nevertheless, they accept Bahram Gur's challenge that whomever will be successful in taking the crown from two wild lions should be the king. Being able to subjugate them at the spot, Bahram takes the crown and becomes the king.[173] Yoltar, relying on a study by Julian Raby, sees resonances in this story with Bayezid II's own highly contested succession to the throne, due to the problems created by his younger brother, Cem Sultan.[174]

In a similar vein, again based on Raby's work, she suggests parallels in the episode of *Iskandar Searches for the Water of Life in the Land of Darkness*, a journey he sets out with the Prophet Khizr, to the search of spiritual wisdom that

[171] Bağcı et al. Ottoman Painting, 55; Necipoğlu, "Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation", 44-45; Tanındı, "Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Workshops", 152
[172] Necipoğlu, "Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation", 44
[173] Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World: Tales from the Khamseh of Nizami*, 70
[174] Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 522, based on Raby, Julian, and Tanındı, Zeren, *Turkish Bookbinding in the 15th Century*, London. 1993, p. 88

informed the sultan's view of life and his close relationship to the circles of Sufi dervishes.[175] The episode takes place towards the end of *Sharafnama*, where Iskandar is now certain that there is not a single part of the world which is not under his rule. In one of his courtly gatherings, some people advise him to see the Land of Darkness, to the northern edge of the world, where resides the Fountain of Life that grants immortality to those who drink from it. Ambitious to acquire otherworldly powers, Iskandar sets on the road with a small retinue including Khizr, but they get lost in the cold and dark land. Only Khizr finds the water of life and drinks from it. Iskandar, unable to find the source, decides that it was not his destiny to reach immortality and returns home.[176]

Although it is difficult to ascertain the relationship between the added paintings in a manuscript and the immediate life of the sultan, it was probably no coincidence that these two royal themes were chosen for these experimental works, as there is still another empty space in the manuscript left for illustration.[177] Even if it would be nothing more than speculation, another attempt of interpretation could propose to see Bahram Gur's episode as the beginning of a ruler's life journey, revolving around the efforts to take the first step to worldly power, while Iskandar's episode would point towards the final parts of his reign, in which he would have already overcome all worldly challenges and his concerns would point towards a more spiritual endeavor now, looking for immortality, not being able to find it, and learning one's limits maybe. Such an interpretation, although speculative, could be in line with the perception of rulership of both the father and the son, Mehmed II and Bayezid II, in different ways.

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[175] Ibid.
[176] Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 495
[177] Tanındı, "Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Workshops", 151; Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 492

## 4. 2 Painting in the reign of Bayezid II

Although Bayezid II did not approve of his father's westerly ways, a more coherent fusion of European and Persianate styles of painting into a more recognizable Ottoman style in manuscript illustration took place under his patronage.[178] The Cem Sultan affair was forcing the sultan to remain at his court, to be ready any moment for his brother's vengeful return to the capital, and he could take care of the cultural production more closely from the palace. Thus, the *nakkaşhane* took a more institutionalized form and the sultan ordered an inventory of all the books in the treasury, categorized according to the subject, having each of them stamped with his name.[179]

Of great importance for the development of Ottoman painting in this period was the sultan's close affinity with Şeyh Hamdullah (1436-1520) from the Suhrawardi order, a prominent calligrapher of the time. Şeyh Hamdullah did not belong to the corpus of scribes working as part of the *kapıkulu* organization, but had a special status in the court due to his mastery of his art and the sultan's deep respect for him. A great number of works transcribed by him were adorned and illuminated luxuriously in the court *nakkaşhane*, raising the status of illuminated book production to a higher level along with the illustrated books.[180] As a result of all these factors, production of illustrated books reached to an unprecedented degree in Ottoman realm during this period.[181]

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[178] Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 544-547

[179] Bağcı et al., Ottoman Painting, 43-44; Kafescioğlu, *The Visual Arts*, 476; Bağcı et al. *Ottoman Painting*, 43-44; Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520*, 262-264

[180] Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520*, 268-270

[181] Bağcı et al., Ottoman Painting, 43-44; Kafescioğlu, *The Visual Arts*, 488

Bayezid II's reign will be the primary focus of this chapter, as it was almost only during his reign within the temporal range of this thesis that illustration of literary texts of Persian origins were a primary focus in the Ottoman painting (with the exception of the *Shahnama* of Firdausi of which copies and translations were continued to be produced through Süleymân I's reign and constituted a special case). Copies of Nizami's *Khamsa* seem not to have been produced from scratch, but paintings were added to incomplete Nizami manuscripts produced in Iran. These refurbishment projects seem to have been among the functions of the Ottoman *nakkaşhane*.

Zeren Tanındı suggests that these refurbishment activities had important effects on the Ottoman painting tradition. She traces the routes of different patrons, artists, and illustrated books coming to the Ottoman court workshop through centers such as Shiraz, Tabriz, and Herat by way of diplomatic gifts, as war booties, as well as by princes seeking refuge in the Ottoman court or taken prisoner after war. Many of the books refurbished by Ottoman painters were incomplete manuscripts brought to the treasury through these channels (with the exception of diplomatic gifts as they were supposed to be complete deluxe works). At an experimental early phase of Ottoman painting tradition, these books opened new horizons to the painters and patrons in Constantinople, and the close scrutiny of them which refurbishment necessitated may have helped in the creation of a distinct Ottoman painting style, as Tanındı points out.[182]

[182] Tanındı, "Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Workshops".

4. 2. 1 A Nizami *Khamsa* refurbished in the Ottoman *nakkaşhane*

The principal manuscript that this chapter will be concerned with is also a refurbished book. It is a copy of Nizami's *Khamsa* transcribed in Muzaffarid domains and hosting twenty-five paintings attributable to the *nakkaşhane* of Bayezid II. This manuscript is currently in Paris Bibliothèque nationale, identified as Supplément persan 580. Its colophon dates the text pages to 12 August 1366, written by Muhammad Abd al-Latif [b.] Muhammad al-Aqaqiri al-Shirazi.[183] Its binding seems to have been added at a later date. The manuscript does not have any frontispiece, and the text starts at folio 1a, flanked from above and below by two illumination panels. A typical full text page is written in four columns and twenty-one lines in *naskh* script.

There are six illumination panels in the first three pages, two to each. Yoltar states that the first four of these panels were painted in the Ottoman domains. Her description of the placement of the panels to the pages does not conform to the digital photographs one sees in the copy published in the website of Bibliothèque nationale, but I follow her identifications in the following discussion as the discrepancy does not affect my analysis.[184] Brend, who also wrote on this

[183] Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 455-456.

[184] She states that the six illuminated panels are distributed to the first four pages, first two having two panels each and the latter two having one panel each (Ibid, p. 456-457). As her description of the third and fourth illuminated panels, which she attributes to Ottoman hands, confirm with equal accuracy to the fifth and sixth panels as well, which she regards as Muzaffarid originals, and considering the incompatibility between her account of the distribution of the panels and the visuals that I see, I am confused as to which of the panels I should consider Ottoman, because the Muzaffarid illuminations in the later parts of the manuscript do not look similar to any of these initial six panels. The digital photographs of the first two folios and the rest of the manuscript can be seen via this link: http://gallica.BnF.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8432215n/f13.item.r=supplement%20persan%20580
The reason why I am sure that the manuscript that Yoltar discusses in her dissertation is one and the same manuscript that is displayed on the website is that her description of individual illuminated panels, as well as the pagination and description of each of the twenty-five illustrations confirm to the images one finds in the website. Thus, I believe the incompatibility between her description and the published images in the initial illuminations must have been the result of a minor error.

manuscript, does not ascribe the illuminations to a provenance, although she notices the difference between the earlier and later illuminations.[185]




Figure 41. Illuminated Page. Supp. pers. 580, 1a, BnF

It is obvious that these early Ottoman illuminations do not derive from Timurid precedents either in color scheme or in the composition (e.g. fig. 41). Blue, black, gold and white are the colors of these illuminations, with orange frames that play a dominating role among the more conventional and paler aforementioned colors, and break the prominence of lapis lazuli and gold that we observed in

[185] Brend, "A 14th-century Khamseh of Nizami from Western Iran with Early Ottoman Illustrations", 134

Timurid illumination. The vocabulary is also highly different and much more abstract and stylized, with no floral scrolls with identifiable flowers. The Timurid geometric patterns are also not seen in these panels, whose compositions are solely based on very abstract floral scrolls, split leaves and palmettes, and lobed medallions.


Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 42. Illuminated Muzaffarid *'unvan* to *Khosrau va Shirin*. Supp. pers. 580, 29b, BnF

The later five illuminated *unvans*, which are thought to be originating from the manuscript's earlier, Muzaffarid phase (ff. 29b, 92b, 147b, 209b, and 291b), are

completely different in every respect than the initial six panels, and they show consistency among themselves. Except for their very narrow size, which cover the height of only three lines of text, these Muzaffarid panels are far closer to the Timurid examples than the Ottoman ones in color, vocabulary and composition, with dominating lapis lazuli, black and gold, punctuated by light blue, red and white tiny flowers (fig. 42).

The margins of the pages are plain, and the sub-section headings within textboxes are not illuminated, but instead they are written with colorful ink on the empty rectangles reserved for them. Likewise, the rulings around the textboxes and individual columns are not multiple and in different colors, but are drawn in plain black ink and tinted lightly with gold.

The illustrations to this manuscript are all small and narrow, typically occupying an area approximately six or seven lines high and equal to the textbox in width. The painter occasionally ventures out of the confines of the illustration frame, but mostly the paintings remain within the assigned areas. Small spaces reserved for paintings point at an earlier practice dating before the Timurids, in line with the Muzaffarid origins of the manuscript. Apparently the Ottoman patron enjoyed small illustrations as well. Yet of course, such small spaces do not leave much room for elaboration in the iconography, and it makes it difficult to trace particularly Timurid approaches in the illustrations.

In this manuscript too, as in the case of Tahmasp's *Khamsa* of Nizami, *Khosrau wa Shirin* and *Haft Paykar* are the most densely illustrated *masnavi*s, and in this case with a higher number; eight for each of them. *Iskandarnama*, in the Ottoman *Khamsa*, follows the aforementioned *masnavi*s closely with seven illustrations, four for *Sharafnama* and three for *Iqbalnama* parts, in striking contrast

to Tahmasp's *Khamsa* in which *Iskandarnama* was not illustrated at all. *Layla and Majnun* has the fewest number of illustrations with only two paintings, which is again parallel to Tahmasp's *Khamsa*, which had the same number of illustrations for this *masnavi*. The *Makhzan al-Asrar* section of the manuscript does not contain any illustrations.

The illustrations to *Khosrau va Shirin* and *Haft Paykar* revolve around the theme of love, which is a common feature with Timurid precedents. In *Haft Paykar*, Bahram Gur's visit to each pavilion is represented. In *Khosrau va Shirin*, instead of courtly festivities and enthronements, the relationship of pairs of character with each other are given prominence. Thus, *Khosrau Sees Shirin Bathing* (f. 42a), *Khosrau and Mayram Converse* (f. 57b), *Shirin Visits Farhad at Mount Bisutun* (f. 64a), and *Khosrau Visits Shirin's Castle* (f. 78b) are among the subjects illustrated. Khosrau's hunt before his visit to Shirin's castle is represented with a painting of Khosrau and Shirin hunting together, instead of Khosrau alone or with his entourage.




Figure 43. Shirin Contemplating About the Identity of Her Voyeur. Supp. pers. 580, 43a, BnF


Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 44. Khosrau and Maryam Conversing. Supp. pers. 580, 57b, BnF

Among these illustrations, the scene of *Khosrau and Maryam Conversing* (f. 57b, fig. 44) is unprecedented for its time as it presents a depiction of Maryam, Khosrau's Byzantine wife with whom he had to get married in return for the help of her father, the Byzantine emperor, in fighting Bahram Chubin, the usurper of the Iranian throne. Although this illustration is interesting as it may have specific resonances in the Ottoman context with an allusion to political intermarriages between Byzantines and Ottomans, it is also indicative of a larger approach of the manuscript observable in the illustration of all the *masnavi*s.

The subjects chosen for illustration in this manuscript point out to a tendency to highlight human interaction and exchange over the extraordinary events occupying an important place in the narrative. Although the priority given to speech over action must owe a good deal to the narrow illustration space, which limits the possibility of fitting extensive action into the frame, the reliance on interaction and contemplation may explain the presence of some unusual subjects among the illustrations, such as *Shirin Contemplating About the Identity of Her Voyeur* (f. 43a, fig. 43),[186] right after she runs away from the lake where Khosrau was watching her bathing, whereas it does not contain any illustration of popular subjects such as *Shirin Sees Khosrau's Portrait on Trees*, or *Khosrau Kills a Lion (with his fists) Outside Shirin's Tent*, or *Farhad Carries Shirin and Her Horse on His Shoulders Down the Mountain*, all of which depict very unusual events rarely occurring in real life.

Similarly, the *Iskandarnama* section does not depict any of the fantastical/mythical stories taking place in this *masnavi*. Even the *Iqbalnama* part, which is highly populated with these stories bringing the poem close to the *ajaib* genre, is illustrated with three scenes of dialogue, which are *Iskandar and the Wise Shepherd* (298b), *Iskandar and the Indian Sage* (308b), and *Iskandar Meets Ten Idolaters* (320b), all of which depicting Iskandar conversing with one or two figures seated before him. These subjects are not particularly unusual in themselves, but lack of illustrations on Iskandar's mythical journeys is unusual. *Bahram Gur Kills the Dragon* (f. 157b) is the only exception to this rule, but considering that the episode is

[186] Brend identifies this painting as *Khosrau Looks at the Empty Pool* (Brend, "A 14th-century Khamseh of Nizami from Western Iran with early Ottoman illustrations", 134) but in this discussion I followed Yoltar's identification (Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 460) on the grounds that the horse that the figure is mounting is Shabdiz, which was ridden by Shirin in this part of the narrative. The previous illustration, *Khosrau Sees Shirin Bathing*, represents Shabdiz close to Shirin by the pond and Khosrau on Gulgun, a pinkish horse, in line with the narrative.

immensely popular for illustrations in manuscripts, this choice may be counted as negligible. All the other seven illustrations to *Haft Paykar* show him in different colored pavilions. Two illustrations to *Layla and Majnun* likewise represent scenes of conversation and speech.

Yet, interesting as it is, the preference for dialogue and encounter in this manuscript may not be closely related to the preferences of the Ottoman patron and/or painters, as the selection of subjects was made by the Muzaffarid individual(s) planning the pagination of the manuscript, who may have been the scribe himself. Of course the selection of this manuscript for illustration in itself is indicative of an agency on the Ottoman part, it may be safer to focus on the illustrations that are at odds with the subjects that they are intended to represent, in order to have a better understanding of the Ottoman agency in the iconography of the manuscript.




Figure 45. Shirin Mourns Farhad's Death. Supp. pers. 580, 64b, BnF

The example I will discuss from *Khosrau va Shirin* is *Shirin Mourns Farhad's Death* (f. 64b, fig. 45), which represents a moment narrated several pages later in the manuscript.[187] The painting is situated on reverse of the same folio with the illustration of *Shirin Visits Farhad on Mount Bisutun* (f. 64a), and Farhad's death takes place a long time after this event, only after Khosrau learns of her visit to Farhad, becomes jealous, and sends someone to give Farhad the false news of

[187] Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 463.

Shirin's death to prevent him from working on the channel that he has been carving on the Mount Bisutun.[188] Muhammad Abd al-Latif, the scribe, might have had intended this space to represent another moment of the story, a likely candidate being *Farhad Carries Shirin and Her Horse*, which, in the text, takes place in the same day of Shirin's visit to Farhad.[189]

Yet the representation of that scene, which involves a very unusual event (someone carrying a horse *and* a person mounting it on his shoulders down a mountain), would contradict the general tendency of the manuscript to portray the stories in a way that brought the characters closer to real life persons. Instead, the choice of *Shirin Mourns Farhad's Death* resonates well with the general impression that the illustrations to this *masnavi* gives about the story, which emphasizes relationships between pairs and focuses on romantic love in a less heroic manner.

The illustration takes Farhad's grave into the center, with the kneeling Shirin and a pomegranate tree in blossoms flanking it. Two cypresses grow out of the grave. Yoltar calls attention to the tree, reminding that according to the text the wooden hold of Farhad's chisel grows after his death into a pomegranate tree. She also suggests the cypresses may be considered as a symbol of Farhad's love for Shirin.[190] On the background are green hills and a flat golden sky. The posture and facial expression of Shirin, as well as the pomegranate tree and the plainness of the composition, give the painting a sad, gloomy air and make it a fairly strong statement on suffering for love.

The *Iskandarnama* section is particularly important for the purposes of this thesis, not the least because this is the most Ottomanized part in the manuscript.

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[188] Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World: Tales from the Khamseh of Nizami*, 37-38
[189] Brend, "A 14th-century Khamseh of Nizami from Western Iran with Early Ottoman Illustrations, 134
[190] Ibid.

Iskandar is often shown as an Ottoman ruler in these paintings, paralleling the normative force of his example in the life of several Ottoman rulers including Mehmed II. Although in the reign of Bayezid II both the aspiration to be the new Alexander and the westward direction of the cultural policies that we have seen in Mehmed II's reign had been largely abandoned, the theme of world-conquering associated with Iskandar would continue to be important, and the claim to this title would be revived during the earlier part of Süleyman I's reign.[191]

Identification of Iskandar with the ruler of the time in manuscript illustrations have always been a common device, in Iran as well as in Ottoman domains, importing prestige to the ruler in question.[192] In Supp. Pers. 580 too, even though Iskandar wears a crown instead of an Ottoman turban in five paintings out of six in which he is identifiable, other elements in the illustrations clearly suggest an Ottoman context.

In the four paintings that I will discuss below, my interpretations will be largely based on details of costumes, both because the painter did not have enough space for making subtle statements through composition in most cases, and also because I believe in some of these cases defining identity through clothing and environment conveyed deliberate messages beyond the common convention of depicting events in the local context. Making Iskandar wear a crown instead of an Ottoman turban in most illustrations was indicative of a purpose.

[191] Bağcı, "Osmanlı Dünyasında Efsanevî Yönetici İmgesi olarak Büyük İskender ve Osmanlı İskendernâmesi", 122-123; Fleischer, " The Lawgiver as Messiah"

[192] An example from Timurid domains is the portrait of Sultan Husayn situated into the painting of *Iskandar Visits the Sage in a Cave* (f. 273a) in Or. 6810 in BL. Iskandar here is a copy of Sultan Husayn's portrait now in Harvard University Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift of John Goelet 1958.59.




Figure 46. Dara Demands Tribute from Iskandar. Supp. pers. 580, 230a, BnF

*Dara Demands Tribute from Iskandar* (f. 230a, fig. 46), the first illustration of the cycle, is the only one that depicts Iskandar with a bulbous Ottoman turban. After defeating the Zangis and conquering their land in Africa, Iskandar, the King of Rum, starts to believe that his power is great now and he should not be obliged to pay the tribute that his predecessor had been paying to Dara, the King of Iran from the Kayanid Dynasty. Thus, when Dara sends an envoy to demand the past-due

tribute, Iskandar firmly refuses to pay, claiming that they are equals now.[193] The exchange of envoys continues for some time with increased tension until a war breaks between the two kings and Dara dies during the battle, leaving all his kingdom to Iskandar as inheritance.

Iskandar's audience of the envoys represents the only moment, within the illustrative program of this manuscript, of the encounter between the Rumi Iskandar with the Iranian Dara, albeit by proxy. As Ottoman rulers were highly concerned with identifying themselves with Iskandar, the preference for the Ottoman turban in this illustration, putting him vis-à-vis Iranian envoys, may have been deliberate, as in the Iranian tradition of *Iskandarnama* genre Iskandar is always thought to be a native of Iran, not really a foreigner. His forged up blood relationship in the *Shahnama* with Dara, Darius III in history, is the core of the invented Iranianness of Alexander of Macedon.

Thus, his Ottoman turban in this painting could be interpreted as a strategic device to take him away from Iran to the side of the Ottoman house. Adding to his Ottomanness are the janissary soldier guarding Iskandar as well as the architectural structure behind him. A speculative suggestion further solidifying this argument could be made about the elongated headgear that the Iranian envoys wear: Maybe the painter was trying to represent Safavid *taj-e Haydari*, which, towards the end of Bayezid II's reign, had been starting to pose as a threatening symbol on the eastern border of the empire.

Another illustration in this section depicts *Iskandar Disguised as His Envoy Before Nushaba* (f. 253b, fig. 47). According to the narrative, Nushaba is the queen

[193] Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 473-74.

of Burda', near Ganja. When Iskandar comes to Armenia, she sends him precious gifts with an envoy. Instead of sending an envoy to her, Iskandar visits her by himself, but he does not reveal his real identity and introduces himself as Iskandar's envoy. Yet his aristocratic demeanor betrays him, and Nushaba tells him that she knows his real identity. Upon his insistent denial, she orders a silk scroll to be brought and shown to Iskandar, who recognizes his own portrait on the scroll and is surprised by Nushaba's cleverness.[194]


Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 47. Iskandar Disguised as His Envoy Before Nushaba. Supp. pers. 580, 253b, BnF

[194] Ibid. 475-76.

The painting does not conform to the narrative. It represents Nushaba as a man instead of a woman. He wears a turban and sits and rests on some cushions. Iskandar sits before him on the ground, appropriate for his role as an envoy, but he wears a crown. The crown probably serves to distinguish him as Iskandar,[195] possibly asking the viewers to notice his real identity but imagine that the crown is not there because he was supposed to be in disguise. Behind him a Janissary soldier brings a robe of honor instead of a painted scroll.[196] Robes of honor were highly prestigious gifts/rewards from Ottoman sultans to their servants and subjects who managed to distinguish themselves from others with their deeds, or to courtly envoys.

The painter clearly deviates from what the narrative necessitates to give the subject a completely Ottoman look. Yet what is surprising about this painting is that it Ottomanizes the context, not Iskandar himself. In a way, it could be interpreted as an expression of the Ottoman sultan's superiority to Iskandar, who is hosted by the sultan as a guest and presented with a robe of honor by him.

*Iskandar Converses with the Indian Sage* (f. 308b, fig. 48) further complicates the issue by depicting two sages instead of one and giving them both Ottoman turbans, while portraying Iskandar with a crown. According to the narrative Iskandar has always enjoyed spending time with wise men and discussing important issues with them. One day he questions his seven sages on the creation of the universe when a fire-worshipping sage from India asks questions about life after death and and promises to convert from his religion if the others can give persuasive answers.[197]

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[195] Ibid. 476.
[196] The discrepancies between the text and the image in the case of this illustration is discussed in detail in Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 475-476.
[197] Ibid. 478-79



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 48. Iskandar Converses with the Indian Sage. Supp. pers. 580, 308b, BnF

Yoltar states that the painter chose to depict two sages instead of painting a specifically Indian one.[198] From this expression it is understood that Yoltar interprets them as a depiction of generic wise men in the Ottoman context, which is plausible considering that the very large, bulbous turbans of the sages in the illustration are

[198] Ibid. 479

reminiscent of the *'ulema* turbans of the time. Iskandar wears a crown again, which this time looks closer to Iranian precedents.


Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 49. Iskandar Meets Ten Idolaters. Supp. pers. 580, 320b, BnF

The last illustration poses yet another perplexing picture with its representation of *Iskandar Meets Ten Idolaters* (f. 320b, fig. 49). According to the text, an angel informs Iskandar that he is chosen as a prophet by God. Upon this news, Iskandar leaves his throne to his mother and leaves his court to invite people all around the world to true religion. He goes first to Egypt and then continues

eastwards, where someday he runs into a strange tribe of idolaters who make divination through human skulls.[199]

The painting represents Iskandar seated on cushions, wearing his crown, conversing with two men who sit on the ground. The depiction of the men looks reminiscent of Christian monks or other Christian individuals especially with their haircut and headgears, but also with the brown and gray colors of their robes. This point is confirmed by Brend, who surmises that the intention behind this representation might have been to deride what the Ottomans interpreted as European idolatry.[200]

Additionally, Yoltar mentions in her discussion of the added painting in H. 781 in Topkapı Palace that black color may have been reserved for the costumes of non-Muslims or Christians in the Ottoman domains.[201] She also mentions an illustration in another *Khamsa* of Nizami, now in Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, I. 6957, f. 118a) again with paintings added during Bayezid II's reign, which illustrates the encounter of a young Muslim ascetic and an old one who started to drink wine. She calls attention to the hat of the old ascetic and suggests that the hat may be intended as a statement of the old ascetic's denouncing of his religion by drinking wine, vis-à-vis the young ascetic who wears a turban. Although, she does not describe the hat worn by the ascetic and the photograph attached at the end of her dissertation is a highly saturated monochrome one which does not allow for any visibility, the caps worn by the idolaters in the Paris Khamsa may be similar to that one.[202]

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[199] Ibid. 479
[200] Brend, "A 14th-century Khamseh of Nizami from Western Iran with early Ottoman illustrations", 139-140.
[201] Ibid. 520-521
[202] Ibid. 520

If so, it is highly significant that the painter chose to represent the idolaters, who were eastern in the narrative, as Christians from the west. Although Iskandar wears a crown again and there is not a single element in the painting indicating an Ottoman context, the portrayal of the idolaters as Christians, in itself, hints at a specifically Ottoman concern, as the empire was situated on the westernmost border of the Muslim world, and jihad with Christians was a crucial part of their claim to legitimate rule.[203] On the other hand, the painting depicts a scene of dialogue rather than conflict, underlying once again the similarity of Ottoman rulers to Iskandar, in that they too, with their dialogue with and invitation of European Christians to righteous ways of Islam, were performing a role akin to those of the prophets. It is also possible for the painting to be alluding to the Ottoman Sufi and other Muslim circles' practices of proselytization.

From these *Iskandarnama* illustrations, therefore, it can be deduced that the attributes of identity in these paintings did not have clear-cut solidified correspondences in the minds of the painter and the viewers, including the patron. The presence of the turbans, and kaftans with specific collars in line with the Ottoman fashion of the age, clearly indicates an Ottoman context, but it does not necessarily point at the ethno-religious identity of the individual wearing them in the painting. Iskandar's crown, throughout the *masnavi* except for the first illustration, helps us to identify him, but it complicates the interpretation of any given painting especially when it is juxtaposed with the Ottoman turban.

An Ottoman context could be suggested without the presence of any element associated with the Ottomans per se, as in the case of *Iskandar Meets Ten Idolaters* (f. 320b) but the local concerns could be diffused into a painting through a careful

[203] Kunt, "State and Sultan up to the Age of Süleyman".

manipulation of the subject, composition, and subtle details. Illustrations in a cycle did not necessarily demonstrate consistency in terms of identification of certain literary actors with real life parties, but a consistency was present in the messages communicated throughout the cycle via the combination of seemingly conflicting associations made in each painting.

### 4. 2. 2 Manuscripts of Şeyhi and Hatifi

Both Nizami *Khamsa*s that were discussed above, H. 781 in Topkapı Palace Museum Library and Supp. pers. 580 in Bibliothèque nationale, were transcribed in Iran and refurbished in an Ottoman workshop with added paintings. As far as the secondary literature and the Topkapı Palace catalogues[204] demonstrate, there is not any single extant illustrated Nizami *Khamsa* completely produced in an Ottoman court workshop within the temporal limits of this thesis, namely between 1450 and 1600.[205] There may have been copies produced in the centers that remained within the Ottoman political orbit but were geographically and culturally closer to Iran, but apparently they do not feature paintings in the early Ottoman style, as none of my sources mention such manuscripts.

Nevertheless, the presence of eighty-six Persian copies of Nizami's *Khamsa* (illustrated or not) in the Topkapı Palace[206] attests to an undeniable interest in this text on the part of Ottoman collectors. Moreover, texts of other authors who wrote to respond to Nizami and based their works on his *masnavi*s were transcribed and

[204] Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, *Farsça Yazmalar Kataloğu*; Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, *Türkçe Yazmalar Kataloğu*.
[205] It is worth noting that there is one Turkish translation of the last four *masnavi*s of the *Khamsa*, dated 1783, and illustrated with sixty-three Ottoman style paintings in TPML (H. 1115). Unfortunately, this manuscript remains outside of the concerns of this thesis. Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, *Türkçe Yazmalar Kataloğu*, cat. no. 2197.
[206] Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, *Farsça Yazmalar Kataloğu*, cat. no. 398-483.

illustrated with great intensity before the second half of the sixteenth century. Among these authors could be counted Ahmedi, a copy of whose text was mentioned above, the Ottoman poet Şeyhi, and significantly, the Timurid poet Hatifi.

Şeyhi (d. 1431?) was a contemporary of Ahmedi. He was a poet and physician who worked in the courts of several Anatolian principalities including Ottomans. His *Hüsrev ve Şirin*, largely based on but not a direct translation of Nizami's *Khosrau va Shirin*, was dedicated to Murad II and was written in Anatolian Turkish. A copy of this text now resides in Hacı Selim Ağa Library, in Üsküdar, Istanbul. The manuscript, identified as MS. 906, is dated 1498, and the scribe gives his name in the colophon as Halil bin Abdullah Edirnevi.[207] The text is written in two columns and fifteen lines to the page and in *naskh* script. The section headings within the text are not illuminated but they are written in red ink over plain ground in the rectangular spaces that they are assigned to. There is only one illumination, in the beginning, which is the *unvan* or title panel (f. 1b). This illumination is considerably closer to the Timurid and/or Shirazi precedents than the ones in the Paris Nizami.

The manuscript has three illustrations that cover a large area of the frame but still accompanying two or three lines of text. The subjects are *Şirin Sees Hüsrev's Portrait* (f. 40a), *Hüsrev Watches Şirin Bathing* (f. 61a), and *Şirin Visits Ferhad on Mount Bisutun* (f. 163b). Unfortunately, the latter two paintings are considerably damaged by smudging the figures, making it very difficult to comment on them and especially on the costumes. In the first illustration, while Şirin's crown brings her close to her Iranian counterparts, her robe clearly has an Ottoman style.

[207] Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 331.



Figure 50. Shirin Sees Portraits of Khosrau. MS 906, 40a, HSAL

The style of these paintings in general seems similar to other examples from Bayezid II's reign, in that it is close to Shirazi/Turcoman style, but fused with elements from European painting. The first illustration (fig. 50) seems to me to carry resonances of Iskandar Sultan's *Miscellany* (BL Add. MS. 27261) in a very simplified manner. If there is truth to this suggestion, it could be argued that Shirazi sources of the paintings of this manuscript carried with them the Timurid legacy that highly influenced the tradition of that city through the fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries. Nevertheless, it is difficult to observe a specifically Timurid impact in this manuscript, and any Timurid influence that may be observed in it would have been mediated by Shirazi examples. Although there is no representation

of any architectural structure, which would allow us to see the degree of the use of perspective, in any of the three paintings, the use of shading and the fact that Hüsrev's portrait was drawn as a bust portrait instead of a full body composition attest to a European legacy.[208]

A final manuscript that can be touched upon in this chapter is a *Khosrau va Shirin* of Hatifi discussed by Ayşin Yoltar.[209] The manuscript is now in New York Metropolitan Museum of Art and is identified by the number 69.27. Yoltar summarizes the importance of this manuscript in two factors: one is that the colophon states that the illumination, illustration, gilding and transcription of the book was made by a single individual who identifies himself with the pseudonym Suzi, turning the manuscript into a document of tremendous importance on the history of Ottoman arts of the book. Secondly, the paintings of the manuscript demonstrate a beautiful example of the way Italianate techniques were fused with principles of Persianate traditions in early Ottoman manuscript illustration.

From the perspective of this thesis, the New York Hatifi's importance stems from its author. Hatifi (d. 1521) was the nephew of the celebrated Timurid poet Jami, and they both belonged to the circle of Sultan Husayn Bayqara. As a poet, he was not seen as very powerful in the Timurid circles, but his work was received very well in the Ottoman court. His poetry was transcribed and illustrated in the Ottoman workshops during the poet's own lifetime, a surprising fact considering that even Jami's and Nevai's works were not illustrated in Bayezid II's *nakkaşhane*.[210] In the same page of her dissertation Yoltar suggests that the interest in his *Khosrau va Shirin* may have been the result of a larger interest in works on the lovers Khosrau

[208] Bağcı, "Surete Aşık Olmanın Resmi", 282-284
[209] Yoltar-Yıldırım, "A 1498-99 Khusraw va Shirin".
[210] Yoltar-Yıldırım, "A 1498-99 Khusraw va Shirin", 99; Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 357.

and Shirin in general, exemplified in the several illustrated copies of Şeyhi's poem made at the time as well as in the refurbished Nizami *Khamsa*s from Bayezid II's reign.

Obviously the admiration and respect of Ottoman court members for Timurid cultural products played a large role in the correspondences they had with Jami and Nevai as well as their demand for Hatifi's poetry.[211] Against this background, however, the paintings of the New York Hatifi signal a striking departure from Timurid stylistic conventions.[212] The highly prominent use of shading and perspective that were borrowed from Italian precedents, together with round and simple forms and some conventions like blush on cheeks, by now established as common practice in Ottoman painting, leave little stylistic connection with Timurid manuscript illustration of the time.

Iconographically too, there is not a particularly visible connection with Timurid examples outside of the general established iconography for *Khosrau va Shirin*. Yet, there is one important exception to this point: The organization of the frontispiece, not at all stylistically but iconographically, quite closely parallels the frontispiece of a *Kalila wa Dimna* produced for Baysunghur and dated 1429 (fig. 51).[213] The open air setting of entertainment, the statesmen and soldiers lined up in the upper left part of the composition, the ruler seated on a carpet on the upper part of the right-hand page, the young cupbearer sitting and serving a little bit below the ruler, with pitchers of beverage lined in front of him, the musicians below on the

[211] Yoltar-Yıldırım, "A 1498-99 Khusraw va Shirin", 99, 107-108; Yoltar, *The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production 1413-1520,* 355-357

[212] All the comments I will be making on the paintings of this manuscript are based on the images Yoltar published in her article, "A 1498-99 Khusraw va Shirin", in which all the paintings in the manuscript can be seen.

[213] The manuscript currently is in Istanbul Topkapı Palace Museum Library, R. 1022. The painting is published in Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 110-111.

right-hand page and finally the servants bringing food below on the left-hand page, are all carefully reiterated in the Ottoman frontispiece.



Figure 51. Double Frontispiece. Acc. no. 69.27, 1b-2a, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Source: Yoltar-Yıldırım, "A 1498-99 Khusraw va Shirin", 97, 2005

As in the famous Baysunghuri frontispiece, possibly the careful distribution of the characters on the two pages attests, in the Ottoman case too, to the highly choreographed and sophisticated nature of the royal social gatherings. The only significant departure from the Timurid model is that in the frontispiece to Hatifi's text the Ottoman ruler is not isolated as in the example of Baysunghur. Rather, he is tightly enveloped by two tent-like parasols from above, statesmen to his right and janissaries to his left. In the *Kalila wa Dimna* frontispiece, the isolation of the ruler, who is interpreted as a portrait of Baysunghur in modern scholarship, conveniently

serves to bring him out as the focal point and underlines his distant and unapproachable aura in the highly hierarchical organization of the painting.

Why such a strong device was not followed in the Ottoman case is difficult to understand, but maybe the painter wanted to surround the Ottoman sultan with the same aura of importance and distant charisma through the reversal of the Timurid device: The presence of soldiers guarding him and parasols casting shadows only over his head, as well as the important personages conversing with him but that clearly show their respect with the little distance that they acknowledge between themselves and him were perhaps seen as clearer indicators to his importance.

At any rate, I find it highly significant that a contemporary literary text from a Timurid poet closely engaged in the circle of Sultan Husayn was illustrated in the Ottoman court workshop soon after its writing, and the illustration were used as a way to respond from the Ottoman side to the Timurid court by the painter Suzi. The text was Timurid, but the Ottomans responded to its writing with illustrations even before the Timurids themselves, and more importantly, they responded to it in their own way, in a slowly emerging, experimental Ottoman style.

A famous Baysunghuri frontispiece was pictorially quoted in its frontispiece, paying homage to the tradition that the text was coming from, but the painter interpreted the frontispiece in his own stylistic approach, and tried to improve it by making changes on it such as the newly arriving *peyk* and the figures surrounding the sultan. The *Kalila va Dimna* manuscript of Baysunghur now resides in the Topkapı Palace, and although it is difficult to suggest that Suzi had access to the treasury, and his knowledge of this composition may have been mediated by other, perhaps Turkoman models, there may be room to speculate that the composition may have been associated with the Timurids at least orally. If so, it can be possible to argue

that referring to Baysunghur in the frontispiece was a deliberate decision made by Suzi himself, as the Hatifi manuscript, deducing from the colophon, seems not to have been produced out of a commission but probably as a gift to be presented to the sultan or to another court official.[214]

This fact makes it even more significant in its demonstration of the agency of the artist and of the diffusion of the idea that an Ottoman patron, at the turn of the fifteenth century, would want to have his cultural wealth in dialogue with Timurid productions, and yet he would want his art objects to add something more, something Ottoman to the conversation. Apparently, Suzi was aware of the demands of his potential patrons and acted in ways that could please them. Moreover, this likelihood does not hinder the possibility that as an artist he himself may have wanted to respond to his past Timurid counterparts from Herat.

### 4. 3 After Bayezid II

Unlike the exuberant production of luxury books that took place under the reign of Bayezid II, the relatively shorter reign of Sultan Selim I (1465/1466/1470-1520) saw a marked decrease in the royal patronage of the arts of the book. No illustrated *Khamsa* of Nizami or poetry of other authors based on his texts dating from Selim I's reign remains to our day, if at all produced. The new sultan's greatest contribution to Ottoman book illustration was the fact that he ordered talented individuals from the areas he conquered or sacked to be brought to the capital in Constantinople.

His victory over Safavid Shah Ismail I in Chaldiran in 1514 meant that many precious manuscripts from the Safavid court *kitabkhana* in Tabriz, along with talented painters and other artisans were transported to Constantinople. These artists

[214] Yoltar-Yıldırım, "A 1498-99 Khusraw va Shirin", 96-97, 107

and artworks included not only Safavid works and individuals, but also a whole legacy of Aqqoyunlu book illustration along with it, since Ismail I had taken Tabriz little more than a decade ago from the latter and the production of that *kitabkhana* had been continuing uninterrupted since then.

Moreover, The Herati painters and books that Ismail I had brought to Tabriz after his victory over Uzbeks in Khorasan only four years ago in 1510 were also carried to Constantinople by Selim I. Among the individuals that moved to the Ottoman capital was the Timurid prince Badi' az-Zaman Mirza, the son of Sultan Husayn. The secondary literature is not clear about his status in the Ottoman court, whether he was considered as a respected prisoner of war or hostage,[215] or as a revered prince saved from the Safavid hands and hosted as a guest in the Ottoman capital.[216] At any rate, scholars agree that the books and painters he brought with him must have contributed to the development of Ottoman painting.[217] An *ehl-i hiref* record from 1526 mentions many painters as brought from Iran by Selim I.[218]

The real effects of this new influx of talent and artworks started to be seen during the reign of Sultan Süleyman I (1494-1566). Necipoğlu contends that during the earlier part of Süleyman's reign, an "international" Timurid aesthetics dominated the cultural productions of the Ottoman court from tile-making to painting.[219] This period coincided with the grand vizierate of Pargalı Ibrahim Pasha (1493-1536), and he promoted a highly eclectic and experimental cultural policy.[220] Cornel Fleisher argues that the political climate of this period was characterized by apocalyptic

[215] Tanındı, "Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Workshops", 148.
[216] Bağcı et al. *Ottoman Painting*, 57
[217] Bağcı et al. *Ottoman Painting*, 57; Tanındı, "Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Workshops", 148-149
[218] Topkapı Palace Archive, D. 9613-1, published in Meriç, *Türk Nakış San'atı Tarihi Araştırmaları I, Vesikalar*.
[219] Necipoğlu, "From International Timurid to Ottoman"
[220] Necipoğlu, "A *Kanun* for the State, a Canon for the Arts"

expectations in both Christian Europe and in the Muslim world, in whose Hijri calendar, moreover, the end of the first millennium was approaching. In such a climate, both his contemporaries, probably as well as he himself, saw Süleyman as the last ruler of the earth before apocalypse, who was to combine temporal and spiritual power under his rule.[221] Thus, the experimental eclecticism in the patronage of the earlier part of Süleyman's reign in a sense paralleled Mehmed II's patronage of fusion, who also had claims to world-rulership.

Yet the apocalyptic expectations started to be proven empty towards the mid-sixteenth century, and the second half of Süleyman's reign was in some respects a deconstruction of the imperial image fostered during the first half. Ibrahim Pasha was replaced by Rüstem Pasha (c. 1500-1561) as the grand vizier, and Rüstem Pasha followed a much more somber policy in patronage, in line with the increasingly orthodox Sunni image of the sultan and the empire aimed to be constructed in this period.[222] Based on the *ehl-i hiref* registers dated between 1526-1596, Necipoğlu argues that the Iranian ("Acem") masters that dominated the artistic/architectural production of the court during the first half of Süleyman's reign were replaced by their local ("Rumi") apprentices of *devşirme* origins in the second half, which aimed at the canonization and classicization of a distinct Ottoman style in all arts including painting.[223]

The reasons for the preference, by the Ottoman patrons, of books inspired by Nizami over Nizami's own book for production seem to be manifold. Bağcı et al. emphasize that in contrast to their neighbors in Iran, Ottomans preferred to commission copies of contemporary texts instead of long-time classics of Persian

[221] Fleischer, " The Lawgiver as Messiah", 160-167
[222] Ibid. 167-174
[223] Necipoğlu, "A *Kanun* for the State, a Canon for the Arts".

literature.[224] After the second half of the sixteenth century, when the Ottoman manuscript painting and cultural production changed its direction to a more distinct approach underlying the new identity of the empire, the trend for contemporary Turkish texts instead of Persian classics took a more pronounced emphasis, especially as the Ottomans directed their artistic energy away from the illustration of poetry and literary texts to that of books of contemporary and near history of their dynasty.

[224] Bağcı et al., *Ottoman Painting*, 17, 26

# CHAPTER 5

# GREETINGS TO THE TIMURID WORLD IN A MUGHAL MANUSCRIPT: COURT, PATRONAGE, AND ART

The relationship of Mughals to Timurids was genealogic. Babur Shah (1483-1530), the founder of the Mughal dynasty, was the grandson of Abu Said Mirza, the rival of Sultan Husayn in the succession crisis after the death of Shahrukh, and the Timurid emperor before him in 1451-1469.[225] This lineage was of tremendous importance to the Mughals, the name of whose dynasty was a corruption of the word Mongol,[226] echoing Timur's own claims to being a part of the genealogical tree of the Chingizid dynasty, constituting the core of his rule's claim to legitimacy.[227]

Babur's exact place in this genealogical tree led Mughals to consider their relationship to the Timurids in terms of succession,[228] and this also meant, especially for the later generations of Mughal emperors, that Timurids were a thing of the past, a glorious episode from the history of their dynasty, figuratively reaching way back to Chingiz Khan. This specific relationship of the Mughal dynasty to their Timurid ancestors, I believe, constituted the core of the difference of their responses to Timurid legacy from those of Safavids and Ottomans, whose dynasties were chronologically closer to the Timurids and whose relationships with the latter were defined more in terms of "us and them", unlike Mughals who saw Timurids as a past form of "us".

[225] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 239-242; Uluç, "The Common Timurid Heritage of the Three Capitals of Islamic Arts", 39
[226] Rogers, Mughal Miniatures, 12.
[227] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 26-28; Rogers, Mughal Miniatures, 12.
[228] Uluç, "The Common Timurid Heritage of the Three Capitals of Islamic Arts", 40

Although there is no known patronage of painting under Babur's rule, as he spent most of his reign either travelling or in campaigns,[229] his vibrant account of the social and cultural environment in Sultan Husayn's Herat in his memoirs does set the path for Mughal admiration towards Timurid culture and aesthetics.[230] His son and successor Humayun Shah (1508-1556) did patronize painters and commissioned illustrated books, but what remains from the painting of this period is scanty and fragmentary.[231] What was more important than the actual works produced under his patronage was the fact that during his exile from India when he was welcomed to Tahmasp's capital in Tabriz, Humayun could convince the former to permit some of his painters to move to India with him. He was fortunate in his timing, because his stay in Tabriz coincided with the beginning of the waning of Tahmasp's interest in painting.[232] Thus, it is plausible to state that Humayun's *kitabkhana* in Kabul, with the painters that joined him from Iran, established the foundations of Mughal painting.[233]

Nevertheless, it is often accepted in the literature that Mughal painting actually starts during Akbar Shah's (1542-1605) reign.[234] Humayun died shortly after he regained the territories his father had conquered in India, and left Akbar, a child at

[229] Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Arts of India and Turkey*, 187; Rogers, Mughal Miniatures, 27.
[230] Babur, *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*; Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 108-109; Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Arts of India and Turkey*, 187; Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 27; Verma, *Interpreting Mughal Painting*, 121
[231] Norah Titley and J. M. Rogers discuss some of the fragmentary remains of paintings remained from Humayun's time in their respective books. Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Arts of India and Turkey*, 188; Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 34-37.
[232] Kossak, *Indian Court Painting, 16th-19th Century*, 9; Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 30-31; Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Arts of India and Turkey*, 188; Uluç, "The Common Timurid Heritage of the Three Capitals of Islamic Arts", 40; Verma, *Interpreting Mughal Painting*, 121-122
[233] Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 31; Uluç, "The Common Timurid Heritage of the Three Capitals of Islamic Arts", 40; Verma, *Interpreting Mughal Painting*, 121-133
[234] Kossak, *Indian Court Painting, 16th-19th Century*, 9; Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 41; Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 8; Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Arts of India and Turkey*, 188

the time, as his successor, under the heavy burden of state-building.[235] Akbar's long reign was marked with an enthusiasm for conquest and integration of different constituents of his empire into a coherent social fabric.[236] Parallel to his syncretistic political, social, and religious policies, his cultural and artistic patronage demonstrated a considerable amount of eclecticism, which, in the case of painting at least, gave birth to the Mughal style.[237]

The Mughal imperial *kitabkhana*, from Akbar's reign onwards, employed many non-Muslim painters along with Muslims, in contrast to the common practice in other early modern Muslim empires. The demography of Akbar's *kitabkhana* was parallel to the demography of his court, in which Hindu rajas could be state officials along with Persian and Central Asian courtiers without converting to Islam. This situation was a result of Akbar's policy of integrating his non-Muslim subjects into his rule, to some degree in expense of the old Central Asian elite, as a part of his efforts to state-building and the centralization of the imperial administration, and not completely unlike the *devşirme* system of Ottomans and *ghulam* system of Safavids.[238]

The encounter between Iranian painters from centers like Tabriz and Herat and Hindu and Jain painters from Rajasthan and Gujarat already resulted in a new kind of painting style in the early years of Akbar's reign, but Mughal painting took the form that is instantly recognizable as Mughal after Akbar and his painters met the

[235] Hambly, *Cities of Moghul India*; Kossak, *Indian Court Painting, 16th-19th Century*, 9; Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 14; Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 12
[236] Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, 39-40, 66; Blake, "Fathpur Sikri and Isfahan"; Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 14; *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 12-14
[237] Goetz, "Indo-Islamic Figural Sculpture", 241; Hambly, *Cities of Moghul India;* Kossak, *Indian Court Painting, 16th-19th Century*, 10
[238] Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*; Blake, "Fathpur Sikri and Isfahan"; Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 14

prints and paintings that European, mostly Portuguese, missionaries brought to the imperial court.[239]

It is usually noted that Mughal painting tradition was born of a synthesis of Iranian, Indian and European sources.[240] Yet, the literature on Mughal painting, especially when it is considered vis-à-vis Rajput and Jain painting traditions, frequently exhibits, in varying degrees, a teleological understanding of history of art in a line of progression from Jain and Rajput painting as the primitive starting point to Mughal painting as a source of influence triggering change, with European painting as the implicit ultimate step of perfection, never reached in India. Persianate painting is usually placed somewhere between the Rajput and Mughal traditions in this line.[241]

An alternative and more fruitful approach could propose to trace the impact of Rajput and Jain traditions on Mughal painting too, instead of seeing influence as something that flows unidirectionally. Of course, the matter of stylistic dialogue is outside of the concerns of this thesis, but it would be helpful to note the sources of particular iconographic elements or compositional conventions to understand what may have been implied in a particular illustration. This approach would be particularly helpful in illustrations making statements about identity and about relations of the rulers to their subjects.

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[239] Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 14,16; Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 100-106

[240] Kossak, *Indian Court Painting, 16th-19th Century*, 9; Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures, 39;* Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor;* Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Arts of India and Turkey*, 186; Verma, *Interpreting Mughal Painting*

[241] As an extreme example, this perspective is exactly and astonishingly emphasized throughout Steven Kossak's *Indian Court Painting*. Despite its theoretical weakness, though, Kossak's book has the virtue of presenting the diverse painting traditions in India in a single holistic account. Rogers's book *Mughal Miniatures* has a similar approach on Mughal painting vis-à-vis European painting, without touching the question of Rajput or Jain traditions. Some derogatory comments Rogers makes on his subject move on the border of insult. For reference, Molly Emma Aitken's book *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting* has extensive historiographic discussions on the issue.

Towards the end of Akbar's reign, single page paintings and albums increased in popularity in the royal patronage, and manuscript illustration was gradually given less attention. The decrease in favor of manuscript illustration under royal patronage, leaving its place to albums, continued during the reigns of Emperors Jahangir (1569-1627) and Shah Jahan (1592-1666).[242] Although a few illustrated manuscripts were produced for these emperors too, apparently no *Khamsa* of Nizami was.[243]

Therefore, the illustrated *Khamsa* produced for Akbar towards the end of the sixteenth century is the only royal Mughal *Khamsa* that was produced within the temporal scope of this thesis. Unfortunately, I was unable to find any non-royal copies in locations that would allow me to see the manuscripts. Thus, Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami, now in the British Library, identified as Or. 12208, is the only manuscript that this chapter will be concerned with, and unfortunately I will not have the opportunity to compare its program with other Mughal *Khamsa*s.

## 5. 1 Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami

Four colophons of Or. 12208 date the manuscript between the years 1593 and 1595. It is an extremely lavish manuscript, with an exquisite binding, sumptuous marginal decorations, six illuminated *unvan*s, eight richly designed *shamsa*s, and forty-one illustrations, one of which was added during the reign of Jahangir. Its binding is lacquered painted on cardboard and varnished. Brend notes that the binding was "reversed so that the pictorial outsides have changed places with the chinoiserie

[242] Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 106-109; Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Arts of India and Turkey*, 206
[243] Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 110-173; Kossak, *Indian Court Painting, 16th-19th Century*, 12-14, 49-53

doublures".[244] The pictorial covers represent a hunting party of Akbar and a prince painted in the Mughal style, in a forest drawn in outlines in an Iranian idiom, similar to the one adopted in the marginal decorations in Tahmasp's Nizami, Or. 2265 in British Library. The "chinoiserie" of the doublures are in the same Iranian style, showing fantastical and real animals in combat in a forest, but figures are not colored unlike in the "outer" covers.

The manuscript starts with a *shamsa* on f. 1a. In total the book contains eight *shamsa*s serving to connect the *masnavi*s to one another (ff. 1a, 31b, 32a, 110a, 168b, 169a, 231a, 285a). Although Timurid illumination seems to have been part of the legacy that these *shamsa*s rely on, there is no particularly visible attempt to emulate Timurid *shamsa*s in the ones in Or. 12208. Both in their warmer colors and in design, these eight *shamsa*s are considerably different than their Timurid precedents (fig. 52).

[244] Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 66.

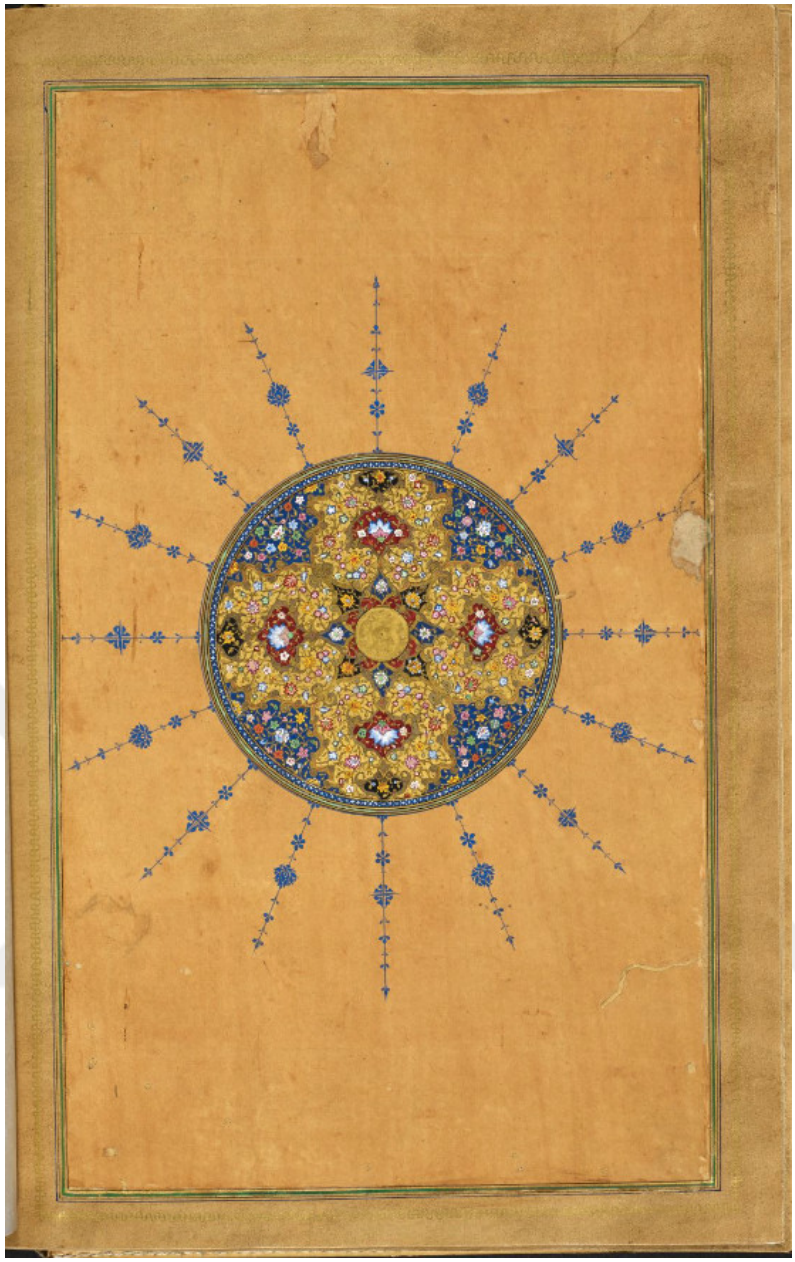

Figure 52. Shamsa. Or. 12208, 31b, BL

*Unvan* illuminations move even farther away from the Timurid examples with their novel vocabulary, design and color (ff. 1b, 32b, 110b, 169b, 231b, 285b). Unusually, *simurgh*s and small birds are used in one of the *unvan*s (f. 285b, fig. 53), and the flowers in general are more naturalistic and more colorful than in Safavid or Timurid examples. The color scheme is so rich that it is totally alien to the restricted colors of Timurid illumination.



Figure 53. Illuminated *'unvan* to *Haft Paykar*. Or. 12208, 169b, BL

Curiously, none of the *unvan*s contain the titles of the *masnavi*s that they start. Some of them do not have any space for writing at all (f. 1b, 110b, 231b), and the one in the beginning of *Khosrau va Shirin* has an empty gilded space (f. 32b, with the tiny signature of the illuminator, Khaja Jan, below in its own space). In the beginning of *Haft Paykar*, only "Allahuakbar" is written on the gilded space (fig. 53), with Khaja Jan's tiny signature below in another space (f. 169b). In the beginning of the *Iqbalnama* part of *Iskandarnama*, there is a prominently placed empty gilded space towards the top middle, but this space is neither big enough for

the title of the *masnavi*, nor small and marginal enough for a signature, and it is difficult to estimate what it was intended for (fig. 54).



Figure 54. Illuminated ‘unvan to *Iqbalnama*. Or. 12208, 285b, BL. I cropped the image for a better view of the illumination.

The sub-section headings within the text are not illuminated, but written in red over a plain rectangular space. The frames of the textboxes are gilded and consist of several parallel lines, the outermost in blue, the innermost in a more brownish gold, for embellishment. The marginal decorations do not cover the whole of the page surrounding the textboxes, but they are framed with several lines as well. Marginal decorations themselves are in content similar to the ones in Tahmasp’s Nizami (BL Or. 2265), but include animals from the Indian subcontinent as well. The text is written in four columns and twenty-one lines to the page in a fine *nastaliq* script by Abd al-Rahim al-Haravi, who was given the epithet *anbarin qalam* (ambergris-pen) by Akbar.[245]

[245] Brend, *The Emperor Akbar’s Khamsa of Nizami*, 65.

The manuscript is currently divided into two, with some pages missing. The larger part is in the British Library, and a smaller portion, including four of the illustrations, one being double-page, is now in Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.[246] The fact that these two portions are actually parts of the one and the same manuscript was discovered in 1960 by Stuart Carry Welch, who wrote an article on the history of the manuscript and published the illustrations in Baltimore in black and white.[247]

Fortunately, Barbara Brend has published all the illustrations on both sides of the Atlantic in the narrative order in her book on this manuscript, and the illustrations in Baltimore are published in it in full color and large scale, enabling one to see all the illustrations to the manuscript together, and even in higher resolution with the online images on British Library's website. Nevertheless, apparently two illustrated folios, which Brend suggests might be a double-page representation of *Iskandar's Defeat of the Zangis*, are still missing.[248]

The distribution of the illustrations to the *masnavi*s is not totally unlike the main manuscripts in my Safavid and Ottoman chapters. *Makhzan al-Asrar* is illustrated with four relatively small paintings, making it the least illustrated one. The illustrations to this *masnavi*, as usual, touch upon the subject of just rule. *Haft Paykar*, in striking contrast to Tahmasp's Nizami and the Muzaffarid/Ottoman manuscript, is illustrated with only four paintings. One factor in this decrease could be that Bahram Gur's stay in any of the seven pavilions is not represented in Or. 12208; but the ratio of four to forty-one is still small; Tahmasp's Nizami did not represent the pavilion scenes either and gave it the largest amount of illustrations.

[246] Throughout the discussions of Akbar's copy of *Khamsa* of Nizami, I will use "f. #" abbreviation for the folio numbers of the British Library's portion of the book, while "WAM, 613, f. #" will be used for the folios in Walters Art Museum and in according to the pagination of the respective institutions.
[247] Welch Jr., "The Emperor Akbar's "Khamsa" of Niẓāmī".
[248] Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 70.

*Layla va Majnun* follows this with seven illustrations. A relatively small number of paintings for this *masnavi* is common, but seven to forty-one is one of the highest ratios for *Layla va Majnun* among the manuscripts discussed so far. *Khosrau va Shirin* is the second most densely illustrated *masnavi* in the book with eleven paintings, in line with most Safavid and Ottoman examples. Finally, *Iskandarnam*a is given fourteen illustrations; when the missing illustrations (which seems to have belonged to this section) are also counted, almost one third of the whole program. The emphasis on Iskandar's story is again similar to common Ottoman and Safavid practices. One last painting was added by Jahangir's order to the last colophon page, representing the scribe of the manuscript, Abd al-Rahim, and the self-portrait of the painter of this illustration, Daulat, working together (f. 325b).

The subjects chosen for illustrations are in many cases very unusual. In *Khosrau va Shirin*, seven of the eleven illustrations may be considered to depict unusual subjects, and they seem to follow a curious pattern: Most of these subjects come in the narrative either just before or just after usually very frequently illustrated subjects, which were not illustrated in this manuscript.

For example, *Elders Pleading to Hurmuz on Behalf of Khosrau*, a very common subject, is not illustrated, but *Khosrau Carouses* (f. 40b), during which the incidents happened that caused Khosrau to be punished in the first place, was illustrated. Similarly, *Shirin Sees Portraits of Khosrau* is not illustrated, but *Shapur before Shirin* (f. 45b), just after the events with portraits, is very unusually there. *Khosrau Sees Shirin Bathin*g is not represented, but *Shapur Brings Khosrau News of Shirin* (f. 52a), which led Khosrau to go to Armenia and see Shirin bathing is illustrated. None of the events about Farhad are illustrated, save for *Farhad before Khosrau* (WAM, 613, f.5a), which is not common at all, but takes place just before

*Shirin Visits Farhad on Mount Bisutun*, an extremely popular scene which was not illustrated. Lastly, *Shiruya Murders Khosrau* is not represented, but the events just before and after that, *Khosrau Consults Bozorg Umid about Shiruya* (f. 99b) and *Shirin Kills Herself* (f. 102a) are illustrated. This pattern is not valid for the illustration of the other *masnavi*s in the manuscript.

With the exception of *Shirin Kills Herself* (f. 102a), another common point between the six or seven unusual subjects is that they are all courtly scenes representing an enthroned ruler or an authority figure receiving his subjects. In almost all cases, this figure is Khosrau; only in f. 45b, *Shapur Before Shirin*, it is Shirin.

Before interpreting the possible meanings of these, let me turn to the account of unusual subjects, after which I will try to present a thematic analysis of the whole illustrative program. As I stated above, there is nothing unusual in the illustrations to *Makhzan al-Asrar*. *Layla va Majnun* illustrations do not depict particularly extraordinary scenes either. The exception to this is the illustration of *Nizami Gives His Son to the Son of the Shirvanshah* (f. 117a), a subject chosen from outside of the narrative and from the introductory section of the *masnavi*. Another dramatic shift from earlier precedents is that it has no illustration for *Layla and Majnun at School*, unusual for a manuscript that reserves seven illustrations to this *masnavi*. Most of the *Layla va Majnun* illustrations depict Majnun conversing with different visitors.

Two of the four illustrations to *Haft Paykar* seem to be unprecedented (*The King Carried off by a Bird in the Black Story*, f. 195a, and *The Princess Paints a Self-Portrait in the Red Story*, f. 206a). One of them is relatively rare (*Bahram Gur Takes the Crown from Lions*, 184b), and the last one is very popular (*The Owner of the House Sees Girls Swimming in His Pool*, f. 220a).

In *Iskandarnama*, half of the illustrations, including the double-page ones, appear to be unprecedented, and four of them (*Iskandar Assumes the Crown of Iran*, WAM, 613, f. 34a; *Iskandar and Nushaba Entertained*,[249] f. 244b; *Iskandar Receives the Indian Envoy*, f. 254a; *Mariya and Would-be Alchemists*, f. 294a) are relatively less common, making eleven unusual subjects out of fourteen. Half of the program being unprecedented means that many of the illustrated subjects are not particularly related to the matters of rulership. In fact, some of these unprecedented subjects are not even about Iskandar himself (*Mani Paints a Dead Dog*, f. 262b; *The Talisman That Causes Qipchaq Women to Veil Themselves*, f. 266b; *The Champion of Russians Wounds an Elephant*, f.273a; *Aflatun Charms the Animals*, f. 298a).

### 5.1.1 The theme of rulership

In all, there seems to be roughly two main concerns of the illustrations to Or. 12208. The first one is just/legitimate rule, or rulership in general. Most of the *Makhzan al-Asrar* illustrations seem to touch upon this theme. *Khosrau va Shirin* seems to be completely devoted to the issues of rulership. It has six royal audience, one royal entertainment, one battle (in which Khosrau suddenly turns into a portrait of Akbar),[250] and one hunting scenes. The only romantic scene, *Khosrau and Shirin Meet in the Hunting Field* (f. 63b), which shows the lovers' first meeting, takes place in the hunting field. The only illustration that does not fit into this pattern is *Shirin Kills Herself* (f. 102a).

[249] Instead of this, commonly *Nushaba Shows Iskandar His Portrait* is illustrated from the Nushaba episode. Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 43.

[250] *Khosrau Defeats Bahram Chubin* (f. 72a). This is the only illustration in which Khosrau wears a moustache, which is drawn similar to Akbar's. He rides an an elephant; Stronge suggests that riding elephants was a sport in which Akbar gave crucial importance. Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 75, 79

Although it is a love story, the choice to highlight the royal aspects of this *masnavi* is not unusual as we have seen in Tahmasp's Nizami and to some degree in the Ottoman illustrations to Supp. Pers. 580. As I suggested in the previous chapters, *Khosrau va Shirin* as a narrative is not unfitting for the depiction of issues of rulership, as both of the lovers are rulers, and Khosrau's lavish lifestyle lends itself very easily to the depiction of traditional royal themes in Persian literature and figurative art such as hunting, polo playing, especially feasting, and enthronement.

The pattern peculiar to the illustrations of this *masnavi*, aforementioned above, that unusual subjects in it take place either just before or just after the usually depicted moments in the story, can be explained with the concern for depicting rulership. These are the audience scenes that cover most of the program for *Khosrau va Shirin*. Their selection from moments close to the popular scenes give them an air of narrative importance. Thus, the popular romantic episodes –such as events related to Farhad, *Khosrau Sees Shirin Bathing*, or the incident with portraits- give way to the closest stately moments, and the romantic nature of the *masnavi* is deemphasized; but instead of totally dismissing it, whomever planned the illustrative program made use of the romantic tension in order to make the theme that was given real importance seem relevant in terms of narrative as well. That this pattern is not followed in other *masnavi*s is understandable, as an attempt to change the balance between romantic and kingly themes in favor of the latter could only be needed in *Khosrau va Shirin* among the five *masnavi*s in the *Khamsa*.

The illustrations to the other *masnavi*s as a whole do not have the same emphasis on rulership, but there are several other illustrations with themes of kingship. *Bahram Gur Takes the Crown from Lions* (f. 184b) and *Iskandar Assumes the Crown of Iran* (WAM, 613, f. 34a) are two illustrations representing a ruler

crowning himself. *Iskandarnama* section has two audience scenes and one courtly entertainment (*Iskandar and Nushaba Entertained*, f. 244a; *Iskandar Receiving the Indian Envoy*, f. 254a, *Iskandar and the Seven Sages*, f. 305a). *Iskandar and the Dying Dara* is a very popular scene which is again about rulership, since it involves a battle, a victory and a defeat, and a dignified dialogue of paramount importance between two legendary kings (WAM, 613, f. 26b). From a more general point of view, the large number of illustrations allocated to *Iskandarnama* by itself can be seen as a demonstration of a concern for the theme of rulership.

The approach of Akbar's Nizami to both *Khosrau va Shirin* and *Iskandarnama* in the representation of rulership is unlike that of the Timurid sample of this thesis (Or. 6810, Add. MS. 25900, Add. MS. 27261, all in BL). Nevertheless, it is important to note that in particularly important scenes of rulers' activities, a more classical Timurid/Persian mode of representation is adopted. One case in point is *Khosrau Hunting* (f. 82a).

The representation of this scene is not particularly unusual, but in terms of narrative, it is important only as a prelude to Khosrau's return to Shirin after a long period of separation marked by the entrance of third individuals into their affair, namely Maryam, Khosrau's Byzantine wife, Farhad, who falls in love with Shirin and is led to death by Khosrau, and Shakar, with whom Khosrau dallies after the death of his wife to the detriment of Shirin. Shirin feels left aside after hearing Khosrau's affair with Shakar, and prays to God for his return to her. Khosrau suddenly feels an urge to go hunting, and moves near to the forest next to which is Shirin's castle. After the hunt, in a drunken state, he decides to visit Shirin, but is denied entrance, and Shirin talks to him only from the roof of her castle. The painting in Or. 12208 takes place during the hunt before his visit to her.

The importance of this scene derives less from its place in the narrative than from the value given to royal hunting by Akbar. In her discussion of the royal hunting scenes in the illustrations to the Victoria and Albert Museum's *Akbarnama*, Susan Stronge suggests that hunting was taken much more seriously than a mere royal pastime: It was a kind of exercise for battling and strategy developing. Moreover, she mentions an illustration depicting a *qamargah*, "a spectacular hunt in the style of the Timurids."[251] *Qamargah* was a very specific kind of hunt with certain rules and it was the "prerogative of the emperor, the princes and nobles being allowed to participate only at his invitation."[252] Stronge also states:

> The fact that it re-enacted a Timurid ceremonial made it even more significant. The regulations of Chingiz Khan, promulgated in 1206 and adopted to some extent by the Timurid rulers, emphasized the importance of hunting as a means of keeping the army alert and efficient. This was not by any means exclusive to the Timurids, but the specific regulation of the *Turah-i Chingizi* seem to have been applied to the organization of the Mughal *qamargah* in 1567.[253]

[251] Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 63.
[252] Ibid. 65.
[253] Ibid.



Figure 55. Khosrau Hunting. Or. 12208, 82a, BL

*Khosrau Hunting* (f. 82a) in Or. 12208 shows a much more standard type of hunting, with Khosrau staying still atop his horse with a falcon on his forefinger, and his attendants pursuing game or preparing to release the royal cheetah on the hunt. The stillness of Khosrau gives him a stately, dignified air, almost iconic. He wears a crown similar to the ones in Iranian paintings of rulers, and unlike his usual turban throughout the manuscript. His elegant posture makes his figure resemble the figures

of rulers entering a scene with their entourage, commonly seen in many Timurid and other Iranian paintings,[254] but the lack of a parasol may hint at his readiness to engage with the hunt in a moment.

All the figures wear Persian clothing instead of the more usual Mughal attires seen in the rest of the manuscript. The treatment of the landscape is strikingly Persian: the picture surface is divided into three tiers, and the rocky ground that covers the entire landscape is rendered in the late medieval Iranian manner. Occasional bush trees and little tufts of grass commonly seen in medieval and early modern Iranian painting is also there, as well as the many birds and animals scattered around, especially to horizon.

The most obviously Persianate element in this painting is the flat golden sky: Throughout the manuscript, most paintings have open vistas in the background showing distant landscapes, cities and seas in a typically Mughal style derived from European precedents. High horizons with flat colored or no visible skies are applied only to the paintings with a clear message about the Timurid past and/or identity. The importance of this illustration is further attested in its large size that leaves barely any space for marginal decoration, and in the fact that there is no single textbox on or around it. The painting, just by itself, covers the entire space within its frame.

[254] Some Timurid examples in which very similar representations of a ruler can be found are; *Baysunghur Hunting*, double page frontispiece to a *Shahnama* of Firdausi copied for Baysunghur in Herat (Tehran, Gulistan Palace Library, no. 61); *A Hunt Scene*, double page frontispiece from a *Hasht Bihisht* of Amir Khosrau Dihlavi, Herat (Istanbul, TPML, H. 676, ff. 1b-2a); *Timur's Army Attacks the Survivors of the Town of Nerges in Georgia*, from a *Zafarnama* of Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi, Herat (?) (Baltimore, John Hopkins University, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, John Work Garett Collection, ff. 282b-283a). Common iconography of *Sultan Sanjar and the Old Woman* has a very similar depiction of Sultan Sanjar. A double page illustration of this subject in a Shaybanid copy of *Makhzan al-Asrar*, which spent some time in the Mughal imperial library, represents the sultan with this posture and in a way similar to the depictions of Timur, with his squinted eyes and pointed beard (Paris, BnF, Supplément persan 985, ff. 40b-41a).

The small inscription of attribution beneath the painting reads: "The work of Khaja Abd as-Samad." Abd as-Samad Shirazi joined the Mughal *kitabkhana* during Humayun's reign,[255] and continued to work for Akbar. It is assumed that he was trained at Tabriz in the Safavid *kitabkhana*, but little is known about his life for certain.[256] He was an important actor in the transmission of the knowledge of Iranian painting in the Mughal *kitabkhana*, with his painting, teaching, and administrative activities.[257]

As he was already working during the late years of Humayun's time, when he painted this illustration probably he was in his advanced years, as Brend suggests.[258] The assignment of this subject to Abd as-Samad, a veteran of the *kitabkhana* and a long time administrator in it who also taught many of its artists, both demonstrates the importance given to this subject, and, as he kept his "conservative" style for almost all his career, the classical Timurid/Persianate air that this painting was intended to convey.

Another very significant illustration which demonstrates a good contrast of the conscious manipulation of Mughal, Rajput, and Timurid/Persian conventions in a single illustration to convey a specific message is *The Priestess of Kandahar Beseeches Iskandar to Spare an Idol* (f. 317b-318a), in *Iskandarnama*. According to the narrative, Iskandar goes to Kandahar during a visit to India. He comes across a Buddhist temple there, in which women worship a huge golden idol of Buddha with two precious jewels set in his eyes. When he orders his men to crush the idol to its precious components, the priestess of the temple beseeches him to spare that idol,

[255] Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 12.
[256] Soucek, "Persian Artists in Mughal India: Influences and Transformations", 169-170
[257] Soucek, "Persian Artists in Mughal India: Influences and Transformations", 170-175; Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 12.
[258] Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 24.

and tells him that in a time when this temple was desolate and about to collapse, two birds brought those two jewels from the sky. For the prevention of a fight over the jewels, the people made a golden idol and placed the jewels in its eyes. The priestess states that the jewels were sent from heavens as a miracle. Upon listening to this story, Iskandar agrees to spare the idol.[259]

[259] The summary paraphrased from Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 62

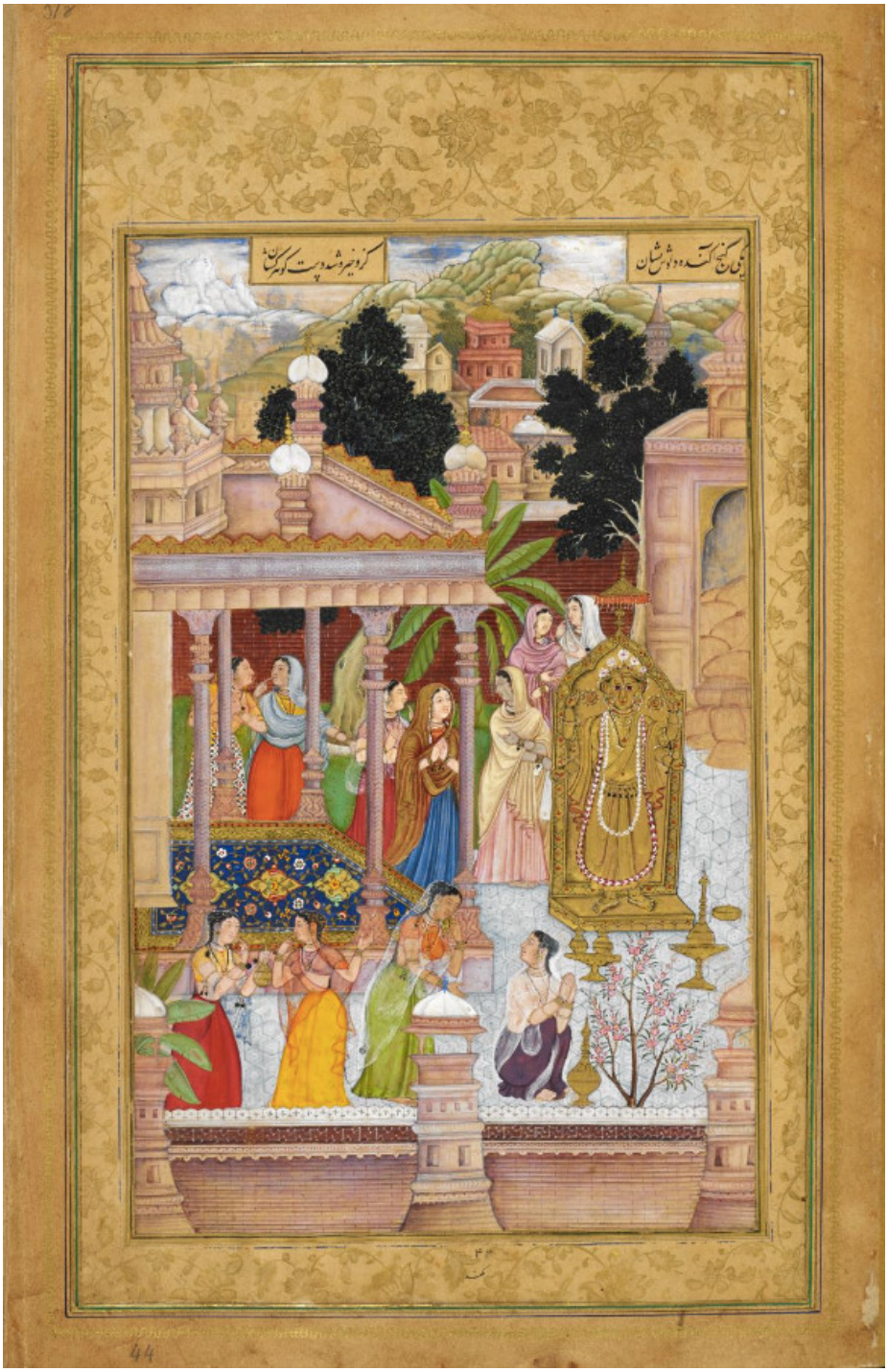

Figure 56. The Priestess of Kandahar Beseeches Iskandar to Spare an Idol, left section.

Or. 12208, 318a, BL



Figure 57. The Priestess of Kandahar Beseeches Iskandar to Spare an Idol, right section. Or. 12208, 317b, BL

The significance of such a story from the perspective of a Mughal emperor is obvious. It must have been especially relevant for Akbar, who was known for his tolerant attitude towards his non-Muslim subjects and for his interest in and respect for Indian belief systems as I mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. Brend

stresses the significance of the presence of a court recorder, in the right-hand page of the double-page composition, towards bottom right with a notebook in his hand. She argues that this figure is normally not found in the illustrations to texts of classic literature, but given a place in the illustrations of important events in Mughal history. In addition, she reminds that the subject is of topical significance as well, "as the Mughals had taken Kandahar from the Safavids of Iran without bloodshed in the April of 1595", and takes a note of the Hindu rather than Buddhist appearance of the idol and the worshippers in the painting.[260]

The two sides of the composition are stylistically consistent and harmonious with each other, but the different modes of representation implied in them are still discernible. The right-hand side, on folio 317b, represents Iskandar on his throne on a raised dais beneath a tent-like parasol. He is surrounded by his attendants, and behind him are several trees and the wall of his garden. Below the page, the opposite wall and the entrance to the garden is represented with the doorkeeper, two horses and their grooms and two other men outside. Iskandar is in conversation with the priestess approaching him.

The two sides of the illustration do not depict a continuous single space as is common in most Persianate double space compositions, but a continuity is maintained in subject. So, the left-hand side, on folio 318a, represents the porch of the temple with the idol in the courtyard, surrounded by female worshippers. Again, the figures are flanked by walls above and below the picture surface. The back wall of the courtyard is lower than that in the garden of Iskandar, and behind the wall can be seen a landscape with a city and distant mountains, and cloudy blue skies turning yellow behind them.

[260] Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 62

The right-hand side of the picture is dominated by a Timurid/post-Timurid Iranian mode of representation. The composition is that of a typical enthronement/audience: The ruler extending his hand in conversation to the person before him, his posture, his throne and the embroidered parasol, which are both decorated with illumination, the plates before him on the ground, the postures of the attendants; one carrying a falcon, some conversing with each other, most attentively listening to the main actors, a few guarding the ruler behind him. Especially the doorkeeper with a stick in his hand talking to and possibly prohibiting entrance of a humble looking man is a staple of courtly scenes,[261] and two grooms with horses outside likewise take attention to the exclusive nature of courtly gatherings.

All the figures except the priestess in this page are dressed in the early modern Iranian mode, and none of them wear a Mughal style *jama*. Significantly I think, none of them have a *katar* dagger attached to their belt. A *katar* is a traditional Indian dagger with an H shaped hold that enables the blade to be placed above the knuckles. Apparently it was a weapon exclusive to India.[262] In most Mughal paintings, including a majority of the illustrations to this manuscript, many figures

[261] Some examples of the doorman in Timurid paintings from Sultan Husayn's period are in *A Party at the Court of Sultan Husayn Mirza*, frontispiece to a *Bustan* of Sadi, Herat, (Cairo, General Egyptian Book Organization, Adab Farsi 908, ff. 1b-2a, published in Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision,* 260-261); *The Beggar before the King*, from a *Mantiq at-Tayr* of Attar, Herat, (New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1963, 63.210.28, published in Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision,* 279); *Iskandar with Seven Sages*, Or. 6810, BL (f. 214a). Men such as these, but occasionally inside of an enclosure, are commonly found in Safavid painting as well. Grabar mentions about these "personages [who] appear frequently in court scenes and are probably to be identified as hajibs or majordomos supervising the proper conduct of the feast and controlling access to it." Grabar and Natif, "Two Safavid Paintings", 187-188. If the duty of these men include both the control of access and the supervision of conduct, then they are found in Timurid painting from Shahrukh's period as well, in feast scenes without enclosures, such as *A Prince Seated in a Garden*, from a lost manuscript from Herat (Washington D.C., Smithsonian Institution, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, S86.0142/0143, published in Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 125), as well as in the *Frontispiece* of Add. MS 25900, BL, ff. 3b-4a.

[262] German, *A Guide to Oriental Daggers and Swords*, 12. German writes about *katar* daggers that they were "The most typical of the Indian daggers and w[ere] used in many areas. Only used by the Hindus." Yet, judging by their prevalence in Mughal painting, it seems they were not used only by Hindus.

have a *katar* attached to their belts. Even Khosrau in the hunting painting discussed above has a *katar*, but in this painting, no figure has it; instead, one of them has a more conventional type of dagger, and the falconer has a sword, both of which can be commonly seen in Iranian courtly paintings.

The trees are also of the kind typically seen in Iranian late medieval and early modern compositions; there is one smaller tree in pink blossom, two cypresses, and three large trees, maybe Oriental planes. I find it highly significant that there is no landscape on the background of this painting. The wall is very high, and above it, a narrow strip of orange-yellow sky is seen. This may have been intended to emulate the plain gold skies of Timurid paintings, but to make it compatible with the left-hand side of the composition, it is given a slightly cloudy appearance and yellow and red colors are used instead of gold. One other striking feature of this painting is that the tops of the trees go outside of the picture frame, which is extremely common in Iranian painting but not at all in this manuscript.

The left-hand side of the composition, in contrast, has a much more Indian atmosphere, by which, I mean both Mughal and Rajput. The architecture, both of the temple and of the city behind is undeniably Indian, with elements both from Rajput and from the eclectic Mughal architecture. The idol with a stupa on its top has a Hindu character, and it is contained in its own frame. The presence of the two examples of a kind of tree, maybe banana, that is so commonly found in Rajput painting[263] is another characteristic giving the painting an Indian look.

[263] The trees that I mention have light green, very large, and small number of leaves spreading out like a fan. One of them is in the center of the page, its trunk obscured by a column of the temple, the other one is in the bottom left corner, again partly obscured by the architecture but both are clearly recognizable. The Rajput images published by both Kossak and Aitken often host these trees. An example for reference is the painting facing the first page of the introduction to Aitken's book, featuring "Krishna dresses as Radha", inscribed to Bhopa (Bhoya), dated 1781, painted in Udaipur, Mewar, now hosted in San Diego Museum of Art (Edwin Binney 3rd Collection) 1990:690. Aitken,

Many of the women are shown in profile and all are in traditional clothing, some of them with transparent shawls, although they are more heavily clad than was usual in Rajput paintings. Most of them approach the idol from behind the porch and our view of them is divided by the columns. The brick wall behind most of their heads serve as a reddish background, a color commonly used in Rajput painting as the background of the energy center of an illustration,[264] and the division of characters through devices like columns and trees is also a common convention as I will elaborate below. The existence of a receding landscape with cloudy blue skies in the background is a Mughal convention not present in Iranian painting.

The two painters working on these two pages are Lal and Mukund, two possibly Hindu painters. Brend suggests that the Hindu, instead of Buddhist, appearance of the left-hand painting must be because the painters drew on their own experience.[265] Maybe the impact of their experience extends more than to the vestimentary and architectural details of one half of the picture, and the whole compositional logic of the illustration owes more to Rajput conventions than visible at first sight. I propose to interpret this divided composition with a method Aitken adopts in her book in interpreting some Rajput manuscript illustrations. She stresses the importance of formal features of a painting in understanding its meaning, and draws attention to the compartmentalized compositions of some paintings illustrating texts like *Bhagavata Purana*, *Gita Govinda*, or *Rasamanjari*.[266]

Accordingly, religious Rajput court painting on the subject of love often has a divided picture surface, and different times, places, and events are represented in a

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*The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting*, xii, 230. Other examples can be found in Ibid, 19, 23,30, 36, 46, etc. and Kossak, *Indian Court Painting*, 30, 66-67, 113, 115, 128-129.

[264] Kossak, *Indian Court Painting*, 27

[265] Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 62

[266] Aitken, *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting* 17-21

single picture via compartmentalization. A character may be represented more than once in a single picture, enacting one action in one part of the composition and another in the other part.[267] Usually in divided compositions there are elements of continuity between different parts of a composition, giving the picture coherence. Thus, the characters and events in different segments are both separate from each other and bound together, creating a tension that continues beyond the picture surface with the separation of the viewer from the picture (a situation especially significant in these cases considering the devotional, religious nature of the subjects).[268]

Moreover, each part of the composition can be read as the memory/imagination in the mind of a character in the other part. For instance, Aitken mentions a painting representing the separation of the god Krishna and his lover Radha that can be seen as a picture of Radha longing for Krishna, rendering the Krishna part of the picture Radha's imagination, and vice versa. The river flowing below the characters in this painting connects the two parts together.[269]

None of the examples Aitken gives are double page illustrations, so the division of the surface within paintings is not imposed by physical necessity in Rajput painting. Double page compositions are common in Persianate painting, but conventionally the two pages are accepted as spatially, temporally, and ontologically continuous, and the continuity is pictorially assured through devices such as dividing elements like a horse, an architectural structure, or a river between the two parts of a composition.

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[267] Foreign to Iranian painting, this convention seems to have been occasionally adopted in the Mughal *kitabkhana*. In some of the *Hamzanama* and *Akbarnama* paintings published by Stronge, some characters are represented more than once in different moments of the narrative within a single picture frame. For example, see Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 27, 69.
[268] Aitken, *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting*, 17-21
[269] Ibid. 20

Here in this example, though, there is ambiguity at best. Iskandar is certainly in a garden with grass on the ground. The ground of the temple, on the other hand, is tiled. The friezes of the front walls of the enclosures on either pages are different, apparently suggesting different places. The color of the sky in the two pages are different, as if the setting of the sun started in the left-hand page and the dusk took full blaze in the right-hand page (or vice versa if the sun is rising rather than setting, which may be more accurate considering the order of the pages).

But there are elements of continuity as well: Both enclosures are represented as flanked by walls below and to the mid-top of the picture surfaces, although their exact placement differs. At first sight there is nothing Indian in the content of the right-hand picture, but the entrance gate is certainly in a Mughal architectural idiom. There is a little blossoming tree, a common element of Persianate paintings, on the left-hand side picture, situated within the wall to the bottom right. The large trees looking like Oriental planes are also present on both sides.

The priestess on the right-hand page, although a narrative requirement anyway, connects the pages pictorially as well, with her face in profile, her posture, transparent veil, and traditional Rajasthani clothing. Although both profile and three-quarter views for representing faces were used in Iranian painting, Aitken states that three-quarter view, called "do chashmi" meaning two-eyed, was considered foreign in Rajput painting, and was a useful tool in the representation of Mughals and Persians, among others.[270] Almost half of the women on the left-hand page of our illustration are painted in profile, but there are several who are represented in three-quarter as well, again connecting both halves of the composition together. Finally, the illuminated carpet on the porch of the temple is another element of continuity.

[270] Aitken, *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting*, 75, 76, 78, 120, 198

In short, the illustration of *The Priestess of Kandahar Beseeches Iskandar to Spare and Idol* demonstrates features of the convention of compartmentalization in Rajput painting: it is divided into two, its parts represent different figures in different times and in different places, but a continuity is maintained via iconographic and compositional devices, by the narrative itself, and also by the viewer's expectation that in a Mughal painting, which relies heavily on the conventions of Persianate painting, a double page illustration represents a single subject.

Then, what do these formal characteristics tell us about the meaning of the painting? First of all, there is separation. The Timurid/Persianate culture and the Indian culture are different. The picture on the right-hand side is a little bigger than the left, and the placement of the ruler on the right is an old convention in double page Persianate illustrations, highlighting his importance.[271] Thus, what part represents authority over the other is made clear. But there are also continuities and commonalities; both spaces are under the hegemony of Iskandar, and both spaces are nurtured by aspects of Indian culture. There is a dialogue of gazes; Iskandar extends his hand to the left in a tolerant, inviting gesture, his men look towards the left, smiling, with the doorman actually pointing his finger towards the idol in the courtyard of the temple, and the women on the left look towards Iskandar, some with their hands joined in supplication, some with fingers on their lips suggesting astonishment.

Moreover, maybe as in the Radha and Krishna example that I cited above from Aitken, the two parts of the composition can be seen as the representation of the views of the characters on one part on the characters on the other part. The two parts

[271] For example, see the references to some Timurid and other Persianate paintings in footnote number 179. Note that all those examples are double page and except for the illustration of Timur's army, they all place the ruler on the right-hand page. Especially in double page frontispieces with rulers, in general, the ruler is almost always placed on the right-hand page.

represent different moments of the story, and there is nothing that obliges us to take one part as "the actual event". So, the left-hand page may be seen as a representation of the account of the temple and its venerators given by the priestess on the right-hand page to Iskandar; narrating the virtues of the temple and its attendants, and how grateful they will be if he spares the idol. Similarly, the right-hand side could be a view of the priestesses of the temple on Iskandar. The news of his tolerance might be circulating on the left-hand side, the story narrated by the main priestess' of her encounter with Iskandar represented on the right, taking attention to his magnanimous, just character and the virtues and the splendor of his court.

I find it highly meaningful that the portrait of Iskandar is given a Persianate/Timurid look rather than a more conventionally Mughal one like in the rest of the *Iskandarnama* and *Khosrau va Shirin* illustrations. Only the most significant subjects in the manuscript are chosen as Timurid portraits of the ruler, underlining the great importance given to the Timurid lineage of the Mughal emperors, which, when connected to Chingiz Khan and beyond, almost extends a claim to timelessness.

I will briefly touch upon two final points related to the representation of rulership before moving on to the next theme. One is the motif of water that asserts itself throughout the manuscript with insistence. Twenty-five out of forty illustrations (excluding the final colophon painting) display a body of water, large or small[272]. In one third of these, the water is represented in a Mughal system of channels and pools, sometimes in *chaharbagh* style (ff. 54a, 65a, 99b, 102a, 220a, 244b, 281a, 294a). In some cases, the oxen and men operating this system are also

[272] In the first illustration, *Anushirvan and the Owls* (f. 13b), a dried well is represented with the traces of the water flow, I counted it as related to water as well. In all other cases a body of water is clearly seen.

represented (ff. 45b, 65a, 99b, 294a). In most cases the water and the systems related to it have no direct connection with the narrative and they are seen in the background.



Figure 58. Faridun and the Gazelle. Or. 12208, 19a, BL. Note the seascape and the river in the background

The insistence on the representation of water and water systems must be deliberate, although it is not very easy at first sight to pinpoint its motivations. Aitken mentions that water was associated with kingship in South Asian thought and

was considered to be a symbol of fecundity and prosperity.[273] It is interesting to note that in illustrations rendered in a Persianized mode we do not encounter water and water systems, even if they are related to themes of rulership. Two considerable examples are *Bahram Gur Takes the Crown from Lions* (f. 184b) and *Iskandar Assumes the Crown of Iran* (f. WAM, 613, 34a). Iskandar's first coronation as a king is not represented in the manuscript; both of these illustrations represent a ruler crowning himself and, significantly, becoming the king of Iran, not another place. Both of these illustrations have high horizons with no land or seascape in the background, there is no *chaharbagh* pool in front of either of them, and they are both slightly Persianized.

[273] Aitken, *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting*, 165.



Figure 59. Bahram Gur Takes the Crown from Lions. Or. 12208, 184b, BL



Figure 60. Shirin Entertains Khosrau. Or. 12208, 65a, BL. Note the water system and the oxen.

Then, could the water systems have been intended to be represented as a Mughal specialty? An interesting example, representing an otherworldly subject, *Khizr Washes His Horse in the Water of Life*[274] (f. 281a), depicts the water of life

[274] The part of the text related to this illustration was summarized in the previous chapter.

flowing in a Mughal water system cascading into a pool, maybe intended as a praise of Mughal engineering. Thus, one explanation could be that the knowledge of engineering behind these water systems was something that the Mughals were proud of, and perhaps it was seen as a demonstration of their domination over nature. Considering both Timurid and Mughal fondness of well-cared gardens, the architecture of water may have been deemed even more important.[275] Also, a capital city that Akbar had built and in which he made most of his administrative reconstruction of the empire was Fatehpur Sikri, a site of considerable water shortage.[276] During his stay there, he and his court might have given increasing value to transportation and channeling of water as an indication of power.

[275] Ebba Koch, "Mughal Palace Gardens from Babur to Shah Jahan", Muqarnas 14 (1997): 143-165; Elizabeth Moynihan, "The Lotus Garden Palace of Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur", Muqarnas 5(1998): 135-152

[276] Blake, "Fathpur Sikri and Isfahan", 150-151

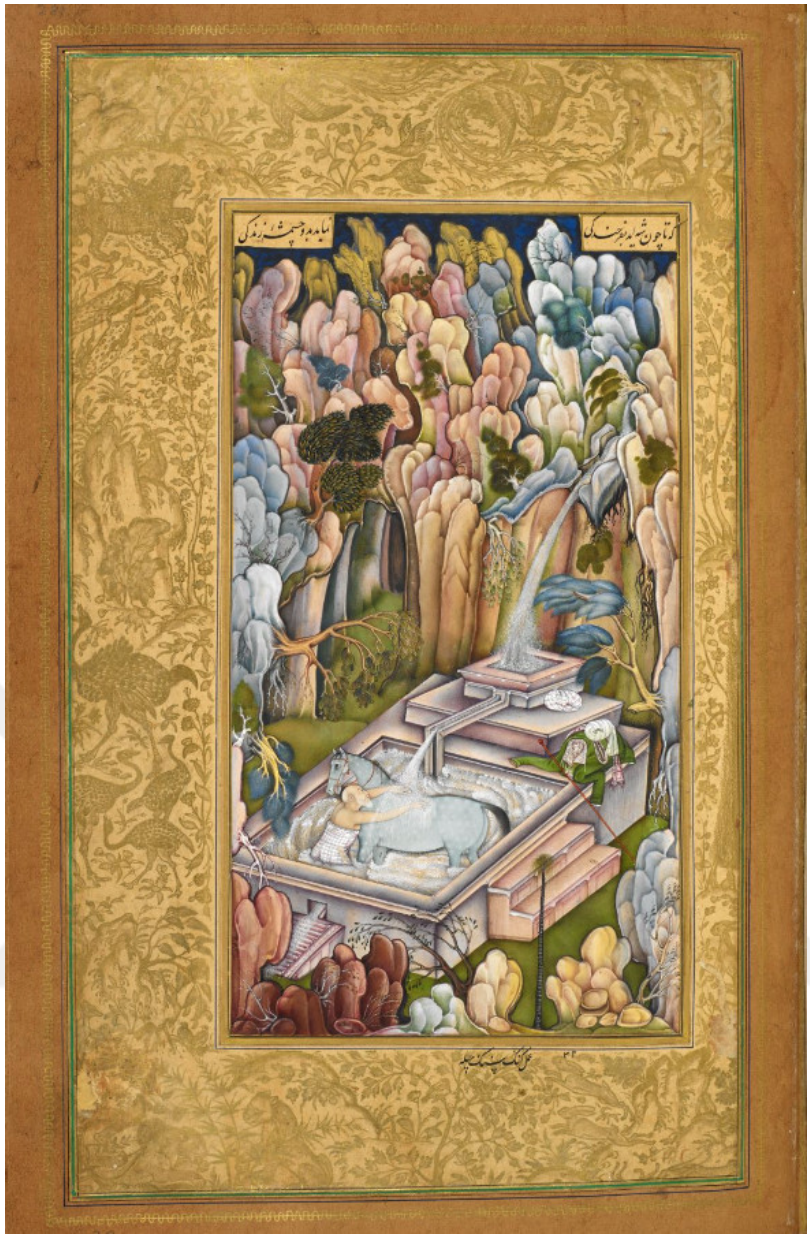

Figure 61. Khizr Washes His Horse in the Water of Life. Or. 12208, 281a, BL.

The other point related to rulership reveals another combination of Timurid and Rajput conventions to highlight the image of a ruler, and which is frequently found in the audience scenes in *Khosrau va Shirin* illustrations of the manuscript. A good example of it is in the illustration of *Khosrau Consults Bozorg Umid about Shiruya* (f. 99b). After getting married to Shirin, Khosrau gives himself to matters of state, but his son from his former wife Maryam, Shiruya, is of a malevolent character, and Khosrau can sense that he will cause problems. He discusses the issue

with his wise vizier, Bozorg Umid. Not very important in terms of narrative, this scene seems to have been represented only because it provides an excuse to depict the audience of a wise scholar by a ruler.



Figure 62. Khosrau Consults Bozorg Umid About Shiruya. Or. 12208, 99b, BL. I cropped the image for a better view of Khosrau.

What I will focus on in this illustration is the depiction of Khosrau. He is represented sitting on his throne under a pavilion, flanked by two columns. The wall behind him is white, with a small window above him. He is neatly framed from above by the roof and to the sides by the columns of the pavilion, and below by its edge with descending stairs. Beyond the columns framing him, the white wall does not continue and the other two columns to his right and left frame less important things; to his right is the empty wall of the courtyard and to the left are attendants

breezing him and carrying his royal weapons. Beneath his throne is a lapis lazuli illuminated carpet, and behind his head is the gold illuminated back of his throne.

He sits upright and cross-legged, maybe leaning a little towards the cushion behind him. One of his hands rests on his knee and the other is suspended about his chest in an elegant gesture of speech. His head is slightly tilted down in recognition of Bozorg Umid who performs *taslim*, the ceremonial Mughal way of greeting the emperor,[277] before him. Khosrau's robe is green and his orange turban is tied in the Mughal mode. A *katar* dagger is attached to his gold embroidered belt. Tassels on the one side of his robe are again in line with the Mughal court fashion, often encountered in Mughal painting.

I find this representation of Khosrau highly iconic, and it seems to me that it manipulates Rajput, Mughal, and Timurid conventions of depicting authority in order to reach this iconicity. The frame is a Rajput device. Khosrau is clearly and neatly separated from others in a perfect rectangular frame, and situated against a solid background color exclusive to him, both devices serving to render his portrait similar to a Hindu devotional image.

His face is not in profile as common in Rajput painting and as adopted later in royal portraiture in Jahangir's and Shah Jahan's reigns. Rather, his bodily posture is completely executed in a Timurid idiom of representing a ruler. The three-quarter face, the seated, full-body portraiture, the slight tilt of his head, the exact position of his hands are all characteristics making this a portrait in Timurid style par excellence. Maybe the green color for the robe can be added to this, considering Sultan Husayn was often represented wearing this color. The lapis lazuli and gold illuminations also derive from a Persianate idiom.

[277] Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 17

Finally, he is represented in Mughal attire and in Mughal style of execution with shading and modelling; defining the identity of this young ruler, who adopts both Timurid and Rajput manners but donning his own style of clothing. The golden back of the throne behind his head serves as a pseudo-halo, so often adopted in royal Mughal portraiture and reserved only for the emperors.

This kind of iconic depiction of Khosrau is not specific to this illustration, although this is the most striking one. Similar portraits, in varying degrees of adopting the conventions mentioned above, can be found in this manuscript in ff. 40b; 52a; 54a; 65a; and WAM, 613, 5s. The painting discussed above depicts the operation of a water system by oxen in the background as well. The presence of a wise scholar, Bozorg Umid, respectfully greeting Khosrau, connects the theme of rulership with the next theme to be discussed in this chapter, that of patronage.

### 5. 1. 2 The themes of patronage and art

At least seven illustrations in the manuscript seem to refer to the theme of patronage of an artist or a scholar by a ruler (ff. 40b; 54a; 99b; 117a; WAM, 613, 16b-17a; 254a; 305a). These seven illustrations show a ruler seated on a throne, receiving the scholar or the artist in question, conversing with him, or receiving a book from him (in f. 40b), and in one case, pioneering an invention (*Iskandar Watches the Invention of Mirrors*, WAM, 613, 16b-17a, note that this is a double page illustration).

Here I will discuss only one of these paintings, namely, *Nizami Gives His Son to the Son of the Shirvanshah* (f. 117a). The subject is unusual as Brend also notes.[278] It takes place in the beginning of *Layla va Majnun*, where Nizami mentions that he wrote this *masnavi* at the request of the Shirvanshah, Akhistan ibn Manuchihr.

[278] Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 26

Muhammad, Nizami's son, encourages his father to write the poem, and after completing the task, Nizami gives Muhammad into the service of the Shirvanshah's son.[279]



Figure 63. Nizami Gives His Son to the Son of the Shirvanshah. Or. 12208, 117a, BL

[279] Ibid.

The illustration depicts another courtly audience scene, now without the iconicity we saw in *Khosrau Consults Bozorg Umid About Shiruya* (f. 99b) in the representation of the ruler. The composition is in a classic Timurid idiom, with a *majlis* in an enclosed space flanked by walls below and to the mid-top of the picture space. The figures are surrounding the throne of the Shirvanshah, who is placed centrally under a pavilion. The architecture, composed of flat two dimensional surfaces attached to each other, sometimes diagonally to indicate perspective, is represented in a Persianate idiom.

Even the red fence of the smaller enclosure around the throne of the Shirvanshah is similar to those found in Timurid paintings, even though it may be reflecting a part of the actual Mughal gardens denoting a continuity in the material culture from Timurids to Mughals.[280] As in the illustration about the Kandahar idol, here too, outside the wall below is a doorman with a stick, talking to two men, and two horses with grooms. Beyond the back wall no receding landscape is placed, but instead, cypress trees, the top of a pavilion, and blossoming trees are painted, emulating again a Timurid/Persianate idiom.

The figures with their attires and the architecture, on the other hand, are given a doubtlessly Mughal identity. It is difficult to estimate what was intended by this apparent contrast between style and content, but the Persianate style of construction of space may be serving as a tribute to Nizami, an Iranian poet writing in Persian. Nizami is represented in the illustration as an old man with a large turban, like a scholar, who himself is dressed more in line with Persian/Central Asian fashion but whose son wears a Mughal attire, which must have been the case with the older and

[280] Some examples among many can be seen in *The Owner of the House Sees Girls Swimming in his Pool* and *Elders Pleading to Hurmuzd on Behalf of Khosrau* in Or. 6810, BL (ff. 190a, 37b), and in *Frontispiece* of Add. MS 25900, BL (ff. 3b-4a). The same red fence can also be found in many paintings of Tahmasp's Nizami, Or. 2265, BL.

younger generations of the Iranian/Central Asian immigrant elites of the Mughal court during Akbar's time.

The court, in all, is certainly Mughal, maybe even to the point of actuality. Brend takes our attention to a stout black musician placed in the mid-left of the composition. She identifies this as the portrait of an actual musician in the court of Akbar, namely Ali Khan Karori, whom we can recognize with certainty in another, single portrait of him, now in the British Museum (1989.8-18.1).[281] The faces in this painting are given an individuality which is missing in most other illustrations in the manuscript. Perhaps some of the other figures in this illustrations are also portraits of courtiers in Akbar's time.

At any rate, the Mughal identity given to the *majlis* and the placement of the portrait of one actual Mughal courtier in the composition are enough evidence that this painting projects an image in which Nizami himself is patronized by the Mughal emperor, which would be a source of immense prestige for him. Patronage of art (ff. 54a; 117a), scholarship (ff. 40b, 99b; 254a, 305a), and technological invention (WAM, 613, f. 16b-17a) is obviously emphasized as a trait of a good ruler in Or. 12208; but learning and art are in themselves elevated in its illustrative program as well.

Five subjects are devoted to the practitioners themselves of scholarship and art without reference to a patron: *Physicians' Duel* (f. 23b), *The Princess Paints a Self-Portrait in the Red Story* (f. 206a), *Mani Paints a Dead Dog* (f. 262b), *Mariya and the Would-be Alchemists* (f. 294a), *Aflatun Charms the Animals* (f. 298a). The painting added by Jahangir's order on the final colophon page (f. 325b), that of the

[281] Ibid. 26-27

self portrait of Daulat and the portrait of the scribe of the manuscript, Abd al-Rahim *anbarin qalam*, further strengthens this emphasis on art and learning.



Figure 64. Mani Paints a Dead Dog. Or. 12208, 262b, BL. Note the lack of any text on the picture surface.

Considering that *Iskandar Watches the Invention of Mirrors* (WAM, 613, f. 16b-17a) is a double page composition of which left half focuses on the artisans, this painting could also be included in this category. Similarly, the motif of the water

channeling system, operated by workers and oxen, may be seen as another tribute to technical knowledge. At the same time, an interest in workers and other people from lower ranks seems to be a concern shared with Timurids, as Lentz and Lowry mention for the Timurid case.[282]

Furthermore, some illustrations lead one to think that art, learning, and technical prowess were not seen as necessarily mutually exclusive. A good example is the illustration of *Aflatun Charms the Animals* (f. 298a). The narrative episode starts with a *majlis* of Iskandar, who engages in a learned discussion with the wise men in his court. Each claim to the expertise of a certain subject, whereas Arastu (Aristotle) asserts himself as the source of all wisdom. Iskandar supports him, and all others start to praise Arastu. This enrages Aflatun (Plato), and he leaves the *majlis*, starting to improve himself in the knowledge of the music of the seven spheres. Then he crafts a musical instrument which causes all men to sing and dance, all animals to sleep or awaken, and kings and doctors to have a better understanding of their occupations. He goes to the woods with this instrument, and when he plays all the animals fall asleep around him. Another melody he plays awakens them. All of this reach to Iskandar's ears, and Arastu is ashamed.[283]

Although its composition is simple, this illustration is a highly complicated one (fig. 65). The painting is divided by a central axis formed by part of a stream, the neck of a rhinoceros, and the trunk of a tree whose leaves are largely obscured by the text but one green branch reaches the top of the page, completing the axis. Aflatun is placed on the right-hand side, playing a European organ, sitting on a small knoll surrounded by the rest of the stream as if with by a moat. Beneath him on the lower

[282] Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 289
[283] Paraphrased from Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 58

right are some smaller wild felines in sleep isolated in a roughly rectangular space bordered by the stream. On the left hand-side, covering the whole space until the outline of the hill that they are situated on, various large felines, tame and wild hoofed animals, and birds, including a *simurgh*, are sleeping. All these figures cover two-third of the picture surface, and to the top a distant landscape of mountains and valleys in cool, delicate colors can be seen under a cloudy blue or mauve sky.[284]



Figure 65. Aflatun Charms the Animals. Or. 12208, 298a, BL

[284] The exact colors differ in the printed copy of Brend's book and the digital images on BL's website.

On the organ that Aflatun plays four pictures can be distinguished. On the wing facing the viewer, the upper part shows a European man with a hat floating diagonally to his head, while in the lower part a man painting a portrait of a European man are depicted, both sitting on the ground. On the wing of the organ that faces Aflatun, the upper part represents the *Annunciation* in a European style whereas below a picture of *Majnun in the Wilderness* is seen. These four pictures seem to give the key to the interpretation of this illustration.



Figure 66. Close-up of figure 65

The first picture simply is a bust portrait, but the diagonally placed hat gives it a bit of absurdness, as if pointing at the artificial nature of the picture. It is the

portrait of a European man, who, as a people, seem to represent only the art of painting within the confines of this manuscript, which occasionally refers to European painting. Below is a depiction of the act of portraiture. To me it seems that these two pictures can be taken as self-referential. They are placed so as to directly face the viewer, reminding us that all this is a painting and about painting, or maybe, to put it more accurately, all this is art and returns to art. Aflatun, on the other hand, faces two narrative pictures, as they give clues about the "moral of the story", the message of the larger painting. The one above again refers to Europe. The one below refers to the greater Persianate world, on the one hand, and specifically to Majnun on the other.



Figure 67. Majnun Visited by His Mother and Uncle. Or. 12208, 150b, BL

Aitken makes the Majnun part clear for us. In a chapter on repetition in paintings of *Layla va Majnun*, she takes attention to a repeated motif in early Mughal *Layla va Majnun* paintings. Three of her examples are derived from Or. 12208 (ff. 123a, 150b, 153b). She reveals that in most early Mughal *Layla va Majnun* illustrations to the different versions of the story in different manuscripts, Majnun is represented sitting on a rocky knoll placed on a stream. In many cases the knoll hosts a large tree and a cypress as well, on either side of Majnun. Aitken also traces this

motif back to Persian painting,[285] and underlines that the repetition of such motifs redundant to the narrative signaled both a show of respect for the tradition and an attempt at adding something more to the iconography on the part of the painter, as each painter incorporated the motif in a way that made a different comment about the narrative, in line with Adamova's argument on repetition in Timurid painting.[286]

In her discussion Aitken also mentions the illustration of *Aflatun Charms the Animals* (f. 298a), and argues that the knoll-and-stream motif that is repeated in this illustration serves to connect Aflatun to Majnun, and to make a comment about the capability of both men in taming wild beasts, and gathering all kinds of animals around themselves in a way that prevents the strong to hurt the weak.[287]

Aitken points out that both Majnun and Aflatun were men associated with ascetics.[288] But, while Majnun gets into harmony with nature by the power of his love for Layla, Aflatun does it with his wisdom and knowledge; and, deducing both from Nizami's story and from the painting, music was seen not solely as a means to entertainment, but as a demonstration of knowledge. Common roots of music and mathematics were indeed part of Platonic philosophy. This point, I believe, can be extended to cover the art of painting as well, both in Nizami's text, which conceives art and science as different dimensions of a single whole,[289] and within the confines of Or. 12208, as implied in its illustrations.

The reference to Europe in the pictures on Aflatun's organ, as well as the organ itself, can be seen as a pictorial homage to Europe; and at the same time, the painter, by incorporating a very small copy of a European engraving or a painting

[285] Aitken, *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting*, 163
[286] Ibid. 163-169, Adamova, "Repetition of Composition in Manuscripts"
[287] Aitken, *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting*, 167
[288] Ibid.
[289] Soucek, "Nizami on Painters and Painting"

above the picture of Majnun, declares his virtuosity and prowess in both European and Persianate idioms of painting. A similar display of capability in incorporating European painting into a Mughal illustration is also present in *Physicians' Duel* (f. 23b). The pictorial quotations such as the small pictures on Aflatun's organ help to turn the illustration into a statement on the power of art and learning in general.

Three other illustrations, *Mani Paints a Dead Dog* (f. 262b) *The Talisman that Causes the Qipchaq Women Veil Themselves* (f. 266b) and *The Priestess of Kandahar Beseeches Iskandar to Spare an Idol* (ff. 317b-318a) take this statement one step further. The latter illustration was discussed above, and the narrative summary of the first two subjects were given in the introduction section, in a discussion around the power of images and the importance Nizami himself accords them. The places reserved to these subjects in this manuscript doubtlessly reveals an agreement on the part of the patron and the painters of Or. 12208.

## 5.2 Conclusion on Mughal responses to Timurid illustration

As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the genealogic relationship of Mughals to Timurids determined the nature of responses they gave in their manuscript illustration to Timurid precedents. Timurid luxury manuscripts were highly prized in the Mughal court, and these manuscripts often received personal comments of the emperors written on their flyleaves. Or. 6810 in British Library, the primary Timurid example of this thesis, was among the manuscripts that remained for a long time in the Mughal library, and its initial leaves host many librarian and royal comments.

The influence of this manuscript and other Timurid precedents on Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami can be seen in several layers; namely in compositional logic, in

iconic prototypes for some figural depictions, in construction of space and architecture, and more importantly than all these, in some of the themes illustrated. These elements and conventions were always adopted in the illustrations of Akbar's Nizami in a selective manner and with specific purposes. Often, the Timurid legacy was put forward with deliberate visibility especially in important scenes making statements about rulership, as their lineage from Timurids was the primary source of Mughal claim to legitimate rule. In some cases, Timurid conventions were adopted in a painting side by side with other, for instance, Rajput conventions, in order to emphasize the distinctness of the Mughal identity, underline the tolerance and justness of their rule, and perhaps to increase the legibility of the paintings for the Rajput elite of the court.

Art and painting found its place in some illustrations as a subject by itself. Together with some illustrations which made complicated references to earlier paintings in order to show respect for tradition, improve an iconographic element, or claim virtuosity, the self-reflexive illustrations of this manuscript were again following the footsteps of Timurid painting, especially of Sultan Husayn's time.

Thus the illustrations made use of different aspects of the Timurid tradition in the way that accommodated them into their main agendas best. Whereas the almost iconic and very formal depiction of rulership in *Khosrau va Shirin* illustrations brought the approach of Akbar's Nizami close to that of Shahrukh's and Baysunghur's patronage; occupation of some paintings with the art of painting and the life of commoners reflected affinity with Sultan Husayn's patronage. Another, lesser theme of the manuscript was fantasy and fairy-tale, which may have stemmed from Akbar's taste for such stories bringing some illustrations of his Nizami to the *Hamzanama* project created under his patronage. If this also had affinities with a

Timurid taste, the most plausible parallel could be Muhammad Juki's *Shahnama*, owned by Babur and his successors as late as Aurangzeb.



Figure 68. The King Carried off by a Bird in the Black Story. Or. 12208, 195a, BL

Even if some general themes and illustrative approaches were common in the patronage of both dynasties, the Mughal approaches to individual *masnavi*s of the *Khamsa* were different from those of Timurids. Religious subjects found no place in the illustrations of Akbar's Nizami, unlike in Timurid examples. In the Timurid sample of this thesis, *Khosrau va Shirin* was always a romantic story, with a Sufi

point of view in the case of Or. 6810. The depiction of issues of rulership was mostly reserved to *Iskandarnama*. Akbar's Nizami had the opposite approach, filling *Iskandarnama* pages with paintings of fantastic stories and illustrations on art and learning. The reverse approach in this manuscript to these two *masnavi*s resulted in the illustration of a great number of unusual subjects.

*Layla va Majnun* was important both in Or. 6810 and in Or. 12208, and possibly for similar reasons. Majnun was always represented like an emaciated *fakir* of India in Mughal painting, and his mystic love received great sympathy in South Asia, elevating him to the status of an ascetic or holy man. Or. 6810 also represented him as an ideal, almost divine, lover, deserving appreciation. In both manuscripts, the *masnavi* was illustrated with depiction of intense emotions and a few scenes on death were represented in both of them.

To sum up, in the end, both as the part of the dynastic past, and as an artistic heritage, Timurid precedents were given emphasized importance in the illustrations of Akbar's Nizami. Yet, what reflected Timurid approaches and what differed in the Mughal illustrations to the *Khamsa* of Nizami was dependent on the contemporary concerns of the Mughal patron and the painters, and the legacy was utilized in the way that best served the thematic agenda of the manuscript.

# CHAPTER 6

# CONCLUSION

My study reveals that in the second half of the fifteenth throughout the sixteenth century, in Timurid, Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal realms, the illustrations of a manuscript created a linkage between the local context, in which the manuscript was produced, and the text and its author.

Illustrations interpreted and commented on the text and added new layers of meaning to it, which were always relevant to the present. Even the most direct and literal illustrations reflected the selection of some subjects for illustration over others, and the way a scene was represented, frequency of certain themes, and the modes of representation adopted all added to the interpretation of the text by the painters and the patrons. Moreover, the illustrations conveyed messages on how the text was understood and how its themes were thought in relation to the immediate concerns of the social, cultural, and political context.

The very fact of the production of illustrated copies of Nizami's *Khamsa* was by itself indicative of a certain kind of relationship of Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal realms with the Timurid past. The *Khamsa* was being illustrated before Timurids as well, but it was in their court that illustration of romances of profound psychological depth moved to greater prominence in royal levels of patronage. This was especially related with the Timurid political and cultural conditions in the reign of Sultan Husayn Bayqara, in which the diminishing military pretentions of the dynasty led the courtly elite to turn inwards and search the image of legitimacy and just rule in the relationship of a ruler with religion, learning and sophistication. The dynastic relationship of each of the three early modern Muslim empires to the Timurids

determined the nature of their artistic responses to the Timurid legacy contingent on the chronological and geographical position of each dynasty with respect to Timurids.

The prominence of illustration of Nizami's text continued for the longest time in the Safavid realm, mainly because, I believe, it was the practitioners of the arts of the book there who sustained this legacy. As mentioned in the introduction and in the third chapter, Ismail I took Herat not from the Timurids but from the Shaybanids, and Safavids never engaged in a direct military conflict with the Timurids, which largely ceased to be a relevant political actor when the Safavid state was established. Thus, responding to the them in dynastic terms was not a main priority in the cultural agenda of the Safavid house. But they ruled the territories that Timurids had ruled in the previous century, and their style of painting was born out of a synthesis of Aqqoyunlu and Timurid traditions. The sustainer of these traditions were the painters themselves, and the Timurid artistic legacy in the Safavid realm lived largely as the inheritance of the practitioner.

This situation reflected itself in the manuscript of Tahmasp's *Khamsa* with the stylistic and compositional logic of paintings, the interest in formal exercises and complex references to precedents, and the continuation of a tendency that we started to observe under Sultan Husayn's reign to gradually move away from the narrative with an interest in the peripheries. These attested to the interests of the painters. The agenda which would have been preferred by the patrons, on the other hand, revolved around the concern for asserting royal splendor for a great degree, and interest in the quotidian life as a side theme. Although these themes also had affinities with the Timurid precedents, they did not particularly attempt at responding to a Timurid patron or ruler. Similarly, Nizami's text was illustrated for the longest time in the

Safavid realm, because it was part and parcel of the literary culture of Iran, which was under Safavid rule.

Ottoman responses to the Timurid world were in stark contrast to those of the Safavids, as engaging in a dialogue with them was largely the concern of a patron in the Ottoman domains. This is why whether Nizami's *Khamsa* or another text based on it was illustrated or not was highly contingent on the cultural policy of the ruler. Ottoman relations with Timurids started in the time of Timur and Bayezid I under highly belligerent terms. Changing political atmosphere in the reigns of later rulers turned this relationship first to a more diplomatic, and later to a friendly manner.

The sophisticated artistic production in Herat during Sultan Husayn's reign coincided with the formative period of Ottoman painting. Artistically, Timurid painting was but one of the many sources of the Ottoman painting idiom. However, Ottoman Empire was situated on the westernmost borders of the Muslim world, and interaction with the east, with other Muslim countries, was of prime importance in maintaining ties and asserting differences with them. Coupled with the great cultural prestige that the Timurids enjoyed in eastern Iran, responding to their artistic products became a serious concern for the Ottoman elite.

Yet the degree of priority given to this dialogue by each sultan was determinant on the products themselves. Mehmed II wanted to create a fusion of European and Persianate cultural forms, which would be synthesized into a Rumi style in line with his imperial vision. Yet manuscript illustration was not the primary concern of his cultural policy. In the reign of Bayezid II, the policy of turning away from Europe for a better integration with the Muslim world resulted in the refurbishment of numerous copies of Nizami's *Khamsa* and production of manuscripts of authors such as Şeyhi and Hatifi, in the illustrations of which Timurid

precedents were responded to in dynastic terms. In later generations, interest in Nizami's text markedly decreased, perhaps partly due to the rise of Turkish as the literary language of the court, but also due to the changing concerns of the later rulers.

In terms of chronology, Mughals were the latest to emerge among these three empires. Geographically, too, they were removed from the Timurid lands. But precisely this temporal and geographical distance encouraged Mughal rulers to recall the Timurid legacy in the cultural products of their courts, because they considered the latter as their own past. The legitimacy of the Mughal dynasty was founded on their lineage from Timurids, and this critical bond became effective in Mughal references to the latter for longer than any other early modern Muslim empire. Like Ottomans, Mughals too were on the borders of the Muslim world, and participation in the culture of the larger Muslim world necessitated constant evocation of elements from their genealogical past. Due to their geographic position, being in India, any reference to Iran and Central Asia was significant.

The reigns of the first two Mughal emperors, Babur, and Humayun, did not leave many remnants to our time in the arts of the book. In Akbar's reign, Mughal Empire asserted itself as a major power in India, and the ruling elite opened to include the local constituency. In this restructuring of the empire, evoking connections to the Timurid past may have been needed for maintaining the Mughal distinctness from other dynasties in India, while Indic elements in painting were used to assert Mughal difference from western Muslim dynasties. Thus, balancing elements from Iran and India in a way to underline the Mughal identity was a major concern in the illustrations of Akbar's *Khamsa*.

Although texts like Nizami's may have been deemed important as they connected the Mughal cultural production with the Muslim west, his *Khamsa* seems to have been rarely illustrated after Akbar's time, in all likelihood due to the decrease of manuscript illustration produced under royal patronage and the rise of albums and single page paintings which started to show its effects in Akbar's reign.

When the manuscripts from these four empires are considered together, issues of political legitimacy often emerge as among the more prevalent concerns dictating the illustration of a manuscript. Nizami's *Khamsa*, per its content, may not seem to be as bent onto the discussions of statesmanship and statecraft as is Firdausi's *Shahnama*. Yet, the illustrations in my sample falsify this suggestion by demonstrating that a love story like *Khosrau va Shirin* may be represented from a point of view heavily concerned with rulership and kingly prerogatives. *Iskandarnama* by itself was a very apt section of the *Khamsa* for discussions of rulership in the illustrations, and it could incorporate different understandings of rulership in different manuscripts.

Of course, illustrations to a lyrical text like Nizami's *Khamsa* did not limit their interest to issues of rulership. They could interpret the stories under a completely different light, as exemplified in the case of the main Timurid manuscript of this thesis, Or. 6810 in the British Library, which conceived Nizami's text from a Sufi point of view and reserved more space to representation of love and commentary on death and human life than on rulership. Similarly, the Ottoman illustrations to a Muzaffarid manuscript emphasized the romantic side of the *masnavi*s with its focus on human dialogue and interaction. Mughal and Safavid examples were more bent onto questions of rulership, but they still reserved considerable space for other themes, such as quotidian life in Tahmasp's copy and art

and patronage in Akbar's copy. The stories in the *Khamsa* were also very suitable to give a manuscript a fairy-tale like, fantastic character. Some manuscripts favored this feature of the *Khamsa* as well, exemplified by Akbar's manuscript.

The customs and manners of behavior represented in a manuscript reflected those of the contemporary local society by convention, but in cases where a certain message was planned to be conveyed, manipulations were made on costumes, architecture, and even the stylistic features of a painting in a way to reflect customs and conventions of another society. In this way, illustrations could make subtle statements about the relationship of the owners or the producers of the manuscript with other cultural and social entities.

Although the style in which the illustrations were painted and the compositions that were used were informed by the local style, many Nizami *Khamsa*s shared commonalities in their illustrative programs and the already existing iconographic pool was often made use of. Repetition of earlier compositions was not an unthinking act of copying, but a kind of visual quotation serving either to show the painter's respect for his tradition, to demonstrate his ability in artfully referencing past forms in new designs, or to make certain thematic statements by associating the subject of the illustration with an earlier one. Moreover, many Timurid manuscripts became training grounds for illustrators working in the later three empires, who restored and completed the unfinished Timurid manuscripts.

Eventually, by no later than the seventeenth century, each empire had largely moved away from Timurid aesthetics and had found its own artistic trajectory. The exact timing varied in each case, but there were common threads in the transition of the early modern Muslim empires from a common Timurid aesthetic to a distinct idiom for each. The transition took place in the reigns of Süleyman in the Ottoman

case and Abbas I in the Safavids. Both of these realms witnessed a solidification of the borders, greater centralization of rule than before, and construction of a clearer identity for each empire. This change took place in the mid-sixteenth century in the Ottoman case, which was accompanied by the canonization of imperial artistic forms.

Safavid transition took place in the beginning of the seventeenth century. In the artistic sphere, seventeenth century was marked by the rise of albums and single page paintings in each of the three empires. The fact that painting was increasingly breaking away from narratives and gaining independence contributed to the departure from Timurid models, which, although including albums and single page drawings as well, laid a greater emphasis on manuscript illustration. The transition of the Mughals was a bit more complicated. The centralization of rule and solidification of the borders, as well as creation of a distinct idiom that characterized the departure from Timurid models in the other two empires took place in the Mughal Empire during Akbar's time. But largely due to the genealogic bond, responding to Timurids protected its relevance for longer in the Mughal Empire. Nevertheless, the mode of representation had already changed under the patronage of Akbar.

# APPENDIX A

## THE LIST OF MANUSCRIPTS ACCORDING TO LOCATION

### BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE (BnF)

Supplément Persan 580: Dated 1365, its text was transcribed in Muzaffarid domains. It is not known how it arrived at the Ottoman realm, but twenty-five illustrations were painted on the spaces left blank for illustrations on the manuscript in Ottoman style.
http://gallica.BnF.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8432215n/f1.item.r=supplement%20persan%20580.zoom

Supplément Persan 1956: Dated, 1560-1561. Attributed to Shiraz or Qazvin.
http://gallica.BnF.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8427193s/f81.item.r=supplement%20persan%201956

Supplément Persan 1980: Dated, 1612-1631. Produced in Herat for Hasan Khan Shamlu, transcribed by Shah Kasim al-Katib.
http://gallica.BnF.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8427255f/f33.item.r=supplement%20persan%201980.zoom

BRITISH LIBRARY (BL)

Add MS 25900: Dated 1442-1443. Fourteen paintings are in the Herat later Timurid style, and four are Tabriz/Safavid work c. 1535-40. Three of its paintings are ascribed to Bihzad.
http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_25900_fs001r

Or 12208: Dated, 1593-1595. Copied by ‘Abd al-Rahim ‘Anbarin-qalam. Emperor Akbar’s copy of Nizami. All its paintings are attributed to various major artists of the Mughal studio. Five of its illustrations are in Walters Art Museum but they are all published together with British Library paintings in Barbara Brend, *The Emperor Akbar’s Khamsa of Nizami*, 1995.
http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=or_12208_fs001r

Or 6810: Late 15th century. Copied for ‘Ali Farsi Barlas. Herat later Timurid style. Attributions to various artists beneath the lower margins of the paintings are added later. Some paintings are ascribed to Bihzad. One of the paintings is dated 1494/95. The manuscript belonged to the Imperial Mughal Library for a long time, and there are many librarian inscriptions and seals documenting its history from 1564/65 to 1782.
http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=or_6810_f003v

Or 2265: Dated 1539-43, with later 17th and 19th century additions. Shah Tahmasb's copy of the *Khamsa*. Includes three paintings by Muhammad Zaman.

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Or_2265

Add 27261: The Miscellany of Iskandar Sultan, grandson of Timur. Among the texts it contains there is Nizami's *Khamsa* as well. Dated, 1410-11. Copied by Muhammad al-Halva'i and Nasir al-Katib. Shiraz/Timurid style. An important work as it was an inspiration for many later Shiraz examples. There are discussions on this manuscript in several secondary sources.

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_27261_f003v

TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM LIBRARY (TPML)

H. 781: ca. 1500. Uncompleted work started in Herat in mid-15th century. Two additional uncompleted illustrations are painted in the Ottoman studio, and show influence of European styles. Binding is also Ottoman and is dedicated to Bayezid II.

HACI SELIM AĞA LIBRARY (HSAL)

Ms. 906: *Hüsrev ve Şirin* of Şeyhi. Dated 1498. It has three illustrations and a single illuminated *'unvan*. Transcribed by Halil b. Abdullah Edirnevi. Completely Ottoman work.

# APPENDIX B

## MANUSCRIPTS ACCORDING TO DYNASTY

### TIMURIDS

BL:

Add MS 25900, by attribution

Or 6810

Add 27261

TPM:

H. 781, by attribution

### SAFAVIDS

BnF:

Supplément Persan 1956, by attribution

Supplément Persan 1980

BL:

Add 25900, four paintings are in Safavid style

Or 2265

### OTTOMANS

BnF:

Supplément Persan 580

TPML:

H. 781, two Ottoman paintings

HSAL:

MS. 906

MUGHALS

BL:

Or 12208

Or 6810, attributed to Herat, it was part of the Mughal library for a long time

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