



The art of miniature painting in Afghanistan during the Timurid period

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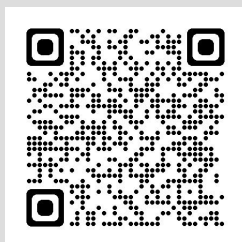
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Abstract: This article converses the historical development of miniature painting in Afghanistan before and after the Islamic period, up to the Taimury era. Herat, as a significant center of the Taimury period, was a gathering place for prominent artists, and the support of the Taimury kings facilitated the establishment of the Herat artistic school. In this school, around six centuries ago, the most precise miniature works of the region and even the world were created, which today are the crown jewels of museums worldwide. The aim of this research is to examine the status of miniature painting during the rule of the Taimury sultans and princes of Herat, and the questions raised in this article are as follows: What was the state of miniature painting during the Taimury sultans' era in Herat? Which artists created what works with what characteristics, and what role did Kamaludin Behzad play in the advancement of miniature painting during this period?

Keywords: Timurids, Herat artistic School, Miniature Painting, Kamaludin Behzad

Introduction

Miniature painting has a rich history in the art of Afghanistan. This art reached its peak during the Taimury period. The Taimury kings were enthusiasts of art and literature, and they were adorned with the beauty of art. Taimur, the founder of this dynasty, summoned artists and literati from various parts of his realm to the center of the empire and laid the foundation for the elevation of art. Subsequently, his art-loving son, Shah Rukh, and his grandson, Prince Baysunghur, created the conditions for the emergence of the Herat artistic school. This school reached its pinnacle during the reign of Sultan Husayn Bayqara, and the prominent master of Afghan miniature painting, Kamaludin Behzad H¹eravi, also emerged during this period.

Despite the rich history of miniature painting in Afghanistan, there has been little research conducted on the subject, leading to the creation of unfounded theories. For instance: some claim that miniature painting came from China to Afghanistan, or that the roots and origins of the Herat artistic school lies outside Afghanistan and are influenced by contemporary schools. However, the art of miniature painting was prevalent in Afghanistan before Islam. The

discovered artifacts from ancient archaeological sites such as Mes Aynak, Lashkari Bazar, Gozargah in Herat, and the Khair Khana area support this claim. Furthermore, in the third century CE, Mani emerged in Ariana, a figure who claimed prophethood and presented his teachings to his followers through illustrations. Mani sent his missionaries to various regions, including China, to spread his faith, which, alongside the religious teachings of Manichaeism, contributed to the promotion of Mani's painting style among Chinese painters. Mani was also a skilled painter during his religious activities, and the book "Arzhang Mani," preserved in the library of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, was filled with his artistic masterpieces. The influence of Mani's painting style is evident in the works of artists even after the advent of Islam, which later evolved in the Herat artistic School. Herat, the capital of Shah Rukh's empire, was a significant artistic and literary center of Khorasan during that era. The court of Shah Rukh was the political power hub and a gathering place for the most prominent scholars and artists of the time. In this regard, the influence of the Herat artistic School on other schools of that era, such as the Shiraz and Tabriz schools, cannot be denied.

The aim of the present research is to examine the history of miniature painting in Afghanistan before Islam and to study the status of miniature painting during the time of the art-loving Taimury sultans and princes, such as Sultan Shah Rukh, Prince Baysunghur, and Sultan Husain Bayqara. Therefore, the questions raised in this article are as follows: What was the state of miniature painting during the reign of Sultan Shah Rukh, and subsequently under Prince Baysunghur and Sultan Husain Bayqara? Which artists created what works, and what characteristics did these works possess? What are the famous works of Master Kamaludin Behzad, what features do they have, and what innovations did he employ in creating his artworks?

The evolution of miniature painting in Afghanistan

Since ancient times, humans have expressed their feelings and inner desires through artistic roles, creating beauty through painting and sculpture. This language has allowed them to reflect their nature, society, and people. It is not out of place to present some brief and concise information regarding the history of painting and miniature art in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of research and information, the cultural relationships of historical periods have sometimes been mistakenly conflated with other relationships. It has been erroneously assumed that the people of Afghanistan learned painting from the Chinese and that painting came from China to Afghanistan. This misconception has led to unfounded opinions about Afghan painting. With the discovery of artifacts from various regions of Afghanistan and the existence of cultural values preserved in this land, Afghan painting has a history that dates back to the earliest periods of human life. If the history of painting in Afghanistan is not older than that of painting in Spain, France, and other countries, it is certainly not newer.

There are documents and evidence indicating that colorful wall paintings were prevalent in this land during the Achaemenid era, prior to Islam. It is mentioned here, citing an ancient work, that Kharas Mi Tili, the head of Alexander's ceremonies, stated: during the Achaemenid period, the writing of poetic texts was common, which included biographies of heroes, tales of love and affection, and other traditional subjects, and these were widely known. People read these stories with particular enthusiasm and interest, and they were depicted in the temples and palaces of the nobility.

Therefore, according to this written account and document from foreigners, during the Achaemenid era, the people of this land adorned their palaces and homes with such paintings. The discovery of colorful wall paintings from the Achaemenid period clearly shows that the wall paintings of that time were all colorful.

In the introduction of the Shahnameh of Abu Mansur, this artistic method in painting is mentioned, noting that the people of this land were the innovators and founders of miniature painting (a term derived from the French "miniature," which means nature in its utmost smallness and delicacy). This style of painting has been prevalent in this region since ancient times, deeply rooted in its culture. As we will discuss, this form of painting traveled from this land to China and then returned once again to this environment.

In ancient times, the delicate engravings made on seals and insignias represent the finest and most authentic miniature painting. No ancient nation, as attested by Professor Pope, has been able to showcase their art in engraving, which is the foundation of painting, like the artists and engravers of Afghanistan. The art of engraving in Aryana, especially during the Achaemenid era, is considered one of the most beautiful miniatures of antiquity, found on cylindrical seals and insignias.

We said that the art of painting has traveled from Khorasan to China. As documented evidence shows and history narrates, painting has indeed moved from Khorasan to China, and it is not unlikely that this art, like any other cultural phenomenon that is transferred from one nation to another, has taken on some Chinese characteristics due to the spiritual and traditional traits of that nation. However, its foundation, essence, and style have remained fundamentally Afghan. The renowned Chinese scholar, Shi Momi, believes that the use of the brush in China coincided with the time when the production of decorated pottery from the Achaemenid court was introduced to China. Professor Pope asserts that from the 5th century BC to the 8th century AD, the influence of Aryan and Khorasani painting on Chinese painting was significant.

The concept of this opinion is that for a full 13 centuries, the influence of Aryan and Khorasani(Afghanistan) painting has dominated the art of Chinese painting. In a famous Chinese treatise about the paintings and skilled painters of China, it is mentioned that a person named Yuni in Chinese pronunciation traveled from the court of the Achaemenid Empire to the court of China during the reign of the Achaemenids. He was a painter, a master artist unmatched in mural painting, and he was the one who introduced miniature painting to the people of China for the first time in the 4th century BC.

Based on the writings of this Chinese treatise and the name and details it provides about this Aryan painting along with its date, we understand that this painter was sent to China by the Achaemenid court. Some writings after the advent of Islam state that Mani went to China, learned painting, and then came to Khorasan (Afghanistan) to claim prophethood; however, this is not true because Mani's journey to China is not substantiated. Instead, the Manichaean missionaries, namely his followers and disciples, traveled to Turkestan and China, and as a result of their preaching, Manichaeism quickly spread in Turkestan and China (Hamayon Farrokh,1974). Nevertheless, ancient speakers, such as Nezami Ganjawi, believe that the painter Mani traveled from the city of Ray to China and there called people to his faith.

What is certain for us is that Mani and his teachings have led to the flourishing and popularity of painting and the elevation of the beautiful art of book decoration. Mani had instructed that halls called "the House of Paintings" be built, and on the walls of these halls, the story of the creation of humanity and its destiny should be painted based on the beliefs of his religion. His followers would understand the philosophy of his teachings by exploring the paintings in this House of Paintings.

Color and design play a prominent role in Manichaean painting. The colors in the paintings of this school are vivid and glossy, predominantly featuring shades of red, dark green, and light purple against a sky-blue (lapis lazuli) background, with abundant use of gold and silver for

shine and radiance. Fortunately, in recent years, apart from what has been discovered in Turfan, several examples of Manichaean paintings have also been found in a few palaces from the Sasanian era in Turkestan, including in the palace of the kings of Diwashtik and in the Afrasiyab palace located on the Afrasiyab hill. It should be noted that the style and method of Aryan painting remained the same as Manichaean painting from the Arab invasion until the Mongol invasion. Numerous examples of wall paintings and book illustrations from the Daylamite, Ghaznawi, and Seljuk periods are available, which can serve as the best evidence and testimony to this claim.

After the arrival of the Mongols in Khorasan, extensive cultural and economic relations were once again established between Khorasan and China. Since the Mongols had a great interest in painting and astronomy, art and knowledge progressed during their rule. It was at this time that the element of painting in this land formed a new connection with China for the third time (the first during the Achaemenid era, the second with the emergence of Mani, and the third with the arrival of the Mongols). Thus, Islam and the Dari language became recognized in China, and Chinese knowledge was utilized in the fields of history and astronomy. The Chinese painting style entered Afghanistan, Transoxiana, and Iran, blending with local styles (Ghobar, 2001). Sometime later, during the Timurid period, artists in Khorasan created a new and innovative school of painting, which reached its peak during the reign of Sultan Husayn Mirza Bayqara with the emergence of skilled painters such as Kamaludin Behzad and his students. This school should be referred to as the Herat artistic School, and it has no Chinese roots in terms of painting principles (Azhar Heravi, 1974).

Miniature Art in the Post-Islamic Era and the Artistic School of Herat

With the arrival of Islam in Afghanistan, some arts, such as painting and sculpture, were initially marginalized and later banned for a time. However, after the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate and the rise of the Timurid dynasty from the 14th century AD onwards, coinciding with the reign of Shah Rukh and his son Baysunghur, and later Sultan Husayn Bayqara and Kamaludin Behzad in the 15th century AD, miniature painting was resumed in a systematic and, of course, Islamic manner. It did not take long for this new method to become the most popular artistic discipline in Herat. The support of painters and poets was a strategy employed by the Timurid kings to legitimize their rule. A characteristic of painting during this period is its delicacy and elegance, reflecting the complex, balanced, and gentle society of the Timurid court (Pernia Hussian, 2023).

The status of art during the Timurid period.

Herat experienced extensive advancements not only in literature but in all aspects of art and life. In this era, various forms of art reached their peak, each acquiring its unique style. The Timurid kings and princes, who themselves possessed remarkable talents in this field, made significant efforts for the development of painting and encouraged artists. This led to the emergence of many painters, calligraphers, and illustrators during this time. Artists came from various regions to Herat, the capital of the Timurids, and were supported by the art-loving princes. The reign of Sultan Husayn Bayqara, despite administrative complexities and the wars of princes, is considered a distinguished period in the history of Herat and its surroundings in terms of culture and various arts. Based on the environment that the Timurid kings created for the flourishing of art, great talents such as Kamaludin Behzad in painting and Sultan Ali in calligraphy emerged during this period. The Herat painting academy was established in this era, serving as a place where artists engaged in painting, calligraphy, and other forms of art with great skill. The artistic works of this period reflect the high talent, artistic taste, and exceptional skill of the masters of that time, representing the school and unique style of that era, which had reached its zenith. The

commitment of the Timurid kings to cultural endeavors and scientific services reached its peak. Shah Rukh, in the year 1429 AD, sent a letter and a messenger to the holy sanctuary of Mecca, expressing his desire to fulfill a vow and to take on the honor of adorning the Kaaba and preparing it. However, this request was not realized due to the opposition of the then ruler of Mecca, "Malik Ashraf Barsbay," who insulted and beat Shah Rukh's envoys upon their return after repeated requests. Later, when the governance of that region passed to Malik "Zahir," another emir, Shah Rukh repeated his request, which was favorably received and executed. Thus, the request and execution of such an important task affirm the value of art in the eyes of the Timurid kings and demonstrate how much they valued artistic endeavors.

The most important figure in the Timurid period who had a deep interest in artistic endeavors and was himself an artist was Baysunghur, the son of Shah Rukh. Baysunghur can rightly be considered one of the greatest book lovers in the world, as evidenced by the surviving documents from that time, which indicate that forty calligraphers and painters, led by Mawlana Jafar Tabrizi, were continuously engaged in copying manuscripts, gilding, and illustrating books in his library. During this period, skilled calligraphers were busy transcribing books, which were then adorned by talented decorators and painters. Expert binders prepared precious bindings for them, creating treasures that were each worth a world. Historical documents also indicate that Baysunghur, by paying hefty wages and granting royal gifts, kept the most talented masters of calligraphy and gilding in his service, and they produced the most exquisite works in calligraphy, gilding, binding, and bookmaking for him (Feqhi, 2023).

The Emergence of the Herat Artistic School

The Herat artistic School was established during the Timurid period and under the rule of Shah Rukh in Herat. This style saw significant advancement during the reign of Sultan Husayn Bayqara. However, in 1507 AD, with the invasion of the Uzbeks, its growth came to a halt. The Herat artistic school later had a profound influence on Indian painting, aided by many painters such as Aqa Reza Jahangiri, who had traveled to the court of Jahangir Shah in India. Among the most famous painters of the Herat artistic school is Kamaludin Behzad (Bayhaqi, 2005).

Prince Baysunghur Mirza and his father Shah Rukh were among the great patrons of the Herat artistic School. Baysunghur had a strong inclination to remain in Herat, and historians consider one of the reasons for his prolonged stay there to be the flourishing cultural life of the city, where he could pursue his rich artistic and intellectual interests. Baysunghur's artistic center in Herat was known as the "Dar al-Sanaye' Bookmaking," and the books produced during the Baysunghur period included the finest miniatures and the most masterful calligraphy, all beautifully bound and decorated. The painters, calligraphers, and scribes who worked at the grand royal library of Herat under the direction of Baysunghur Mirza created numerous works, including illustrated copies of the Shahnameh, Layla and Majnun, and Saadi's Bustan and Golestan. The collection of these works gave rise to a new style known as the Herat artistic school. The Herati style had its own characteristics, one of which was the presence of elements from the Far East, likely due to the exchange of ambassadors between the court of Herat and China. After the death of Baysunghur in 1433, Herat continued to serve as a central hub for the art of illustrating exquisite books for a relatively long time (Taherkhani, 2019).

The status of miniature painting during the reign of Sultan Shahrokh

Shahrokh encouraged and honored painters, scholars, and artists. As Qazi Ahmad writes: "In the year 1419 AD, when Shahrokh sent Shadi Khwaja and a group of nobles and princes as ambassadors to the court of Daymin Khan in the land of China, he dispatched Khwaja Ghiyath al-Din the painter to document everything he saw from the moment they left the capital of Herat

for their journey to Khitai until the day they returned. He was to record daily, in a journal, all that they encountered regarding the nature of the roads, the conditions of the provinces, the architecture, the rules of the cities, the grandeur of the kings, the methods of governance, and the various wonders observed in that land. This delegation, which also included Mirza Baysunghur, returned from China to Herat in the year 1422 AD, recounting strange tales about the customs and conditions of that country, and Khwaja Ghiyath al-Din the painter wrote and illustrated the essence of those tales without bias or prejudice" (Monshi Qomi, 1980). During Shahrokh's reign, the city of Herat became one of the major centers of art and attracted artists and craftsmen. It should be noted that Timur, despite his brutality and bloodthirstiness, was a lover of knowledge and art, but his son Shahrokh paid even more attention to art and artists, treating them with kindness. For this reason, during his era, the art of painting went through a phase of adaptation and learning foreign techniques, reaching its youthful period. Subsequently, artists were able to internalize what they had borrowed from others and make it an inseparable part of themselves. In the forms and shapes created during the reign of Shahrokh in Herat, one can observe the most important characteristics of the decorative styles that were prevalent. These same characteristics later became the most significant features of the painting school of Herat in the following century. The most important traits of this school included beautiful landscapes of flowers and flower gardens in the spring, with mountains and hills shaped like sponges, and the use of bright and luminous colors that never compromised their unity and independence by shifting from one color to another. Furthermore, the painters of this period were able to establish reasonable and acceptable proportions between figures and buildings with other landscapes they depicted. In particular, the miniatures of the Herat artistic School are very similar in style, and nearly all of them depict mountains at specific distances, accompanied by greenery covering the ground, along with a broad horizon and new colors. The golden age of miniature painting began during the Timurid period in Herat, led by the artists of this era. Today, many unique works from the Timurid period can be found in museums around the world; these works are unparalleled in terms of beauty, coloring, and precision in details. A large number of exquisite manuscripts from the Herat artistic School belong to the era of Shahrokh, including an exquisite copy of the Khamsa of Nizami, which is housed in the collection of Louis Cartier in Paris and is stamped with Shahrokh's seal (Dimand, 1957).

A unique copy of the book "Miraj Namah" was illustrated in the Uyghur Turkish language during the reign of Shah Rukh. This version is written in the hand of Mir Bakhshi and contains sixty-one images, and it is currently preserved in the National Library of Paris. The book discusses the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Its images are unusually presented in square shapes and are distinctly separate from the text of the book. This arrangement is further emphasized by the strong balance of the figures on many pages. Although this version is exquisite, it is not particularly rich in creativity (Binyon, 1988).

One of the most exquisite paintings belonging to this period is an independent piece that is currently housed in the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris. This painting depicts the meeting of Homay and Homayoun in the gardens of the royal palace in Beijing and is considered one of the masterpieces of Timurid painting. Throughout this artwork, there is a remarkable creativity combined with beauty, a harmonious integration of elements, and a complete mastery in expressing emotions and thoughts. The grandeur and nobility of the figures portrayed are clearly evident. Additionally, its unusual coloring and the depiction of beautiful flowers give it a unique artistic allure.

Dawlat shah Samarqandi writes in his "Tazkaratul Shoaara" about the circumstances of Shahrokh: "However, there were four artists in the capital of Shahrokh who had no equal in the inhabited

quarter of their time. Khwaja Abdul Qadir Maraghi in the science of musical modes, Yusuf Andakani in singing and performance, Ustad Qawamuddin in engineering, design, and architecture, and Mawlana Khalil Musawir, who was a second Mani" (Samarqandi, 2003).

Miniature Painting of the Baysunghur Period

After Bayqara Mirza took control of Herat by the order of Shahrokh, he established his grand library in this city. As a cultured and talented prince with a keen appreciation for the arts, he gathered the most prominent masters of the time to his court from all over the realm. Bayqara's passion for art was such that he called artists from everywhere to Herat and nurtured them, including Master Sayedi Ahmad the painter and Khwaja Ali the Illustrator, whom he brought from Tabriz and placed in his library. As historians have noted, many scribes, painters, and calligraphers were constantly engaged in work in his library, and it was indeed the disciples of these artists who completed the art school of Herat during the reign of Sultan Husayn Bayqara. During Bayqara's time, in addition to those mentioned, there were many other painters, such as Master Waliullah Simini from Nishapur, S the painter, and Ahmad ibn Mahmoud Kamal al-Khatib among them (Monshi Qomi, 1980). Although the painters of Bayqara's court continued to illustrate the Shahnameh, the subjects that captured their attention more were romantic poetry and the mystical themes of renowned poets such as Nezami and Saadi. In this era, Nezami produced five poems known as the Khamasa of Nezami, which include: Makhzanul Asrar, Khesraw and Shirin, Laily and Majnun, Haft Paykar, and Iskandarnamah. Saadi also created two famous works, namely Bustan and Golestan. For the illustration of these poems, the Herat artistic School developed a new style that suited the meaning and concepts of the lyrical and romantic verses. Typically, the human forms in these delicate images are depicted smaller, with a landscape that is distinctly Khurasani, decorative, featuring a high horizon and sponge-like mountains. The coloring of these images is bright and harmonious, and compared to the early Mongol period paintings, new colors have been added. (Dimand, 1957).

A collection of poetry was written in the year 1420 AD by Mahmoud Mortaza Husaini for the Bayestgir Library, which belongs to this period. The uniqueness of this manuscript lies in the fact that the artist was able to minimize the depiction of faces as much as possible, and he demonstrated skill in the coloring and stylistic conventions used in drawing mountains and hills (Zaki,1984). The most beautiful images in this collection are two faces: one is the face of Khosrow, who is shown above Shirin, inquiring about her situation, and the other is a depiction of a battle between the army of Khosrow Parviz and Bahram Chubin (Zaki, 1978).

The excellent taste of Baysunghur and the unparalleled skill of these masters manifested in the finest examples of book illustration of the ninth century. The painter of Baysunghur's time, continuing the painting tradition of Sultan Iskandar, achieved a formal and systematic style, prominently displayed in the famous Shahnameh illustrations known as Baysunghuri (1429 AD). This manuscript contains 22 illustrations and is currently preserved in the Golestan Library in Tehran. The identity of the painter or painters of this Shahnameh is unknown, but we know that Ja'far Tabrizi wrote it and Qavam al-Din crafted its binding. The Baysunghuri Shahnameh is significant not only for its elegance and beauty but also because Baysunghur himself wrote an introduction to it, which is known as Baysunghur's introduction. The tall, dignified figures with bearded faces, large floral motifs, and solitary green trees are characteristic elements in the completely balanced compositions of the Baysunghuri Shahnameh and other manuscripts of this period. Sometimes, the foundation of the composition consists of horizontal and diagonal elements. Avoiding mere symmetry allows the painter to depict hunting scenes and battles as dynamic, while banquets and feasts appear serene and calm. Court scenes, due to a specific

emphasis on colorful motifs, garments, tiles, and carpets, possess greater decorative finesse. The painter employs utmost precision in grouping figures, arranging color levels, and detailing architecture and natural landscapes; and through careful and calculated color use, he strives to convey a spacious and deep pictorial space. Nevertheless, his work can sometimes appear lifeless due to excessive meticulousness in balancing visual elements.

In addition to the *Shahnamah* of Baysunghur, the book of *Kalila wa Dimna* is also considered one of the artistic masterpieces of this era. According to the author, from the Seljuks to the Safavids, these two priceless Timurid legacies are among the rare masterpieces; because the illustrations and scenes of the gatherings in these two manuscripts, belonging to the Herat artistic School, contain the brightest and most beautiful characteristics of painting from this period and are also unmatched in terms of delicacy and precision in the world of miniature art (Zarrin il, 2012).

The status of miniature painting during the reign of Sultan Husain Bayqara

The artistic school of Herat can be divided into two periods of transformation, before and after the rule of Sultan Husain Bayqara, with the peak undoubtedly being the presence of Kamaludin Behzad at the court of Sultan Husain Bayqara and the creation of innovative works in the painting of this period. Regarding the characteristics of this school during the time of Sultan Husain Bayqara, it can be stated that the works of the Herat artistic school feature strong and dynamic scenes compared to the contemporaneous paintings in other artistic schools. This is because artists have made less use of symmetrical compositions in their scenes.

At the same time, the precise design and attention to the reconstruction of the enchanting landscapes of nature and their connection to architecture, as well as the deep bond between painting, literature, and mysticism, along with the presentation of human forms with utmost delicacy, are among its other prominent features. Furthermore, the meticulous use of color and the proportion of colors, along with the reduction of painted areas and repetition, allowed the painters to minimize the contradictions and deviations from the norms of coloring in their images. Thus, the works of the Herat artistic School encapsulated the most refined methods of visualization with vivid representations of the daily social life of the people, which resulted in significant achievements for the Herat artistic School. The Herat artistic School reached its peak during the reign of Sultan Husain Bayqara, thanks to the special attention of the capable and wise minister Alishir Nawayi, and subsequently, unparalleled masters emerged at the court. The master painters of this period, with their unique technical characteristics, breathed extraordinary life into this art and made remarkable changes, which became a distinguishing factor between the painters before and after them.

Among the notable masters of this period, one can mention Khwaja Mirak the painter, who had no equal in the science of illustration and gilding, and who had raised the banner of book writing to unprecedented heights. Shah Muzaffar, who created works with a unique style, Qasim Ali Chehragosha, who was a court attendant and a musician, was greatly favored by Muzaffar due to his training in this art; and Molana Haji Mohammad the painter, who was a master of various arts in his time. It is very likely that the painters at the court of Sultan Husain Bayqara were more numerous than this, but what is certain is that the most important and influential artist of this era, as well as the greatest miniaturist and the most famous painter in the Islamic world, was Kamaludin Behzad Herawi (Ial Shateri, 2016).

Kamaludin Behzad

Kamaludin Behzad Herawi was an innovative and skilled artist who opened a new path in the field of painting and had a significant impact on the work of later painters of the Herat artistic School. He became an orphan in childhood, and Ruhullah Mirak his uncle took him under his care. His intellectual and artistic mentor and supporter was Amir Ali Shirnawayee, and Behzad served the last powerful Timurid king, Sultan Hussain Bayqara, in Herat. After the rise of Shah Ismail Safawi to power, he was taken to Tabriz and appointed to oversee the library and the art workshop. Behzad passed away in Herat and was buried there. The first master from whom Behzad learned to draw was Aqa Mirak Herawi, who was apparently a relative. Among other masters of Behzad were Sayyid Ahmad Tabrizi or Master Sayed Ahmad the Painter. Behzad learned the art of delicacy and illumination directly from Ruhullah Mirak Khurasani and the fine engraving and profound expression from the designs of Mawlana Waliyullah. At the age of twenty, he was recognized as a talented painter. Over an eight-year period, he developed his style, and in the subsequent period, he created his best works.

During his stay in Herat and Tabriz, he dedicated himself to training outstanding students such as Qasim Ali, Sheikh Zadah, and Mir Masoud. Among his followers, Qasim Ali is the most renowned. Regarding the painters influenced by him, it can be said that "painters like Mir Masud and Aqa Mirak were more faithful to the style of Behzad than Sultan Muhammad, although their work is distinguished from that of the master in terms of the complexity of composition and color variety" (Kawosi, 2018).

The most important works of Kamaludin Behzad

Despite Master Behzad's long life and the support of the court, it was expected that many of his works would remain. However, the book "Bustan" by Saadi, found in the Cairo library, is the only work that all researchers agree is attributed to Behzad. The reasons for this may be explored in the following points. Firstly, although Behzad, unlike many other artists, did not wait for death to achieve fame, and his contemporaries quickly recognized his genius, none of them endeavored to describe or articulate the characteristics of his style. As a result, the ground was prepared for the misuse of his name; so much so that every good work was attributed to him, with his signature placed beneath it. It should also be noted that painters of the Timurid era, including Qasim Ali, worked concurrently with Behzad, and while their works may not fully match those of Behzad, they are quite close. Behzad's students, such as Sheikh Zadeh Khorasani and Agha Mirak Tabrizi, had also reached a level of mastery similar to that of Behzad. It can be imagined that many of the paintings were initially designed by the master, with his students completing them. The six illustrated images from the book "Bustan" in the Cairo library are undoubtedly considered original and outstanding works of Master Behzad.

The first image features a dual composition of the scene of a feast hosted by Shah Sultan Hossein Bayqara in the palace garden. In this image, numerous figures are depicted, filling almost the entire space with various shapes. The perfection and balance in the composition, along with the utilization of experiences from all painting styles, are central to the astonishing idea of this work. Behzad structured his painting in such a way that he could introduce new faces and create a scene rich with images of architectural elements, which was only possible through the application of a geometric arrangement of components. In this miniature, the ruler is the main hero of the work. However, the focus is not solely on the image of the ruler, as the painter delicately employs strategies to balance the figures. It seems that Behzad, in this work, aimed to present details of the lifestyle during that era. It appears to offer a vivid tableau of courtly life from those years to the viewer. The image of the king and the shepherd relates to a tale from

Saadi's "Gulistan" about recognizing friends and foes. In this image, a completely distinct and fresh perspective from the artist Behzad emerges, elevating the structure of the traditional composition. The depiction of humans and animals in this work comes to life, with figures taking on form and movement. In this illustration, the images appear astonishingly realistic, setting aside the last remnants of rigidity and inflexibility from the Mongol era, which itself becomes a model for painting in later periods. In the illustrations of the mosque, Behzad showcases his creativity in depicting buildings and significantly improving the proportions between the images of humans and structures. One of the features of this work is Behzad's attention to the livelihoods and customs of the general populace. All images are drawn in a way that they relate to their surroundings. Everything is meticulously placed in its position, and the composition achieves the best possible and natural form. In these miniatures, Behzad presents scenes of real-life events through the depiction of various figures, creating a complete tableau of the real lives of the people of Herat. He also delivers an astonishing effect by using colors and their specific combinations.

Perhaps the most beautiful composition by Behzad is the illustration of Joseph's temptation from the Cairo edition of the *Bustan*. In this illustration, the adorned palace and locked doors are meticulously painted, effectively conveying Joseph's sense of loneliness and entrapment in Zuleikha's snare. The palace is depicted with baked bricks and adorned with tiles, wooden latticework, and carpets, reminiscent of Timurid architecture. This brilliant image transcends the text of the poem itself, expressing mystical themes alongside the literature and society of that era. Architecture plays a significant role in this image. In fact, Behzad transforms nature and architecture into the setting and actions of people, assigning each figure a suitable place. Additionally, he emphasizes the hidden meanings in human actions and the relationships between objects, striving to blend his realism with profound concepts. Among the illustrations that researchers view positively regarding Behzad's authenticity and artistry are the paintings from two copies of the *Khamasa* of Nizami housed in the British Library. In the 1459 AD edition, images depict the battles of tribes, the fight between Bahram and the dragon, Majnun in the desert, and Majnun at the Kaaba. In the second edition, created for Amir Ali, one of Sultan Hussein Bayqara's princes in Herat, the illustrations include Mamun in the bath, the construction of the Khornak palace, women swimming, Alexander meeting the pious man, and the death of Farhad, all attributed to Behzad. The artistic skill that Behzad employed in these works is unparalleled and reflects the immense genius of this exceptional artist. The beautiful, circular, and enclosed compositions filled with dramatic expressions, harmonious color schemes, exquisite landscapes, and dynamic, lively scenes brimming with realism are unique characteristics of Behzad's works (Moshkini, 2019).

Characteristics of Kamaludin Behzad's Work Master

Kamaludin Behzad was a leading figure in his art during his time, striving to execute his artistic work with precision. Below are some characteristics of his work:

1. Intricacy and utmost meticulousness, with such attention to detail and complete accuracy in his works that no viewer can find fault or criticism in the delicacy and precision of his creations.
2. Carefulness and integrity in all his works without mistakes.
3. Bringing life to scenes of gatherings, battles, and landscapes.
4. His unique coloring techniques, demonstrating such skill in coloring that it seems he has infused each point with a spirit.

5. The perspectives in his works do not conform to realism, and his style does not demand adherence to perspective.
6. The colors used by Master Behzad are generally his own creations, known for their durability, and there is never any error in his coloring.
7. The leaves of trees, hair, beards, and other intricate details by Behzad are enchanting and exhibit extraordinary skill.
8. Behzad and his followers attempted to depict spiritual figures and dignitaries in a semi-circle illuminated by sunlight.
9. Behzad portrays humans from one side in profile.
10. The ability to combine colors and use various types of colors in a painting is one of the remarkable powers of Master Behzad (Shahrani, 2012).

Conclusion

Miniature painting is a specific style of painting in which the artist strives to display a vast space with more details within a small and limited environment. This art has a rich history in Afghanistan; according to archaeological researches, the earliest signs of miniature painting were discovered in pre-Islamic times in areas such as Mes Aynak, Lashkari Bazar, Gazar Gah in Herat, and the Khair Khana area of Kabul, which consist of delicate and ornate designs on coins, beads, and pottery. Then, in the third century AD, with the emergence of Mani, miniature painting took on a more professional form. The Manichaean missionaries, who traveled to other regions to promote their religious teachings, also spread the Manichaean style of painting in various parts of the country and even to China. According to the renowned Chinese scholar Sui Yi Qi Shi, it is clarified that miniature painting traveled from Aryana to China, and within the country, signs of Manichaean painting that were prevalent during that era can be observed in the ancient area of Bagram and also in the Bamiyan caves. During the Timurid period, the art of miniature painting reached its peak as a continuation of Manichaean painting, leading to the establishment of the Herat artistic school and specific artistic styles. Among the Timurid kings and emirs, Sultan Shah Rukh, Prince Baysunghur, and Sultan Husain Bayqara paid special attention to the development of art and adorned their courts with artists and scholars. During their reign, the best miniature works in the country were created, and at the end of this period, namely during Sultan Husain Bayqara's reign, the master Kamaludin Behzad emerged. Behzad, with the support of the court, created the finest miniature works in the country and worked with such skill and precision that his work led to the formation of a specific style known as the style of Kamaludin Behzad.

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