

# ARTS OF THE BOOK, PAINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY

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## Part One

# IRAN AND NORTH-WESTERN CENTRAL ASIA

(O. Akimushkin)

## Iran

### The Safavids (1501–1736)

Iran entered the sixteenth century with a new dynasty, the Safavids (see Chapter 10). In the summer of 1501, Shāh Ismāʿīl I (1501–24), having defeated the Āq Qoyūnlū ruler Sultān Alvand, entered Tabriz and proclaimed himself *shāhanshāh* of Persia and declared that the state religion was to be Twelver Shiʿism (*isnā-ʿasharīyya*). That act distinguished the newly declared state of Iran, exerting a decisive influence on all aspects of the country's life, including the arts.

A prominent aspect of the arts patronized by the new regime was the production of manuscripts, whether lavishly and artistically designed or modest in their execution. In the sixteenth century the art of the illuminated manuscript was brought to perfection: splendid manuscripts were penned by renowned calligraphers, illustrated with masterpieces of the miniaturist's art, decorated with refinement and clad in elegant bindings. These manuscripts, which have never been surpassed, remain for posterity as *chefs-d'oeuvre* of the art of the Persian manuscript. They were executed by teams of outstanding craftsmen, assembled in the court and private libraries of Tabriz, Qazvin, Herat and Mashhad. A falling-off in the quality of manuscript production occurred at the end of the 1570s, although the overall number of manuscripts continued to rise until the second decade of the eighteenth century, at which time, according to the statistics of Monzavī, growth ceased and was replaced by a swift and precipitous decline towards the end of the century.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Monzavī, 1350/1971, pp. 283–92.

During the sixteenth century, as in earlier times, Persian painting remained essentially an affair of the court: the royal patron continued to play a vital role in its support. At the same time, it should be noted that connoisseurs and admirers of illustrated manuscripts were to be found in wider circles of society, and in less elitist milieux, something that had not been the case during the Timurid period (1370–1507), when the execution of illuminated manuscripts depended entirely on the support of members of the ruling dynasty. Thus, the basis of support in society for the artisans engaged in the execution of manuscripts broadened considerably. According to the sources,<sup>2</sup> the number of private workshops (in the capital) and private libraries increased from the 1550s onwards, and high-quality illustrated manuscripts were no longer ordered only by the ruler or a narrow circle of princes, but also by the aristocracy in the capital and higher functionaries, provincial governors and local dignitaries. What is most striking, however, is that the circle of patrons grew to include wealthy Persian traders and merchants as well.

It is worth noting that the great variety of styles, techniques and schools of Persian painting that we observe in the Safavid period were no longer wholly determined by the artisans working at court or in the capital cities Tabriz (up to 1548–9), Qazvin (1550–98) and Isfahan (*c.* 1598–*c.* 1722), but were also influenced by the schools and techniques of painting that developed in Mashhad, Herat and Shiraz, and the commercial schools of Shiraz, Astarabad (Astarābād, present-day Gorgan) and Khurasan (in Bākhraz and Mālān).

There is no doubt that the emergence of the new currents in painting was substantially influenced by the large-scale migration of artisans (artists, calligraphers, decorators, binders) whose combined efforts within the very same workshops produced a synthesis of styles and lent momentum to these trends. There were both voluntary and forced migrations, the latter brought about by factors including instability, war and dynastic changes.

From the second half of the sixteenth century, the tradition of commissioning large and costly manuscripts with miniature paintings entered a period of decline (their execution was completely halted in the second decade of the eighteenth century, but revived to some extent in the first quarter of the nineteenth, under the Qajar dynasty: see below). This did not mean that production ceased entirely, but it did decline. At the same time as this change occurred, interest in graphic representational drawings and miniatures on single sheets grew, and such works began to circulate freely on the market in the following (seventeenth and eighteenth) centuries. As a result, this genre acquired a degree of popularity which is difficult to explain solely in terms of the fact that the works were many times cheaper

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Budāq Qazvīnī's notes on the family workshops in Shiraz in the middle of the sixteenth century; also Iskandar Beg Munshī, 1334–6/1955–7, pp. 174–7 (for Qazvin and Isfahan at the end of the sixteenth century).

than manuscripts lavishly illustrated with miniatures. To all appearances, a transformation occurred in people's view of the role, significance and position of the artist in society: an artist's work acquired social significance and resonance.

It is clear that a decisive factor in this transformation of public opinion was the change in views on aesthetics and the theory of artistic reproduction, i.e. painting (miniatures, frescos, figurative graphics and coloured drawings). Whereas the art of calligraphy was regarded, for religious reasons, as the only superior form of graphic expression prior to the sixteenth century, this view began to give way to the theory of equivalence of the two *qalams*: the vegetal, the *ney-qalam* (the reed pen of the calligrapher), and the animal, the *qalammū* (the brush of the artist).

The first person to propound this theory was a native of Shiraz, the poet, historian and man of letters, Zayn al-<sup>c</sup>Ābidīn <sup>c</sup>Alī, known as <sup>c</sup>Abdī Beg Shīrāzī (1515–80), in his poem *Ā'īna-i Iskandarī* [Alexander's Looking-glass] of c. 950/1543–4.<sup>3</sup> His concept was developed further in 1544 by Dūst Muhammad Herawī in his famous *Muqaddama* [Introduction] to the *Muraqqa<sup>c</sup>* [Album] of Bahrām Mīrāzā (d. 1546),<sup>4</sup> in which it is noted that <sup>c</sup>Alī (the first Imām)' was the first to draw back the curtain before painting and illustration'. Thirteen years later in 1557, his younger contemporary, Qutb al-Dīn Muhammad Yazdī Qissa-khwān, wrote of this view in his introduction to the *Muraqqa<sup>c</sup>* that he composed for Shāh Tahmāsp I (1524–76), as if it were already a generally accepted notion.<sup>5</sup> At the end of the century <sup>c</sup>Alī was depicted in the celebrated treatise (1595) of Qāzī Ahmad Qumī as the patron and virtuoso practitioner of two arts: the written art, calligraphy, and the ornamental and graphic art, painting.<sup>6</sup>

Naturally, the change in society's aesthetic and ideological view of the artist's work ran parallel to changes in the artist's own awareness of the prestige and significance of his work. This reciprocal process first revealed itself in the increasingly frequent practice among artists of signing and dating their works, in the manner of calligraphers. In previous centuries this had been an extremely rare occurrence. At the same time, the growing interest shown by society in the person and individuality of the artist was reflected in contemporary written sources whose authors devoted essays to artists' works, recording not only the specific traits of their skill and their character, but also the novelty and originality of their works. References of the latter sort may be interpreted as evidence of a desire to revise the aesthetic canons of classical Persian painting.

<sup>3</sup> <sup>c</sup>Abdī Beg Shīrāzī, 1977, p. 103; Adle, 1982, p. 217 and notes 76 and 82; 1993, pp. 222, 294.

<sup>4</sup> Herawī, MS, fols. 14a–b; for more details on this album, see Adle, 1990, pp. 219–56.

<sup>5</sup> Qutb al-Dīn, MS, pp. 393–408, pp. 394, 397–8; see also Adle, 1993, pp. 222–3; Akimushkin, 1995, pp. 6–7.

<sup>6</sup> Qāzī Ahmad, 1352/1973, pp. 3–5, 129.

Artistic life under the Safavids also gave rise to a type of book which, from the middle of the sixteenth century, very quickly acquired great popularity and prestige. This was the *muraqqa*<sup>c</sup>, or compilation of albums containing miniatures or delicately coloured drawings on separate sheets, which were often mounted together with examples of the work of renowned calligraphers (either on the verso or alternate accordion folds). If such albums were at first produced exclusively for the upper reaches of society, towards the end of the sixteenth century their readership extended to groups occupying lower rungs on the ladder. The unimpeded, widespread circulation of miniatures on separate sheets made it possible to compile albums with different time-frames (for example, the works of old masters, contemporaries, single schools, single movements).

Such is the variety of schools, styles, techniques and trends in the painting of the Safavid era that the art form may be analysed in terms of its territorial and chronological dimensions, for each expression of this variety was associated with a specific atelier, a certain town and a particular period.

#### TABRIZ (1502 TO 1548–9)

##### Shāh Ismāʿīl I's *kitāb-khāna*

To judge by the works that have come down to us, Shāh Ismāʿīl I preserved the *kitāb-khāna* (court library) of the Āq Qoyūnlū, which had a staff of 38 in 1476,<sup>7</sup> and attached it to his own court after taking Tabriz in 1501, inasmuch as the style of the ‘Turkmen’ court miniature did not undergo any appreciable changes until the 1520s. This stage was precisely recorded by the miniatures of Nizāmī’s *Khamsa* [Quintet of Poetical Works] (Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Museum, H. 762). This manuscript was copied for Yaʿqūb Āq Qoyūnlū (d. 1490) in 1481; it contains 19 miniatures (initially there were 22, 3 of which are now in the Keir Collection in London, including 1 which is dated 910/1504–5). Ten miniatures were executed at Tabriz in Yaʿqūb’s time and are perfect examples of the Turkmen court miniatures at the end of the fifteenth century, whereas 9 were produced in the reign of Ismāʿīl I. These miniatures exhibit virtually the same style, having been executed by artists of the *kitāb-khāna* with characteristic elegance, a decorative quality and imaginary landscapes. The only difference is that the figures in the 9 later paintings are wearing the typical elongated Safavid turban, the *tāj-i heydarī*. It is thought that the young artist Sultān Muhammad produced a number of miniatures for this manuscript. His is the large miniature ‘Sleeping Rustam’ (London, British Museum, MS. 1948.12-11-023) from a dismembered (or unfinished) copy of the *Shāh-nāma* [Book of Kings] by Firdausi (d. c. 1020). This outstanding

<sup>7</sup> Davānī, MS no. C 692, fols. 616–75a; Minorsky, 1939, p. 162.

miniature, which is entirely within the painting tradition of the 'Turkmen' style, is executed with a broad palette and is also notable for its inanimate landscape, which plays a role equivalent to that of the main protagonists.

Although the manuscript of the *Dāstān-i Jamāl o Jalāl* by Āsafī was copied in Herat in 908/1502–3 (it is now in Uppsala University Library, O. Nova. 2), most of the 34 miniatures that adorn it were produced in the reign of Ismāʿīl I in Tabriz. They are clearly 'Turkmen' in style and execution, but 2 of them are dated 909/1503–4 and 910/1504–5, and many of the figures in these pictures are wearing the typical *tāj-i heydarī*. Only a few of the miniatures are executed in traditions resembling those of the Herat style at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Another manuscript which is undoubtedly associated with the *kitāb-khāna* of Ismāʿīl I in Tabriz is the *Dīwān-i khatāʾī* (a collection of poems by Ismāʿīl I). This manuscript (Washington, D.C., Sackler Gallery, S. 86.0060), which has aged considerably and has many lacunae, contains only 3 small miniatures, presenting idealized court scenes. They are more conventional (or less refined) in their composition than the miniatures of the 1481 *Khamṣa*. This manuscript may clearly be associated with a direct order from Ismāʿīl. On the strength of the available evidence, it would seem that a further manuscript of Nizāmī's *Khamṣa* (Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Museum, A 3559) was copied on the instructions of Ismāʿīl by Shāh Mahmūd Neshāpurī, who subsequently became a calligrapher of renown. This manuscript is illustrated with 74 miniatures, executed at a later date under Tahmāsp I, according to the canons of the early Safavid Tabriz style.

We do not know how many artists worked in the *kitāb-khāna* at Ismāʿīl's court but we do know that, in addition to local artists, it included masters who had come from Herat even before Ismāʿīl took the city in 1510. The young Sultān Muhammad was successfully employed in the *kitāb-khāna*, adhering mainly to the late fifteenth-century Tabriz style in his work. There were also calligraphers such as Shāh Mahmūd Neshāpurī and his teacher ʿAbdī Neshāpurī. It would appear that Ismāʿīl I devoted particular attention to the court atelier towards the end of his life, obviously realizing the importance of large and lavish books as instruments of dynastic propaganda.

In 1522 Ismāʿīl appointed as the head of the *kitāb-khāna* the remarkable artist from Herat, Kamālu'ddīn Bihzād (c. 1455–1536), whose arrival in Tabriz in the suite of the young Tahmāsp clearly coincided with this appointment. Prior to his arrival the work of the *kitāb-khāna* had been directed, since 1517, by Shamsu'ddīn Muhammad al-Khazzānī. There is no doubt that Tahmāsp's suite included a sizeable contingent of manuscript-masters from Herat. Among these artists were not only the pupils and followers of Bihzād but also masters from another atelier, which had functioned in Herat alongside the court

atelier. The painting of these artists was not so lively, light or realistic, being duller, stiffer and more academic, recalling the style of the period before Bihzād. None the less, these masters and their works played a vital part in the establishment of the school of Turkish (Ottoman) court painting between 1510 and 1540.

Some of the Herat masters joined the staff of the *kitāb-khāna*, now headed by Bihzād, whose role henceforth was essentially that of mentor. Bihzād himself worked much less than before. Clearly, he was occupied with his pupils, retouching and putting the finishing touches to paintings (see below the diptych ‘Gūy va Chaugān’ [Ball and Stick] and also the miniature of 1523, now in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.).

### Shāh Tahmāsp I's *kitāb-khāna*

On his accession to the throne in 1524, Shāh Tahmāsp I inherited the *kitāb-khāna*, which continued to function at his court for almost all of the next quarter of a century. Naturally, its work was guided in the first instance by the aesthetic views of its patron, who wielded both brush and reed and was a connoisseur of the art of the manuscript. Moreover, Tahmāsp's tastes were influenced by the views and experience of Bihzād, whom he regarded with unconditional reverence. Thus two main schools of painting were now to be found in the court atelier of Tabriz: the Turkmen court school and the Herat school of Bihzād. The process by which they were to be fused into the new, early Safavid style proceeded through several grandiose and ambitious projects on which the members of the two schools collaborated.

The first of these projects was the great manuscript of Firdausi's *Shāh-nāma* executed for Tahmāsp I and referred to as the *Shāh-nāma-i Shāhī*. The manuscript was dismembered by Houghton, a former owner, and its folios are now to be found in various state and private collections, including 78 miniatures in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and 118 miniatures in Tehran. These 118 paintings and nearly the whole text were acquired by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1994. It is quite possible that Tahmāsp's father initiated the project that resulted in the making of the *Shāh-nāma*. The large-format manuscript (470×318 mm) contains 258 miniatures, which were executed over a lengthy period, from c. 1522 to the beginning of the 1540s. Towards the end of this period, some of the artists were already engaged in work on another project. Neither the name of the copyist nor the date of completion is known. All of the margins are coloured and sprinkled with gold (*zar-afshān*). Only 1 miniature (‘Ardashīr and Gulnār’, fol. 516a) bears the date of completion (934/1527–8), whereas 2 of them have attributive notes with the names of the artists: ‘Manuchihr on the Throne’ (fol. 60b), attributed to Mīr Musavvir, and ‘Haftvād and the Worm’ (fol. 521b), attributed to Dūst Muhammad (Dīvāna). In Welch's view, a

total of 15 artists worked on the miniatures at various times, including such masters as Sultān Muhammad, Mīr Musavvir, Dūst Muhammad Dīvāna, Āqā Mīrak, °Abdu'l Samad, Muzaffar °Alī, Mīrzā °Alī, Shaykh Muhammad and Mīr Sayyid °Alī.<sup>8</sup>

Evidently, this project was initially directed by Sultān Muhammad, to whom all experts unanimously attribute the miniature ‘The Court of Kayumars’ (fol. 20b) (Fig. 1). This miniature is magnificent in terms of its style and clearly displays the innovative tech-



Fig. 1. The court of Kayumars, from the *Shāh-nāma-i Shāhī* (Shāh Tahmāsp's *Shāh-nāma* by Firdausi), c. 1522–40, fol. 20b. (Photo: © From the Collection of Prince and Princess Sadruddin Aga Khan.)

<sup>8</sup> Dickson and Welch, 1981.

nique of Sultān Muhammad in its free, allround composition of the action. Thereafter, the work was conducted under the supervision of Āqā Mīrak and Mīr Musavvir. In spite of the grandiose scale of the project, it must be noted that the quality of the miniatures is extremely uneven. Some of them are unquestionably excellent, others are first-class while a third group are ordinary and conventional. The manuscript of the Tahmāsp *Shāh-nāma* was a masterpiece of the Tabriz *kitāb-khāna* that was never surpassed; the miniatures it contains reflect practically all of the stylistic trends of Persian book painting at various stages of its development from the 1480s and 1490s onwards, including the early Safavid Tabriz style.

Another masterpiece that does not bear the name of the calligrapher and may have been part of a second project is the undated and now dismantled manuscript of the *Dīwān-i Hāfiz* of c. 1527, formerly in the Cartier private collection. The manuscript was clearly executed in Tabriz although one of the four miniatures (there were originally five), the ‘Feast of Ālīd’, painted by Sultān Muhammad, is dedicated to Sām Mīrzā, the brother of Tahmāsp I, who ruled in Herat from 1522 to 1527. The miniatures in this manuscript clearly show the differences between the two schools: the Turkmen court school and the Herat school of Bihzād.

Another manuscript of Firdausi’s *Shāh-nāma* (St Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Studies, MS. D184) (Fig. 2) was copied at a slightly earlier date (931/1524) in Tabriz, and contains 27 miniatures, the work of between 4 and 6 artists engaged in the project of the Tahmāsp *Shāh-nāma*. The manuscript is remarkable in that it records some artistic trends, the convergence and adaptation of certain styles and the first steps in the formation of the style that was later to be known as the early Safavid style, that is to say, the Tabriz school of the first half of the sixteenth century.

In the year 931/1524–5, the 12-year-old Tahmāsp I copied the poem *Gūy va Chaugān* by Ārifī. This delightful, small (290×190 mm), exquisitely decorated manuscript (St Petersburg, Russian National Library, MS. Dorn 441) is adorned with 19 miniatures, the work of Bihzād and 4 other leading artists of the atelier. The miniatures are not signed but it is thought that Bihzād put the finishing touches to the diptych (fols. 1b, 2a) and that the artist Sultān Muhammad painted 7 miniatures, 3 of which he executed jointly with the young shah. Āqā Mīrak painted 3, Mīr Musavvir, 1, and Dūst Dīvāna, 6 miniatures.

Another equally outstanding manuscript is the Nizāmī *Khamṣa* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 13.288.7) copied by the calligrapher Sultān Muhammad-i Nūr in the same year, 931/1524–5. Most of the 16 miniatures in this manuscript are believed to be the work of Shaykhzāda. To him are also attributed the 5 or 6 miniatures in the



Fig. 2. Iskandar in search of the water of life. Folio from Firdausi's *Shāh-nāma*, 931/1524. Calligrapher Muhammad al-Herawī. Tabriz. (Photo: Courtesy of the St Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, MS. D184, fol. 388a.)

manuscript of the *Dīwān-i Nawā'ī* [Collection of Poems by °Alīshīr Nawā'ī] copied in Herat in 933/1526–7 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Suppl. Turc 316–317).

Another ambitious project undertaken in the Tabriz *kitāb-khāna* was the manuscript of Nizāmī's *Khamsa*. This was executed by the master calligrapher Shāh Mahmūd Neshāpūrī between 1539 and 1543. The manuscript is a true masterpiece of the art of the book. It measures 360×250 mm and is decorated with 14 miniatures (of the 3 that have been removed from the manuscript, 2 are now in the Sackler Museum, Cambridge, Mass., and 1 in the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh). Muhammad Zamān from Qum added 3 more miniatures to the manuscript in 1675–6; none the less, it was never fully illustrated. The miniatures bear notes attributing them to the most famous artists of the *kitāb-khāna*: Sultān Muhammad and his son, Mīrzā °Alī. The name of Mīr Musavvir and the date 946/1539–40 are noted below a couplet in the miniature, 'Anūshirvān and his Vizier Contemplate the Ruins'. In principle, the *Khamsa* provides the most complete picture of the Tabriz style as it developed, although, at the same time, it may be noted that the main components of early Safavid painting are closely linked with both the Turkmen court style and the Herat style of Bihzād.

Dūst Muhammad Herawī provides a very detailed account of the establishment of Tahmāsp's court library, naming the leading masters who worked there in 951/1544–5. Taking into account the reports of other sources, it would appear that there were in all 21

masters working in the library (calligraphers, painters, copiers, etc.). This figure takes no account, of course, of pupils and apprentices. Bihzād was succeeded as head of the atelier by Nūr al-Dīn Muhammad Mu'min, who departed for India when the atelier was dissolved.

Tahmāsp I, who was obsessed by the fact that the Ottomans had managed to take Tabriz in 1548, decided to move the capital to the town of Qazvin, further from the theatre of any possible military operations. It was evidently at that time (if not later, in 1549), that Tahmāsp lost interest in his creation, the *kitāb-khāna*, in which at least two generations of remarkable masters had worked for a quarter of a century. They were virtually dismissed, with the exception of the calligrapher Dūst Muhammad, who was retained in the shah's service.

The masters dispersed throughout the region in search of work and patrons. Some of them travelled to Istanbul; others to Kabul to Bābur's successor, Humāyūn, in exile; and yet others to the courts of the independent rulers of the Deccan. Lastly, a few settled in Qazvin, where they continued to work within the canons of the Tabriz style. According to the sources, Tahmāsp reconstituted the *kitāb-khāna* in Qazvin in the early 1560s, but its output was much smaller and less intense than what it had been in Tabriz.<sup>9</sup> None the less, it could count 10 'masters of brush and pen', including the calligraphers Mālik Daylamī and Khalīl Allāh Shāh, the gilders Hasan Baghdādī and °Abdullāh Shīrāzī and the painters Muzaffar °Alī, °Abdu'l Jabbār, Siyāvush Beg Gurjī, °Alī Asghar Kāshī and °Abdu'l °Azīz Kāshī. In all likelihood, it was within the walls of this *kitāb-khāna*, on the command of Tahmāsp, that the manuscript of the *Fāl-nāma* [Book of Auguries] was penned.<sup>10</sup>

### MASHHAD (c. 1550–89)

In 1556 Ibrāhīm Sultān (1543–77), the son of Tahmāsp's brother, Bahrām Mīrzā, was appointed governor of Mashhad, remaining in that post until 1564. On his arrival, this gifted youth commissioned from a number of masters a copy of the 7 poems, the *Haft Aurang* [Seven Thrones] by °Abdu'l Rahmān Jāmī. Work on this splendid manuscript (Washington D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, 46.12.) (Fig. 3)<sup>11</sup> continued, with interruptions, for 9 years (1556–65). The 7 poems were copied by outstanding calligraphers whose names have entered the pantheon. The entire manuscript was designed by °Abdullāh Shīrāzī. The work contains 28 superb miniatures, evidently executed by 6 painters. The miniatures differ in style and execution: if some may be compared with the work of the Tabriz school

<sup>9</sup> Stchoukine, 1959, pp. 86–98.

<sup>10</sup> This large-format work (590×445 mm) has not survived intact but some unsigned miniatures (about 28) are extant. One of these is now in Geneva (Museum of Art and History, N 1971–107/35).

<sup>11</sup> Simpson, 1982, pp. 93–119.



Fig. 3. Folio from the *Haft Aurang* by Abdu'l Rahmān Jāmī, 1556–65. Mashhad. (Photo: © Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Purchase F1946.12. 132a)

at its height, others reveal a new and original trend in their conception and execution. The miniatures contained in the *Haft Aurang* reflect the increasing trend towards a languorous style that was later to become the main ingredient in the traditional painting of the Isfahan school for the whole of the seventeenth century.

Naturally, the output of Ibrāhīm Sultān's atelier could not be compared with that of the court *kitāb-khāna* in Tabriz. The works produced in the Mashhad style include a large double miniature: a frontispiece illustrating a hunting scene (depicting Ibrāhīm Sultān?) and pasted into the manuscript of the *Silsilat al-zahab* [The Golden Chain] by ʿAbd al-Rahmān Jāmī (St Petersburg, Russian National Library, MS. Dorn. 434, fols. 1b-2a). The diptych, which was evidently painted around 1560–5, is very similar in style to the Mashhad school and highly reminiscent of the hand of Mīrzā ʿAlī.

### QAZVIN (1550–98)

A new school was formed in Qazvin in the 1560s and early 1570s, chiefly through the efforts of a new generation of artists who were not constrained by the traditions of Tabriz;

the style and canon of this new school were described by Stchoukine as baroque.<sup>12</sup> This decorative style was most strikingly expressed in individual miniatures and coloured drawings on separate sheets, often depicting single figures or young couples. These drawings represent a search for the ideal beauty of youth and sensual allure. There is therefore no question of any attempt at portraiture. And yet these drawings are, to some extent, ethnographic, showing everyday clothes, dress uniforms, military equipment, horses' harnesses and so on. The technique employed in their execution is of the highest order: sure, crisp lines and contours and a palette that sharply defines the figures against the background of a very schematic landscape. This genre was pioneered by Muhammadī, a remarkable painter from Herat whose work significantly anticipated and predetermined the style employed in the genre in Isfahan during the first half of the seventeenth century. It is worth noting that the tradition of lavish illustrated manuscripts persisted albeit on a much reduced scale.

On his accession to the throne, Shāh Ismāʿīl II, who ruled for just one and a half years (1576–7), almost immediately set about the reorganization of the court *kitāb-khāna*, in which, according to the sources, 12 artists worked together with 2 calligraphers and 2 gilders (*muzahhebs*).<sup>13</sup> The head of the *kitāb-khāna* was clearly Mīr Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, Sultān Muhammad's nephew. The new establishment was instructed to produce a large manuscript of the *Shāh-nāma*. At first, the project was directed by the well-known if very elderly Muzaffar ʿAlī, who enlisted the services of his pupils, Sādiqī Beg Afshār and Siyāvush Beg Gurjī. This manuscript was evidently never completed. Fifty-two miniatures remain. All of them have attribution marks, applied by the same hand – obviously the *kitābdār* (librarian) – and corresponding to the names of 8 masters: Sādiqī Beg and Siyāvush Beg (mentioned above), Naqdī, Murād, Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, Mihrāb, ʿAlī Asghar Kāshānī and Burjī.<sup>14</sup> The miniatures were executed in a highly professional manner in the typical style of the Qazvin school. They are not notable for any particular individuality but neither do they appear especially refined or mannered.

The death of Ismāʿīl II obliged the master craftsmen to leave the court *kitāb-khāna* since the shah's elder brother and successor, Sultān Muhammad Khudābanda (1578–87), showed no interest in it. In search of employment, they had to disperse throughout the land to the courts of the local rulers (Gilan, Mazandaran) and Safavid governors (Mashhad, Shiraz). Some of them found refuge in Herat with the khans of the Shāmlū clan. Thus Muhammadi Musavvir painted in Herat the portrait of the first regent of the future Shāh ʿAbbās, ʿAlī

<sup>12</sup> Stchoukine, 1959, pp. 89–90, 145, 162–3, 181–2, 192–3.

<sup>13</sup> A. Welch, 1976, pp. 162–3; Robinson, 1976, pp. 1–8.

<sup>14</sup> Robinson, 1976, p. 108; 1988, pp. 125–8.

Qulī Khān, who was killed in 1588.<sup>15</sup> During the period from 1588 to 1598, these masters of the manuscript book continued to work in Herat under the Shaybanid rulers, paying occasional visits to Bukhara, Balkh and Samarkand, where they exercised an important influence on the formation of the new Bukhara school of the seventeenth century.

During the period from 1598 to 1620, after Shāh ʿAbbās I (1587–1629) had restored Khurasan to the fold of the Safavid empire, a *kitāb-khāna* functioned at the court of the Shāmlū governors, Husayn Khān and his son Hasan. This atelier produced 20 or so extremely fine manuscripts: a *Shāh-nāma* of 1008/1599 with 44 miniatures (Sotheby, Sale Catalogue, New York, 2 May 1975), a *Dīwān-i Hāfiz* (Windsor Castle, Royal Library, N RSIN.10050.17) and an *Iskandar-nāma* [The Book of Alexander] of Nizāmī (Tehran, Golestan Palace Library, N566). The miniatures in these manuscripts are eclectic: landscapes in the Qazvin-Mashhad style are to be found alongside classical Herat sixteenth-century compositions; the treatment of human figures, their clothes and, particularly, their faces appears to anticipate the Isfahan style of the seventeenth century even though the paintings are executed in the traditions of the classical Persian miniature of the sixteenth century.

## PROVINCIAL STYLES

### Shiraz (c. 1500–c. 1640)

Shiraz was always the main centre in Iran producing fine manuscripts for sale in a trade which apparently had its beginnings in the 1340s. It managed to preserve its status as the centre for this trade up until the middle of the seventeenth century: the colophons of a number of manuscripts indicate the presence of private ateliers producing manuscripts for the market between 1625 and 1745.<sup>16</sup> The time-tested 'commercial style' was maintained under the Safavids: in the first quarter of the sixteenth century it was practically unchanged, retaining its 'Turkmen' stylistic features, although the distinctive Safavid headgear, the *tāj-i heydarī*, made its appearance in the miniatures. The figures became less thickset and assumed more elegant proportions; the round Turkmen turban was replaced with an elongated version.

The Safavid commercial style of Shiraz took shape towards the end of the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Compared with the metropolitan style of Tabriz or Mashhad-Qazvin it appeared provincial, continuing the tradition of two-dimensional representation.

<sup>15</sup> Iskandar Beg Munshī, 1334–6/1955–7, Vol. 2, pp. 337–8; A. Welch, 1976, p. 174, note 41.

<sup>16</sup> For example, a scribe called Muhammad Husayn Dār al-Marzī pointed out in the colophon of Nizāmī's *Khamsa* that he had transcribed the book in the private workshop of Lutfallāh the gilder at Shiraz in 1034/1627 (Bayānī, 1363/1984, p. 684).

However, the manuscripts retained a high level of artistry and decorativeness. They were also highly striking. Shirazi artists occasionally travelled to the capital, where they worked on various projects with their resident colleagues. Thus the *Shāh-nāma* of Ismāʿīl II, the *Haft Aurang* of Ibrāhīm Sultān, referred to above, and the *Shāh-nāma* of 1580–5 (Windsor Castle, Royal Library, Holms 150 A/5), with its 88 miniatures, were clearly products of the Shiraz school in the case of 3 of the 4 artists concerned. On their return, they brought to their work in Shiraz some of the experience they had acquired of the style practised in the capital.

At the same time, the enormous number of manuscripts produced in Shiraz, which were alike both in terms of pictorial technique and style of the miniatures, and also the remarkable similarity of the *nastaʿlīq* (sloping style of script developed in the fifteenth century for writing Persian), demonstrates that the quality of manuscript production, if not of the first order, was genuinely satisfactory and that manuscripts were turned out in a constant stream. The considerable output can hardly be ascribed to two or three ateliers, such as, for example, the one located near the grave of Husāmuʿddīn Ibrāhīm. An explanation was furnished by Budāq Munshī of Qazvin, who noted in 1576:

The author [of these lines] travelled to Shiraz and verified that in every family in Shiraz the wife is indeed a copier, the husband a painter, the daughter a book designer and the son a binder. Any book, if it is so wished, may be produced by a single family. Should anyone wish for 1,000 illuminated books, they will certainly be delivered from Shiraz within the year. And all alike, so that it is impossible to spot any differences.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, in addition to private ateliers, there was in fact a widespread practice of home-based manuscript production.

It is worth noting that, in the course of several generations during the fifteenth and the first third of the sixteenth centuries, ‘masters of the pen’ developed a particular style of *nastaʿlīq* writing which has not been recognized by connoisseurs inasmuch as it was not flowing and elegant or an expression of individual skill. It did, however, supply what was needed for a continuous flow of manuscripts: professional clarity and conciseness, compactness and legibility. The members of these families bore such common names as Qawām, Murshid, Munʿim and Auhadī. It is quite probable that some of these masters practised two professions: calligrapher and decorator, or painter and decorator.

One distinguishing feature of the miniatures painted in Shiraz was the relationship of the written text to the miniatures on the page. These mathematical proportions were observed in Shiraz from the 1530s. Horizontally, the miniature, including the text, represented three-fifths of the total height of the page (Fig. 4). The page was divided into three sections

<sup>17</sup> Akimushkin, 1994a, pp. 456, 483.

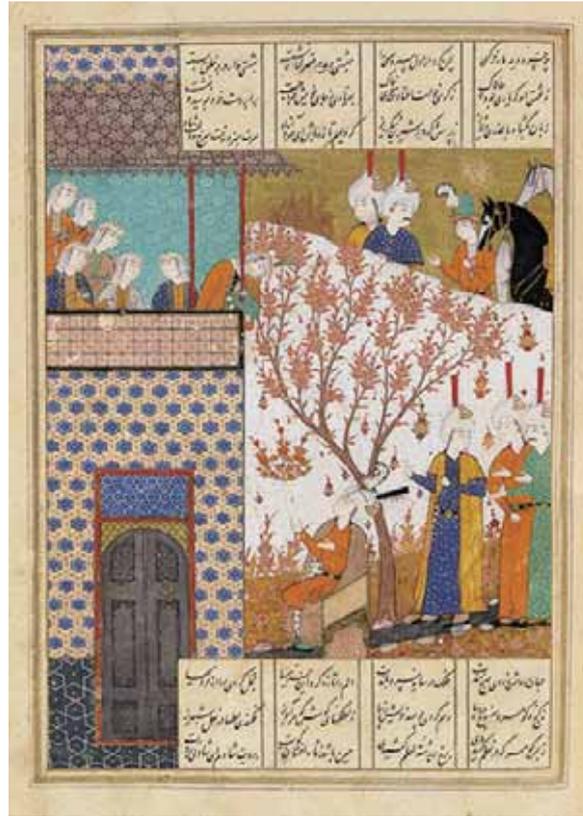


Fig. 4. Khusrau in front of Shīrīn's castle. *Khamsa* of Nīzāmī. Shiraz. (Photo: Courtesy of the St Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, MS. D212, fol. 91a.)

by two blocks of text and the miniature projected outwards (to the left or right) beyond the framed text and extended vertically over its full length, thus creating the typical T-configuration of the entire field. It is also worth noting the somewhat less striking, toned-down palette typical of the Shiraz school, which otherwise preserved its characteristic traits with practically no changes until the 1630s.<sup>18</sup> The manuscript of Siyāqī-Nīzāmī's *Futūhāt-i Humāyūn* [August Victories], painted in Shiraz at the beginning of the seventeenth century, is a good example of this style.<sup>19</sup>

#### Khurasan and Astarabad (1560–1620)

A considerable number of illustrated, well-designed and copied manuscripts were produced in Khurasan in the period 1560–1600, in places that were not far apart (according to their colophons, in Herat, Bākhaz and Mālān). The style of the miniatures of this provincial school was highly simplified and represented a blend of the Mashhad style in the days

<sup>18</sup> This particularity was noticed and studied by G. D. Guest and analysed in detail by B. W. Robinson. See Guest, 1949; Robinson, 1979, pp. 105–8.

<sup>19</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris, Suppl. Pers. 226); see Adle, 1975.

of Ibrāhīm Mīrzā and the style associated with the brush of Muhammadīn Herat. The size of the output suggests that most of the manuscripts were made for export to Central Asia (Bukhara) and to Mughal India and the Deccan. This supposition is reinforced by the fact that the margins of some of the manuscripts are designed in the fashion that was popular in Bukhara: wide, tinted, cardboard margins with painted and gilt stencilled patterns. As noted by Robinson,<sup>20</sup> the style is characterized by confident drawing and a firm line recalling the technique of Muhammadī; the decorativeness of the miniatures is reduced to a minimum, with bubble-shaped hills in a simple landscape dominated by the greenish and pale blue tone of the foreground.

A relatively small group, consisting almost entirely of manuscripts of the *Shāh-nāma*, was produced in Astarabad between the 1560s and the 1640s. The miniatures contained in these manuscripts are naive in a provincial fashion but are well designed with a strict composition and some claim to originality in their development of the subject. The palette is one of bright tints and sharp contrasts.<sup>21</sup>

#### ISFAHAN (c. 1598–c. 1700)

Soon after his accession to the throne in 1587, Shāh °Abbās I re-created the court *kitāb-khāna* in Qazvin and many masters of the manuscript book who had previously worked under Tahmāsp I, Ibrāhīm Mīrzā and Ismā°il II again found employment there. The *kitāb-khāna* was headed by Sādiqī Beg Afshār (d. 1609–10). It almost immediately set to work on a manuscript of the *Shāh-nāma*, a fragment of which has survived (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, MS. N.277). This fragment consists of 21 sheets containing 16 miniatures (2 of which were added later in 1675–6 by Muhammad Zamān Qumī). It is thought that 14 of the miniatures were executed by 3 artists, 2 of whom achieved renown: Sādiqī Beg (who painted 3) and Rizā, the son of °Alī Asghar Kāshānī. Their work reflects the main features of contemporary painting. Sādiqī Beg’s most distinguished contribution to this *Shāh-nāma* is undoubtedly the large, full-page miniature, ‘Simurgh Carrying Zāl, the White-Haired Baby, to his Nest’: the subject is not only developed in an unusual manner in aesthetic terms but is also executed in a masterly fashion.

Experts agree that Sādiqī Beg made 107 coloured drawings in the manuscript of Kāshifī’s work *Anwār-i Suhaylī* [The Light of Canopus]. According to the colophon, where he is referred to as Sādiqī-i Musavvir (‘Sādiqī the Painter’), the manuscript was copied in 1002/1593 at his order (Fig. 5). Sādiqī Beg was removed from his post as head (*kitābdār*)

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, 1982, pp. 54–6.

<sup>21</sup> Robinson, 1982, pp. 54–6.



Fig. 5. The ducks carry the tortoise over a village, where all stop to stare. (Photo: © From the Collection of Prince and Princess Sadruddin Aga Khan, MS 40, fol. 89v.)

of Shāh Abbās' library<sup>22</sup> and was replaced by °Alī Rizā-i Tabrīzī, an equally renowned calligrapher and a skilful intriguer, whose plotting led to the death in 1615 of the last great master of *nasta'liq*, Mīr °Imād of Qazvin.<sup>23</sup>

The same period witnessed the rapid rise to fame and popularity of the remarkable young painter Āqā Rizā, the son of °Alī Asghar of Kashan (d. 1635), who, at the turn of the seventeenth century, took the name Rizā-i °Abbāsī.<sup>24</sup> This artist gradually brought in a style based on a new aesthetic vision of the ideal beauty of youth, a vision that was to dominate Persian traditional painting throughout almost all of the seventeenth century (Fig. 6). Although Rizā-i °Abbāsī began in the traditional manner, working on miniatures for books (for example, the *Shāh-nāma* of °Abbās I), he soon switched to single, separate miniatures and drawings, to which he was to devote most of his attention throughout his career. Nevertheless, he also produced illustrations for books from time to time, at least

<sup>22</sup> A. Welch, 1976, pp. 54–70.

<sup>23</sup> Akimushkin, 1996, p. 43.

<sup>24</sup> Stchoukine, 1964, pp. 85–133; Canby, 1996.

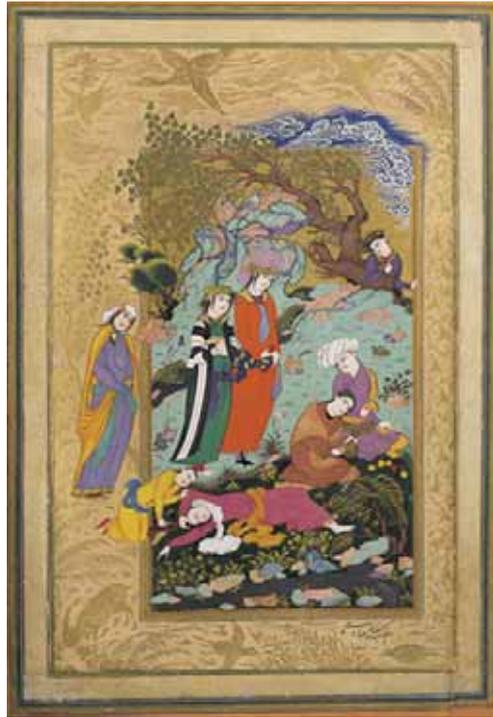


Fig. 6. A convivial party by Rizā-i Abbāsī, 1020/1612. Isfahan. Photo: © Terebenin (Hermitage, St. Petersburg)

five of which are known. These include Nizāmī's *Khusrau va Shīrīn* (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 364–1885 and 1613–1964); a *Dīwān-i Hāfiz* (c. 1617–19; Tehran, National Museum of Iran, N. 4323); and a *Makhzan al-asrār* [Repository of Secrets] (1614) of Haydar-i Khwārazmī.<sup>25</sup> His early work (up to 1605) includes a graceful and elegant miniature entitled 'Girl in a Fur Hat' (St Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, V P705) (Fig. 7), dated 1011/1602–3. The superb miniatures 'The Shepherd' (St Petersburg, Russian National Library, MS. Dorn. 489, fol. 73b), dated 1043/1634, and 'Portrait of a Man' (St Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Studies, MS. D181, fol. 16a), dated 1044/1634, are among the best works of the artist's later years. Rizā-i Abbāsī was undoubtedly one of the most talented artists and draughtsmen in the history of Persian painting and was acknowledged as the head of the Isfahan school.

At the time when the capital was transferred to Isfahan in 1598, certain masters of the older generation such as Habīb Allāh of Mashhad and Muhammad Husayn of Isfahan were also employed in the *kitāb-khāna*. It was Habīb Allāh who painted a miniature entitled 'Mantiq al-tair' [The Conference of the Birds] in the manuscript of the work of the same name by Attār (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, MS. 63.210, fol. 11a). While 3 of

<sup>25</sup> Soudavar, 1992, pp. 275–81.



Fig. 7. Girl in a fur hat by Rizā-i Abbāsī, 1011/1602–03. Isfahan. Photo: © Terebenin (Hermitage, St. Petersburg)

the 4 miniatures of the book contain elements of the Qazvin- Isfahan and, to some extent, of the Timurid style, the work of Habīb Allāh remains particularly Timurid in style. The Timurid masters were also followed in the making of the 44 miniatures of the *Shāh-nāma* in the New York Public Library (Spencer Collection),<sup>26</sup> personally commissioned by Shāh Abbās in 1614. All are stylized copies of the Bāysunqur *Shāh-nāma* of 1430 (Tehran, Golestan Palace Library, MS. 716).

It is extremely difficult to say with any certainty which of the masters who usually adhered to the style of Rizā-i Abbāsī were his pupils and which his followers. Muhammad Muḥṣin unquestionably belongs in the first category. His creative activity in the course of a long life was nothing short of phenomenal: his earliest known work is dated 1638 and the latest 1705. All of his works bear dated annotations (often in very great detail). In technique and style, Muḥṣin's early miniatures strongly resemble the works of Rizā-i Abbāsī (Fig. 8). However, by the beginning of the 1640s, Muḥṣin had developed his own individual style, which was light and lively. Curiously, towards the end of his life, he partially absorbed some of the stylistic trends that had arrived from Europe.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Grube, 1964, pp. 9–28; Robinson, 1982, p. 66.

<sup>27</sup> For an example of his work dated 1655, see A. Welch and S. C. Welch, 1982, pp. 117–20.



Fig. 8. Portrait of Tīmūr Khān Turkmān. Begun in 1002/1593–4 by Sādiqī Afshār and completed in 1095/1683 by Mu<sup>c</sup>īn Musavvir. Isfahan. (Photo: Courtesy of the St Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, MS. D181, fol. 16a.)

The followers of Rizā-i <sup>c</sup>Abbāsī and Muhammad Mu<sup>c</sup>īn undoubtedly represent a galaxy of fine artists: Muhammad Yūsuf, Muhammad Qāsim, Muhammad <sup>c</sup>Alī and Shafī<sup>c</sup> <sup>c</sup>Abbāsī (the son of Rizā-i <sup>c</sup>Abbāsī). Among their contemporaries were two highly talented artists, Afzal al-Husaynī from Tun and Pīr Muhammad al-Hāfiz, who signed some of the 192 excellent miniatures in the large-format *Shāh-nāma* in St Petersburg (Russian National Library, MS. Dorn. 333). This manuscript was copied by the calligrapher Muhammad Shafī<sup>c</sup> b. <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l Jabbār between 1642 and 1651. In works bearing the signature of Afzal al-Husaynī there are, however, clear signs of decadence.

#### European influences on the school of Isfahan (c. 1640–1722)

Alongside the traditional movement in Persian painting, which was represented by several schools (the style of Rizā-i <sup>c</sup>Abbāsī remaining dominant), a new trend, influenced by European painting, took shape in Isfahan at the end of the first half of the seventeenth century. Persian artists had in fact developed an interest in European painting as early as the mid-sixteenth century and Shaykh Muhammad of Shiraz had copied works by European painters at that time.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Stchoukine, 1959, pp. 46–7; 1964, p. 82.

The growth of diplomatic and commercial relations with various European countries could not fail to stimulate interest in European art and culture and in the people's way of life. This new-found interest was reflected in the miniature. New subjects were chosen, depicting European figures. The influence of European painting, which also came via India, grew steadily as Western works of art made their appearance in Iran. Pictures and engravings by European masters were imported by ambassadors as gifts for the shah but also by merchants and missionaries. European artists came to Iran, probably as members of embassies and missions, and some of them remained to work in the country. The latter development was considerably assisted by the court's enthusiasm for European painting, which had become fashionable, and by the interest shown in it by the shah; it is known that Shāh ʿAbbās II (1642–66) took painting lessons from two European artists.<sup>29</sup>

Court and local artists did not let this occasion pass and at first made copies of European originals. They gradually learned the techniques of European painting such as linear perspective, chiaroscuro modelling and the use of light and scale to create the appearance of space, depth and volume. These borrowed techniques subsequently became integral features of the Persian miniature and Persian painting as a whole. Persian artists evidently learned all of these technical devices *in situ*, copying European models and studying with European artists who had come to Iran. There is no reliable information as to whether any of them studied painting independently in Europe at that time or were sent there for that purpose by the shah. Persian artists also absorbed a number of techniques from contemporary Indian (Mughal) painting: the realistic representation of fauna and flora, the striving to achieve a portrait likeness of their subject and the use of artificial lighting. It remains unclear whether they learned these aesthetic innovations in Iran or whether they absorbed them in India as, evidently, in the case of ʿAlī Qulī Beg Jabbādār.

The artist in whose work European features were most evident was Muhammad Zamān b. Hājī Yūsuf Qumī (d. c. 1700). As Ivanov convincingly demonstrated, Muhammad Zamān studied under a European artist in Isfahan and the report of his being sent by Shāh ʿAbbās II to study in Italy, where he adopted Christianity, is no more than a colourful legend.<sup>30</sup> He was apparently a highly gifted artist who diligently copied European originals in the traditional miniature form. He worked in the court atelier under Shāh Sulaymān (1666–94) and, probably, in the first years of the reign of Shāh Sultān Husayn (1694–1722). A fair number of his miniature copies have survived on separate sheets; there are also lacquer pen-cases (*qalamdāns*) and assorted beautifully painted articles made of papier mâché. The only examples of book miniatures by Muhammad Zamān are contained in two

<sup>29</sup> Ivanov, 1996, p. 34.

<sup>30</sup> Ivanov, 1979, pp. 65–70.

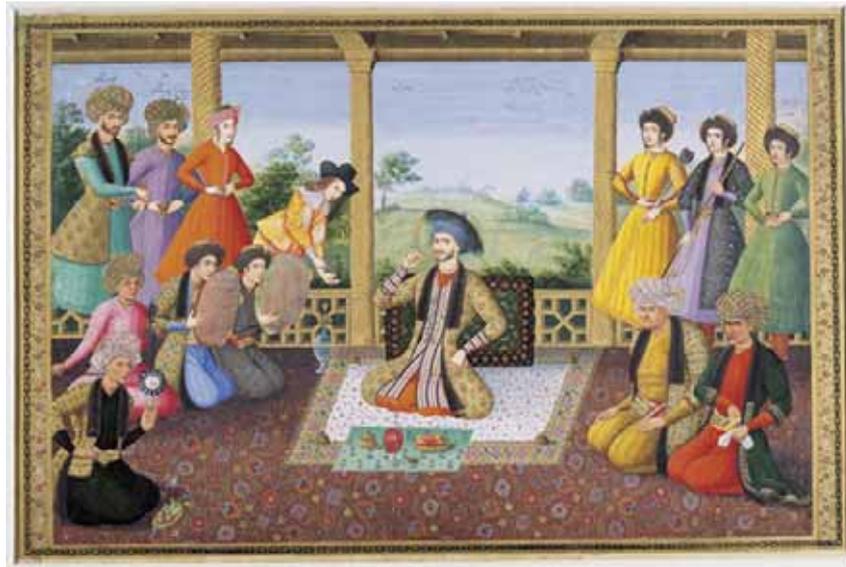


Fig. 9. The king and his courtiers by °Alī Qulī Jabbādār. European style of the school of Isfahan, c. 1670–5. (Photo: Courtesy of the St Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, MS. E14, fol. 98a.)

manuscripts produced long before his day: three miniatures added by him to the Nizāmī *Khamsa* of 1539–43, and two others, dated 1675–76, in a *Shāh-nāma* for °Abbas I.<sup>31</sup> His style is clearly recognizable and highly individual: he frequently introduces European background details and interiors into traditional Persian subjects.

Another leading figure in this movement was °Alī Qulī Beg Jabbādār. According to a note in the *Ātash-kada* [Fire-temple], he was a European or of European origin and a convert to Islam, who enjoyed a long career working at the court of three Safavid shahs: °Abbās II, Sulaymān and Sultān Husayn.<sup>32</sup> °Alī Qulī's style is also easy to recognize: his drawing is highly individual and is usually characterized by the lack of a clear calligraphic line. His style contains features of the Mughal school of the second half of the seventeenth century (Fig. 9).

Closely related in style to °Alī Qulī and using similar techniques were such contemporaries as Shaykh °Abbāsī, his son °Alī Naqī, Hājī Muhammad b. Ibrāhīm (Muhammad Zamān's brother)<sup>33</sup> and °Alī Muhammad (Muhammad Zamān's son), who was responsible for the portrait of Shāh Sultān Husayn that is now in the British Museum.<sup>34</sup>

An extremely interesting work of this period is the large-format *Shāh-nāma* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cochran 4, 13, 228.17), which was begun prior to 1663 and

<sup>31</sup> Ivanov, 1996, pp. 35–6.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>33</sup> Adle, 1980; *Elr.*, Vol. 1, pp. 86–8: °Abbāsī, Wayk– (R. Skelton).

<sup>34</sup> Robinson, 1982, p. 71.

completed in 1669. The calligrapher was Shaykh Muhammad b. Shamsu'ddīn. It contains 42 miniatures that were painted nearly a quarter of a century later and which, in Robinson's opinion,<sup>35</sup> may be divided stylistically into three groups. According to the ascriptions, Ghulām Pīr Beg, °Alī Naqīb. Shaykh °Abbāsī, Fazl °Alī and also, evidently, Muhammad Zamān worked on these miniatures in 1692–5, in addition to Mu°īn, who painted the great majority.

## The Afshars (1735–47) and the Zands (1747–94)

The lack of stability and the disorder within the country, the political turbulence and civil wars in eighteenth-century Iran were not conducive to the development of culture and the arts. The most dramatic change during this period was the enormous decline in the output of manuscript books, including, of course, illustrated books. Those that have survived from this time may be counted in single figures.<sup>36</sup> Artists turned to oil painting, and also to lacquer painting on pen-cases, covers for portable mirrors, book-covers and various sorts of papier mâché boxes, a technique that became very fashionable and popular. Two fine contemporary portraits of Nādir Shāh (1736–47), painted in oil in what is clearly the European fashion, are now in London (Victoria and Albert Museum, I.M. 201919; Commonwealth Relations Office).

The best artist in the second half of the eighteenth century was undoubtedly Muhammad Sādiq (Āqā Sādiq, Mullā Sādiq), whom Robinson considers to be the creator of a new style of painting known as the Qajar style.<sup>37</sup> Much of his work in oils was exhibited in Tehran in the former Negaristan Museum (now in the Sa°dābād Palace Museum). It is worth remembering that, at this time and in the first half of the nineteenth century, there were several artists working in Iran whose names included the element 'Sādiq'. Thus, a certain Muhammad Sādiq painted and signed 21 miniatures dated 1200/1785–6 in an album compiled at the beginning of nineteenth century (St Petersburg, Russian National Library, MS. PNS 383).

Another artist who worked in several genres (miniatures, lacquerware, objects, etc.) was Muhammad Bāqir Imāmī (Isfahānī). There is a portrait of Karīm Khān Zand (1750–79) painted in oils by him, now in Georgia (Tbilisi, State Museum of Art, N. 12).<sup>38</sup> Over 50

<sup>35</sup> Robinson, 1972, p. 73–86.

<sup>36</sup> See, for instance, regarding manuscript production, Monzavī's statistics about political disorder (cited in note 1); Mahdī Khān Astarābādī, 1341/1962; *Tārīkh-i Hazin*, 1332/1954.

<sup>37</sup> Robinson, 1982, p. 72.

<sup>38</sup> See photocopy of this portrait in Adamova, 1996, pp. 38, 84, Fig. 8.

of his works have survived, half of which are signed. Another artist of the same name is encountered in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In addition to the above-mentioned Sādiq and Bāqir, °Alī Ashraf, whose lacquerwork (a profusion of flowers of many sorts on a black background) was well known, also worked in Shiraz between 1730 and 1760. Other natives of Shiraz were Muhammad Hādī (d. c. 1822) and Lutf °Alī (1797–1869), whose lacquerware depicting flowers and birds (*gul o bulbul*) achieved enormous popularity under the Qajars (1795–1925).<sup>39</sup>

## The Qajars: from Āghā Muhammad Khān to Muhammad Shāh's reign (1795–1848)

The style that had taken shape in Shiraz in the second half of the eighteenth century under the Zands continued smoothly and practically unchanged under the Qajars. The only difference related to the depiction of interiors and the forms of the figures, including details of clothes and the sumptuous precious ornaments for which the Qajar period showed a particular predilection.

The Qajar period witnessed the triumph of large-scale oil painting. The first painter and leading artist at the Qajar court in this fashionable kind of art was Mīrzā Bābā, who had previously been in the service of the Qajar family at Astarabad. He painted some remarkable full-length oil portraits of Fath °Alī Shāh (1796–1834). He was also responsible for reviving the art of the book miniature, producing two portraits of the shah and his uncle, Āghā Muhammad, and designing the cover and margins of the manuscript of the *Dīwān-i Khāqān* [Royal Verse Collection], which was sent by Fath °Alī Shāh in 1812 as a gift to the future King George IV of England (Windsor Castle, Royal Library).<sup>40</sup> Another outstanding master was Mihr °Alī, who painted some ten portraits of the shah, including the seated portraits in oils of Fath °Alī, in the Sa°dābād Palace Museum in Tehran and the Hermitage (St Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, VP-1108). The latter work is dated 1229/1813–14.

The period of the first Qajars also saw the revival of large-scale thematic pictures with many figures as previously seen, for instance, in the Chehel Sotun Palace in Isfahan. The category includes two large paintings (oil and canvas) commissioned from an anonymous artist (c. 1815–16) by °Abbās Mīrzā (d. 1833) for his residence in Ujān. The first of these (230×395 cm) is entitled *The Battle of the Persians Against the Russians* (St Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, VP-1122); the second (203×415 cm), *Review of the Persian*

<sup>39</sup> Robinson, 1982, p. 74.

<sup>40</sup> Robinson, 1963, pp. 94–105; Falk, 1972; Robinson, 1982, p. 75; Adamova, 1996, pp. 38–40, 85–6.

*Troops by Fath ʿAlī Shāh* (in the same collection, VP-1121).<sup>41</sup> Another artist of the same generation was ʿAbdullāh Khān (d. c. 1848). In 1812 he painted a huge fresco on three walls of the audience room in the Negārestan Palace: *The Reception of Foreign Envoys by Fath ʿAlī Shāh* (depicting a total of 118 figures). The fresco was destroyed at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>42</sup>

In the second generation of court painters were Sayyid Mīrzā Ahmad (the pupil of Mihr ʿAlī) and Muhammad, who specialized in the depiction of languorous, moon-faced beauties with enormous eyes. Another pupil of Mihr ʿAlī, Abūʿl Hasan Ghaffārī, was sent to study painting in Italy by Muhammad Shāh (1834–48). When he returned, Nāsiruʿddīn Shāh (1848–96), who had in the meantime ascended the throne, appointed him chief artist with the title of Sanīʿ al-Mulk. He led a group of 34 artists who worked on a grandiose project: the Persian manuscript translation of *A Thousand and One Nights* (Tehran, Golestan Palace Library, MS. N.2240). The completed project consisted of 6 volumes (1,144 pages of text and 1,134 miniatures). Some of the miniatures were executed by the Sanīʿ al-Mulk in person.<sup>43</sup>

During the nineteenth century, masters of lacquer painting worked in Isfahan (Najaf ʿAlī and his three sons, Kāzīm, Ahmad and Jaʿfar) and Shiraz (Āqā Buzurg, Fathallāh Shīrāzī and Sanīʿ Humāyūn). To a greater or lesser degree they all kept up the traditions of the local schools of lacquer painting, but did not avoid subjects with a European content.<sup>44</sup>

## North-western Central Asia

### The Shaybanids (Bukhara, 1500–98) and the Janids (Astarkhanids) (Bukhara, 1599–1753)

In the middle of the fifteenth century, an independent (Timurid) school of painting was in operation, chiefly, of course, in Samarkand. Attached to the local tradition, its style was to some degree influenced by that of Herat in the period before Bihzād. This school, which continued to function until the 1520s, was characterized by large, ponderous figures with elongated, obviously Mongol-type faces; the representation was clearly two-dimensional and the landscape schematic. The miniatures illustrating the manuscript of the poem by Muhammad Shādī, the *Fath-nāma* [Book of Victory] (Tashkent, Institute of

<sup>41</sup> Adamova, 1996, pp. 42–4, 86–7.

<sup>42</sup> Robinson, 1972, Pl. XXXIII; 1982, pp. 77–8; *Eir*, Vol. 1, fasc. 2, pp. 197–8; Adamova, 1996, p. 42.

<sup>43</sup> Atabai, 1976, pp. 1375–92.

<sup>44</sup> Robinson, 1985, pp. 176–296; Diba, 1989, pp. 243–65.

Oriental Studies, MS. N.5369), were executed in this style as were those in the manuscript of Hātifi's poem *Khusrau va Shīrīn* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ouseley N.19); both are works of the 1520s.<sup>45</sup> Greatly resembling the Samarkand miniatures of the 1440s and 1450s are the illustrations for the manuscript of Nawā'ī's *Khamsa* of 1521–2 (St Petersburg, Russian National Library, MS. Dorn 559), which was executed in Shahrukhiyya for Sultan Keldī Muhammad (d. 1532–3). This centre broke up with the death of the sultan and most of the artists moved to Bukhara.<sup>46</sup>

In Bukhara the court library flourished under the Shaybanids, enjoying the patronage of °Ubaydullāh Khān (1505–33) and, more particularly, of his son, °Abdu'l °Azīz Khān (1533–50), who was a passionate bibliophile. A pleiad of artists, who had come or been brought from Herat, worked there with their local apprentices. Sultān Mīrak was the *kitābdār* under whose supervision and on whose initiative the remarkable manuscripts brought from the Herat collections were reformatted. Among the many manuscripts that came to the library were the Sa°dī *Golestān* (*Gulistān*) [Rose Garden] of 1500 (Geneva, Bodmer Foundation, Pers.30), the Jāmī *Tuhfat al-ahrār* [Gift to the Noble] of 1509 (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, MS. N.215) and the Nawā'ī *Khamsa* of 1491–2 (Windsor Castle, Royal Library, MS. N.177). Original manuscripts were also executed in the library by such renowned calligraphers as °Alī al-Husaynī al-Herawī, Khwāja Mahmūd b. Ishāq al-Shihābī, Mīr Sayyid Ahmad-i Sham°rīz-i Mashhadī, Mīr Husayn al-Husaynī (Mīr Kulangī) and others.<sup>47</sup>

Three trends may be identified in Bukhara book miniatures of the period 1520–90. First, there were variations on the Herat style of Bihzād, related to the work of his most consistent follower, Shaykhzāda, who was possibly brought to Bukhara by °Ubaydullāh around 1529, and also to the work of other masters trained in Herat.<sup>48</sup> The fact that Shaykhzāda actually worked in Bukhara is confirmed by the manuscript of Hātifi's *Haft Manzar* [Seven Portraits] of 1537–8 (Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, N.56.14), in which he signed one of the miniatures. Also from his brush are two miniatures in the *Anthology* (St Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Studies, MS. C860, fols. 9a and 41a), copied in Bukhara in 1529 (Fig. 10).

Second, there was the transitional Herat-Bukhara style, whose most outstanding practitioners were Mahmūd Muzahhib, °Abdullāh (at first) and Shayhān b. Mullā Yūsuf al-Herawī. It is possible that they all trained under Shaykhzāda while their own work extends

<sup>45</sup> Ashrafi-Aini, 1979, pp. 250–1, 260, 262; Robinson, 1982, pp. 41–3; Soudavar, 1992, pp. 206–9.

<sup>46</sup> Ashrafi-Aini, 1979, pp. 260–2; Soudavar, 1992, p. 209.

<sup>47</sup> Akimushkin, 1994b, pp. 325–41.

<sup>48</sup> Soudavar, 1992, pp. 189–97; Ashrafi-Aini, 1979, p. 264; Schmitz, 1992, pp. 57–60.



Fig. 10. Two lovers in an orchard in full bloom. ‘Bayāz’ Collection of °Alī al-Husaynī al-Herawī, 1529, Bukhara style, c. 1530–40. (Photo: Courtesy of the St Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, MS. C860, fol. 41a.)

from the 1530s to the beginning of the 1550s.<sup>49</sup> An example is the diptych painted by Mahmūd Muzahhib in 1545–6 for the manuscript of the Nizāmī *Makhzan al-asrār* of 1537–8 (Fig. 11). This trend typically acknowledged local traditions in the depiction of individual figures and couples although the models used were those of the Herat miniatures. This style gradually lost ground and faded away at the end of the sixteenth century.

Third, there was the Bukhara school itself, which flourished from the 1550s to the 1570s.<sup>50</sup> It was linked with the name of °Abdullāh, whose artistic development culminated in the creation of a local style of painting: stocky, rounded figures with heavy jaws and small mouths and unrefined brushwork, a schematic composition and a simple, unfinished landscape. A typical example of his style is the diptych ‘The Lovers’ (fols. 2b–3a) in the manuscript of the Sa°dī *Bustān* [Orchard] of 1575–6, the work of the master calligrapher Mīr Kulangī (St Petersburg, Russian National Library, MS. PNS 269).

<sup>49</sup> Ashrafi, 1974a, pp. 159–92; Ashrafi-Aini, 1979, pp. 268–71.

<sup>50</sup> Ashrafi, 1987, pp. 159–92; *Elr*, Vol. 1, fasc. 2, pp. 193–4; °Abdallāh Bokārī (P. Soucek).



Fig. 11. Sultan Sanjar and an old woman. Nizāmī's *Makhzan al-asrār*, 1545–6. (Photo: © Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS. Suppl. Persan 98D1, fol. 40v.)

From the 1580s onwards, the Bukhara school was chiefly known for its twodimensional, schematic compositions and a conventional treatment of landscape and architectural decor. Typical of this period are miniature paintings of single figures or couples placed in a background which is lightly adorned with solitary trees and sparse vegetation. The motifs and subjects of Khurasan painting at the end of the sixteenth century exerted a general influence, as a consequence of Shaybanid dominion over Herat and Mashhad in the period 1588–98. This influence continued to be felt in the painting of Bukhara and Samarkand until the 1630s. That the book miniatures produced in these towns served as examples for local artists is clearly demonstrated by the 28 miniatures in the manuscript of the *Zafar-nāma* [Book of Victory] of 1628–9 by ʿAlī Yazdī (Tashkent, Institute of Oriental Studies, MS. N.4472). The palette, landscape and cliffs, the compositions and figurative quality practically reproduce the styles of Mashhad and Herat in the 1570s and 1580s.<sup>51</sup>

In the first half of the seventeenth century, the Bukhara school temporarily gave way to the school of Samarkand. At the time, two gifted artists, Muhammad Murād Samarqandī and Muhammad Sharīf, were working in Samarkand under the Janids. The former, who worked between 1600 and 1625, had a realistic style, modulated by a satirical strain. His style can be clearly seen in the miniatures of the *Shāh-nāma*, copied in 1556–7 (Tashkent,

<sup>51</sup> Schmitz, 1992, pp. 57–60.

Institute of Oriental Studies, MS. N. 1811), and the Sa<sup>c</sup>dī *Bustān* of 1578 (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, MS. 297). Four of the eleven miniatures in this manuscript were finished by the painter's contemporary, Muhammad Sharīf.<sup>52</sup>

It is known for certain, from information provided by the historian Muhammad Amīn of Bukhara in *Muhīt al-tawārīkh* [The Ocean of Histories], that there was a library in Bukhara at the court of the Janids in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>53</sup> The artists on the staff of the library were Muhammad Muqīm, <sup>c</sup>Awaz Muhammad, Muhammad Amīn, Muhammad Salīm and Bihzād; the designer was Khwāja Gadā'ī Naqqāsh; the calligraphers, Yādgar, Mullā <sup>c</sup>Arabshāh and Mullā Barqī; and the heads of the library, <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l Rahmān and Nāsiru'ddīn. The Bukhara library carried out several major projects for <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l <sup>c</sup>Azīz Khān (1645–1680), including two manuscripts of Nizāmī's *Khamsa* of 1648 (St Petersburg, Russian National Library, MS. PNS 66) and of 1671 (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, MS. 276). If no Persian influence is apparent in the miniatures illustrating these manuscripts, they do exhibit to some extent the influence of seventeenth-century Indian (Mughal) painting. This may be sensed particularly in landscape and figurative painting. At the same time, the depiction of the faces of figures and their clothes, and the pure, bright, rich palette are traditional in Bukhara painting.

From the evidence we have, book miniatures seem to have fallen into a state of terminal decay in Bukhara and Samarkand in the 1720s and 1730s and the book markets of the khanate became entirely dominated by the illustrated manuscripts imported from Kashmir in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Schmitz, 1992, pp. 59–60; Ashrafi, 1974a, pp. 108–14.

<sup>53</sup> Akimushkin and Ivanov, 1982, pp. 127–39.

<sup>54</sup> Schmitz, 1992, pp. 59–60; Skelton, 1987, pp. 1–9.

## Part Two

# PAINTING IN MUGHAL INDIA

(A. Okada)

## Bābur in India (1526–30) and the creation of Mughal India

The first traces of the artistic style which was later to develop into the brilliant and highly distinctive tradition of Mughal painting are generally said to have appeared towards the end of the reign of Emperor Humāyūn (1530–56), the second ruler of the Timurid or Mughal dynasty, established by Bābur in northern India in 1526. Although the short and turbulent reign of Bābur (1526–30) hardly provided an auspicious setting for sustained artistic creation, it is nevertheless true that the founder of the Mughal dynasty had a definite love of painting, and books and manuscripts in general – a love that all his successors were to inherit. This is reflected in certain passages of Bābur’s own memoirs, the *Vaqāyi*<sup>c</sup> or *Bābur-nāma*.

In these well-known lines, Bābur gives his views on the work of the great artist, Bihzād: ‘His work was very dainty but he did not draw beardless faces well; he used greatly to lengthen the double chin; bearded faces he drew admirably.’<sup>55</sup> The memoirs also describe a small tent in which the emperor sometimes liked to sit, which was set up at the gate of the Garden of Plane Trees (in Kabul), south-east of the picture gallery – the garden and the pavilion were said to have been laid out and built by Bābur.<sup>56</sup> We also know that a precious manuscript bearing Bābur’s seal – to which were later added the seals of some of his successors, such as Humāyūn, Jahāngīr, Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb – represented one of the treasures of the Mughal imperial atelier (*kitāb-khāna*). Illustrated at Herat c. 1440 for Prince Muhammad Jukī (1402–44), grandson of Timur and brother of Prince Bāysunqur,

<sup>55</sup> Bābur, 1922, Vol. 1, p. 291. For the corresponding passage in the original Turki text, see Bābur, 1995, p. 283.

<sup>56</sup> See Adle, 2000, pp. 173–80.

patron of the arts, this manuscript of the *Shāh-nāma* (London, Royal Asiatic Society) fell into Bābur's hands – although the date and circumstances are unknown. The taste for books and richly illuminated manuscripts was not the prerogative of Bābur alone – he shared this passion with his sons. In January 1526, when he took possession of the fortress of Malot (Salt Range) in Punjab, the emperor went through the books preserved in Ghāzī Khān's library. He gave the most precious books to Humāyūn, who was accompanying him, and sent the others to his brother Kāmṛān, who was then at Kandahar (Qandahār).<sup>57</sup>

## Prince Kāmṛān and Humāyūn (1530–56)

Some time after Bābur's death in 1530, Prince Kāmṛān commissioned the calligrapher °Abdullāh Shīrāzī to copy a manuscript of *Yūsuf va Zulaykhā* by Jāmī (c. 1530–40; New York Public Library), a manuscript which was thought to have been copied in Kabul. It was in Kabul that the artist Dūst Muhammad, from the studio of Shāh Tahmāsp Safavī, entered Kāmṛān's service in the late 1530s, thus joining the small group of painters who formed the prince's modest studio and among whom were Maulānā Darwīsh Muhammad and Maulānā Yūsuf.<sup>58</sup> In 1543, however, Humāyūn, who had succeeded Bābur on the throne of Mughal India, was forced to seek refuge in Persia after being defeated and dispossessed of his realm by the Afghan leader Sher Shāh Sūr (1540–5). During his brief period of exile at the court of Shāh Tahmāsp in 1544, the Mughal emperor had the opportunity of meeting at Tabriz two great masters, °Abdu'l Samad and Mīr Sayyid °Alī, whose beautifully finished compositions pleased him immensely.

In 1545 Humāyūn established his court provisionally at Kabul and invited the two artists to come and join him there. In 1549 °Abdu'l Samad and Mīr Sayyid °Alī came to Kabul and in 1554, when the exiled monarch set out to reconquer his kingdom, the Safavid painters, including Dūst Muhammad, followed him to India. There they had the task, during the last months of Humāyūn's reign and even more so during the reign of his successor, Akbar (1556–1605), of laying the foundations of a Mughal school of painting, a brilliant and creative synthesis of Persian and Indian traditional arts. In a letter to °Abdu'l Rashīd Khān, the khan of Kashghar (1533–60), Humāyūn wrote about the two Safavid masters whose talent illuminated his court:

One of them is the painter Mīr Sayyid °Alī, Nādir al-°Asr ['Rarity of the Age'], who is matchless in painting. He has painted on a grain of rice a polo scene – two horsemen stand within the fields, a third comes galloping from one corner, while a fourth horseman stands

<sup>57</sup> Bābur, 1995, p. 416; 1922, p. 460.

<sup>58</sup> See Adle, 2000, pp. 193–217, in which the author, examining the artistic sources of Mughal painting, dwells at length on the studio of Ulugh Beg II (1469–1502), the last Timurid ruler of Kabulistan.

at one end receiving a mallet from a footman; at each end of the field are two goal posts... Another is the painter Maulānā °Abdu'l Samad, the unique one of the time, Shīrīn-Qalam ['Sweet Pen'] who has surpassed his contemporaries. He has made on a grain of rice a large field on which a group is playing polo.<sup>59</sup>

Few graphic works from the troubled reign of Humāyūn have survived. A handful of rare paintings, executed at Kabul around 1550 by one or other of the three Persian masters, give clear evidence of the Safavid tradition, which quite naturally dominated the early Mughal production (Fig. 12). It was not until the long and prolific reign of Akbar that Mughal painting really developed and that, in the imperial studio, manuscripts and miniatures were produced in great quantities by artists who, as time went on, showed an increasing mastery of their art, freeing themselves gradually from Persian influences and traditions.

## Akbar (1556–1605) and the birth of Mughal painting

The founding and development of the imperial *kitāb-khāna* owe much to the exceptional personality of Akbar and his intense intellectual curiosity despite the fact that he was reputed to be illiterate. Akbar followed the work of his court painters with real interest and discernment as his successors, Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān, were also to do. He was the first to encourage them to move gradually away from the Persian models which had inevitably influenced their early work and to turn boldly to new styles, including the art of the West, which gradually penetrated the Mughal court in the wake of Jesuit missionaries and European travellers and merchants. According to the historian Abū'l Fazl, the author of the *Akbar-nāma* and the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, it was by no means rare for the emperor himself to indicate to his artists the subjects that he wished them to paint. He was also eager to have the artists' work presented to him every week and on those occasions granted rewards and increases in salary, based on the quality of the work. The emperor, writes Abū'l Fazl, had in this way discerned the extraordinary talent of a painter of humble origins, the son of a palanquin-bearer, called Daswant, who used:

to draw and paint on walls. One day the eye of His Majesty fell on him; his talent was discovered, and he himself handed over to the Khwāja. In a short time he surpassed all painters, and became the first master of the age. Unfortunately the light of his talents was dimmed by the shadow of madness; he committed suicide. He has left many masterpieces.<sup>60</sup>

Although the policy followed by Akbar and his successors in matters of art was exemplary – and the astonishing flowering of miniatures and manuscripts during that period bears witness to this – it was nevertheless directly inherited from the ancestral Mongol and Timurid

<sup>59</sup> Bāyazīd Bayāt, 1941, pp. 67–9; quoted in Chandra, 1976, pp. 172–3.

<sup>60</sup> Abū'l Fazl, 1867–77, Vol. 1, p. 117; 1938–9, Vol. 1, p. 114.

traditions in which the monarchs were seen as cultivated men who encouraged the arts, surrounding themselves with a brilliant court and a select circle of poets, writers, painters, calligraphers and musicians. Akbar appointed the masters °Abdu'l Samad and Mīr Sayyid °Alī to direct the *kitāb-khāna*, while artists were taken into service in increasing numbers, some of them – as their names indicate (Nand Gwālīorī, Sūr Das Gujarātī, Muhammad Kashmīrī) – from Malwa, Gujarat and Kashmir.

In these provinces, which were newly conquered and annexed to the Mughal crown, local schools of painting had been flourishing for a long time, well before the arrival of the Mughals in India, thus forming established regional centres of art which existed alongside the Persian tradition promoted by the directors of the *kitāb-khāna*. The arrival at court of these artists who had inherited different artistic traditions played a considerable role in the creation and development of imperial Mughal painting, since their own artistic backgrounds helped to enrich the court art with innovative stylistic features.

The 218 miniatures of one of the very first Mughal manuscripts, the *Tūtī-nāma* [Tales of a Parrot] (Cleveland Museum of Art), executed *c.* 1560–5, represent, in relatively finished form, a particularly significant synthesis of various styles deriving from different pre-Mughal local traditions and schools. These sometimes naive illustrations contain discreet traces of the art of the sultanates, which had survived particularly in the courts of Bengal, Golconda and Mandu. They also show more obvious features that are clearly Indian in origin and derive mainly from a 'Hindu' school of painting that came into being in the Rajput courts and is typically found in the illustration of Sanskrit or local language texts (manuscripts of the type known as *Caurapañcāshikā*), though we should not overlook certain stylistic features which derive from the Jain tradition of painting in Gujarat and Rajasthan. The presence of these artists, many of whom were Hindus, also encouraged the emergence of themes which were to become typical of the Mughal school of painting, such as scenes of self-renunciation, of Hindu ascetics and *yogins*, of the ascetic life of the hermitages (*āshramas*) and of Hindu rites and customs.

The abundant production of illustrated manuscripts characteristic of the reign of Akbar – over 30 manuscripts, some of which contained a large number of illustrated folios, are known to have been prepared between 1560 and 1600 – was mostly the result of a 'collective' form of work introduced by the emperor, in which several artists shared the execution of a single work. The painters, who were almost inevitably obliged to specialize because of this system, distributed the tasks in accordance with their respective skills and experience. The most experienced usually had the tasks of overseeing the general composition of the page and painting the portraits, while the less talented artists or the young novices were responsible for filling in the colours. The miniatures produced in Akbar's *kitāb-khāna* were

thus the result of a highly specialized collaboration between two or three painters, hence the inevitably homogeneous or even somewhat uniform style of the imperial production, particularly in the years 1580–90.

Although this group work made it easier to produce large quantities of high-quality manuscripts in a short time, it went out of fashion during the reign of Jahāngīr (1605–27), who encouraged the imperial painters to work alone and produce increasingly more individual and refined works. From the reign of Akbar onwards, however, the names of the artists were set down precisely by the scribes attached to the *kitāb-khāna* and noted, often in red ink, in the lower margins of the manuscript. This system of notation presumably made it possible to see the number of paintings executed by a single artist and to remunerate him in accordance with the quality and quantity of his work.

In the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, Abū'l Fazl writes:

More than 100 painters have become famous masters of the art, whilst the number of those who approach perfection, or of those who are middling, is very large. This is especially true of the Hindus: their paintings surpass our conception of things. Few, indeed, in the whole world are found equal to them.<sup>61</sup>

And the chronicler names, in order of excellence, 17 of the artists who were regarded as the most eminent among those then attached to the imperial *kitāb-khāna*: Mīr Sayyid °Alī of Tabriz, Khwāja °Abdu'l Samad, Daswant, Basāwan, Kesav, La°l, Mukund, Miskin, Farukh the Kalmuk (Qalmāq), Mādhav, Jagan, Mahesh, Khemkaran, Tārā, Sānwala, Haribans and Rām.<sup>62</sup>

The vigorous creativity of the imperial *kitāb-khāna* from the time of its foundation is reflected brilliantly in the illustration of the *Hamza-nāma* [The Story of Hamza], the first of a series of great Mughal art projects carried out between 1562 and 1577 (Fig. 12). This work, which ranks among the most ambitious ever undertaken by the Mughal painters, relates the semi-apocryphal adventures of Hamza, an uncle of the Prophet Muhammad and one of the early heroes of Islam. Originally consisting of some 1,400 illustrations divided into 14 books with some 100 illustrations per volume, the *Hamza-nāma* required the services of about 100 artists from the imperial studio. Mīr Sayyid °Alī first of all, and then °Abdu'l Samad, supervised the execution of the *Hamza-nāma* (many paintings of which are missing today, the remainder being scattered among different museums). The manuscript stands out on account of the unusually large size of its illustrations

<sup>61</sup> Abū'l Fazl, 1867–77, Vol. 1, pp. 116–17; 1938–9, Vol. 1, p. 114.

<sup>62</sup> Abū'l Fazl, 1867–77, Vol. 1, p. 118; 1938–9, Vol. 1, p. 114. The forms of names as given in the translation have been corrected. For works by the artists named by Abū'l Fazl, see entries in alphabetical order in Verma, 1994.



Fig. 12. *Hamza-nāma*: Zumurrad Shāh aloft, c. 1562–1577. (Photo: Courtesy of MAK – Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna. B.I. 7780/28 Hamza.)

(c. 80×60 cm), the boldness and vigour of its compositions and the intensity and brilliance of the colours.

Throughout his reign, Akbar showed an unflinching interest in tales, anthologies of fables and lyric works in poetry or prose. The monarch therefore commissioned his artists to illustrate manuscripts such as the *Dārāb-nāma* (c. 1580–5; London, British Library), the *Khamsa* of Nizāmī (c. 1585; London, Keir Collection), the *Golestān* of Sa<sup>ʿ</sup>dī (dated 1582; London, Royal Asiatic Society), the *Bahāristān* of Jāmī (dated 1595; Oxford, Bodleian Library), and the *Nafahāt al-uns* of Jāmī (dated 1605; London, British Library). But the emperor, who had a keen sense of history and an undying determination to uphold the grandeur and legitimacy of the dynasty, also commissioned a large number of historical



Fig. 13. *Akbar-nāma*: Akbar inspecting the construction of Fatehpur Sikri, c. 1590. (Photo: © V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London.)

manuscripts intended to exalt and underline the political legitimacy of the Mughals and their right to govern India. Thus he had the memoirs of the founder of the Mughal line, Bābur, translated from Chaghatay Turki into Persian (the cultural and administrative language of the Mughal empire) and then illustrated by the imperial artists. He also entrusted Abū'l Fazl, his friend and close counsellor, with the task of writing, from 1590 onwards, the official annals of his reign, the *Akbar-nāma*, a real literary monument, dedicated to the achievements of the emperor. Two famous illustrated manuscripts of this work are extant, the first usually dated c. 1590 (London, Victoria and Albert Museum) (Fig. 13), the second c. 1604 (divided up between the British Library in London and the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin), both illustrated by a whole series of the most outstanding imperial artists.

But the emperor was also intent on a history of the Muslim world and, perhaps even more so, the glorious annals of two of his most revered ancestors – Chinggis Khan and Timur. This was how the *Tārīkh-i alfī* [History of the Millennium] (c. 1592–4; now

dispersed), the *Chingīz-nāma* (dated 1596; Tehran, Golestan Palace Library) and the *Tārikh-i khāndān-i Timuriyya* [History of the Timurid Dynasty] (c. 1580; Patna, Khudābakhsh Library) came to be illustrated. Thus through the compilation of manuscripts dealing with the history of the Timurids, Akbar measured his own achievements against the exploits of his illustrious ancestors.

In his desire also to make the great literary and religious texts of India accessible to the members of his court and the Muslim elite, the emperor decided in 1574 to have them translated from Sanskrit into Persian and illustrated. In the Translation Office, then in Fatehpur Sikri, Persian scholars worked together with Hindu pundits in order to produce the most accurate translations possible of the great texts of ancient India, and were followed by the artists, often of the Hindu faith, who illustrated the newly translated texts with fervour and verisimilitude. The *Razm-nāma* [Book of Wars] (Jaipur, City Palace Museum), the Persian translation of the *Mahābhārata* of Vyāsa, illustrated c. 1582–6, the *Harivamsa* (dispersed), illustrated c. 1585, and the *Rāmāyana* (Jaipur, City Palace Museum), illustrated in 1588, thus bear witness to the artistic opulence and iconographic innovations of Akbar's artists in dealing with a repertoire of themes and motifs which were totally new, compared with the Persian-based expression which had earlier dominated the pictorial creations of the Mughal court. These Mughal manuscripts of the great Hindu epics reflect the policy of religious tolerance boldly advocated by Akbar, who showed a sincere interest in and genuine respect for the cultural and religious traditions of his Hindu subjects.

It was precisely that policy of religious tolerance established by Akbar, combined with his interest in questions of a spiritual and religious nature, which made possible the first Jesuit mission in 1580 to Fatehpur Sikri, then the capital of the Mughal empire. At the invitation of Akbar, who wished to hear the Jesuit fathers explain the nature of Christianity to him and to see them take part in the philosophical debates held in the °Ibādat-Khāna (House of Prayer), bringing together the adepts of the different religions followed in his empire, Father Aquaviva, Father Monserrate and Father Henriques left Goa for Fatehpur Sikri. The gifts they presented to the emperor included seven of the eight volumes of the famous *Polyglot Bible* printed in Antwerp between 1568 and 1572 by Christophe Plantin at the behest of King Philip II of Spain. Printed in four languages (Hebrew, Chaldean, Latin and Greek), the Bible contained title pages engraved by various Flemish artists, such as Pieter van der Heyden, Pieter Huys, the Wiericx brothers and Gerard van Kampen. These illustrations, combined with the numerous European engravings (mainly Flemish and German) which reached the Mughal court, exercised a considerable influence on the court artists and on the subsequent development of Mughal painting.

In addition to welcoming the Jesuit fathers and their gifts with the greatest courtesy, Akbar invited his court painters to seek inspiration from the European engravings, study their style and technique and make faithful copies or free adaptations of these works (Fig. 14). Despite the fact that the religious content remained a closed book to them, the imperial painters hastened to make copies and adaptations (which were sometimes brilliant, but frequently rather naive) of these strange models and in so doing learned the effects of volume, relief and perspective, notions which were absent in the Persian tradition. The European engravings found in India (which were generally presented in album form, *muraqqaʿ*, like the Mughal miniatures), or copied by local artists, included German works (Albrecht Dürer, the Beham brothers, Georg Pencz) and even more numerous works by engravers active in Antwerp in the late sixteenth century (the Sadeler brothers, Jerome Wiericx, Cornelis Cort). However, engravings inspired by religious subjects were not the only ones to reach India from Europe at this time. Works of a profane character were also introduced, this time by the European merchants who came to trade in the Indian subcontinent. Thus, Francisco Pelsaert, an agent for the Dutch East India Company during the reign of Jahāngīr, wrote in 1626: 'Send us two or three good battle pictures, painted by an artist with a pleasing style, for the Moslems want to see everything from close by – also some decorative pictures showing comic incidents or nude figures.'<sup>63</sup>

The discovery of the European engravings was to have a determining influence on the development of art at Akbar's court, which was eclectic, inspired by various sources including Persian influence, and which, by partially assimilating the lessons of the West, moved gradually towards greater realism. The court artists, using the new techniques which they had acquired by studying the European engravings, endeavoured to achieve greater realism in portraiture. This new approach, which emphasized the personality of the subjects and sought to bring out their underlying nature, giving the portrait a psychological dimension, had a considerable influence on Mughal art, particularly in the reign of Jahāngīr. Nevertheless, Akbar was the first Mughal emperor to give open encouragement to the art of the portrait, which was regarded as a particularly suitable means of perceiving the personality of an individual. In the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, Abū'l Fazl relates the emperor's original decision to have a vast album of portraits compiled:

His Majesty himself sat for his likeness, and also ordered the likeness taken of all grandees of the realm. An immense album was thus formed: those that have passed away have received a new life, and those who are still alive have immortality promised them.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Beach, 1978, p. 156.

<sup>64</sup> Abū'l Fazl, 1867–77, Vol. 1, p. 118; 1938–9, Vol. 1, p. 115.



Fig. 14. Allegorical figure, c. 1590. Artist: Basāwan. Musée National de Arts Asiatiques-Guimet, Paris (No. 3619, J,a). (Photo: © R.M.N./© Ravaux)

Akbar's clearly expressed interest in capturing the personality of the subject and creating a psychological portrait was to be admirably served by the newly acquired techniques of draughtsmanship and an objective, almost analytical observation of the facial features. But it was Akbar's son Jahāngīr who was to raise the imperial art of the portrait to its most sophisticated form, making it the expression *par excellence* of Mughal art.

## Jahāngīr (1605–27)

History has left a flattering and, all in all, a justified image of Jahāngīr as a patron of the arts, a refined aesthete, a demanding connoisseur and an insatiable collector. His interest in the work of the court painters, combined with his discernment in the field of art, naturally led him to surround himself with a circle of particularly talented and prolific artists upon whom on occasion he conferred the most laudatory titles. Thus the artist Abū'l Hasan received in 1618 the title of Nādir al-Zamān ('Rarity of the Time') while the painter Mansūr was given the title of Nādir al-<sup>c</sup>Asr ('Rarity of the Age'). The emperor also sometimes paid tribute to his favourite painters in his memoirs, the *Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī*, while not forgetting to pay tribute to his own discernment in matters of art. Indeed, he was proud of his ability to distinguish the work of a given artist from that of another painter, whether of past times or contemporary:

As regards myself [he writes] my liking for painting and my practice in judging it have arrived at such a point that when any work is brought before me, either of deceased artists or those of the present day, without the names being told me, I say on the spur of the moment that it is the work of such and such a man. And if there be a picture containing many portraits, and each face be the work of a different master, I can discover which face is the work of each of them. If any other person has put in the eye and eyebrow of a face, I can perceive whose work the original face is, and who has painted the eye and eyebrow.<sup>65</sup>

Jahāngīr's genuine interest in his artists and their work undoubtedly contributed to the extraordinary flourishing of Mughal painting in the first decades of the seventeenth century. The practice that had been common during Akbar's reign of several artists collaborating to create a single work gradually went out of fashion and was soon replaced by miniatures entirely painted by a single artist and sometimes bearing his signature. Similarly, the abundant production of illustrated manuscripts, which had been so characteristic of the previous reign, declined noticeably, while the artists, working in a sophisticated and increasingly individual style, obviously lost interest in the dense and deliberately complex compositions and sought to represent single figures generally standing out against a monochrome background. These single paintings were intended to be set out on pages with richly ornamented margins and then included – along with pages of calligraphy – in albums (*muraqqa*'s) compiled for the aesthetic satisfaction of the patron.

The most outstanding form of Mughal art, the art of the portrait in the reign of Jahāngīr and his successor Shāh Jahān (1628–58), is characterized by a strictly static rendering of the human figure, whose contours stand out clearly against the background of the page (Fig. 15). The profile (especially of the faces, as the bodies were generally turned at an angle, three-quarters towards the front) is systematically emphasized, its clear lines bringing the subject into sharp focus. The obvious predilection in this art for static forms and fixed attitudes fits in with a sense of the hieratic which is not graphic alone but clearly reflects the ostentatious formalism of a court governed by etiquette and ceremony. The idea of separation into clear divisions, which is both spatial and hierarchical, is particularly obvious in the scenes depicting royal audiences (*darbārs*) or group portraits, in which the arrangement of the different planes and the compartmentalized structure of the composition are intended to reflect strictly codified court etiquette.

Jahāngīr's interest in highly individualized and psychological portraits, reflecting the very soul of the subject, is shown in the portrait that the emperor commissioned in 1618 of one of his court dignitaries, °Ināyat Khān. The sovereign, struck by the ravages wrought by disease in the dying °Ināyat Khān, had instructed his artists to paint a portrait of him

<sup>65</sup> *Tuzuk*, 1914, Vol. 2, pp. 20–1.

at death's door. A drawing and a painting<sup>66</sup> have survived, depicting the courtier a few hours before his death. These are poignant works, showing both the extraordinary degree of realism attained in the Mughal portraits, and the morbid and almost indecent curiosity sometimes displayed by the emperor in his aesthetic passion for painting.

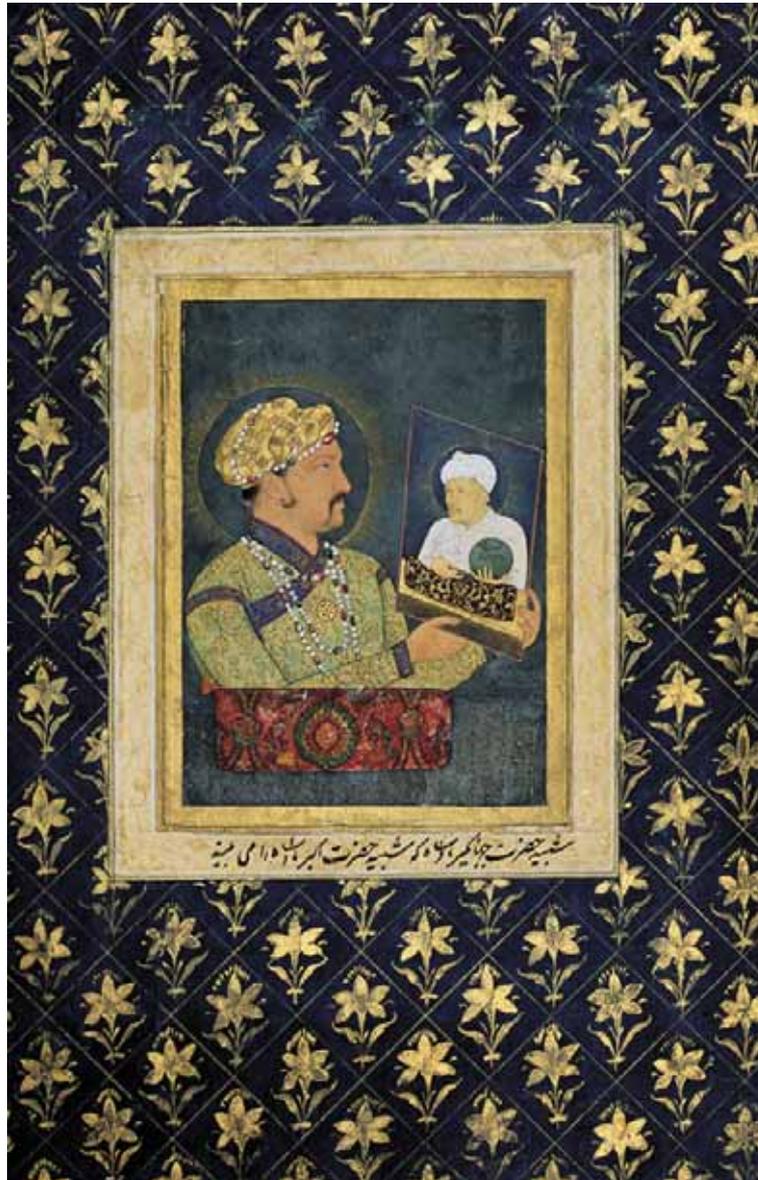


Fig. 15. Portrait of Emperor Jahāngīr holding the portrait of his father Akbar, *c.* 1615. Artists: Hāshim and Abū'l Hasan. Musée National de Arts Asiatiques-Guimet, Paris (No. 3676, B). (Photo: © R.M.N./© Thierry Ollivier.)

<sup>66</sup> See S. C. Welch, 1963, Pl. 28.

## Allegorical portraits and dynastic legitimacy

In 1615 the ambassador of King James I of England, Sir Thomas Roe, reached the Mughal court bearing gifts for the emperor, as custom demanded. In his account of his mission to the Great Mughal, Roe mentions more than once the interest shown by Jahāngīr in precious objects from Europe, particularly the works of the famous English miniature painter, Isaac Oliver, of which Roe had brought several examples to the court.

The works of Isaac Oliver and the other paintings brought by Sir Thomas Roe, as well as those received from Europe through other possible channels, were to have an influence on the development of Mughal imperial iconography comparable to that of the European engravings introduced at Akbar's court by the Jesuit missionaries. From then on, the court painters, in their enthusiasm for artistic innovation, were to seek inspiration in Christian imagery and symbolism and elaborate a new imperial iconography full of European references and motifs and designed to glorify the emperor and exalt his grandeur and power. Thus the brilliant and complex allegorical portraits created in the second half of Jahāngīr's reign, the production of which was to continue during the reign of Shāh Jahān, reflect the deliberate assimilation by a few of the most eminent artists in the imperial workshops (such as Abū'l Hasan and Bichitr) of foreign motifs (crown, hour-glass, globe, halo, cherubs brandishing royal insignia). These were subtly integrated into the Mughal imperial iconography and cleverly linked to ancient Islamic symbols celebrating royalty and dynastic legitimacy.

The process of deification of the emperor, admirably served by the talent of a few outstanding painters, was obviously a choice subject for graphic illustration and encouraged the astonishing use by the artists of a symbolism which was foreign to their own iconographic and aesthetic traditions. The allegorical portraits, exalted and sometimes grandiloquent works which provide a godlike interpretation of the emperor Jahāngīr, are among the most outstanding masterpieces of Mughal painting. 'Jahāngīr Preferring a Sufi Shaykh to Kings' (by Bichitr, c. 1618; Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art) (Fig. 16), 'Jahāngīr Embracing Shāh 'Abbās' (by Abū'l Hasan, c. 1618; Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art), 'Jahāngīr Triumphant over Poverty' (attributed to Abū'l Hasan, c. 1620; Los Angeles County Museum of Art) and 'Jahāngīr Symbolically Killing Malik 'Ambar' (by Abū'l Hasan, c. 1616; Dublin, Chester Beatty Library) are unique compositions in the Mughal iconographic repertory and are also a brilliant testimony to the artistic eclecticism of the Mughal genius.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> See Okada, 1992, pp. 45–59, Figs. 48, 49, 53, 54, and p. 37, Fig. 37.



Fig. 16. Jahāngīr preferring a Sufī *shaykh* to kings, c. 1618. Artist: Bichitr. Photo: © Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Purchase F1942, 15a

It will be remembered that Akbar had commissioned in the last decades of the sixteenth century the illustration of an ambitious series of historical manuscripts relating the epic deeds of his ancestors, Chinggis Khan and Timur. His successors, particularly his grandson Shāh Jahān, succeeded in giving this political statement an original artistic dimension by commissioning a series of ‘dynastic portraits’, brilliant works with an immutable and stereotyped iconography.

The determination of the Mughal emperors to affirm their dynastic prestige and to trace their lineage back to Amīr Timur could already be seen in the very choice of imperial

seals, which invariably listed the names and titles of the reigning sovereign's ancestors back to Timur. It is also known that Jahāngīr was a keen collector of Timurid miniatures, manuscripts and jades, that he personally sent regular funds for the upkeep of Timur's tomb in Samarkand, and that Shāh Jahān in turn chose to bestow on himself the title Sāhib Qirān-i Sānī ('Second Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction') as a reference to his ancestor Timur, the first Sāhib-i Qirān. Mughal art had to reflect this obsession with the imperial lineage and the court painters consequently painted portraits of Timur sitting on a throne and handing one or other of his Mughal descendants the Timurid crown, the orb of power or an ornamental egret plume to adorn their turbans. The symbolic transfer of authority in these allegorical works is thus explicitly shown by Timur's gift to the Mughal emperor of an object regarded as one of the attributes of royalty.

Two pages in the *Minto Album* (one held in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the other in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin), which were obviously meant to be placed opposite each other, illustrate the symbolic transmission of power from a monarch to his successor. One of these pages, by the painter Govardhan, shows Timur enthroned between the two Mughal emperors, Bābur and Humāyūn, and presenting the imperial crown to Bābur (Fig. 17); the second miniature, dated 1630 and signed by Bichitr, reproduces exactly the same composition and iconography, showing Akbar enthroned between



Fig. 17. Timur giving the imperial crown to Bābur, c. 1630. Artist: Govardhan. (Photo: © V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

his successors Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān and presenting the latter, who had commissioned the two illustrations, with the imperial crown.

## The apogee of Mughal painting under Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān

A propensity for naturalism, which was one of the features of Mughal painting under Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān, led to the development of outstanding animal studies in which several artists, and particularly the famous Ustād Mansūr Nādir al-<sup>c</sup>Asr, excelled. Jahāngīr, who enjoyed contemplating nature and was curious about the diversity of the animal world, commissioned Mansūr to represent the different species of animals not usually to be found at his court, for example the famous zebra brought back from Abyssinia by Mīr Ja<sup>c</sup>far, which the emperor had decided to present to Shāh <sup>c</sup>Abbās I of Persia, painted by Mansūr in 1621 (Fig. 18). In the *Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī*, the emperor refers several times to the unrivalled talent of the artist: ‘Ustād Mansūr has become such a master in the art of painting that he holds the title Nādir al-<sup>c</sup>Asr, and in the art of drawing he is unique among the artists of his generation.’<sup>68</sup> ‘As it was something out of the common, I ordered Ustād Mansūr, who has the title of Nādir al-<sup>c</sup>Asr, to paint and preserve its likeness.’<sup>69</sup>

Thus Jahāngīr showed himself to be the worthy descendant of Bābur, Humāyūn and Akbar, who were also delighted by the contemplation of nature. Humāyūn’s servant, Jauhar Aftābichī, mentions in his memoirs that, one day in 1543, the emperor was fascinated by a



Fig. 18. A zebra, 1621. Artist: Mansūr. (Photo: © V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London.)

<sup>68</sup> *Tuzuk*, 1914, Vol. 2, p. 20.

<sup>69</sup> *Tuzuk*, 1914, Vol. 2, pp. 107–8; cf. Das, 1991, p. 45.

beautiful bird which had suddenly flown into his tent and immediately ordered one of his artists to paint it. Bābur had also described in great detail the flora and fauna of Ferghana, Kabul and Hindustan but, as Jahāngīr does not fail to point out, he never had his artists paint them:

Although King Bābur has described in his memoirs the appearance and shapes of several animals, he had never ordered the painters to make pictures of them. As these animals appeared to me to be very strange, I both described them and ordered that the painters should draw them in the *Jahāngīr-nāma*.<sup>70</sup>

It was Akbar who first gave visual and artistic form to Bābur's literary descriptions of his ancestor when he decided to have Bābur's memoirs translated and then illustrated. These representations of the fauna and flora of India, produced in the last decades of the sixteenth century, are remarkable for their freshness and spontaneity and cover several pages of the various manuscripts of the *Bābur-nāma*. They herald the emergence of a whole wave of animal painting within the Mughal artistic tradition, a subject which henceforth became a fully-fledged art motif, and no longer a secondary feature for decorating the margins of miniatures.

In 1620 the prolific artist Ustād Mansūr accompanied Jahāngīr to Kashmir, which the Mughal emperors regarded as their 'private garden'. At the request of the sovereign, Mansūr made innumerable flower studies inspired by the profusion of flowers and plant varieties which flourished in this fertile valley. Although most of these studies have unfortunately been lost, they were highly appreciated at the time and did much to renew the thematic and decorative repertoire of the Mughal artists. It may be supposed that they lay behind the astonishing enthusiasm for floral motifs which then became a feature of the Mughal artistic tradition. From the 1620s onwards, for a period of over two centuries, flowers of various species, delicately stylized or treated with the precision of the naturalist, began to proliferate in the borders around miniatures and in the margins of illustrated albums. They also appeared on textiles, prayer mats, tent hangings and decorative objects in glass or jade and even in the great architectural monuments erected in the reign of Shāh Jahān (the Taj Mahal, and Agra and Delhi Forts), whose walls were carved and inlaid with delicate floral motifs.

There is, however, another element which explains the vogue for floral motifs in the arts of the Mughal court, and for their obviously technical treatment. It is known that illustrated botanical works and plant collections – such as those of Clusius or Doddens, printed in Antwerp by Christophe Plantin – were in circulation at the Mughal court, and these highly naturalistic illustrations could have inspired the work of the imperial painters

<sup>70</sup> *Tuzuk*, 1909, Vol. 1, p. 215; cf. Das, n.d., p. 1.

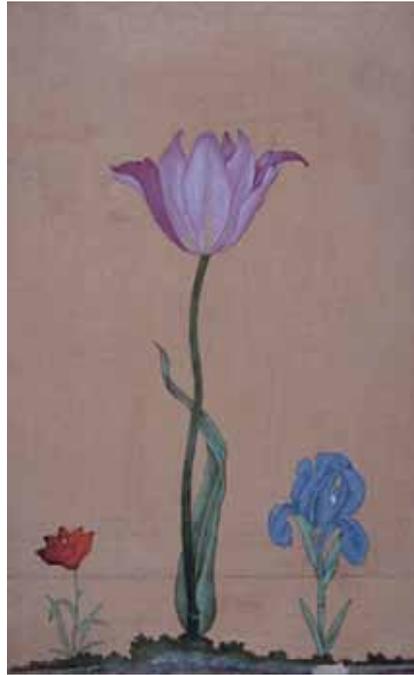


Fig. 19. Tulips and an iris. Mughal, c. 1650. (Photo: © From the Collection of Prince and Princess Sadruddin Aga Khan.)

in the same way as the religious European engravings brought by the Jesuit missionaries had inspired their predecessors. The influence of these European sources can be clearly seen in the composition of the Mughal floral decorations and in the precision and clarity of their line – showing once again, if that were necessary, the extraordinary artistic eclecticism of Mughal India (Fig. 19).

Mughal painters' 'naturalism' did not extend only to animals and flowers. Bichitr, who could so easily play with symbols of divinity borrowed from the West, forgets all formality when depicting a villager listening to two roadside Sufi singers sitting in front of poor men's huts (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, IM 27 and A-1925). This is a side of Mughal painting that should not be overlooked while appraising this largely court-oriented art.

Mughal painting in the reigns of Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān had undoubtedly a courtly splendour of its own. One of its great monuments is the imperial manuscript of the *Pādshāh-nāma* [Royal History], preserved in the Royal Library of Windsor Castle. A chronicle of the reign of Shāh Jahān, it was written by °Abdu'l Hamīd Lāhorī and illustrated by the most eminent court painters, then at the pinnacle of their art.<sup>71</sup> This imperial manuscript, with its splendid illustrations and brilliant and sumptuous colours, is one of the finest examples

<sup>71</sup> See Beach and Koch, 1997.

of the composite nature of Mughal inspiration, the crystallization of different influences and traditions subtly assimilated and transposed with infinite mastery in a brilliant and eminently original style.

## The last Mughals

The main artistic features of Mughal painting were sustained under the reign – austere and much less conducive to the flourishing of the arts – of Aurangzeb (1659–1707), but the production of the imperial *kitāb-khāna* was often less sumptuous and less beautifully finished. From 1665 onwards, the sovereign turned gradually away from painting and even closed down the imperial studios. Gradually deprived of the emperor's favour and largesse, the artists entered the service of new patrons from among the nobles and high dignitaries. Among the favourite themes during these last decades of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century were hunting scenes and the depiction of graceful princely entertainments taking place by night on terraces overlooking a lake or standing out against a sky lit up by fireworks. These intimate and even hedonistic paintings depicting everyday life or romantic scenes (Fig. 20) are typical of eighteenth-century Mughal taste and were briefly to flourish under the reign of the emperor Muhammad Shāh (1719–48), before coming abruptly to an end after the sack of Delhi by the Persian conqueror Nādir Shāh in 1739.

After the fall of Delhi, during which many of the Mughal treasures were lost (including the famous Peacock Throne commissioned by Shāh Jahān in the year of his coronation, invaluable precious stones and jewels and many priceless manuscripts including the *Hamza-nāma*), thus precipitating the decline of a dynasty which was already significantly weakened, many artists left the Mughal court in search of new patrons. Some of them went to the Rajput kingdoms of Rajasthan or Punjab, others were to establish themselves in Bengal and the kingdom of Awadh (Oudh), governed by extravagant nawābs who were patrons of the arts. A school of painting known as 'provincial Mughal' was to emerge in Faizabad, Lucknow, Farrukhabad and Murshidabad. Inheriting the great imperial traditions, this school was mainly characterized by a taste for hedonistic and courtly themes emphasizing the depiction of revelries and carefree entertainment, and by the intensity of its colours, often used in the depiction of sunsets or fiery skies in which red, orange and purple tones predominate (Fig. 21). A few artists such as Mihr Chand or Mīr Kalān Khān, who had come from the imperial workshop of Muhammad Shāh and were working in Faizabad and Lucknow, were to sign some of the finest compositions in this late 'provincial' flowering of Mughal art.

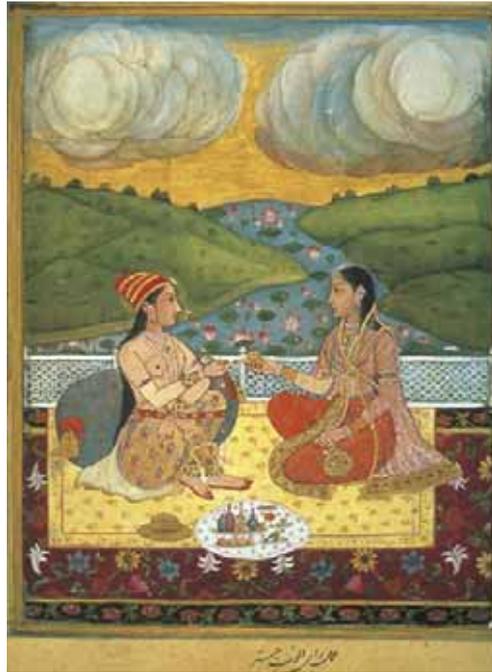


Fig. 20. Two ladies on a terrace, c. 1710. India Office Library, London. Photo: © British Library Board, All Rights Reserved. India Office, Johnson Album 21, No. 6

In Murshidabad, the reign of the Nawāb °Alī Virdī Khān (1740–56) and of his successor Sirāj al-Daula fostered the development of a school of painting that was dominated by a powerful and vigorous style, enhanced by hard and distinct lines and relatively cold colours. Some mannerisms, such as the exaggerated elongation of the eye towards the temple or the pronounced contours of the faces, distinguish the school of Murshidabad from the pictorial production of the neighbouring provinces. However, neither the Murshidabad school nor that of Lucknow could escape an increasing formalism, which would gradually strip them of all psychological subtlety and emotion. Apart from the hedonistic themes dear to the artists of these provincial schools, there are also many illustrations of *Rāgamālās*, or ‘garlands of musical modes (*rāgas*)’, a pictorial motif which also enjoyed great favour in the Hindu kingdoms of Rajasthan and the hills of Punjab during the eighteenth century.

In Delhi, during the reign of the Mughal emperors Akbar Shāh II (1806–37) and Bahādur Shāh II (1837–58), the painters, far from innovating, were more often than not merely content to reproduce, in a wilfully archaistic vein, the brilliant compositions that had been conceived during earlier reigns – particularly the court scenes from the days of Shāh Jahān – and to provide unending series of portraits of emperors and scenes of audiences often revealing graceless draughtsmanship, overemphatic modelling and a palette lacking in chromatic subtlety. A number of talented painters such as Ghulām Murtazā Khān and Ghulām °Alī Khān did, however, work in Delhi in the first half of the nineteenth century.

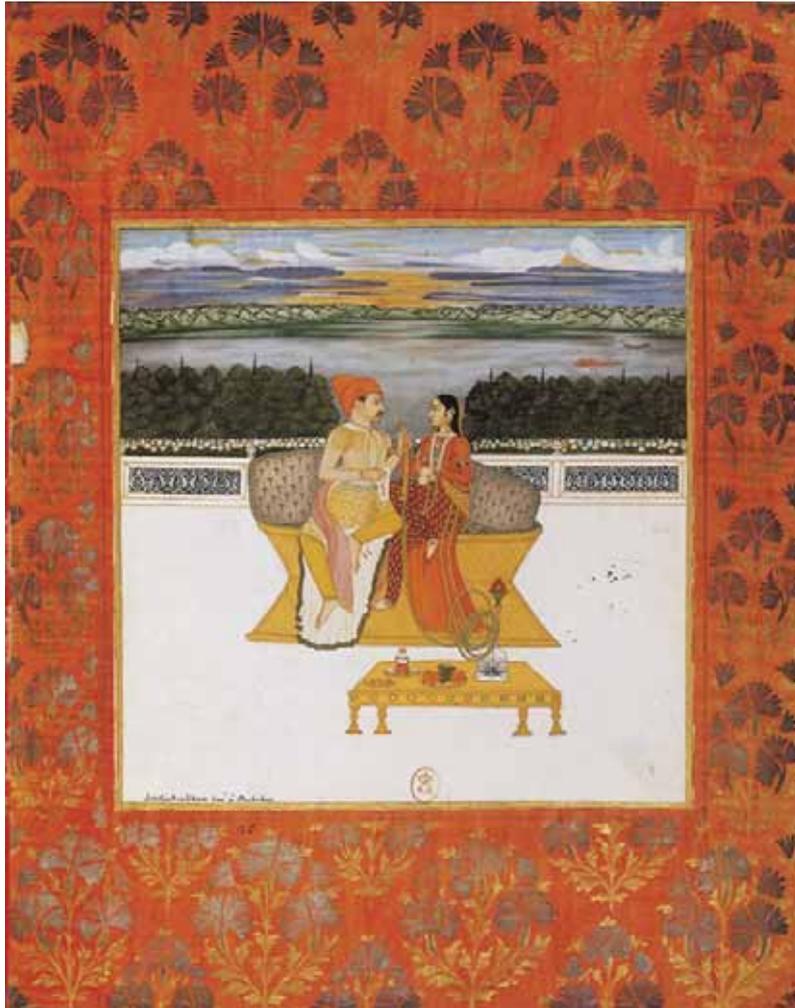


Fig. 21. Shujā' Qulī Khān on a terrace in the company of a lady. Lucknow (?), c. 1760. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (Estampes, Rés. Od 51 4 °, fol. 20, Coll. Gentil). (Photo: © Bibliothèque Nationale de France.)

The latter was a particularly talented and eclectic artist who painted many portraits for the Mughal court, while also putting himself at the service of the British – including James Skinner and John Fraser – for whom he unhesitatingly made significant changes in his style so as to satisfy the aesthetic tastes of his new patrons. Among the most famous works by Ghulām Alī Khān is the portrait that he painted of the last Mughal emperor, Bahādur Shāh II, who, after the 1857 Rebellion, was deposed and imprisoned by the British. Bahādur Shāh's tragic destiny marked the end of the Mughal empire and the Timurid dynasty.

With the rise of British power in the second half of the eighteenth century, new patrons – agents of the East India Company, traders, mercenaries, adventurers, etc. – replaced the Indian sovereigns and princes. The tastes and sense of economy of these new amateurs and collectors, which were very different from those of their opulent precursors, led to

the emergence of a new type of art, traditionally described as 'Company painting'. The favourite subjects of these new collectors included dull portraits of kings and princes, court scenes or genre paintings, representations of the principal Hindu gods, suave and rustic evocations of the Indian castes and trades, of festivals and religious ceremonies, and often repetitive series showing the most famous monuments of Hindustan.

## Part Three

# EASTERN CENTRAL ASIA

(*Liu Zhengyin*)

## Xinjiang

The Xinjiang region can be roughly divided into two dissimilar cultural areas. The area to the south of the Tian Shan is referred to as Tian Shan Nanlu (i.e. the region to the south of the Tian Shan mountains) in Qing-dynasty literature; this includes the Tarim basin and the Turfan and Hami areas, both agricultural oases. The population of this region consisted mainly of Uighurs and other Muslim peoples. To the north of the Tian Shan is the area called Tian Shan Beilu (i.e. the region to the north of the Tian Shan mountains) in Qing-dynasty records; it is an area of steppe and mountain pastures where the Oirat Mongols lived during this period. After the middle of the seventeenth century, the Oirat Dzungars dominated the area to the north of the Tian Shan, which came to be known as Dzungaria in European accounts.

### TIAN SHAN NANLU

In our period the written language of Tian Shan Nanlu was predominantly Chaghatay Turki. Since the tenth century, following the spread of Islam to the area of the Tarim basin under the reign of the Karakhanids, the Arabic script was used for the contemporary written form of the Turkic language. This form of the written language is known as Haqaniya. As Islam spread, this written language was adopted over larger areas and inevitably changed in some ways, with much influx of Persian vocabulary. By the beginning of the fifteenth century Chaghatay had become the common literary language for the Uighur peoples, being

the predominant Turkic language within both Xinjiang and some other areas in Central Asia. It was used chiefly in the regions of the Chaghatay khanate, which explains its name. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries in the area we now call Xinjiang a number of works were written in the Chaghatay language. At the same time Persian also became widespread in this region and was the language used in the writing of literature, such as the famous historical chronicle, the *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, written in the mid-sixteenth century.

Works of literature were usually handwritten. They normally made use of bamboo, wooden or reed pens and were written in black ink on paper. The most commonly manufactured paper of the time used by the scribes was mulberry-bark paper, but old and recycled cotton fibres and worn-out hessian were also used as materials for paper-making. Basically, paper was produced locally in the towns of the Tarim basin, especially in Khotan. There were enormous variations in the thickness of different papers, as well as the final quality, durability and pliability. Paper which underwent a process of calendaring and milling may be described as ‘processed paper’. In addition some paper had starch paste applied to it as both a preservative and a blanching agent; other paper might be subjected to the addition of powdered white minerals or plant extracts to impart colour or produce an exquisite hue. Mulberry-bark paper was both pliable and tough and many transcribed texts made use of it. Most of the extant works of literature from that time use this durable paper.

The style of the Arabic script used was generally *nasta‘līq*. This lettering is also known as *khat-i fārsī* (‘Persian script’) and is the most commonly found script in Xinjiang. Other styles include *naskh* and *suls*; these were used mainly in writing the titles of books, headings of chapters or sections in a book. After all the leaves of a book had been transcribed, they were bound into a volume with covers. Sometimes the limits of the written form were determined within prescribed boundaries which stipulated the maximum permissible length of transcription on each page. The most exquisite examples of the genre frequently strive to combine excellence within both the text and its accompanying illustrations, relying upon coloured drawings or patterned text either to embroider the artwork itself or the patterns within it; this is accomplished by the use of carefully constructed designs of great beauty which use a wide variety of vibrant colours. In addition to this, pages are given highly decorated margins, employing pigments of a golden hue, various shades of water-based ink and even powdered gold. In particular, the title pages and the headings of chapters of bound volumes are especially finely decorated.

The front and back covers of bound volumes (including the spine) are most commonly of goat or camel hide or other animal skins; the binding is fine and exquisitely designed and worked. Book formats vary greatly, often similar to modern sextodecimo formats. The edges of book covers are even with the edges of pages, and the back cover has an extension

which is folded inside along the lower edge of the volume, and then folded again inside along the upper edge of the volume, with the corners cut off to form a very obtuse angle, which serves as a flap, usually triangular, folding under the front cover. The book flap, together with the fore-edge flap (between a back cover and a flap), protects the edges of the pages and can also be used by readers as a bookmark.

A great variety of patterns adorn the covers and title pages of these books. Early book covers were decorated with geometric designs; later geometric designs evolved into floral patterns and become gradually more elaborate, depicting flowers, clouds, ornamental rocks and landscapes. Influenced by Chinese art, some of these designs incorporate dragons, phoenixes and miscellaneous birds and animals. Most of the covers are rectangles with a central medallion filled with geometric or floral patterns, corner quadrants with similar patterns and a border which varies in width, composed of a series of cartouches, around all the four patterned margins. The front and back covers are decorated in the same style, but the back-cover decoration is usually simpler. Earlier, most of the decorated covers were tooled and stamped with individually carved templates or small sets; later the covers were pressed with large stamps and engraved copper or steel matrices for the field design which was able to cover the whole field. In addition to gold stamping, gilding was occasionally used, giving the book an opulent appearance and demonstrating considerable artistic achievement. The covers of books usually took the colour of the original animal hide as their base, other colours being superimposed on part or whole of the leather covering. Cloth covers are similarly adorned with every conceivable type of design, and are especially dazzling in appearance.

Following the spread of Islam, painting in this region underwent a transformation. The depiction of the human form was abandoned and painting was directed more towards geometric and floral patterns. This greatly increased the use of traditional Uighur and other ethnic decorative patterns, thus gradually producing a highly individual and authentic style of painting.

Not only was painting used for decorative and illustrative purposes in books, it was also applied to the walls of mosques, mausoleums and other buildings. It could be widely found on the ceilings, rafters and beams of mosques and places of religious instruction; these paintings were often of coloured floral designs, bright in hue. The subjects painted were herbs, peonies, lotus, sunflowers, chrysanthemums, plum blossom and roses, occasionally interspersed with landscapes. Paintings on ceilings or vaulted recesses usually concentrate on a single theme, with floral designs predominantly composed of grass, flowers and other plants. On such ceilings where entire compositions are painted, the drawings are based on moulded designs which focus on smallscale depictions of flowers, plants and

landscapes. Repetitive patterns sometimes occur in wide bands of continuous floral decoration on beams and rafters; the column heads and struts which support the beams and rafters exhibit floral ornamentation in bas-relief based on a combination of floral, plant-inspired and geometric designs.

Colourful paintings can cover large areas and make use of many colours, with contrasting colours deployed at focal points either in a homogeneous manner or presenting complex contrasts. Paintings often use ultramarine, dark green, magenta, black or other dark shades as base colours, with the superimposed floral designs frequently of white, yellow or other lighter hues. Mausoleums do not make such wide use of coloured paintings as do mosques. Paintings are usually found only on the walls and vaults of the coffin chamber within the mausoleums: the designs are chiefly based upon scripture and geometry and the drawings are bold and powerful, unlike the delicate and exquisite paintings found on the walls of the mosques.

Royal palaces and the mansions of the rich and powerful also contained many paintings. According to Haydar Dughlāt, there were a great many fine and imposing buildings in Yarkand, each with over 100 rooms with ‘dados of glazed tiles and frescoes’.<sup>72</sup> Even relatively small and humble dwellings had painted walls or murals, and a vast array of buildings were decorated with painted vaulted ceilings and ornamented rafters and beams, although simpler and less richly toned than those found in religious buildings.

Following the annexation of the whole area by the Qing dynasty in the 1750s, the art of this region came to be greatly influenced by Chinese culture. In paintings one can see the tell-tale imprint of Chinese designs, especially in Hami in the eastern part of this region, where one notices that the style of painting now clearly reflects that of China proper. The screen wall of the royal court of the Uighur monarch at Hami was painted with coloured murals depicting ‘the sun rising in the eastern sky’ and ‘the fierce tiger vaulting over the hills’,<sup>73</sup> which happen to be favourite Chinese traditional themes.

To return to calligraphy, after the sixteenth century when Islam became the universal religious faith of the area, the art of Arabic calligraphy not only took root in the whole of the Tian Shan Nanlu region, but also provoked change in the style of the written form. The older Kufic lettering was more often employed in artistic adornment and also underwent a great transformation. Prior to the sixteenth century, Haydar Dughlāt writes that inscriptions or epigraphs found on a mausoleum in Yarkand could not be understood because ‘most of them were in Kufic characters, but not in the Kufic which is employed nowadays’.<sup>74</sup> In

<sup>72</sup> Haydar Dughlāt, 1898, p. 297.

<sup>73</sup> *Hami Huiwang shiliao*, 1962, p. 63.

<sup>74</sup> Haydar Dughlāt, 1898, p. 299. The tomb was presumably that of Dawa Khan (d. 1306).

this period the art of calligraphy was flourishing in the region. Saʿīd Khan, the founder of the Yarkand khanate, was accomplished in calligraphy, especially in the writing of the *nastaʿlīq* script.<sup>75</sup> According to the *Tawārīkh-i musīqiyyūn* [Annals of Musicians], which was written in the mid-nineteenth century, the consort of Rashīd Khan wrote a book entitled *Shurūh al-qulūb* [Exposition of the Hearts], dealing with poetry, music and calligraphy.<sup>76</sup>

Following the mid-eighteenth-century acquisition of the Western Territories by the Qing dynasty, calligraphy underwent much enrichment, developing in manifold directions and spawning more than 30 distinct categories. The lettering most commonly found in manuscripts of the time is the *nastaʿlīq* script; its especial characteristics are its smooth and easy fluency and naturalism, its delicate lettering and its flexible and compact nature suited to both reading and writing. It was frequently used in the transcription of works of literature and those which survive to the present day usually employ this script (see Fig. 22). The secondary *naskh* and *suls* scripts, since they too belong to the artistic form, often feature in the transcriptions of book titles and headings of chapters, or are used in the writing of aphorisms, exhortations, recitations and so on, or in the writing of plaques and the carving of steles or seals. Calligraphy was also used widely as a device in patterned and ornamental designs on the front and back covers of books and around the margins of the page, as well as in the decoration of every type of Islamic architecture.

## TIAN SHAN BEILU

After the sixteenth century the Oirat Mongols gradually established themselves in the region to the north of the Tian Shan mountains (Tian Shan Beilu). The Oirats were nomads and had originally practised shamanism, but around the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth they switched their allegiance to the Yellow (Gelu) sect of Tibetan Buddhism (Lamaism) and were henceforth heavily influenced by this conversion.

The Oirats speak a Western Mongolian dialect. Before the mid-seventeenth century, they used the Uighur script for writing Mongolian. In the mid-seventeenth century the eminent Oirat monk, the Zaya Pandita, introduced such alterations to the Uighur-Mongolian script as took account of the special characteristics of the Oirat dialect and thus created the Mongol Todo script. This script could more accurately reflect the nuances of the spoken Oirat dialect. Thus the Oirats called this more readily comprehensible script ‘Todo’, meaning ‘clear’ in Mongolian. The Oirat Mongols made use of it to write a large number of works on religion, astronomy, history, linguistics, etc.

<sup>75</sup> Haydar Dughlāt, 1898, p. 138.

<sup>76</sup> Maulā ʿIsmatullāh Mujjizī, 1982.

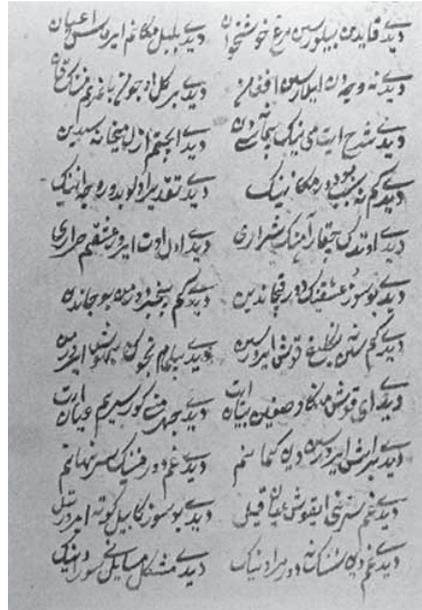


Fig. 22. Page from *Muhabbatnama wa Mihnatnama* [Love and Misery] in Chaghatay, written by Hirkiti in the seventeenth century. State Museum of Xinjiang, Urumqi. (Photo: Courtesy of Liu Zhengyin.)

These works of literature were largely handwritten, although some were printed. They were usually written with bamboo or wooden pens in ink on paper. At that time pulped *cha'asun* grass was used to make paper 'of a thick, well-pressed quality suited to writing'<sup>77</sup> which thus came to be known as *cha'asun* paper. Mulberry-bark paper made to the south of Tian Shan was also used, as well as paper made in Tibet, paper from eastern China and from Russia. The texts were written in straight columns read from left to right across the page; careful scribes invariably used a fixed number of columns on each page, with evenly spaced gaps between the columns. The style of bookbinding used more often than not was *pothi* binding (a bookbinding form like Indian palm-leaf binding) or accordion binding (a method of folded paper binding); in later times thread binding (*xian zhuang* in Chinese), a method of binding that had originated in China proper, was also employed.

The written characters were framed in the most exquisite calligraphy. Writing was also usually with wooden or bamboo pens. The Oirats called these writing pens *ujugs* and made them from finely sliced and pared wood or bamboo. They were 4 or more *cuns* in length (1 *cun* = approx. 3.3 cm), 2 *fens* wide at the top (1 *fen* = approx. 0.3 cm) and tapered gradually towards the tip of the brush, which was as narrow as the edge of a knife and could thus be easily used with black ink. Ink-holding devices called *birs* were hair-brooms, usually 4 *cuns* or more in length. The tips of these brushes were left unbound for the final 0.5

<sup>77</sup> Fuheng et al., 1782, Vol. 41, Materials I.

*cun* or so (approx. 1.67 cm) and so could be immersed in ink and remain moist thereafter. The originator of the Todo script, the Zaya Pandita, himself practised the most beautiful calligraphy, which was then widely disseminated.

There is an intimate connection between the paintings of this region and the development of Lamaism. After the Oirats had adopted Tibetan Buddhism as their official religion, a number of Buddhist monasteries (lamaseries) were established in the region. Within these monasteries were to be found wall paintings and designs of all kinds of birds, beasts, flowers, trees, and the like. These wall paintings chiefly had Buddhist themes and included representations of the Buddha, the bodhisattvas and their acolytes as well as depictions of Buddhist scriptures and lore. Other paintings showed scenes with human beings, mountains, rivers, birds, flowers, beasts and the like. The most famous Buddhist monasteries in this region were built in the first half of the eighteenth century and were the Gulja monastery (also known as the Golden Top Temple) on the northern banks of the Ili river and the Xainuk monastery (also known as the Silver Top Temple) on the southern banks of the Ili. According to sources of the time, 'the lofty temples touched the heavens, their golden streamers sparkling in the sunshine, their ridgepoles and tiled roofs lofty and spacious, the temples looked both solemn and dignified'.<sup>78</sup> Unfortunately, these two monasteries are no longer extant.

The Baluntay 'Yellow' monastery in the Tian Shan mountain range (north of current Hejing County in Xinjiang) has, however, survived. Built in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the principal building is 2,500 m<sup>2</sup> in area and is thus on a grandiose scale. Because the entire complex is painted yellow, it has long been called the Yellow monastery. The buildings within the monastery compound are adorned with exquisite paintings and multifarious types of decorative designs. A Buddha 8 m in height stands in the main hall. There are exquisitely painted Buddhist murals on the walls on either side in rich and gaudy colours. On the doors to the main hall are painted *mthun-pa'i-spunbzhi* (auspicious four animals) and the 'Garuda' (golden eagle). These likenesses are full of life, each painting executed in the minutest detail and meticulously drawn and outlined, while being filled with appropriately rich and lustrous colours. They represent some of the highest achievements of Buddhist art (see Fig. 23).

## Mongolia

After the sixteenth century, there was a period of relative stability in the Mongol region, and Mongol culture entered an important stage of development. From this time onwards,

<sup>78</sup> Fuheng et al., 1782, Vol. 39, Customs I.



Fig. 23. Paintings on the doors to the main hall of the Yellow monastery in Baluntay, Xinjiang, showing the *mthun-pa'i-spun-bzhi* (auspicious four animals) and the 'Garuda' (golden eagle). (Photo: Courtesy of Liu Zhengyin.)

the Yellow sect of Tibetan Buddhism (Lamaism) was in the ascendant and exerted an overwhelming influence on the entire spectrum of Mongol society. In the field of Mongol art this was apparent both in the techniques adopted and the subject chosen.

After the thirteenth century the Uighur script was almost always used for the Mongolian literary language. Although the Tibetan hPhagas-pa script was adopted as the official script by the government, the Uighur script was used by the general populace. After the sixteenth century, following a resurgence of Mongol culture, the Uighur script came to be used in the vast majority of handwritten and printed works on religious as well as secular matters. Since there were insufficient letters in Mongolian to render Buddhist texts into Mongolian, the *ali-ghali*, a new phonetic alphabet, was created for transliteration from Tibetan and Sanskrit.<sup>79</sup> This was used to translate Buddhist sutras from both Tibetan and Sanskrit, making it much easier to transliterate a great body of canonical literature into the indigenous language. Towards the end of the seventeenth century the Khalkha Mongols of northern Mongolia used Sanskrit and Tibetan scripts for reference, creating the Soyombo script, suited to translations of works on Buddhist texts. The Soyombo script is an alphabetic system based upon squares and is written horizontally from left to right. The lettering has printed, formal and cursive forms. This script was employed in Khalkha temples for more than 200 years and was used chiefly in the translations of Buddhist scriptures; however, because it was difficult to write, it was never widely used.

Works of Mongolian literature were usually hand-copied transcripts or woodblock prints, or sometimes stone-block prints. Most were hand-copied transcripts, especially in the

<sup>79</sup> *Ali-ghali* is a word from Tibetan, where *ali* means vowel and *ghali*, consonant.

earlier period; secular works chiefly used the handwritten method, while Buddhist tomes usually employed methods of woodblock printing. Mongolian literature pays close attention to both format and lettering. The texts were written in straight columns that ran across the page from left to right; the columns are parallel and evenly spaced. Whether handwritten or block-printed, the books show the same style of lettering, and each page holds a predetermined number of lines. Some used cinnabar-based printing frames for retouching, others contained exquisite illustrations (see Fig. 24). Earlier the Mongols mainly used pared bamboo pens for writing, but under the Qing dynasty, Chinese-style writing brushes were progressively used.

Most works used Chinese black or red inks and after the seventeenth century, also used vermilion produced in Mongolia. Most texts were written with black ink. Red ink or vermilion was used in the special sections of the text or in the writing of the prestigious names, as well as in the decoration around the margins of the pages. Usually, Mongol works were hand-copied or were printed on paper in accordance with three basic formulae: black ink on white paper; vermilion or cinnabar lettering on white or black paper; and golden lettering on dark greenish-blue paper. Buddhist sacred texts are even lavishly decorated with the text embossed on sheets of silver and gilded. Some sutras were written on black paper in the nine colours which were made of the ‘nine gems’, gold, silver, coral, pearls, lapis lazuli, turquoise, steel, copper and mother-of-pearl. Most paper used in the Mongol region was produced in China. After the rise of Lamaism in Mongolia, and the consequent strengthening of relations between Mongolia and Tibet, paper produced in Tibet was also used. Subsequently, paper began to be manufactured in Mongolia itself, although it was of a thick and coarse consistency. Later, Russian paper was also used. In addition, a few Mongol documents continued to be written on birch bark, silk or leather. *The Silver Birch Book of Statutes* from the early seventeenth century was written on birch bark; it is 10 cm in height and 14 cm in breadth, and is bound into a volume.

As in Tian Shan Beilu, books were mostly bound in three kinds of bookbinding: *pothi* binding (also called ‘palm-leaf binding’), accordion binding (*jingzhe zhuang* in Chinese, literally meaning ‘folded sutra binding’) and thread binding (*xian zhuang* in Chinese). The great majority of Buddhist works use *pothi* binding, which originated in India. This bookbinding format consisted of sheets of paper cut into rectangular-shaped pages like palm leaves stacked on top of each other. The pages could be turned, enabling both sides of the leaf to be read. In general, the pages were sandwiched between wooden boards that not only helped keep the pages together, but also protected them from damage. The book title was written or carved on the wooden board. Some boards were also decorated in red, blue or yellow colour, as well as painting; others were also covered in golden brocade. In some

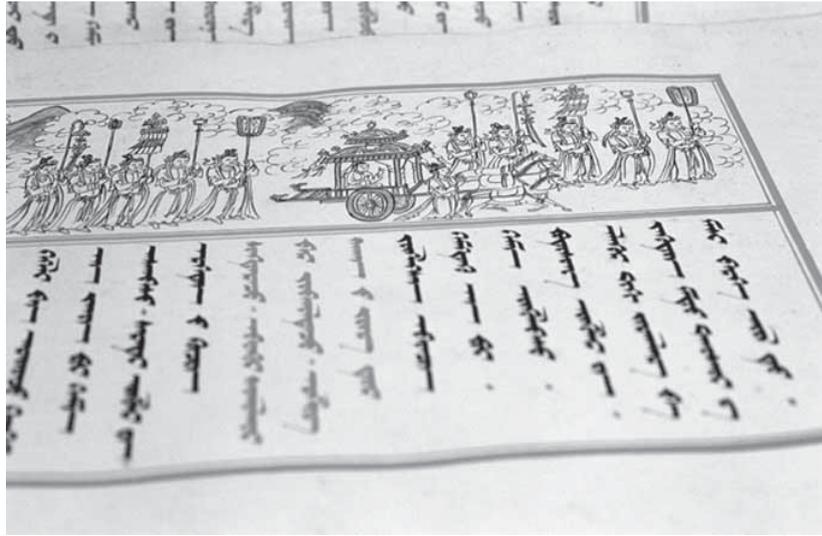


Fig. 24. A Buddhist sutra written in Mongolian.  
Imperial Palace Museum, Beijing. (Photo: Courtesy of Liu Zhengyin.)

works, pages in this format were stacked in wooden boxes or were packed with silk or thick cloth. According to the size of volume, the works in the *pothi* format can be subdivided into a large type, a mid-sized type and a small type. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, besides Buddhist works, some chronicles and other secular works also used this binding; an example is the *Altan Tobchi* [Golden History] in Mongolian, written by Lubsandanjin, and hand-copied in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>80</sup> Later this binding format was generally used in works of Buddhist literature.

‘Accordion’ binding was a bookbinding format in which a long sheet of paper was folded into a volume like an accordion. Mongol accordion binding can be divided into either horizontally folded or vertically folded formats. The horizontally folded format is unique to Mongolia; the writing is executed from the top to the bottom of the page in straight rows, vertically within each fold. The page format is similar to that of *pothi* binding. The style of covers or first page of this bookbinding is similar to that of *pothi* binding, usually with illustrations especially printed on the left- and right-hand margins of the page. The vertically folded volumes are very similar to the Chinese accordion binding, but they are marked by certain dissimilarities between the Chinese and Mongolian systems of handwriting as well as the direction of writing on the page. Chinese is written perpendicularly from right to left and so has a method of folding which allows books to be opened on the left side. Mongolian is written perpendicularly from left to right and so uses a method of

<sup>80</sup> These are preserved in the National Library of Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar.

folding which allows books to be opened on the right side. Accordion bookbinding was first used mainly for volumes of Buddhist scriptures and only later also for historical works.

In thread binding certain pages were stacked to form a quire and were sewn together with threads alongside the spine to make a book. The Mongol method of thread binding, or threading, developed directly from that of China, and was more usually seen in works handwritten or published after the eighteenth century. This thread binding could be subdivided into latitudinally and longitudinally bound books. Latitudinally threaded volumes were horizontally rectangular in shape and resembled Mongol *pothi*-bound books. The texts were written from the top to the bottom of the page in straight rows, vertically over open edges, also similar to that of *pothi* binding. Longitudinally threaded volumes look similar to Chinese thread binding on the outside, but, since handwriting customs differ, the direction in which such books open also differs. The covers of Mongol thread binding were usually made of paper in the same shape and size as the pages. Other covers were made of cloth or brocade. The title of a book was written on the front cover or on the label affixed to the front cover.

Painting was an important component of the artistic life of Mongolia. Following the gradual revival of Mongol culture after the sixteenth century, Mongol painting began to acquire a certain dynamism. The illustrations in the still-extant *Memorial of the Shunyi Wang Altan Khan to the Emperor of the Ming*<sup>81</sup> are among the precious artistic remains which unambiguously demonstrate the finely honed Mongol artistic techniques of that period. The Mongolian memorial and its Chinese version appear side by side, with the illustrations placed beneath the texts. The illustrations are coloured with brush and ink on a silk-scroll base and date from 1580. The contents trace the route taken by the tributary envoys sent from Tümed where Altan Khan lived to Beijing. The paintings show evidence of the influence of Chinese artists, yet at the same time they evince many unique characteristics: they show felt tents and horses painted with ease. Of particular note are the exquisite realistic depictions of Altan Khan and his consort, retinue and cavalry. In the paintings we also see delicate interpretations of scenes showing the tributary envoys travelling along the city walls, as well as Altan Khan's palaces and the minutiae of palace life. Thus in one priceless, illustrated historical document we find representations of landscapes, palatial halls and lofty buildings, the passage of chariots and horses and intimate details from life at every level of society.

After the mid-sixteenth century, following the ascendance of the Yellow sect of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia, Lamaist art in this region underwent considerable development.

<sup>81</sup> The originals are held in the Museum of Asia attached to the Russian Academy of Sciences. 'Shunyi Wang' ('Obedient and Righteous Prince') was a title granted to Altan Khan by the Ming court.

Inspired by Tibetan art, and influenced by Chinese painting, blended with the artistic style of the Mongol peoples, there arose the style of Mongol Lamaist painting. Its most important distinguishing characteristics are that, besides subjects of Tibetan Buddhism, the themes include stories from Mongol history as well as popular customs; and the composition of paintings often reflects traditional designs of popular Mongol culture.

Following the spread of Lamaism, temples and Buddhist pagodas were built in every area of Mongolia, usually in either the Chinese or Tibetan style. These buildings often contain the most beautiful murals, such as those found in the Mayidari Dzu (where the latter word indicates a monastery), the Qingyuan temple and the Da ('Grand', in Chinese) Dzu complexes in the Hohhot region of Inner Mongolia.

The Mayidari Dzu, in the Tümed Right-banner in Inner Mongolia, constitutes the most important group of buildings to have been commissioned by Altan Khan. It was built in 1575. Mayidari Khutughtu, who travelled from Tibet to Mongolia as a missionary, stayed here, and so the buildings became known as the Mayidari Dzu (see Chapter 18, Part Four). The complex included a Buddhist chapel, temples, a royal residence and surrounding walls. The brightly coloured murals in the various halls include depictions of the Buddha, the bodhisattvas and eminent monks as well as scenes from the stories of the Buddha's previous lives; there are also depictions of historical figures, the natural landscape and environment and other decorative patterns.

Representations of the Buddha can be seen everywhere in wall paintings and hanging portraits found in the chapel, the main hall and the glazed hall. These employ many different techniques and styles. Stories from the Buddhist tradition are painted on the walls of the chapel; on the lower half of the wall there are some portraits of the Buddha. These paintings are all carefully drawn and outlined and show human forms in exquisite and well-proportioned detail. The colours give the impression of harmony and elegance. Gold leaf is evenly used in some paintings. Of especial note is a painting of a landscape of mountains, rocks and trees diligently dotted in moss-shapes in the manner of the traditional Chinese method of painting characterized by the predominance of blues and greens.

The brilliantly coloured portrait of the Buddha on the wall opposite the entrance of the chapel reflects the special nature of Tibetan Lamaist art and is in sharp contrast to the simpler and elegant murals. The Buddha's images in the glazed hall are exquisitely designed and drawn, making faint strokes in an array of colours. Most of the faces are of a livid purple colour evidently designed to create feelings of awe. The postures of bodhisattvas painted on the walls are uniformly elegant, and their hands are either held out, palms cupped upwards, or so turned as if they are plucking flowers. Each bodhisattva has his own individual gesture, betraying the kind and good-natured temperament attributed

to women in Chinese art. A giant portrait of the Sakyamuni (Buddha) is painted on the wall opposite the entrance of the main hall; the walls on either side are fully occupied by paintings which show scenes from the Buddha's previous lives. On the east and west walls are some exquisitely crafted and traced paintings showing the image of Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Yellow sect of Tibetan Buddhism, and scenes from his previous life. The outlined figures are filled with colours such as vermilion, cinnabar, ochre, bright yellow, grey and mineral green (a green pigment made from malachite) and other mineral-based pigments. The warm tones used to portray the Buddhist figures offer a contrast to the cool greens and blues used to paint landscapes and create a brilliant yet harmonious effect.

The mural depicting Altan Khan's consort Junggin Khatun on the western wall of the main hall is perhaps the finest to be found in the Mayidari Dzu complex. Junggin Khatun was a famous Mongol stateswoman (*fl. c. 1600*), and was proclaimed Zhongshun Furen (Loyal and Obedient Lady) by an imperial Ming-dynasty edict. The mural is 17 m long and 2 m high. The left side concentrates upon the first part of Junggin Khatun's life; the right side, upon the last part: these are separated by the central section which contains a painting of the Sumeru Pedestal. The left-hand section shows a youthful Junggin Khatun (see Fig. 25) sitting cross-legged, wearing a coloured hat topped with a red tassel and a scarlet sleeveless outer garment over grey-coloured bound sleeves and a long robe. Beside her is Altan Khan, wearing a coloured hat and a grey cape with a red edge over tangerine-coloured bound sleeves and a long robe, his hand fingering some prayer beads. Both his consort and he bend forwards as if in contemplative prayer. Their retinue kneel on either side, respectfully presenting them with tea in cupped hands. There is also a figure wearing a short-sleeved half-length robe to Junggin Khatun's left, the robe being apricot yellow in colour. This part of the painting shows the landscape of the Mongol steppes, with clusters of fresh flowers and streams rushing and gurgling. The artist uses the Buddhist scriptures, beads, etc. to decorate the painting and fill any empty spaces, emphasizing the brilliance of the subject and presenting an integrated whole.

In the right-hand painting we see an aged Junggin Khatun (see Fig. 26). She wears a fur-lined conical hat with a broad brim and a fur-edged yellow outer robe and has a faint smile. She is seen half-sitting on a wooden bench in a reverential manner. Painted lower than her is a young woman wearing a scarlet jacket and a shawl over her shoulders and below her feet are four young women playing different musical instruments. To the young woman's left there is a bearded elder wearing a broad-edged conical hat topped with a pearl and a red tassel, and beneath her feet are also four young men in fur-lined conical hats and pigtailed sitting on a vermilion rug. All the figures in the painting appear to follow the rhythms of the canticles and musical instruments in what is a most vibrant scene. Using heavy brush



Fig. 25. Wall painting of Junggin Khatun at Mayidari Dzu (detail). (Photo: Courtesy of Liu Zhengyin.)



Fig. 26. Wall painting of Junggin Khatun at Mayidari Dzu (detail). (Photo: Courtesy of Liu Zhengyin.)

strokes, the style is bold and unsophisticated. The hues are brilliant and the effect is quite startling; such depiction allows us to see, perhaps, the highest level of achievement in Mongol artistry.

In the monastery there are many murals of flowers, birds, mountains and landscapes: amongst these the wall paintings in the temple where Junggin Khatun is said to lie entombed in her coffin are outstanding. These paintings of the natural world are unlike the landscapes of the Song and Yüan dynasties in China, as they use a freehand style of brushwork characterized by vivid expressions and bold outlines, showing that they were heavily influenced by the Chinese ink paintings of the late Ming period. Nevertheless these landscapes often make use of perspective, a regional artistic characteristic worthy of note.

The Qingyuan temple is at Usutu village to the north-west of Hohhot and was built in 1606. Later, another four temples were added and the whole complex became known as the Usutu Dzu. The Qingyuan temple was built by Mongol craftsmen. The wall paintings can be found on the eastern and western walls of the Buddhist temple. Each one is 13 m high and 4.1 m wide. The paintings are each divisible into two parts, the upper part showing Bhairava and the lower part natural landscapes, giving an impression of space and grandeur. The various postures and facial expressions of Dharmapala are imbued with great verve and strength and were intended to create awe among those who looked upon them. This sort of detail is of the same type found in the paintings at the Mayidari Dzu in that the brush strokes are thick and emphatic. These scenes all lead the eye onwards to Dharmapala through the use of relatively pale colours. In sharp contrast with the lower sections of the paintings are the varied postures and facial expressions of Mahakalah, whose limitless supernatural powers, Buddhists believe, ensure that every living creature in the world depends upon his protection. The expression of the goddess Shridevi is intended to evoke extreme feelings of fear as her three eyes glare down on the beholder. In her hands she holds a human heart and a *danda* (stick) and she rides a donkey through an ocean of blood. The donkey wears a human head dripping with blood. There are other fearsome and hideous deities painted in an exaggerated fashion among the murals.

The Da Dzu, known in Mongolian as the Yeke Dzu, on the site of the monastery at Hohhot, was built under the sponsorship of Altan Khan in 1579–1580 and was granted the name of Hongci Shi ('Hongci temple') by the Ming court. Both the Buddhist chapel and the temple contain wall paintings. The murals on the eastern and western sides of the chapel are 18.3 m high and 2.6 m wide. In layout, the paintings are divided into three levels: the heavens are at the top, the Sakyamuni resides in the middle and the earth forms the lowest level. They tell the story of the Sakyamuni's first enlightenment and of how he travelled from place to place preaching over the course of the first 15 days of the lunar New Year.

The paintings are all on a grand scale. In terms of skill, the influence of the Chinese artistic tradition is to be seen in the soft and delicate brush strokes which nimbly and meticulously sketch the figures. The depictions of the Buddha are the most colourful, such as in

the painting which shows him sitting cross-legged in meditation upon a lotus-flower throne and holding a *cakra* (wheel of dharma) in his upturned palm, his face imbued with grace and benevolence. His head is inclined slightly to one side as he contemplates the world below. His bejewelled crown and flowing robes are all extremely lifelike. The colouration is evenly applied and the simple and elegant artwork has a most charming appearance. In the depiction of the landscape, faint strokes in an array of dyes and hues are used to paint the cloud layers to perfection, and the lotus throne is also vividly dyed.

The Wudang Dzu in Wudang Gou to the north-east of Baotou city in Inner Mongolia began to be built during the reign of the Qing emperor Kang Xi (1662–1722) and was extensively renovated in 1749. The monastery is built in the Tibetan style and includes six halls, three mansions and one mausoleum. One of its most striking features are the richly gorgeous wall paintings. They illustrate stories from the life of the Sakyamuni, a tale of Tsongkhapa, numerous Buddhas and the four Kings of Heaven (namely, Dhrtarastra, Virudhaka, Virupaksa and Dhanada), etc.

From the sixteenth century there was a great flurry of temple building in every corner of Mongolia. After the establishment of the Qing government in the region, many more temples were built, particularly in Inner Mongolia. Around Hohhot, for example, there were 15 large monasteries. In ‘Outer’ Mongolia, the famous Erdeni Dzu was the first monastery dedicated to the Yellow sect of Tibetan Buddhism. It was constructed in 1586 by the Khalkha ruler Abtai Khan at the ruins of Karakorum, the famous city under the Yüan dynasty. In 1723 the Qing government also built the Qinning monastery at Urga (present Ulaanbaatar) where Jebtsundamba Khutughtu lived. Other temples were also built in relatively remote locations. All these large and small temples were decorated with murals and this naturally promoted the development of Mongol art.

A notable Mongol art form is the *thangka* (scroll painting), something painted on, or embroidered on, cloth. *Thangka* paintings constitute an important part of the heritage of Lamaist art among the Mongols. The Mongol *thangkas*, similar to the Tibetan *thangkas*, mostly depicted figures of the Buddha and scenes from the stories of the Buddha’s life as well as from other Buddhist legends. *Thangka* paintings also depicted local customs and way of life. Besides large *thangka* paintings which were several tens of metres long or wide, there were small *thangka* paintings hanging from the walls of Buddhist chapels. These small *thangka* paintings mostly depicted scenes from the stories of the Buddha, and constituted a series of exquisitely made picturestory paintings.

Prints (in other words, pictures printed from an engraved or etched plate) are also an important form of Mongol art. When the Buddhist sutras were printed, illustrations showing themes relevant to Buddhism were created. The vast collection of Buddhist sutras

include a great quantity of woodcuts. Their flowing lines, lifelike portraits and exquisite printing bear testimony to the fine craftsmanship of the Mongol artists.

After the seventeenth century the influence of Han Chinese art on Mongol areas became increasingly important. This was shown by the emergence of an eminent group of Mongol artists well-versed in the techniques of Chinese painting. Manghuli and Buyantu are representatives of this group. Manghuli was an outstanding portrait artist attached to the royal court. He studied Western methods of painting to inform his own skills. In his famous *Portrait of Yunli* (Fig. 27) the facial features are traced with thin lines using a reddishbrown ochre and the hair, beard and eyebrows have both dark and light shades, giving the portrait a three-dimensional quality.

Buyantu flourished in the first half of the eighteenth century and was the most famous landscape artist of the time. Not only was he adept at painting, he was also a master of the theory of art. His well-known book *Huaxue Xinfa Wenda* [Questions and Answers on Painting] uses a question-and-answer format to address the many theoretical questions regarding art. The book contains 37 chapters in which the master answers his students' questions. The aestheticism of his drawings is rooted in realism but also displays some romanticism. Buyantu was an outstanding artist who managed to combine theory and practice relatively well and whose artistic theories hold a certain practical relevance even now.

Calligraphy is an important component of Mongol fine art. One of the most notable early characteristics of Mongolian writing was the way in which the tails, or suffixes, of a great number of words were written, pointing straight down; this type of writing is therefore also known as the 'Mongolian upright tail script'. Around the eighteenth century the design of the Mongolian script fell gradually into a regular pattern. Whereas in the past a confused jumble of different symbols gave rise to peculiar characteristics, writing now became increasingly clear and more attractive; the tails of words began to point in a more horizontal direction and so this type of writing became known as the 'Mongolian horizontal tail script'.

Writing tools also influenced the way in which the script was written. In earlier times Mongolian had been mainly written with bamboo pens and so the script had strong, angular strokes. From the eighteenth century, most texts were written with Chinese brushes so that the once strong, angular strokes were gradually replaced by softer, rounder and more fluent lines. Early Mongolian was usually in the regular script, in which all kinds of strokes in the initial, medial and final forms of the characters are, on the whole, neatly and clearly written. From the eighteenth century, calligraphy progressed from the regular style into a regular-running style with tails which protruded from the bottoms of the characters. The strokes of these tails are usually thickly and heavily written with calligraphy brushes;

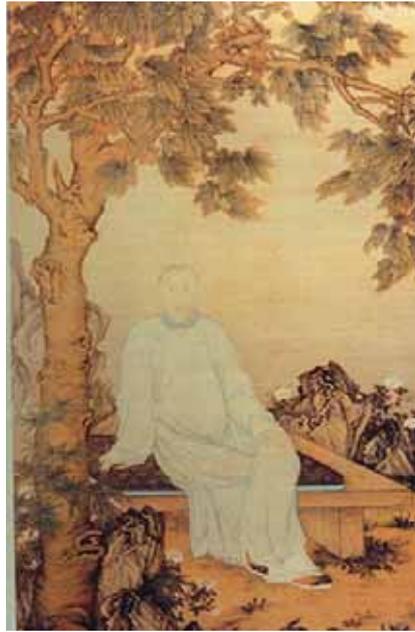


Fig. 27. Portrait of Yunli by Manghuli (landscape supplied by Jiang Tingxi). Painting on a silk scroll. Imperial Palace Museum, Beijing. (Photo: Courtesy of Liu Zhengyin.)

since they look like knives in shape, they are called ‘knife-strokes’. The style of the ‘seal’ character is also employed mainly for decoration in Mongolian calligraphy. All these different scripts give the impression of a strong and vibrant art form. Buddhist writings are written in a comparatively fine manner, being supposed to be the embodiment of precious and sacred truths. These Buddhist works were usually transcribed by master calligraphers, and the scrolls or bound volumes were often kept in the monastery’s treasury. Mongolian calligraphy was also used on boards fixed to walls or the lintels of doors or was carved on steles. There are many outstanding examples of calligraphy in Mongolian texts and on engraved steles that date from the sixteenth century.

After the seventeenth century, influenced by the culture of inland China, Mongolia also produced some calligraphers of the Han (Chinese) script. Manghuli and Buyantu, mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, were skilled at both painting and calligraphy. There were other famous calligraphers like Fashishan (1753–1813), Songyun (1752–1835) and Woren (1804–71). All these Mongol masters hold a secure place in the history of Chinese calligraphy.