

History of Persian Miniature painting through Herat School of Miniature

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Abstract- This paper presents an analysis and interpretation of so-called early miniature school of Herat, one of the most peculiar and elaborate miniature style of 15th century, which is bright colored illustrations with complete theme. The detailed documentations of all the objects bearing the style makes it possible to recognize not only a basic set of combination and some aspects of their possible change in time, but also visual levels of art. The sophisticated structure of these images fully deserves to be considered early form of miniature.

Index Terms- Herat, Illustration, Interpretation, Miniature

I. INTRODUCTION

The origins of Persian painting unquestionably predate the advent of Islamic civilization in Persia. From the 3rd century AH onwards with the emergence of local ruling dynasties and the growing influence of distinguished Persian figures at the Abbasid court, Persian cultural and artistic traditions, which had remained stagnant for several centuries, because pre-Islamic Persian art had been based on their ancient Persian wisdom.

Mongol hordes invaded and devastated Persia during the 7th and 8th century. Genghis Khan's invasion began in 615 AH and lasted until 619 AH. Holaku Khan's army marched into Persia and razed Samarkand in 654 AH. Before taking control of Baghdad and overthrowing the Abbasid dynasty three years later. Timur's repeated bloody onslaughts at the close of the 8th century left many Persian cities in ruins and innumerable people dead. In the course of these savage invasions, wall paintings inside palaces were destroyed and thousands of manuscripts both illustrated and non-illustrated were burned to ashes when libraries across the country were put to flame.

This explains the scarcity of pictorial works from before the Mongol invasions, either in the form of illustrated manuscripts or wall paintings.

II. KHANID PAINTING IN TABRIZ

Political stability gradually returned to Persia after the last Il-khans embraced Islam and adopted the indigenous Persian culture and civilization.

During the reign of Ghazan-Khan the physician and historian Rashid-o-Din Hamadani rose to the post of prime minister. He commissioned and supervised the creation in the suburbs of Tabriz of Rabe-e-Rashidi, which became the gathering place for numerous scientists, calligraphers, artists and writers who soon began producing and illustrating sundry manuscripts in its

workshops. It was during that era that the Tabriz school of painting reached full maturity. This school best reveals its personality and particularities in the illustrated copy of the Jame-o-Tavarikh compiled by Rashid-o-Din himself and said to have been reproduced and illustrated in approximately twenty Persian and Arabic copies, and in a copy of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh (ca.735 AH), referred to as the Demotte Shahnameh.

The persistence of the traditions in Persian paintings in Shiraz in the 8th century AH,

The persistence of the painting traditions of this region, which was more in touch with the evolution of the school of Baghdad than was Tabriz, is best exemplified in the illustrations of the Varqeh-va-Golshah manuscript.

The decorative features, palette and simple composition of the works produced by the school of the Shiraz are best visible in the paintings of a Shahnameh created around 732 AH and today preserved at the Topkapi Saray Museum in Istanbul.

III. MINIATURE PAINTING UNDER THE JALAYERIDS

The end of Il-khanid rules after Abu-saeed Bahador-khan's death, an opportunity for local governments to emerge across Persia. This period was a golden era during which the painting styles of western and southern Persia most effectively came together. In the interim period between the down fall of the Mongol Il-khans and the onset of Timur's invasions, the Jalayerid dynasty enjoyed a more important position, which allowed it to rule from Baghdad or Tabriz for more than half a century. This interval allowed the artists of these two centers, each of which boasted a vigorous and longstanding tradition in the art of the book, to better benefit from their mutual experiences. During Jalayerid patronage, especially during the reign of Sultan Oveis (739-776 AH) and Sultan Ahmad (784-813 AH), who were both keen supporters of poets and scholars, this merger of experiences led to the emergence of a purified style of painting at the Jalayerid court in Baghdad.

IV. PERSIAN PAINTING IN SHIRAZ SCHOOL

In Persian [miniature painting](#), styles of a group of artists centered at Shīrāz, in southwestern Iran near the ancient city of Persepolis. The school, founded by the Mongol Il-Khans 6-7th century AH, was active through the beginning of the 16th century. It developed three distinct styles.

The school reached maturity under the [Timurids](#). The paintings have a dreamlike and very personal quality. Fewer

figures are represented, and they are elongated and stylized in pose and gesture. Faces are expressionless and remote. A system of perspective is introduced. Landscapes, which replace solid-color backgrounds, are represented in fantastic shapes and colors, thus adding to the dream effect. Pale blues, pinks, grays, and white dominate. When the Shīrāz school was coming of age, however, it was overshadowed by the [Herāt school](#) at the seat of the Timurid court.

V. HERAT SCHOOL

15th-century style of [miniature painting](#) that flourished in Herāt, western Afghanistan, under the patronage of the Timurids. Its initial period is connected with the founding of a court manuscript workshop in 1410, and its end came with the conquest of Herat in 1507 by Shaibani Khan. [Shah Rokh](#), the son of the Islamic conqueror Timur, founded the school, but it was his son [Baysunqur Mirza](#) (died 1433) who developed it into an important center of painting, bringing to his court artists from all over Persia and Afghanistan. The school grew in importance until 1507, when Herāt was sacked by the Uzbeks.

The development of the urban life and culture of feudal Herat created the necessary conditions for the flowering of the art of miniature painting. Book illumination, being in stylistic harmony with monumental painting and applied art, acquired an unprecedented importance within the total system of manuscript design.

Although paintings were occasionally done on silk, illustrations for manuscripts, usually poems were more common. In the miniatures of the Herat school, numerous figures, in groups or singly, are shown on various planes, one above the other, using the entire picture area. The juxtaposition of figures and elements of scenery one above the other produced the effect of one appearing to be behind the other.

VI. MINIATURES OF THE HERAT SCHOOL

The imagery of miniatures of the Herat school is derived from nature, fresh and replete with bright colors and flowing lines. A spring garden with blossoming trees, meadows, and brooks framed in lush grass and buildings decorated with plants and geometric designs from the traditional decorative background against which the action is developed. Flat tones without light and shade modeling are also characteristic of the Herat school. The intense local tones are usually harmonious and do not give an impression of gaudiness. The elaborate designs combined with sonorous colors constitute the distinctive quality and strong impact of the Herat school.

VII. SUBJECT OF HERAT SCHOOL

The subject matter of Herat school in paintings is many scenes from the Persian epic *Shah-namah* by the poet Ferdowsi survive, as well as illustrations from the later works of Nezami, Sadi, and Jami.

A manuscript created for Shahrokh around 828 AH was Hafeze Abru's *Majma-o-tavarikh*, its surviving pages are unfortunately scattered today. Several pages of this manuscript

are preserved at the Reza Abbasi Museum in Tehran; represent the school of Herat at the time Shahrokh in the current exhibition. The illustrations of the *Majma-o-Tavarikh* are simple compositions of large aligned or opposed characters depicted on a relatively bare background topped by blue sky.

VIII. CHARACTERISTICS

The first phase of the Herat school, which was connected primarily with the Shiraz school of miniature painting of the 14th and 15th centuries and probably also with the Baghdad and Tabriz schools, The most important influence, however, was the concept of [perspective](#), introduced by the Mongols and developed by the Jalayirid school from mid-14th century to around 1400, Herat school is characterized by illustrations that are quite faithful to the text.

- The landscape, depicted on several planes, is relatively simple and plays a subordinate role.
- The number of characters is small and the figures are large and somewhat static; the composition tends to be symmetrical.
- An exception is seen in the *Shah-nama* piece done in the grand style, distinguished by its size and differing from the chamber style of most manuscripts.
- Its “densely peopled” miniatures
- Complexity of architectural backgrounds
- Use of foreshortening and of realistic gestures anticipates the flowering of the Herat school that occurred at the end of the 15th century in connection with the innovative work of Kamal Ud-din Behzad.
- The figures of the earlier Herat school are stylized—tall and thin with oblong heads and pointed beards—but are painted in a variety of positions. Above all they are animated, always taking part in the action of whatever scene is represented. Artists of the Herat school display a highly developed sense of composition combined with a fondness for descriptive detail.
- The colors, gay but not strident, are worked in subtle gradations. An illustration from Khwaju Kermani's *Masnavi* shows a remarkable variety of blues and greens and demonstrates the delicately refined brushwork for which the Herat school is famous.

IX. BEHZAD WORK

Behzad invested miniature painting with a refined decorativeness, expanding the range of variations and styles considerably and creating, in addition to illustrations, easel paintings and portraits not connected with books patronized by the ruler [Husayn Bayqarah](#). In a harmonious, imaginative, and dramatic style, [Behzad](#) painted individuals rather than characterizations. In cooperation with his teacher Mirak Naqqash and his pupil Qasim Ali, Behzad illustrated Nizami's *Khamse* manuscript, which is considered the standard example of the late Herat school, whose artists developed a unified style through close cooperation. A 1489 copy of the poet Sadi's *Bustan* (National Library, Cairo) contains illustrations that are outstanding among Behzad's works.

After Herat School a new school came ahead with the name of Safavid, during the Timurid period

X. CONCLUSION

Miniature painters of the last quarter of the 15th century favored keen dramatic subjects; the complicated spatial compositions, designed on many planes, often extend to the margins or are abruptly cut off by the frame. The innovative character of the Herat school derives from the artists' keen powers of observation, the authenticity of the details, and especially the strong interest in people and the desire to depict their emotions by means of the surrounding landscape and the expressiveness of gestures and poses. The Herat school influenced the work of the artists of the Tabriz school, the Mavera-un-nahr school (Middle Asia), and the Mogul school.

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