

MAY 1967

# The Metropolitan Museum of Art BULLETIN



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# THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIRDS

A Persian manuscript of exceptional interest has entered the Museum's collections. This is a copy of the *Mantiq-al-tayr*, "The Language of the Birds," a mystical poem (in which the birds, searching for a leader, are used as a symbol for mankind in search of God) written by the twelfth-century poet Farid al-din Attar. It was copied by one of the great calligraphers of the fifteenth century, Sultan Ali of Meshhed; the colophon records the date and place of its production: Herat, 1483; and it is illustrated with eight miniature paintings of the finest quality, four of which are contemporary with the copying of the text, while the others are additions of the early seventeenth century. The fifteenth-century paintings are the product of the court atelier at Herat, although it is not known if the patron who commissioned the work was the sultan, a member of his family, or his artistically minded vizier. The later miniatures were painted in Isfahan at the order of the Safavid Shah Abbas, who had the pages of the manuscript remounted and given brilliantly colored, gold-flecked margins. New, illuminated opening pages were also added, and the whole was rebound. Shah Abbas presented the completed volume in 1609 to the family shrine of Shaikh Safi in Ardabil, where only the greatest work would have made a worthy dedication.

The manuscript's regal history and the exceedingly fine quality of its calligraphy, illumination, and illustrations make this a major acquisition for the Department of Islamic Art. In the following articles, two principal aspects of the miniatures are discussed: their relation to the late fifteenth-century school of painting in Herat, and their relation—a peculiar and, as we shall see, quite remarkable relation—to the school of painting that flourished in early seventeenth-century Isfahan.

FRONTISPIECE: *Detail of the miniature shown on page 347*

ON THE COVER: *Detail of the miniature shown in color on page 343*

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# The Fifteenth-Century Miniatures

MARIE G. LUKENS *Assistant Curator of Islamic Art*

The manuscript of *The Language of the Birds* was copied in Herat in 1483 by Sultan Ali of Meshhed. According to contemporary sources, Sultan Ali had been summoned from Meshhed, his birthplace, to work in the library of the last great Timurid ruler and art patron in Iran, Husayn Mirza Bayqara (1468-1506), whose capital was the city of Herat (now in Afghanistan, but at that time part of the province of Khurasan, within the Timurid domains of Iran). Calligraphers were the artists most highly regarded in the Muslim world, and an early seventeenth-century author stated that “[Sultan Ali’s] writing is among other writings as the sun among the other planets.” It is not surprising that the four paintings contemporary with the calligraphy are of comparable quality, and they are, indeed, among the finest examples known of the late fifteenth-century court style of Herat. The development of this style is in large part attributed to the painter Bihzad, the most renowned name in the history of Persian painting.

In spite of the fame of this artist, whose reputation began in his own lifetime, relatively little that is definite is known about him. Kemal al-din Bihzad, to give his full name, was born in the mid-fifteenth century, grew up under the tutelage of the painter Mirak Naqqash, and worked first under the patronage of the famous vizier Mir Ali Shir Neva’i, for whom Sultan Ali also did much work and who was as great a patron of the arts as Husayn Mirza, as well as an author in his own right. Later, like Sultan Ali, Bihzad was attached to Husayn Mirza’s library, presumably until the sultan’s death in 1506.

The Uzbek tribal leader Shaibani Khan captured the city of Herat in 1507, but was defeated by the first Safavid prince, Shah Ismail, in 1510. Babur, the Timurid prince who left his small Central Asian kingdom of Ferghana to found the Mughal dynasty of India, mentioned in his memoirs that Shaibani Khan, whom he considered the crassest barbarian, took it upon himself to correct Bihzad’s drawings. Aside from this reference, there is scant mention of Bihzad during this period, and he is heard of again only in 1522, at the time of his appointment as head of the royal library in the Safavid capital of Tabriz. It is not known whether he had been taken by Shaibani Khan to the Uzbek capital at Bukhara, where a Herat court style of painting appeared in the early sixteenth century, or whether he remained in Herat until taken to Tabriz at an unknown date (but presumably not long before his library appointment there). He is said to have died in the year 1535/36.

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OPPOSITE:

1. *The beggar who professed his love for a prince. Dated 1487/88. Folio 28 of The Language of the Birds, copied by Sultan Ali in Herat in 1483. Colors and gold on paper, 8 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Fleicher Fund, 63.210.28. Here the fence turns the corner at the front in the same way as in another of the Cairo Bustan paintings, the scene of the man spattered with mud (Plate 886 in Survey of Persian Art)*

Of concern here is the early part of Bihzad's working life – approximately the last twenty years of the fifteenth century, when the style of painting associated with his name had become the established norm.

That there is so little recorded about either the details of his life or the personality of the man is not due to lack of contemporary historians but rather to their point of view. In the Iran of this time there was not the passion for personality that exists in the West. In fact, in this period artists were just beginning to sign their paintings occasionally, and if they did so, it was done as inconspicuously as possible. The interest of contemporaries was not in the person himself, but in the degree of perfection he was able to achieve within the accepted limits of his art. And if his was considered the brightest light within the well defined order of the much used metaphor of the solar system, his name would become synonymous with the highest achievement in future generations. Thus, in this strongly traditionalist culture, when a writer wished to give the greatest praise to an artist of his own time, his work would be likened to Bihzad's, as Bihzad's had been likened to that of Mani, the founder of the Manichaean heresy in the third century, whose great perfection in painting had become a tradition, although any specific evidence of this talent had probably been lost. Still, it was the constant and continuing reference to Bihzad that led Western scholars on a determined search for particulars to enable them to understand what it was about him that was outstanding, hoping they could then separate his work from that of his fellow artists.

2. *Left leaf of the double-page frontispiece from the Bustan of the poet Sa'di copied for Husayn Mirza in Herat in 1488. Colors and gold on paper, page 12 x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches. National Egyptian Library, Cairo*
3. *Folio 37v of the Khamseh of the poet Nizami copied in 1494/95. Colors and gold on paper, page 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches. British Museum, Or. 6810*



الحمد لله الذي جعل الدنيا داراً للعبادة والآخرى داراً للمعاد

یا کونستم کار تو چکار کی  
پس بریدن خواه باوار کی





4. Folio 16r of the British Museum Nizami of 1494/95 (Or. 6810)

The obvious sources to consult were contemporary or near contemporary authors. Typical of the time is the description given by the historian Khwandamir, who was born in Herat about 1475: “Ustad Kamal ad-Din Bihzad. He sets before us marvelous forms and rarities of art; his draughtsmanship, which is like the brush of Mani, has caused the memorials of all the painters of the world to be obliterated, and his fingers endowed with miraculous qualities have wiped out the pictures of all the artists among the sons of Adam. A hair of his brush, through his mastery, has given life to the lifeless form.”

Such lavish praise was not, however, confined to Bihzad. In reference to Bihzad’s teacher, the painter Mirak, Khwandamir commented, “He had no equal in the art of painting and gilding, and uplifted the banner of unsurpassedness in the art of calligraphy.” And of a pupil of Bihzad’s he wrote, “Master Qasim Ali, a painter of faces, is the cream of the artists of the age and the leader of the painters of lovely pictures.”

This lack of a helpful delineation of a painter’s style cannot be entirely blamed on the prose style in vogue at the time. Since the aim of the miniature painter was neither originality nor individuality, and since everyone was thoroughly familiar with the tenets of the art, only a real connoisseur or an artist might feel the need for more particular remarks.

Babur, mentioned above as the founder of the Mughal dynasty, fits the former category. Unfortunately, in references to Bihzad he remarked only that Bihzad painted bearded faces well, while he criticized his unbearded ones in having a greatly lengthened double chin.

To the latter category belongs Babur’s cousin, the author Mirza Muhammad Haydar Dughlat. His remarks on a painter of the previous Mongol period mention some of the criteria by which painting was judged: “[’Abd al-Hayy] is unrivalled in purity and delicacy and firmness of brush, indeed in all the characteristics of the art of painting. After Khwajah ’Abd al-Hayy came Shah Muzaffar [a contemporary of Bihzad’s in Herat, who died

young] and Bihzad, and after these up to our own times there has been none like them.”

Of the three Herat artists he wrote:

Bihzad. As a painter he is a master, though he does not come up to Shah Muzaffar in delicacy of touch, but his brush is firmer and he surpasses him in his preliminary sketches and his grouping of his figures.

Qasim 'Ali, portrait-painter. He is a pupil of Bihzad and his works come close to Bihzad, but in this style [of painting] any expert connoisseur can recognize that the works of Qasim 'Ali are rougher than those of Bihzad and that his original designs are more unsymmetrical.

Mawlana Mirak Naqqash. He is one of the marvels of the age, and he is the master of Bihzad. His original designs are more mature than those of Bihzad, though his finish is not equal to that of Bihzad.

One other important characteristic of Bihzad is mentioned by a seventeenth-century Turkish traveler, who, speaking of a Turkish painter, said, “In pictures of battles he may be called a second Bihzad.”

From the foregoing examples it is evident that even in the eyes of his contemporaries and their followers, the works of Bihzad and the other artists of the Herat court were in very much the same style. In many ways this style was a continuation of that developed in the same city under the patronage of another Timurid prince, Baysunghur Mirza, in the earlier part of the century. Still continued is the lyric quality that is the basis of so much of Persian painting. Scenes still take place in idealized landscapes where the background plane is tilted up so the small and delicate figures can be deployed with equal clarity across its surface, and where objects are depicted from two points of view, either on the same plane or as if looking down from above. There is still the loving attention to detail, in the leaves and blossoms, in the decorations of the buildings and their interiors, and in the figures themselves and their costumes. The colors remain bright and clear, chosen for their decorative effect rather than for realism, and there are still no obscuring atmospheric effects or diminishing distances or cast shadows to break

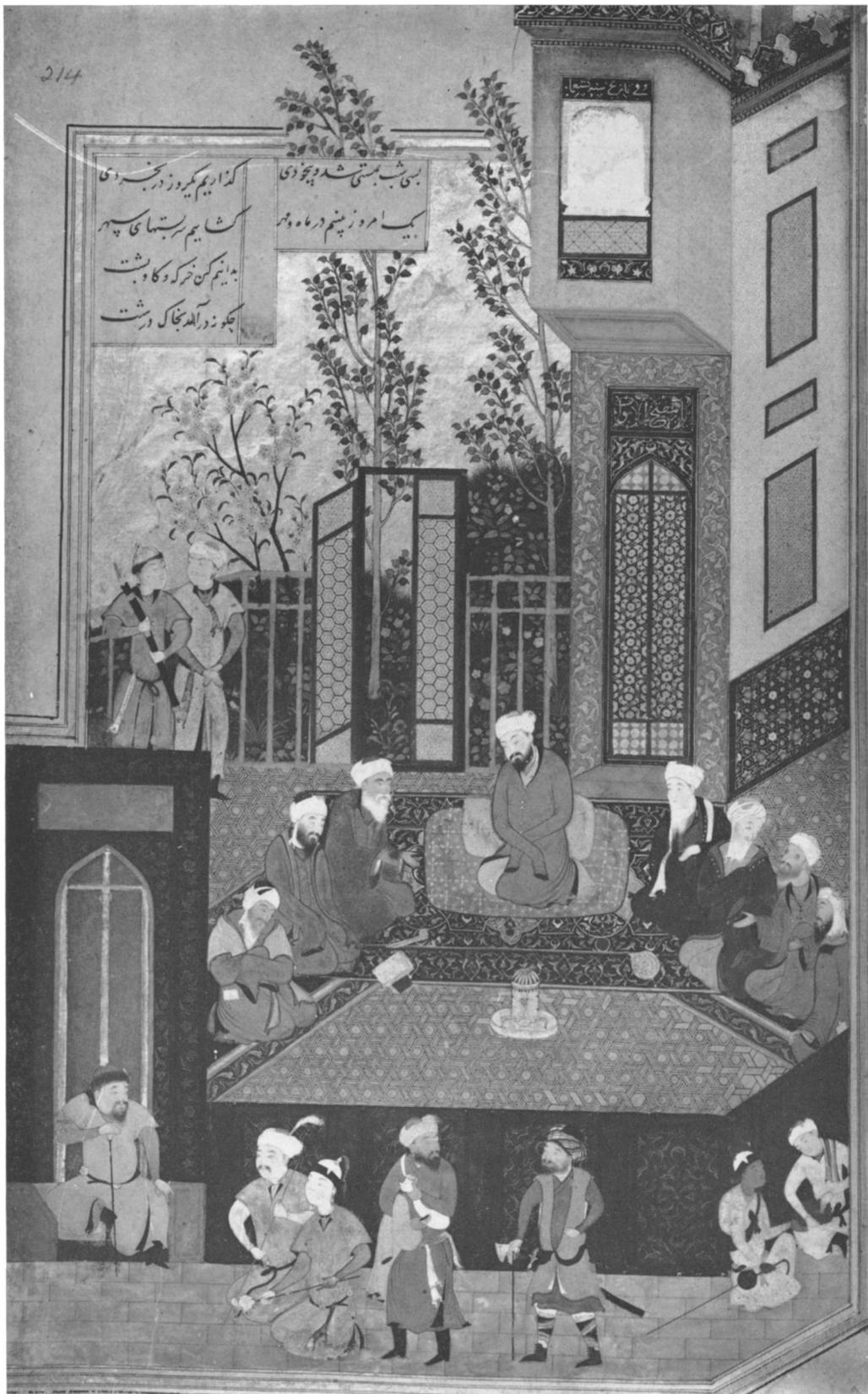
the spell of the poetic ideal and bring the viewer back to the reality of a harsh, arid land.

The innovations in the late fifteenth-century Herat style, of which Bihzad is considered the prime mover, is the general freeing of composition from a rather static formalism, greater diversity and naturalness in pose and gesture as well as more individuality in face and form, and a greater range of subject matter, rendered more intimately and dramatically. While these changes separate the school of Husayn Mirza Bayqara from those of the preceding periods, there is no startling departure from tradition.

To make a positive identification of a single painter more difficult, it was often the custom in ateliers of this time for a master and his pupils to work on the same painting, the master providing the overall plan and doing the most demanding parts, the student completing the remainder. Bihzad is mentioned as having worked in this way, especially as an old man.

The fact that quite a number of the paintings of this school are signed does not confirm authorship for one obvious reason: the presence of a signature does not, regrettably, mean its owner put it there. Owing to the fame of Bihzad and the great demand for his works, false signatures became legion, and while some are patently forgeries, with others it is extremely difficult to be sure.

The one manuscript whose miniatures have now been pretty well accepted as being the work of Bihzad is the *Bustan* of the poet Sa'di, copied at Herat for Sultan Husayn Mirza in 1488 and now in the National Egyptian Library in Cairo. In two of the six paintings in this manuscript, Bihzad's signature is incorporated in the architectural decoration, as is the date 1488 (893 H.) for one and 1489 (894 H.) for the second. Two others are signed but not dated, and the double-page frontispiece has an effaced signature. As the style and quality are consistent in all six, all are considered Bihzad's work. Since this is the only manuscript that bears his indisputable signature, other miniatures attributed to his hand must be compared to these. The results of such comparisons are often less than success-



5. Folio 214r of the  
British Museum  
Nizami of 1494/95  
(Or. 6810)

ful, however, since the *Bustan* contains only four paintings aside from the frontispiece (which, while exhibiting considerable freedom of detail, adheres to the conventional presentation of rulers and courtiers in frontispieces). For example, there would be little basis of comparison between any of the *Bustan* paintings and a painting of a battle, since there is just one landscape in the *Bustan*, and that is a pastoral scene.

Only one painting from our *Language of the Birds* can be readily compared with one from the *Bustan*: the scene of “a beggar who professed his love for a prince” (Figure 1) with the left page of the *Bustan* frontispiece, showing Husayn Mirza at a feast (Figure 2). Both take place in a fenced palace courtyard, with a gate at the right and a building at the left. Although the buildings are of different shape they are much alike in patterns of brickwork, tile and window decoration (including a window with vases in niches), roof pavilions, and the use of panels with inscriptions. There can be no doubt that these paintings are of the same school. They are also practically identical in date, the text of the Cairo manuscript having been finished in 1488, and the Metropolitan miniature being dated in the inscription around the upper part of the building 1487/88 (892 H.).



6. *The Museum's miniature shown in Figure 1*

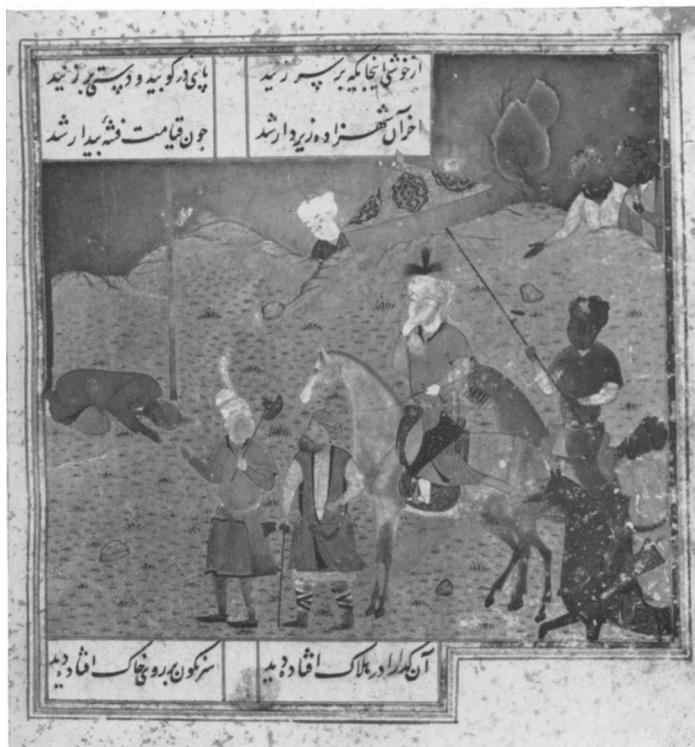


7. *Detail of a miniature from the Khamseh of the poet Amīr Khusrau Dihlavi. Herat school, Iran, late XV century. The Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., 37.27*

8. *Detail of the left leaf of a double-page frontispiece of a Zafar Nameh copied in 1467. Herat school, Iran, late XV century. John Work Garrett Library of the Johns Hopkins University, T. L. 6.1950, fol. 83*



9. *Folio 181v of a Mantiq-al-tayr by the poet Farid al-din Attar. Herat school, Iran, late XV century. British Museum, Add. 7735*



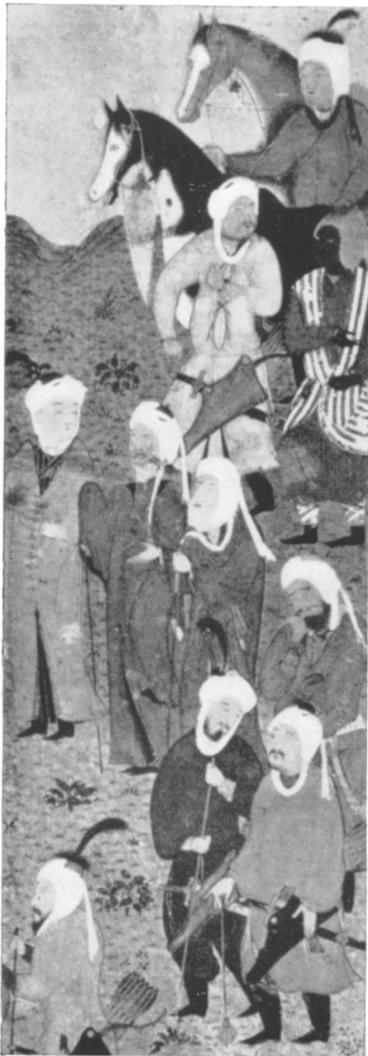
10. Folio 161, about 1493, of a Nizami copied in 1442.  $5\frac{1}{8} \times 3\frac{3}{16}$  inches. British Museum, Add. 25900

11. Folio 157 of the British Museum Nizami of 1494/95 (Or. 6810)

12. Miniature from a Nizami copied in Shiraz in 1444/45. Shiraz school, Iran, mid-xv century. John Rylands Library, Manchester, Pers. MS 36. Illustration from Plate XLI of *Les Peintures des manuscrits timûrides* by Ivan Sichoukine (Paris, 1954). Photograph: Taylor & Dull



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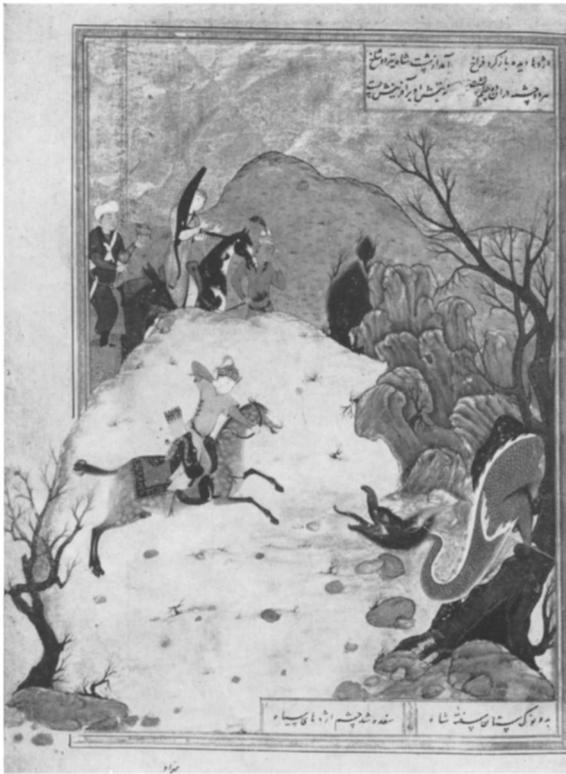
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14



13. Detail of folio 34r of the *Sadd I Iskandar* by Mir Ali Shir Neva'i, copied for Sultan Husayn Mirza's son in Herat in 1485. Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Elliot 287. Illustration from Plate LXIV of *Persian Miniature Painting* by Laurence Binyon, J. V. S. Wilkinson, and Basil Gray (London, 1933). Photograph: Taylor & Dull

14. Detail of the Museum's miniature shown in Figure 1



11



12

15



16



15. Folio 190r of the British Museum Nizami of 1494/95 (Or. 6810)

16. Folio 47a of the Haft Paikar from the Khamseh of the poet Nizami probably copied for Prince Baysunghur. Herat school, Iran, about 1430. Colors on paper, 9 x 4¾ inches. Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 13.228.13

داشت زینتی بر زرگان بلخی  
 و پیش از شکی کی مرده سپرد  
 گفت یقیناً بره بره نیست  
 که است این درین ایکن کار  
 غوغا شد در آب دریا ما کهی  
 گفت از سپهر کفنی آن تو بره  
 نیست این بر شکی که نشو نیست  
 تن فرو و پانت تا به کشت زار

و گفت



The main difference between them is in the figures, their grouping as well as their pose and gesture. In the frontispiece there is a naturalness that gives an immediate quality to what the figures are doing, from the decanting of wine on the right-hand page, not shown here, to its inebriating effect on some of the courtiers, including the sultan's son. Such relaxing of the usual formality and recititude of court scenes, particularly if they are also frontispieces, was unheard of before this period and seems to be a Bihzadian innovation. The scene in *The Language of the Birds* lacks this informal quality. The courtiers and attendants, although differing in face and figure, and although arranged in a very satisfying composition, varied yet unified, still have something archaic about them. Their placement seems arranged rather than natural, their gestures formal and frozen, and so the impression given is less the depiction of a scene at its most arresting moment than the repetition of a timeless formula for a certain type of scene, however skillfully carried out. This trace of an archaic quality undoubtedly led to a mistaken reading of the name of the painter Mirak in the inscription at the top of the building. Actually, no name is mentioned, the inscription consisting of a poetic line in praise of the sultan. Still, an attribution of this paint-

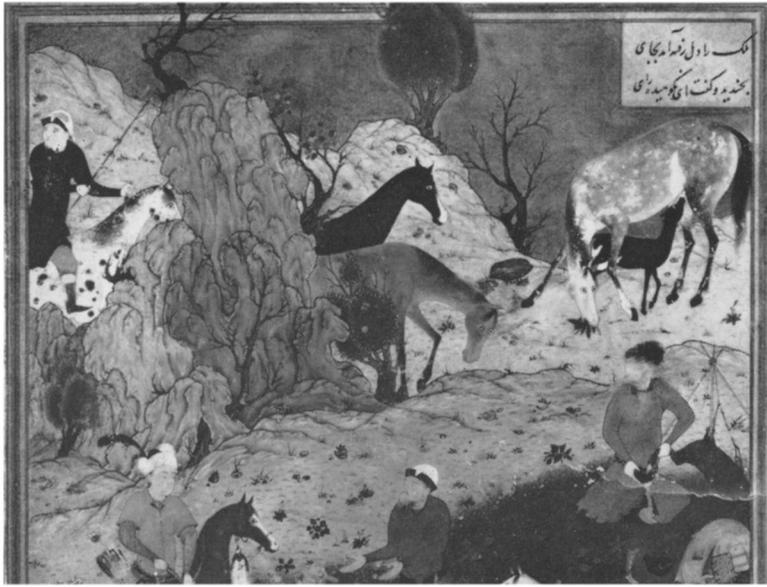
ing to Mirak is not inconsistent with the little that is known about him. He may even have been the instigator of the style associated with his illustrious pupil Bihzad; in any case, his reported close attendance upon Husayn Mirza confirms that he was at the very center of court activity, and contemporary sources indicate his work does not compare unfavorably with Bihzad's. It could then be assumed that his painting style would be the one currently in favor in the court ateliers, but might betray certain archaic characteristics, because of the artist's being of an older generation. With this criterion in mind, one could attribute not only our miniature but many others of the period to Mirak. Such a claim would not be weaker than the generally accepted one that Mirak was the author of the paintings in a pre-Bihzadian fifteenth-century style found in a manuscript, dated 1494/95, of the poems of Nizami in the British Museum (Figure 4). This attribution is made on the strength of his name (though hardly his signature) appearing on some of these paintings; on the fact that the Mughal emperor Jahangir stated that an unspecified five miniatures in this manuscript were by Mirak; and on the assumption that a member of an older generation would paint in a more archaic style. On the other hand, one could as easily argue that the few

19. *Detail showing two wrestlers, from the Gulistan by the poet Sa'di probably copied in Herat in 1486. Maurice de Rothschild Collection, Paris. Illustration from page 128 of Ars Islamica IV (Ann Arbor, 1937). Photograph: Taylor & Dull*



OPPOSITE AND RIGHT:

17, 18. *Men assembling wood and a man drowning. Folio 44 of the Museum's Language of the Birds. Colors and gold on paper, color plate actual size. Fletcher Fund, 63.210.44*



20. Detail of the miniature of King Dara and the herdsman in the Cairo Bustan

artists whom contemporaries singled out with Bihzad – Mirak included – probably painted in the new style then in vogue at the court.

In order to reach some conclusion one must review the controversial but irresistible game of “Did Bihzad paint this?” that has been indulged in with enthusiasm by every scholar who has written on the subject. Because of space only those paintings that have some connection with the four in our *Language of the Birds* – about which we too may ask, “Did Bihzad paint these?” – can be considered here.

One painting in the British Museum Nizami is much closer to our scene of the prince and the beggar than is the frontispiece in the Cairo manuscript, and it is also a scene of a petition before a ruler (Figure 3). The similarities, such as the position of the throne, the foliage on the stream bank, and some of the attendants, are obvious. The representation of the people is somewhat different, with greater age and more obesity apparent in the London painting. The latter also lacks precision in the finishing of details, as can be seen particularly clearly along the bars of the fence and top of the gate. Two renowned Islamic scholars differ in their attribution of this painting in London. Richard Ettinghausen lists it among the works

of Bihzad himself, while Ivan Stchoukine states that although it has Bihzadian features it is not by the master, as the figures lack animation. Stchoukine also points out the almost exact duplication of several of these figures in a scene of two wrestlers in a manuscript dated 1486 of the *Gulistan* by the poet Sa’di, in the collection of Maurice de Rothschild in Paris. Whether the paintings in this manuscript are by Bihzad or not has been the subject of intense controversy. To return to our miniature, however, one might reasonably conclude that it was painted by a different artist in the same atelier as the British Museum painting.

The two figures standing together by the fence in our painting appear exactly duplicated but reversed in another miniature from the Nizami (Figure 5) and several more details, such as the buildings, are also similar. This second painting in the British Museum is counted by both Ettinghausen and Stchoukine as the work of Bihzad. Other figures in this Nizami miniature appear in other manuscripts of the same Herat school. For example, to name just one, the man in the foreground with his legs wrapped with cloth and leaning on a short staff is repeated in reverse in the frontispiece of the *Zafar Nameh* (Figure 8) in the John Work Garrett Library of the Johns Hopkins University. The same figure reappears, again reversed, in a painting in the Freer Gallery in Washington (Figure 7). He is repeated yet again, not reversed, in an undated manuscript of the *Mantiq-al-tayr* in the British Museum (Figure 9), which is painted in a more provincial or archaic style but must be of much the same period.

The striding man in the lower right-hand corner of our miniature (Figure 14) is identical, save for facial type, turban, and quiver, to one at the upper right of a painting in the Bodleian Library in Oxford (Figure 13), from a manuscript written by the Vizier Mir Ali Shir, and copied at Herat in 1485 for the sultan’s son. Two figures in the foreground of the latter miniature appear again in another painting from the same work (folio 7a). The last painting in this Oxford manuscript bears the name of Bihzad’s pupil Qasim Ali. There has been much discussion of the validity of this

inscription (and of similar ones in the British Museum Nizami): some authors believing that because of their quality the paintings must be by Bihzad, others, that since Qasim Ali was taught by Bihzad and considered nearly his equal, they could indeed be by him.

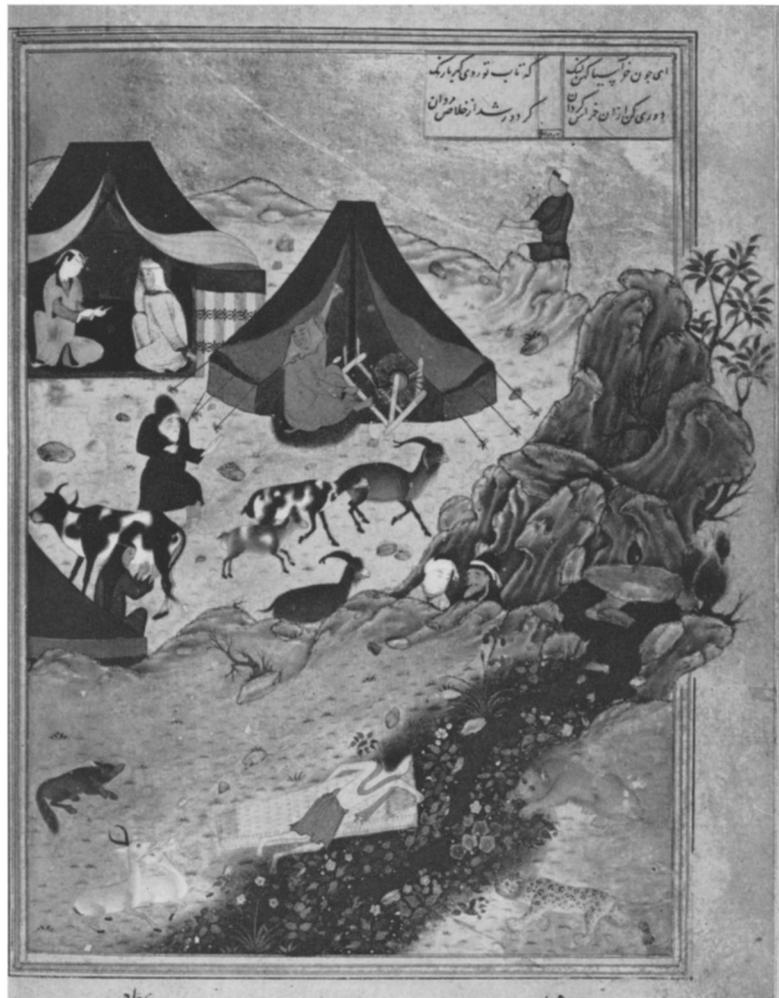
The noted Islamic scholar Ernst Kühnel, finding three of the figures from another painting in the Bodleian manuscript repeated in the Cairo *Bustan* (almost universally accepted as the work of Bihzad), felt that Bihzad would not have copied the work of his pupil, and that the Bodleian paintings, which he accepted as being by Qasim Ali, must have been painted later than those in the *Bustan*.

This leads to a crucial point in the investigation. Bihzad, if one accepts the majority opinion, copied one of his own compositions, Bahram Gur killing the dragon. The earlier version (Figure 10) is in another Nizami manuscript in the British Museum, whose text was copied (the place is not indicated) in 1442; the miniatures were added later and one is dated 1493. The second version (Figure 11) is in the Nizami of 1494/95 discussed above. Both of these, however, particularly the earlier one, follow almost exactly the composition of the same scene (Figure 12) in a Nizami that is dated 1444/45 and is painted in a quite different style – that typical of a mid-century school whose center was Shiraz, a city at the other end of the country from Herat. There is nothing to indicate that Bihzad or his fellows saw this particular Shiraz manuscript. More likely is the assumption that the composition was simply an accepted and satisfactory way of depicting this scene, known equally to the mid-century and later artists. Another miniature in the Nizami of 1494/95 (Figure 15), again generally attributed to Bihzad, also appears to have been based on an earlier precedent: it seems to have had as its inspiration a painting of the same scene, nymphs bathing (Figure 16), done by the Herat school of Prince Baysunghur about 1430. Details of architecture and foliage in the Nizami bathing scene are very close to some in the painting of the prince and the beggar in *The Language of the Birds* (Figure 1).

From these examples it becomes clear that

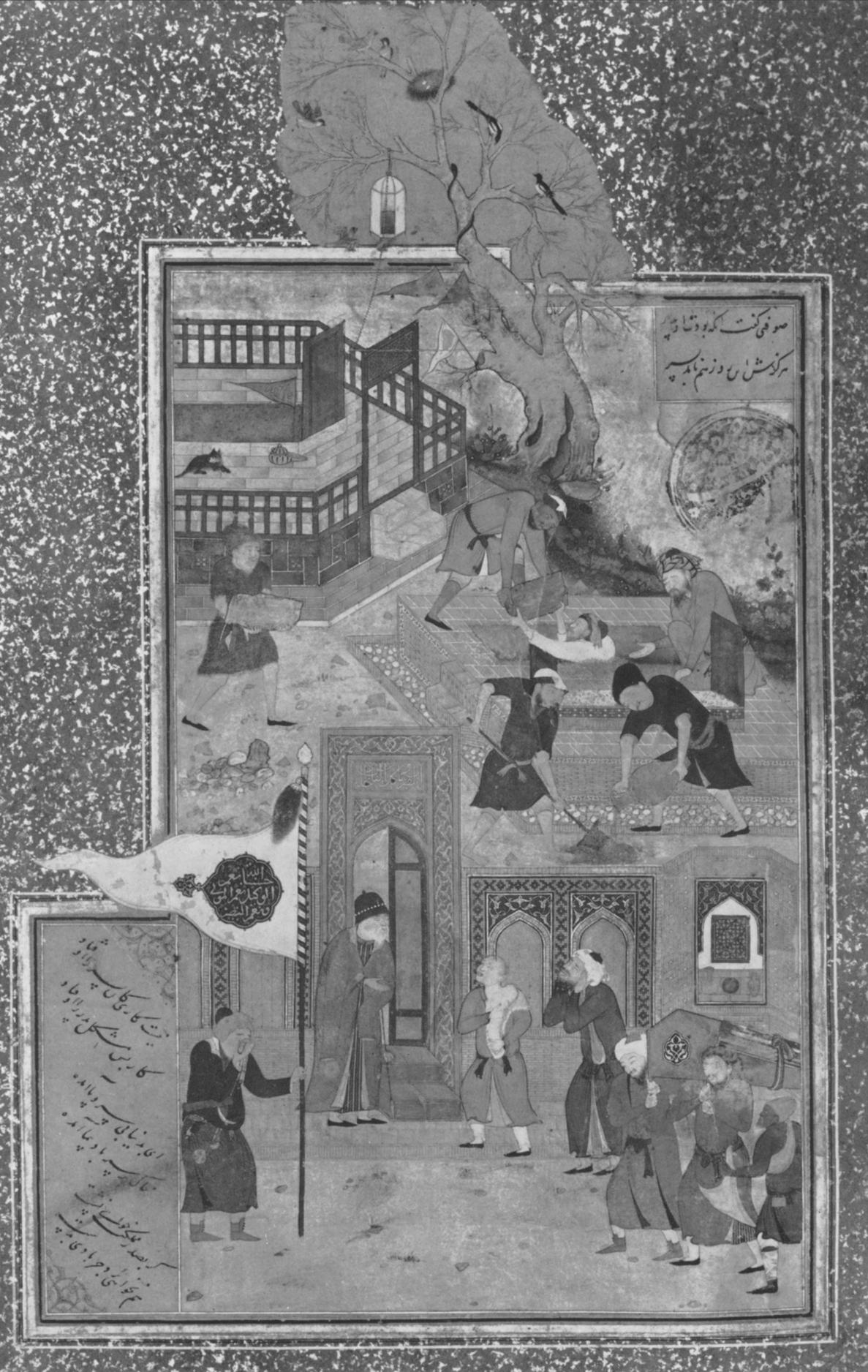
when whole compositions were found suitable, they were copied without qualm, as were single figures, groups, trees, rock formations, animals, and buildings, either in part or as a whole. In short, anything and everything was copied. The inescapable implications are that sketchbooks were readily available and heavily relied on in the ateliers, that tradition was strong and originality not a criterion, and that individuality was of so little importance that paintings were rarely signed, and in any case were probably often a joint project. All this being so, Professor Kühnel's objection that a master would be loath to copy his pupil becomes inoperative; the appearance of the same

21. Folio 144v of the British Museum Nizami of 1494/95 (Or. 6810)



صوفی گشت که بود تا و  
سرکشش از وزیم ناید

تخت کارگاهان سپهر قباد  
کارین شکل در آوا  
ای بنیادی و سر و اندام  
تاک سیر باد با کرده  
که بعد از تو نیست  
هم کار جان در آوا



elements in different paintings and different manuscripts implies not simply that a painter copied himself or someone else, but that the painters working together had in common the sources available to that atelier.

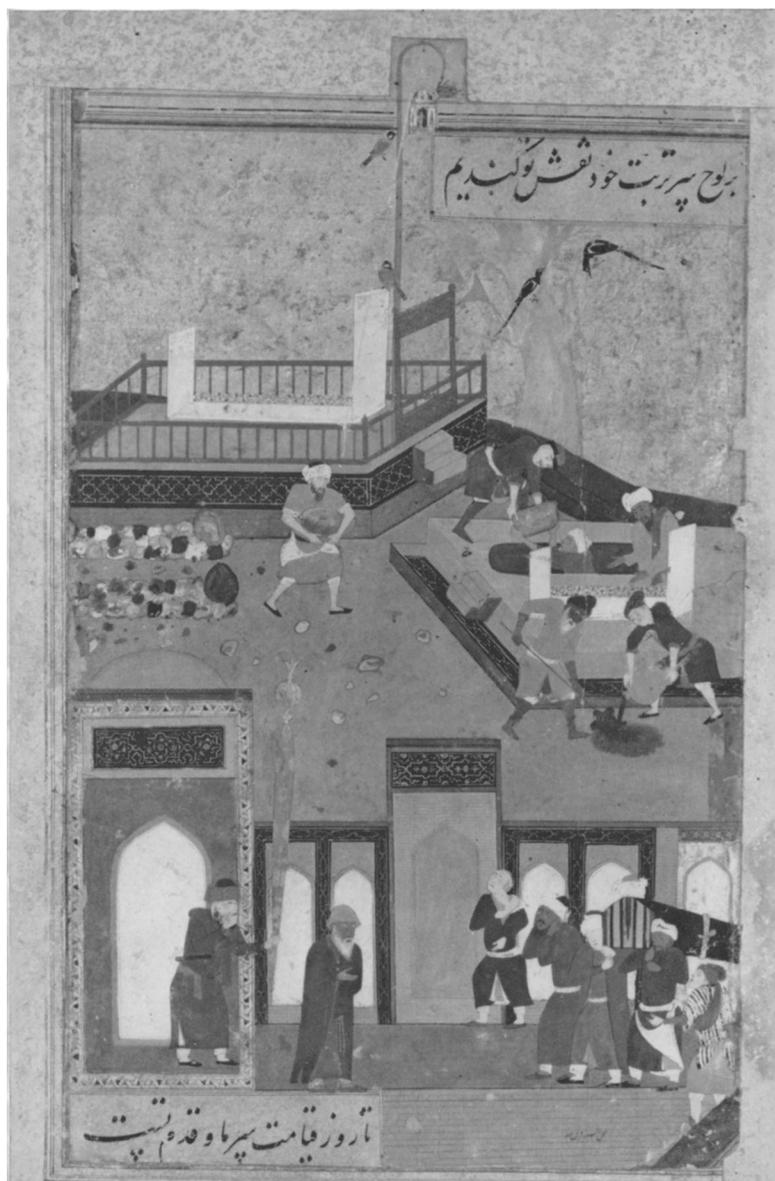
The scene of another painting in *The Language of the Birds* (Figure 17) is laid in hills and mountains, with a rushing torrent between in which a man is drowning; the coat and turban at the lower left, by the water's edge, presumably indicate that he entered the torrent there. Only a figure on the further bank is aware of his plight. The group in the foreground, while the oldest rests on a rock, is busy cutting wood and loading it on a donkey, all quite oblivious to the drama being enacted on the other side of the mountains that surround them.

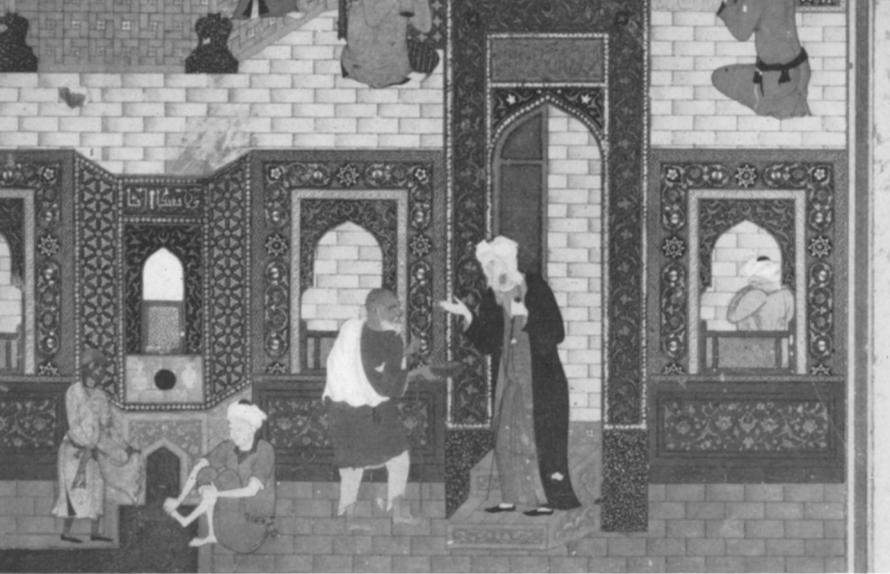
This scene does not appear to be a popular subject for illustration. No exact parallels with other paintings of the school of Herat have been found, though there are general similarities. For example, the one landscape in the Cairo *Bustan* (Figure 20) is fairly similar, with an intrusion of mountains in the middle of the picture, and less jagged hills at the horizon. The mountains may also be compared to two paintings in the Nizami of 1494/95, in one of which (Figure 21) the tree on the mountain resembles that on the background hill in our painting, and the placement of small stones with grass tufts growing from their far sides is also alike. There is even a hunched old man who is of the same vintage as the one on the rock in our miniature, although the latter is better drawn and more successful as a personality. The man in our painting bracing his foot against the load on the donkey to tighten the rope is very close in facial type to the foremost of two non-courtly figures in the miniature in the Rothschild *Gulistan* (Figure 19). The effort of the wood gatherer's action, contrasted with the patient passivity of the donkey, gives the scene a spontaneity and naturalness hitherto rare in Persian painting. Such incorporating of details of daily life into the art of picture-making was one of the important innovations generally attributed to Bihzad, and, certainly, this painting can be compared to any of the

OPPOSITE:

22. *A funeral procession and the preparation of a grave. Folio 35 of the Museum's Language of the Birds. Colors and gold on paper, 9¾ x 5½ inches. Fletcher Fund, 63.210.35*

23. *A funeral procession and the preparation of a grave. Herat school, Iran, late XV century. Colors on paper, 9¾ x 6⅞ inches. The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 10.678*





24. Detail of the miniature of the beggar before a mosque in the Cairo Bustan. The beggar and the doorman are repeated in reverse at the lower right of Figure 26

25. Detail of the Museum's miniature shown in Figure 23. Here the figure at the lower right is the same as in Figure 27



school of Bihzad and not lose by the comparison.

A third painting in *The Language of the Birds* shows a funeral scene in the foreground and the preparing of a grave in the background (Figure 22). The story is that of a prince who, on completing a palace, was warned by a sage that a crevice in it would let in the angel of death, Asrael.

There is a single, undated miniature in the Walters Art Gallery (Figure 23) that at first glance seems close to this one. Careful inspection reveals many minor differences and some major ones. In our painting the picture space is narrower but deeper, and the tree at the top has been allowed to grow up into the margin. (Its awkward appearance is due to the remounting, since it has been roughly silhouetted and pasted on the new margin, a rather distracting red-brown gold-flecked paper. The Baltimore miniature has also been remounted, as the cutting of the top indicates.) The façade in the foreground has been pushed back (Figure 25), enabling the mourning figures to move in greater depth, though at the same time they are grouped more closely together. The domed structure at the left of the Baltimore painting does not appear, while the gate is higher and, further along, the wall is recessed to break the monotony. All the undecorated areas of the façade in the Walters miniature would suggest that it was never finished, which is confirmed by a comparison of the trees and stream banks in the two paintings. In the Baltimore picture, for example, one can see the faint indication of where the deep hollows in the tree trunk were to be.

Some of the faces and costumes in these two paintings are not the same, as in the case of the figures working on the new grave (though they are alike in pose and action). The coffin is differently decorated in each, and the ground itself is quite dissimilar. In our painting the old man extending a sympathetic hand stands at the steps of the door, where he seems in direct communication with the mourners, while in the other miniature he is so far in the foreground as not to seem looking at the approaching figures at all. The color schemes are also disparate: the Baltimore scene is painted

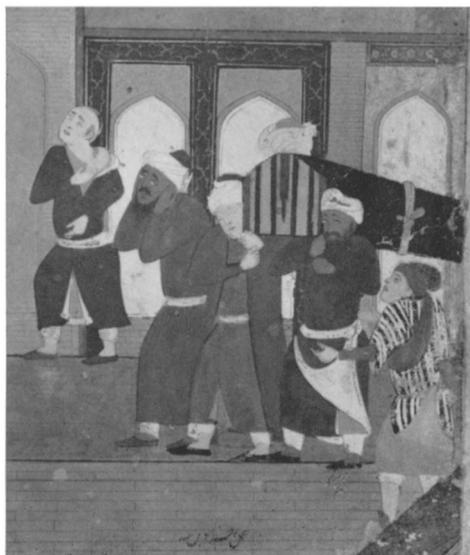
mainly in blues and greens, giving a rather somber effect, while ours is in warmer, lighter colors.

Although a comparison of these two paintings reveals an unmistakable difference in quality, not wholly attributable to the incompleteness of the one, their relationship still poses a question. Less refinement in the drawing of the figures and in the decorative details could point to an artist who had not yet reached the state of maturity and delicate perfection of the other—or it could mean a less accomplished copyist. The improvement in the composition in the Metropolitan's painting, however, does strongly suggest that it was painted later than the Walters miniature, and, conversely, a less talented painter would hardly be likely to abandon what might be considered a perfect composition for a less successful one, when the other was before him for the copying. But even if it can be agreed that the Baltimore miniature is earlier, the question of whether the artist of the painting in our manuscript improved upon his own work or another's, in view of the communal attitude of the ateliers, would be extremely difficult to answer.

The lower part of our miniature (Figure 25) echoes, in reverse, one in the Cairo *Bustan*



26. Folio 135v of the British Museum Nizami of 1494/95 (Or. 6810). Note the similarity of the youth tearing his clothes in the foreground, here displaying grief, to the one at the right edge of the frontispiece of the Cairo *Bustan* (Figure 2), who is apparently overcome with emotion at the reading of poetry



27. Detail of the Walters Art Gallery miniature shown in Figure 23



LEFT :

28. Folio 174v of the *Zafar Nameh* in the John Work Garrett Library (T. L. 6.1950)

(Figure 24). It also has close affiliations with another funeral scene, or rather a mourning scene (Figure 26), in the British Museum Nizami of 1494/95. Almost identical, but reversed, is the standard-bearer. His hunched shoulders, his hand holding a handkerchief to his round face, and the bulging of his clothes at the waist are all more closely related in these two manuscripts than this figure in our manuscript is related to its counterpart in Baltimore. Similarly, the man on the roof with his hands to his ears in the Nizami is closer, particularly in costume detail, to one of the foreground figures in the Metropolitan miniature than the latter is to the Walters one. The mourning scene is one of the miniatures from this British Museum Nizami listed by Dr. Ettinghausen as being by Bihzad himself, while Dr. Stchoukine attributes it to a pupil.

In attempting to attribute paintings to Bihzad or to a student of Bihzad, because of the lack of real evidence almost every writer on the subject has – sometimes unconsciously, it seems – worked from the following premise: Since Bihzad was allegedly the outstanding artist working in Herat during the reign of Husayn Mirza Bayqara, the best paintings of this school must be by him. Although the use of the superlative in art is, in the last analysis, subjective, there have still been many debates between scholars on the subject of which paintings, by careful study and comparison, appear best and are consequently attributable to this great master. By this criterion, the funeral scene in our manuscript, like the one of the woodcutters, has every claim to the name of Bihzad.

The last of the fifteenth-century paintings in this manuscript (Figure 30), showing scenes



LEFT AND OPPOSITE :

29, 30. A rural scene. Folio 49 of the Museum's *Language of the Birds*. Colors on paper,  $7\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$  inches. Fletcher Fund, 63.210.49

شیخ سواد شد و کوشش سلام  
پرچون بشیند کف ای بویید

شرح ادبش حال تبرخه تمام  
از فرو و درش تا عیش محمد



گرفتند این چنبد پرازان  
زیبیکرت بهدکرت مدام

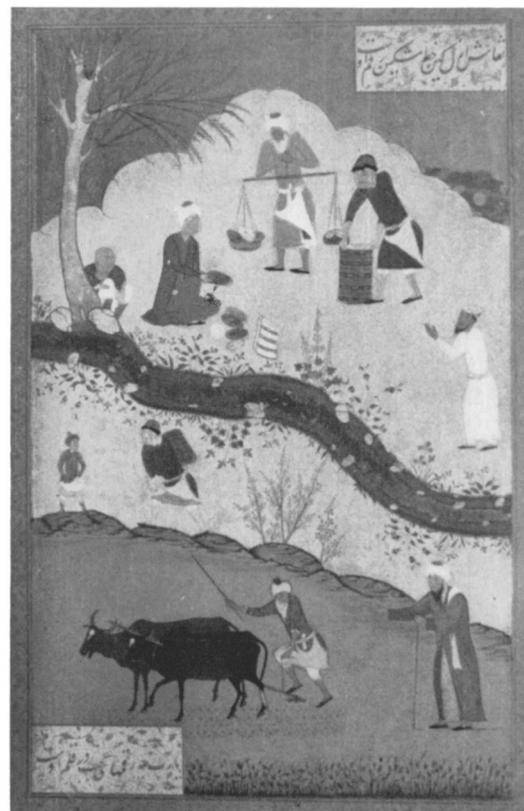


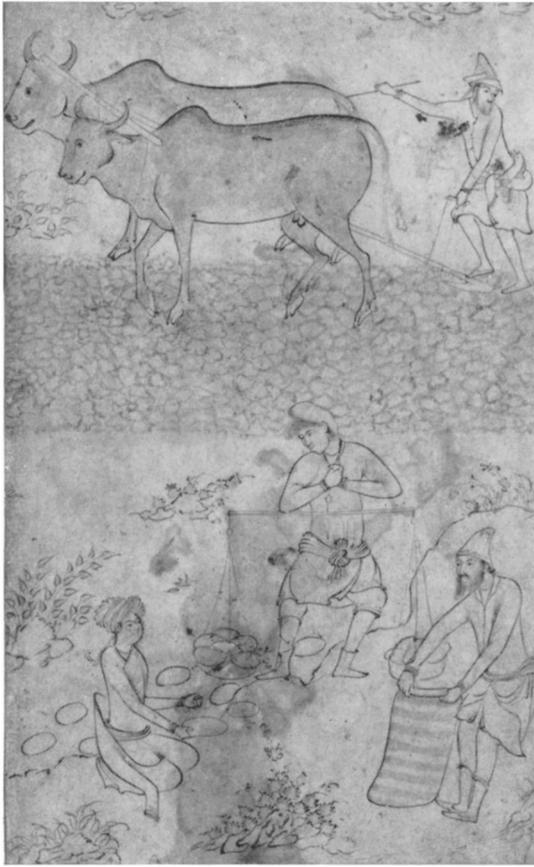
31. *Detail of the Museum's miniature shown in Figure 30*

of plowing and melon weighing, while still related to the other three, seems definitely by a different hand, as there is a change in overall flavor—more of a genre quality, a greater feeling of air and space. The depiction of the bright-eyed little dog and the different kinds of melon is the result of acute observation on the artist's part, and infuses this scene with a rare touch of naturalism. Another unusual element is the figure squatting behind the tree trunk (Figure 29), which, in pose, features, and dress, as well as dragon-headed crook, appears to have been taken intact from Chinese religious art. There is no figure so close to an Oriental original in other miniatures of this school; while Far Eastern borrowings were not uncommon in Iran, artists tended to copy entire Oriental works (as in the early Timurid period) or to adapt individual Chinese motifs, such as the cloud band or stylized peony and lotus, to their own use, modifying them in the process.

The flowers along the stream bank at the back are executed with characteristic Persian delicacy, and closely resemble those beyond the gate in the scene of the prince and the beggar (Figure 1) or those across the stream at the right edge of our funeral scene (Figure 22). The tree, while not startlingly different from that in the latter miniature, is less crisp in outline and has more shading. The landscape is also different from the one behind the woodcutters: there is a softer edge and

32. *Folio 9r in Album H 2155. Probably Bukhara school, Iran, XVI century. Topkapi Serayi Library, Istanbul*





33. *Album leaf. Qazvin school, Iran, late XVI century. The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, W 749*

straighter outline to the hill on the horizon, again with some shading, and there is less internal detail – fewer grass tufts, smoother surfaces. The color scheme – a rather even light beige – separates it even further from the woodcutting scene, with its variegated blues, lavenders, and pinks. Of roughly contemporary manuscripts, this landscape seems closest to some of those in the *Zafar Nameh* of the Garrett collection (Figure 28), in general shape and simplification of the horizon, in sparsity of groundcover, and in its even color tone – but the *Zafar Nameh* was retouched in India, which makes comparison difficult.

This fourth miniature from *The Language of the Birds*, like the funeral scene, has different activities taking place in foreground and background, but here related less by composition than by their rural character. These two groups, further separated by intervening figures and by a stream, appear again in a sixteenth-century painting in an album in Istanbul (Figure 32), probably painted in Bukhara. In spite of the closeness of the copy, its static quality widely separates this painting from its prototype, as does the weakening of the drawing of the figures, who now not only have a puppet-like appearance, but seem arbitrarily placed in their setting.

A drawing that must be from near the end of the sixteenth century (Figure 33), in the

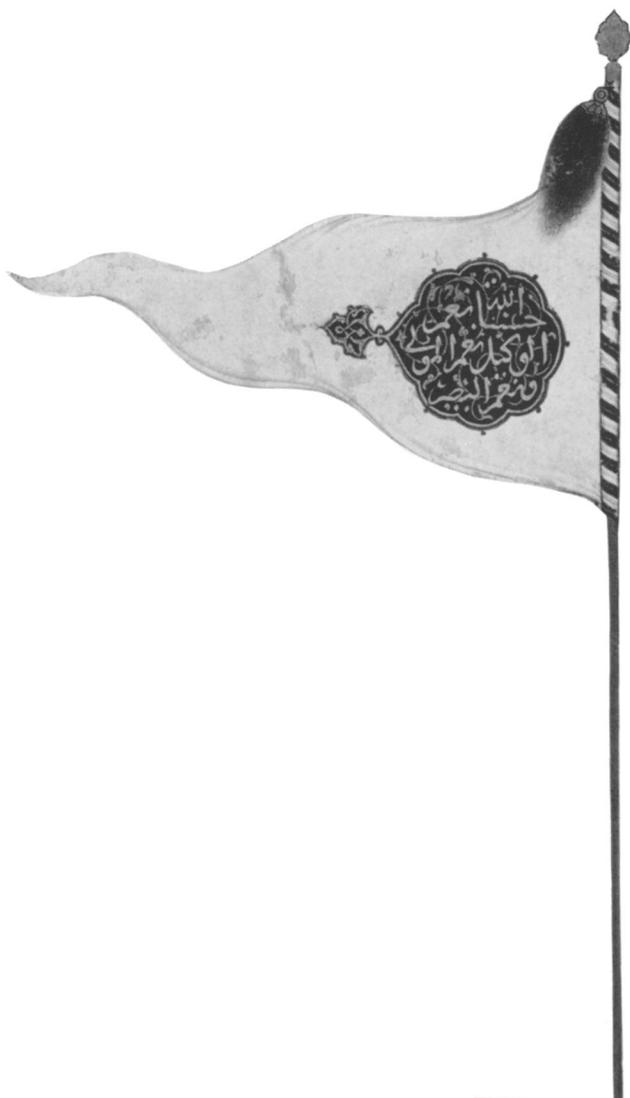


34. *Detail of the Museum's miniature shown in Figure 30*

Walters Art Gallery, shows the persistence of this theme. Here the man at the plow is at the top of the drawing, and only the three figures weighing melons appear at the bottom. The style of drawing – not to mention the vogue in dress – has changed considerably, but the persistence of position, pose, and gesture is still a reminder of the traditional character of Persian painting.

The interrelationship of individual paintings in various manuscripts of this school is so close and intricately woven that to disentangle each separate thread is impossible. Whole compositions as well as individual elements apparently served as models and were accessible even to outside artists. Indeed, the particular

praise given in separate sources to the *original* compositions of Bihzad and Mirak implies the customary use of existing models where suitable, and the necessity for original compositions only where no traditional one was readily available. In quality, these four Timurid miniatures compare favorably with others of this Herat school of painting, which was so often called the school of Bihzad. But, while his may have been the guiding genius responsible for annealing the efforts of this unusually talented group of artists into a homogeneous style, we should think of Bihzad less as an identifiable individual than as a representative of his fellow artists, or, as it were, chairman of the board.



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# The Seventeenth-Century Miniatures

ERNST J. GRUBE *Curator of Islamic Art*

When *The Language of the Birds* attracted the attention of the Safavid Shah Abbas as a possible gift to the family shrine in Ardabil, it was incomplete. There were four spaces in the text, obviously intended, when the manuscript was written by Sultan Ali of Meshhed in 1483, to be used by the Timurid painters of the royal atelier in Herat for their illustrations. For reasons unknown, only four paintings were executed at that time. The other spaces remained unused.

Herat was taken by the Uzbeks in 1507, an event that destroyed the Timurid house, and then in 1510 Shah Ismail, first ruler of the Safavid dynasty that had come to power in northern Iran at the beginning of the century, defeated the Uzbeks. Shah Ismail not only carried off the painters still remaining in Herat but what survived of the royal library after the two sacks of the city. Our manuscript must have been among those books. It apparently remained in the Safavid royal library when this was removed from Tabriz to Qazvin, which became the capital in 1548, and later to Isfahan, which became the capital in 1598. It was in Isfahan, the last great center of Eastern Islamic culture in the seventeenth century, that Shah Abbas, some time before 1609, the year the manuscript entered the Ardabil shrine, ordered its completion.

The pages were provided with new margins of various colors, gold-flecked. A frontispiece was designed and executed by one of the masters of the period, Zayn al-Abadin of Tabriz. Paintings were added in the empty spaces, one of them signed by a master of the Isfahan atelier, Habib Allah of Meshhed. The manuscript was put into a new tooled and gilded binding. Each page was stamped with the library seal of Shah Abbas, the word *waqf* (signifying “religious donation”) was written upon the frontispiece and each of the eight paintings, and the manuscript was ready for the shrine as a truly royal gift.

The paintings added at the command of Shah Abbas are of exquisite quality and baffling style. Baffling because, except for one, they have very little to do with the style current in Isfahan around 1600. This was the period when the great calligrapher and painter Riza-i Abbasi had developed to a rarely surpassed height a brilliant, if extremely mannered and at times somewhat sweetish, style of painting. It had origi-

OPPOSITE:

1. *The Christian maiden swooning when Shaikh San'an reconverts to Islam, the religion he had abandoned for her. Folio 22 of The Language of the Birds. Isfahan school, Iran, before 1609. Colors and gold on paper, 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches. Fletcher Fund, 63.210.22. The text that appears in a single column at the top right and in four columns at the bottom was written by the fifteenth-century calligrapher, but the space left for the painting was not then used. A repair of the paper, visible in the stream near the two men at the left, must have been done in Isfahan shortly before the painting was executed. Had the damage occurred before 1483, the page would not have survived; the calligrapher would simply have substituted a new one. Later, when Shah Abbas ordered the completion of the manuscript, Sultan Ali's calligraphy was considered irreplaceable, and repair was the only solution. The Isfahan artist extended the staff of the man standing farthest to the left across the frame of the miniature into the added margin, thus confirming the composition's late date. The word waqf (signifying "religious donation"), written on each page and painting of the manuscript, has been nearly erased here, only part of one letter remaining, halfway up the tree trunk*

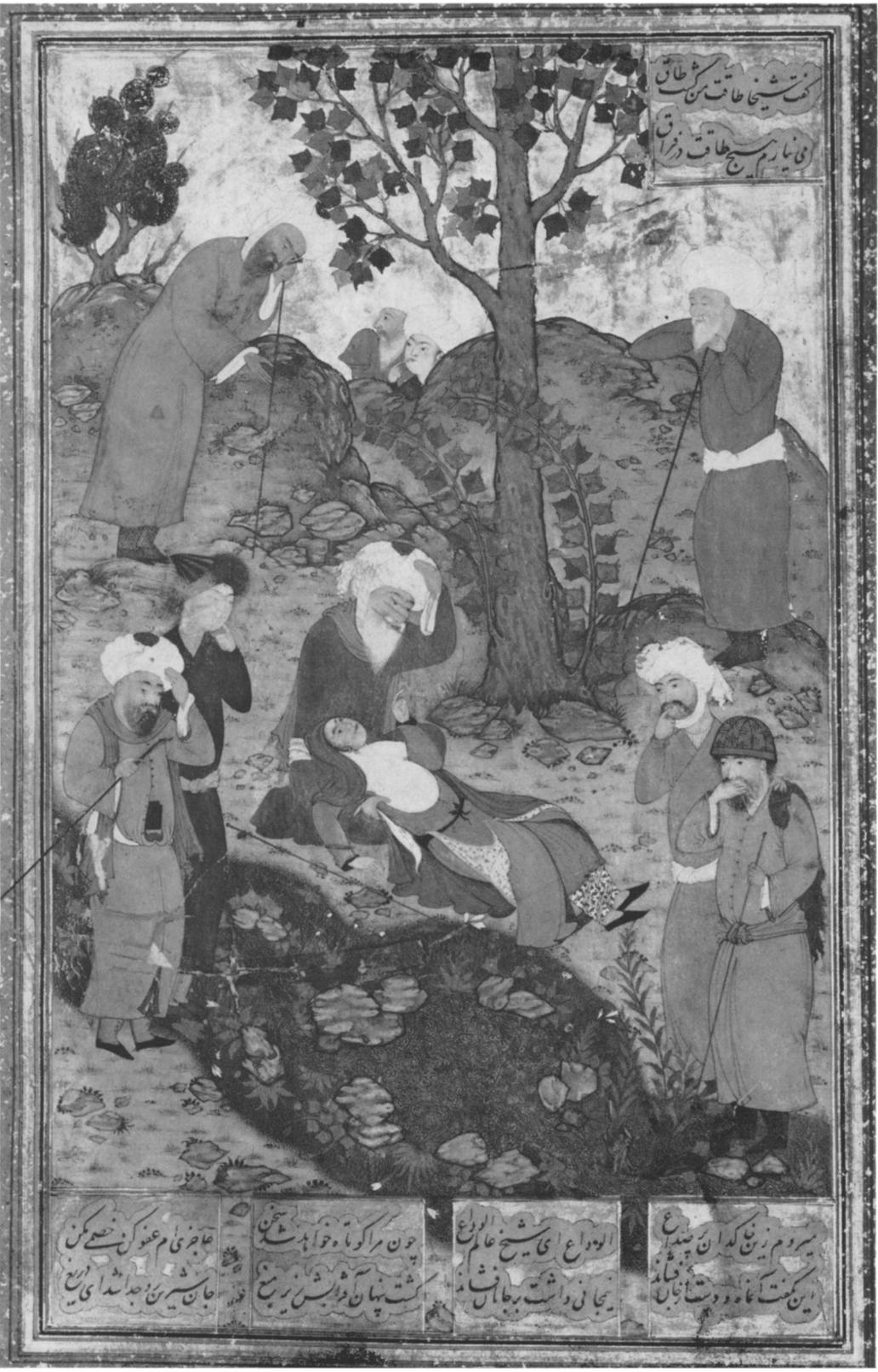
2. *A Prince and a Dervish, by Riza-i Abbasi (died 1635), Isfahan school, Iran. Brush drawing with additional color and gold, 7 x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches. Rogers Fund, 11.84.13. A typical example of the highly calligraphic style developed in the late sixteenth century and generally adopted throughout Iran in the seventeenth*



nated in Qazvin in the time of Shah Tahmasp, the father of Shah Abbas, and is associated with Sadiqi-beg, at one time Tahmasp's *kitabdar*, or head of the royal atelier. Even an eye not trained in studying Persian painting, or unfamiliar with the peculiarities and finesse of Islamic painting in general, can immediately see differences between paintings in the "true" Isfahan style (Figure 2) and at least three of the paintings in our manuscript (Figures 4, 7, 9). One of the paintings (Figure 1), as mentioned, is in some respects closer to the Isfahan style, particularly in its figures. Here, especially in the young woman, we see the typical facial features: oval shape of the head, heavy, at times joined brows, narrow, slanting eyes, prominent nose, small but full mouth, curly hair. The solid colors of the garments – bright reds, blues, yellows, and purples – are also characteristic, reflecting the Safavid taste of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

It is in the landscape that an un-Isfahani quality appears. The details are carried out with great care. Grass tufts are evenly spread over the ground, as are small rocks of varied shape, accompanied by leafy plants. The rocks are colored in curious broken tones of purple, greenish brown, and yellow. Particularly striking is the mannered representation of the brook, the surface of which is organized into an intricate, highly stylized linear pattern. This treatment, first developed in fifteenth-century painting (for instance, Figure 17 in the preceding article), demonstrates the tendency of the Isfahan painter to recreate, at least in part, an earlier style. The banks of the brook, deep green, are executed in a soft stippled technique. Upon them, embedded in large-leaved plants, are more of the oddly colored rocks. The attention to details and tendency to patternize on one hand, and to create atmospheric color effects by stippling and breaking up of tones on the other, find few if any parallels in the contemporary official court style. The contrast between the tall, bold, brightly colored figures and the soft, intricate, subtle landscape makes it clear, even in this least exceptional painting of the four, that we are dealing with a mixture of two different and ultimately unrelated styles.

گفت شیخ طاقت بر شیطان  
ای نیارم سحاطت در آفاق



عاجزی م عنون خضع کن  
جان شیرین جلد ای مرغ

چون مرا که ماه خواهد شد سخن  
گشت پنهان در پیش زربخ

الوداع ای شیخ عالم الوداع  
یجاننی داشت بر جانان

سیروم زین کد آن چند  
این گفت خانه و دست از جان



3. *A Young Officer of the Guard*, by Habib Allah, Isfahan school, Iran. Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Illustration from Plate CIII, 185 of *La Miniature persane du XI<sup>e</sup> au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris and Brussels, 1929) by Arménag Bey Sakisian. The gun is of the same type as the one in the miniature opposite

OPPOSITE:

4. *The Concourse of the Birds*, by Habib Allah. Folio 11 of the Museum's *Language of the Birds*. Colors and gold on paper, actual size. Fletcher Fund, 63.210.11. The painting is signed on the small rock centered among the four geese
5. *Signature of Habib Allah*. Detail of Figure 4



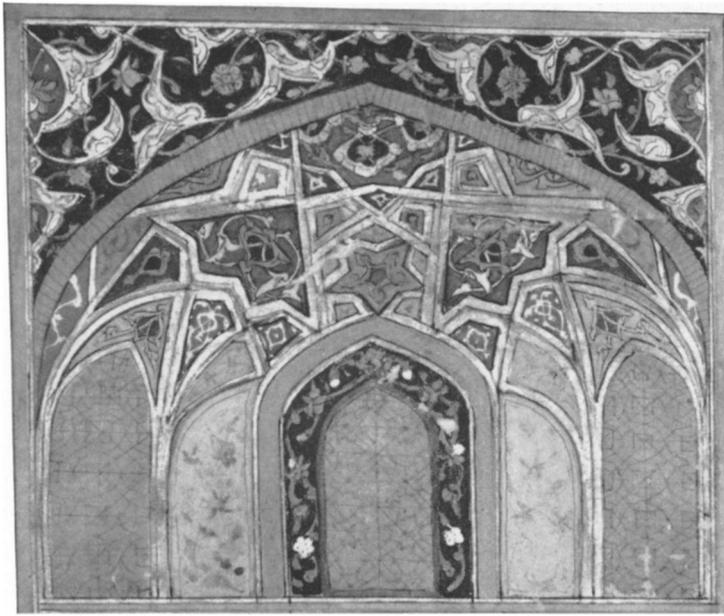
The divergence from the Isfahan style is much more marked in the other paintings. Even so, certain of their elements quickly confirm the late date. Practically all the human figures in Figure 9, for example, and the young woman in the balcony in Figure 7, are as Isfahani as one might expect. The rest, however, is unlike anything one would count on from Shah Abbas's court school. This is especially true of the landscape in Figure 7. The softness of the color and the contrast between the green of the garden and the barrenness of the hills behind remind us of the first painting. But there are still more striking features. One of these is the cut-down shrub or bush, with leafless twisted branches, set at the edge of the hill at the left, creating a tortured pattern against the golden sky. This shrub is one of the most typical landscape props in Herat painting of the fifteenth century; indeed, it is found in very similar form in one of the Timurid paintings of this manuscript (Figure 17 of the preceding article). Other landscape details echo the early paintings. The garden, for instance, is almost a counterpart of the garden in Figure 1 of the preceding article, even to the use of a flowering cherry tree and a fence of identical construction. In addition to these elements there are, in this painting, motifs that are impossible to accept as of the seventeenth century. The most striking are the men approaching from the left on the terrace. In physical type, dress, gesture, and position – tightly grouped and placed close to the frame – they are so strongly reminiscent of Herat painting of the later fifteenth century that it seems strange, if not at first sight inexplicable, that they should have been painted in Isfahan in the first decade of the seventeenth century. The gardener, standing near the cherry tree, is also clearly derived from a fifteenth-century Herat model.

In the painting shown in Figure 9 the composition and the architectural setting are quite unrelated to the seventeenth-century style. The building, with its peculiar perspective and intricate decoration, the elaborately tiled terrace with pool and fountain, and the enclosing wall at the bottom are all motifs taken

گشتای مرغزار بهمان سبب  
مهر پر حضرت و ملک پادشاه

مهر پادشاه حضرت خیر و آید  
مهر نعلیت صاحب پیر آید





LEFT:

6. Detail of Figure 7. The type of elaborate decorative vaulting illustrated here reached its peak in architecture of the Timurid period

OPPOSITE:

7. Scene at a garden pavilion. Folio 18 of the Museum's *Language of the Birds*. Colors and gold on paper,  $7\frac{3}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Fletcher Fund, 63.210.18. Probably part of the story of Shaikh San'an: on his way to Egypt, Shaikh San'an sees the Christian maiden at the palace window. The word *waqf* is visible on the hill to the left. Above it appears the library seal of Shah Abbas

over from a painting tradition that had been profoundly altered in the early Safavid period.

The painting farthest from the Isfahan style (Figure 4) is the finest and most beautiful of the group. At first glance it could easily be taken for a Timurid work. In spite of this appearance, however, one of its elements confirms its late date. To the right, beyond the second range of rocky hills, there stands a man with a gun—a gun of a type not developed before the late sixteenth century. Like the branches of the tree at the left (and the staff of one of the men in Figure 1), the barrel of the gun is painted onto the margin of the page, proof that the painting was added to the manuscript when the pages were remounted.

The painting is an astonishing tour de force. The delicacy of the color, the beautifully arranged composition, the almost unsurpassed finesse of the brushwork all point to a tradition of painting that had been handed down from the earliest phase of the Timurid court ateliers in Central Asia and Herat. The floral decoration, the rock formations, and the handling of the brook (so much like the brook in Figure 1) are highly reminiscent of Timurid paintings of the later fifteenth century, yet this work is signed by Habib Allah, one of

Shah Abbas's court painters. We know this artist through a number of signed works (Figure 3) that show him to be a proponent of the Isfahan style, best exemplified by Riza-i Abbasi.

The question we must now attempt to answer is why these paintings added by Shah Abbas are not in the official court style of the period—a fully developed style that was employed not only in contemporary paintings and manuscript illustrations but in monumental wall paintings in the shah's palaces in Isfahan. The answer that comes first to mind would be that Shah Abbas or his artists were so deeply impressed with the Timurid paintings in the manuscript that they could not but try to imitate their specific quality. However, this is not likely. The later miniatures are not very close to the earlier ones—aside from the details that have been discussed—and more to the point, their Timurid resemblances have parallels in other paintings of the early seventeenth century.

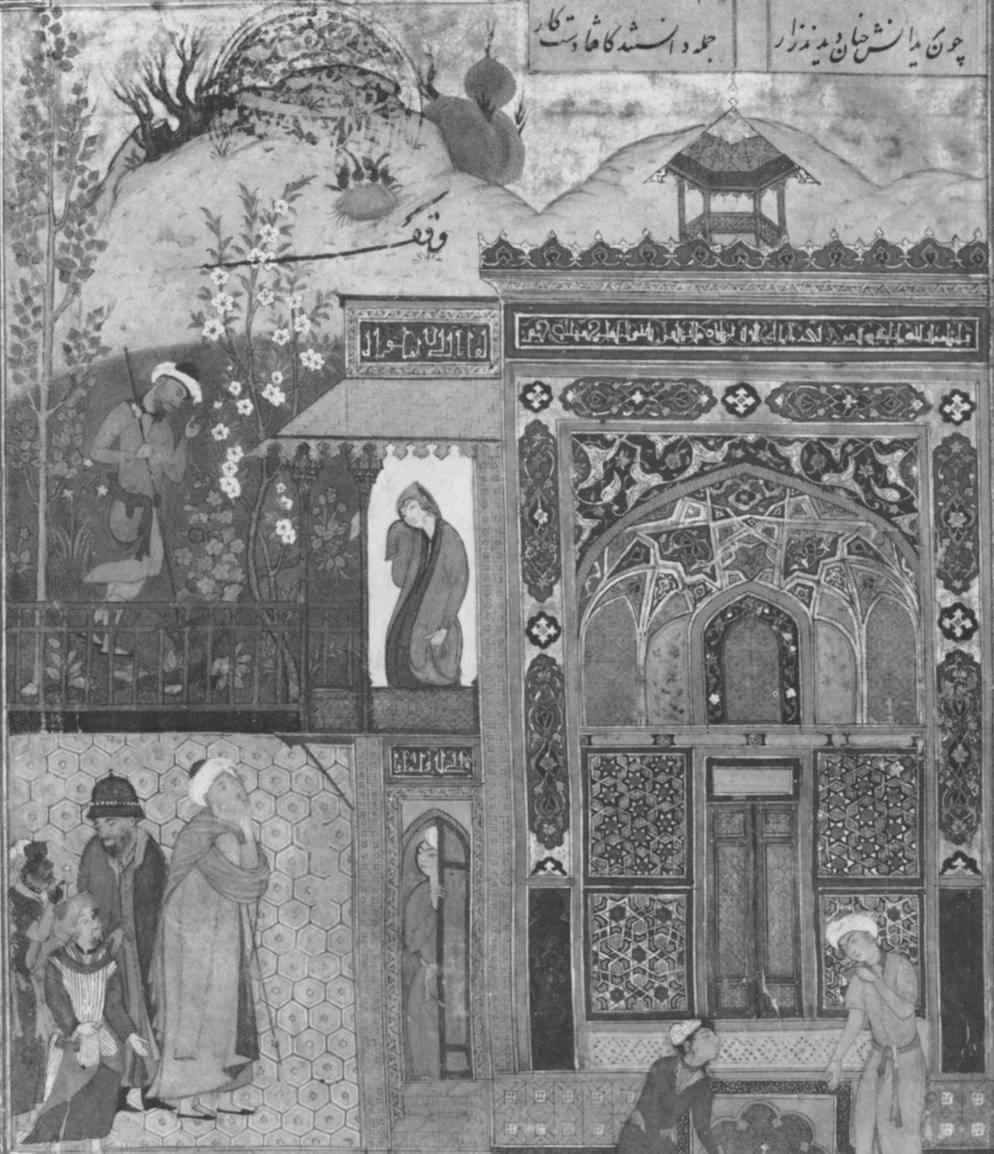
A number of late Safavid paintings have recently come to light that must be recognized as inspired by Timurid models. The Museum has acquired a double-page composition (Figure 11) and two single-page miniatures (Fig-

عشق تر که و غارت جان او  
عشق تر سپارد دل جی سیر شد  
چون دیدارش خان دیدن تر

کفر نیت از زلف پرایان او  
هم ز دل بونید و از جان سیر شد  
جمله دانسته گاه است کار

شیخ ایمان او تر سانی خرید  
مکت چونین فتنه جانی شد

عاقبت بود خت سوانی خرید  
عشق تر سازاده کار شکست



پند او اندش سبجی دخی بود  
عاش آشفته در مان چون بر

بودنی چون در بسبجی دخی بود  
در در مان بوز در مان چون

سر بسبجی کار او حیران شدند  
بر که پندش او در مانش نبرد  
بود مان شب سپهان ز در او

سر کون شده سپر کردان شدند  
تا که در مانش او در مانش نبرد  
چشم ر سطره مانش اند با نبرد

BELOW AND OPPOSITE:

8, 9. *The Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist. Folio 4 of the Museum's Language of the Birds. Colors and gold on paper, 7¾ x 4½ inches. Fletcher Fund, 63.210.4. Rather close to the Isfahan style in its figures, particularly in the facial features and curly sidelock in front of the ear. The architecture and landscape, on the other hand, are in the older style*



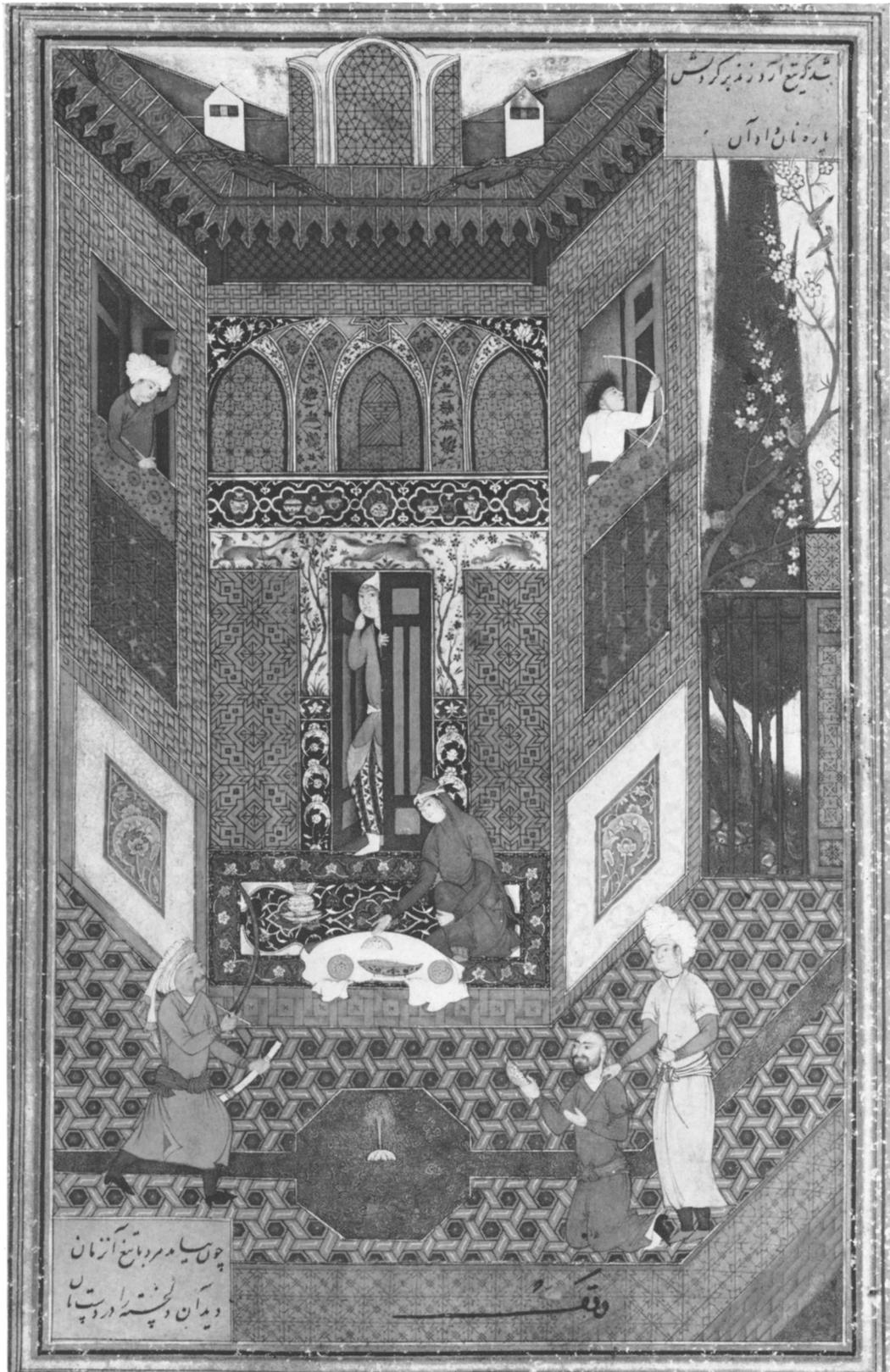
ures 13, 15) of this type, all from a single manuscript, and the specific models from which these works derive can be identified.

The double-page painting is copied, with minor changes in the placing of the figures and certain other alterations, from the frontispiece (Figure 10) of the famous *Shah Nameh* made in Herat in 1430 for Prince Baysunghur Mirza. This manuscript came into Shah Ismail's possession when he took Herat in 1510, and ever since it has been one of the principal treasures of the imperial collection, now in Teheran. Available to Shah Abbas's painters in Isfahan, it clearly inspired the creation of the single-page miniatures as well as the frontispiece. However, the single-page miniatures are less direct copies. They treat their models (Figures 12, 14) rather freely, in fact, demonstrating that we are dealing here with a group of Safavid painters paraphrasing the earlier style, rather than copying it.

Although exact information as to the date and place of production of these three Safavid paintings is lacking, an even more striking example of the style can be precisely placed. This is a *Shah Nameh* copied and illustrated for Shah Abbas in Isfahan in 1614, five years after our *Language of the Birds* entered the Ardabil shrine. This *Shah Nameh*, now in the New York Public Library, contains forty-four paintings. A number of them are almost exact copies of paintings in the *Shah Nameh* of 1430. Others may be considered free variations (Figure 16).

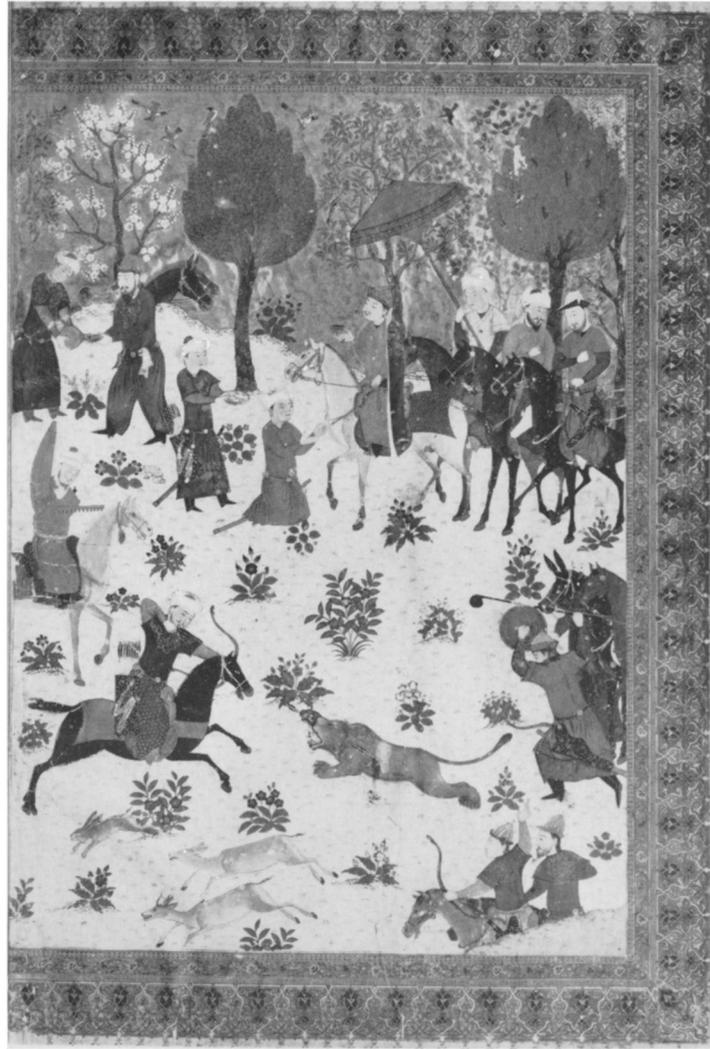
Thus we come to a second and more likely explanation for the archaism of the four late paintings in our manuscript, which is that around 1600 there was a revival of a long superseded style. No comparable revival is known in Islamic painting, and the reason for this one remains a mystery. While most of the Safavid production of what may now be identified as the Timurid Revival seems to have been inspired by the finest creation of the early Herat school, the *Shah Nameh* of Baysunghur Mirza, the four paintings in our *Language of the Birds* document the use of Timurid motifs from the fully developed style of fifty years later. In this, they are so far unique.

شکر خیز آرد ز نذر بر کردش  
بارد نان او آس



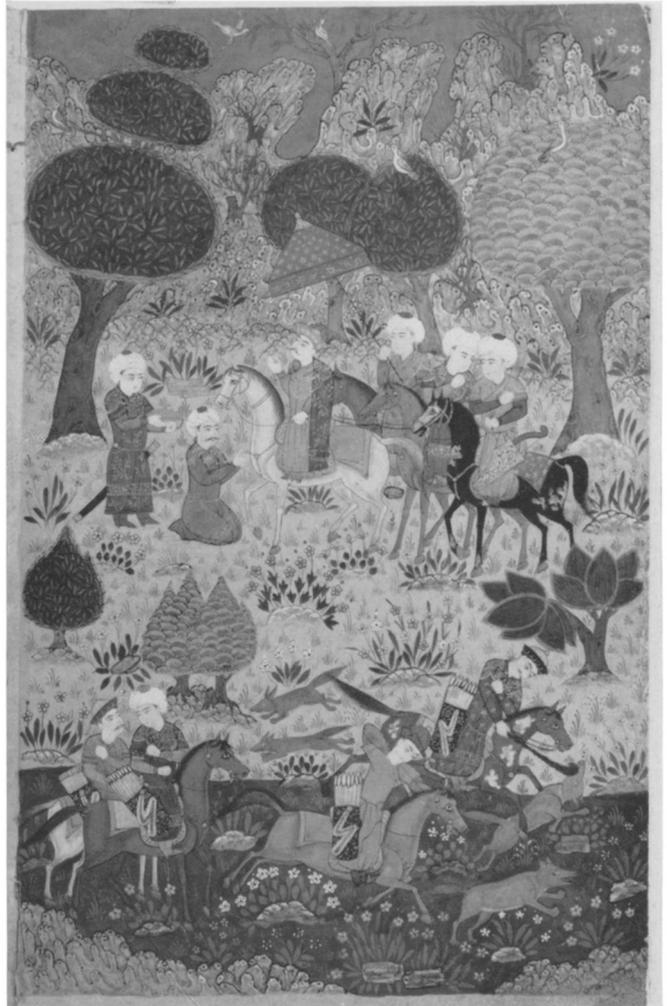
چون سید مردمان آستان  
دید آن لخته در دست ما

وَقَدْ



10. *Hunting scene. Double-page frontispiece of the Shah Nameh made for Prince Baysunghur Mirza ibn Shah Rukh in Herat in 1430. Gulistan Palace Library, Teheran. This manuscript, containing some of the finest paintings of the early Herat school, inspired the Safavid painters to revive the Timurid style in Isfahan about 1600*

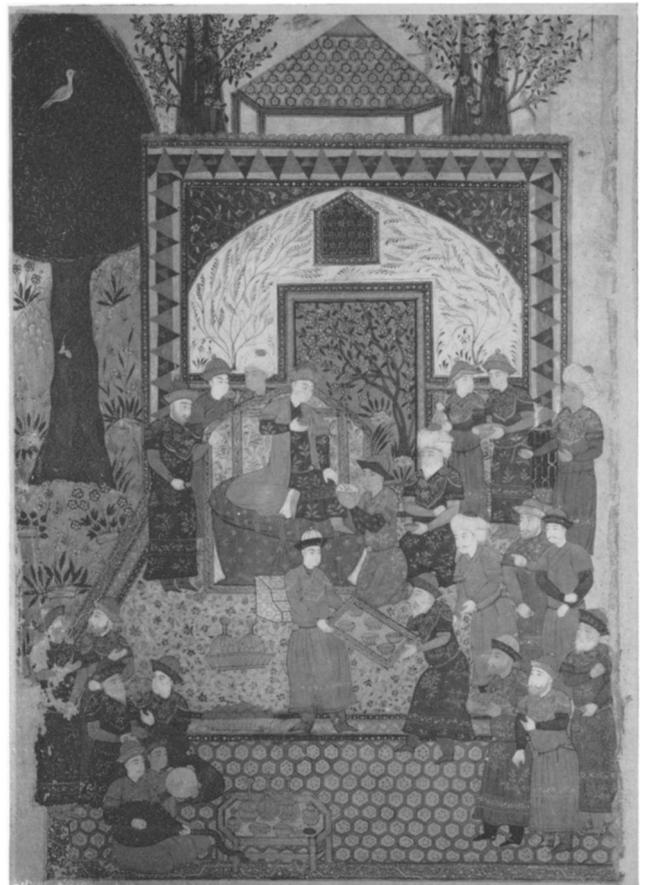
11. *Hunting scene. Double-page frontispiece from a Shah Nameh. Isfahan school, Iran, XVII century. Colors on paper, each page 13¼ x 8⅝ inches. Fletcher Fund, 64.135.1-2*

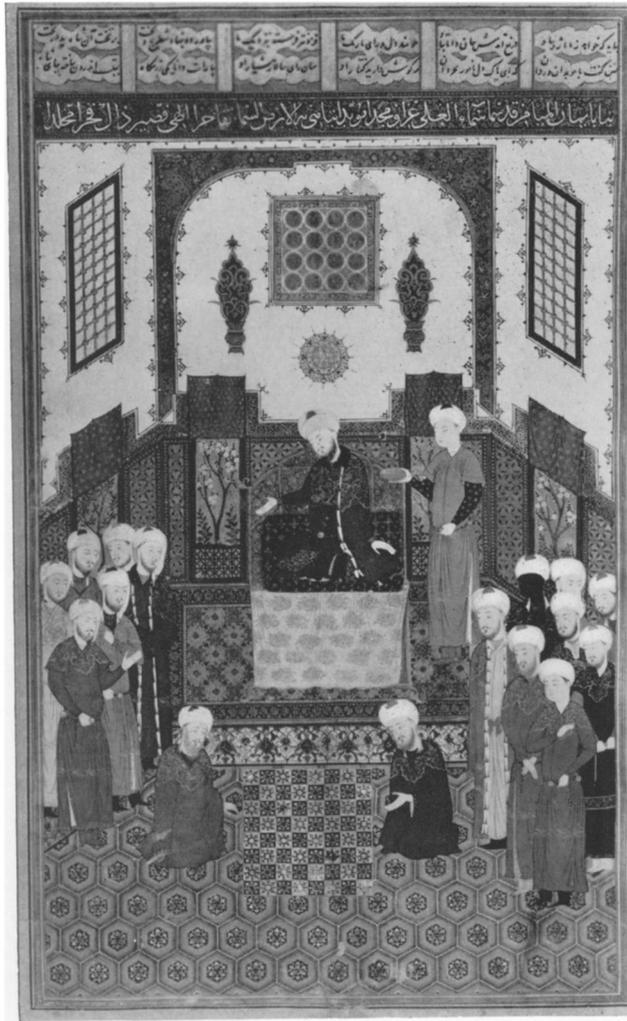




12. Kay Ka'us receives the div from Mazanderan, come to him in the guise of a bard. From the Teheran Shah Nameh of 1430

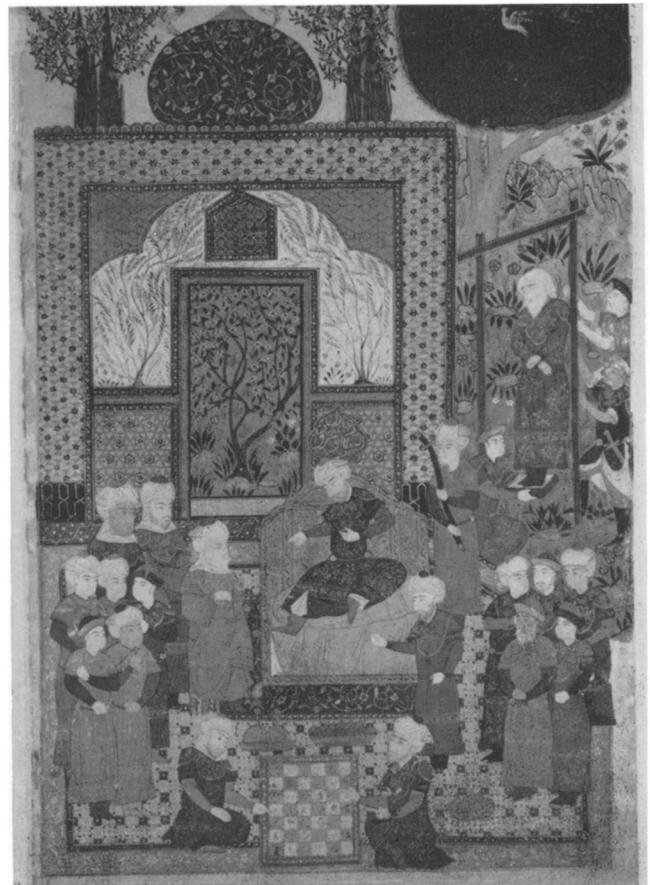
13. Banquet scene in a garden pavilion. From the Museum's XVII-century Shah Nameh. Colors on paper, 13 7/8 x 9 1/8 inches. Fletcher Fund, 64.135.3



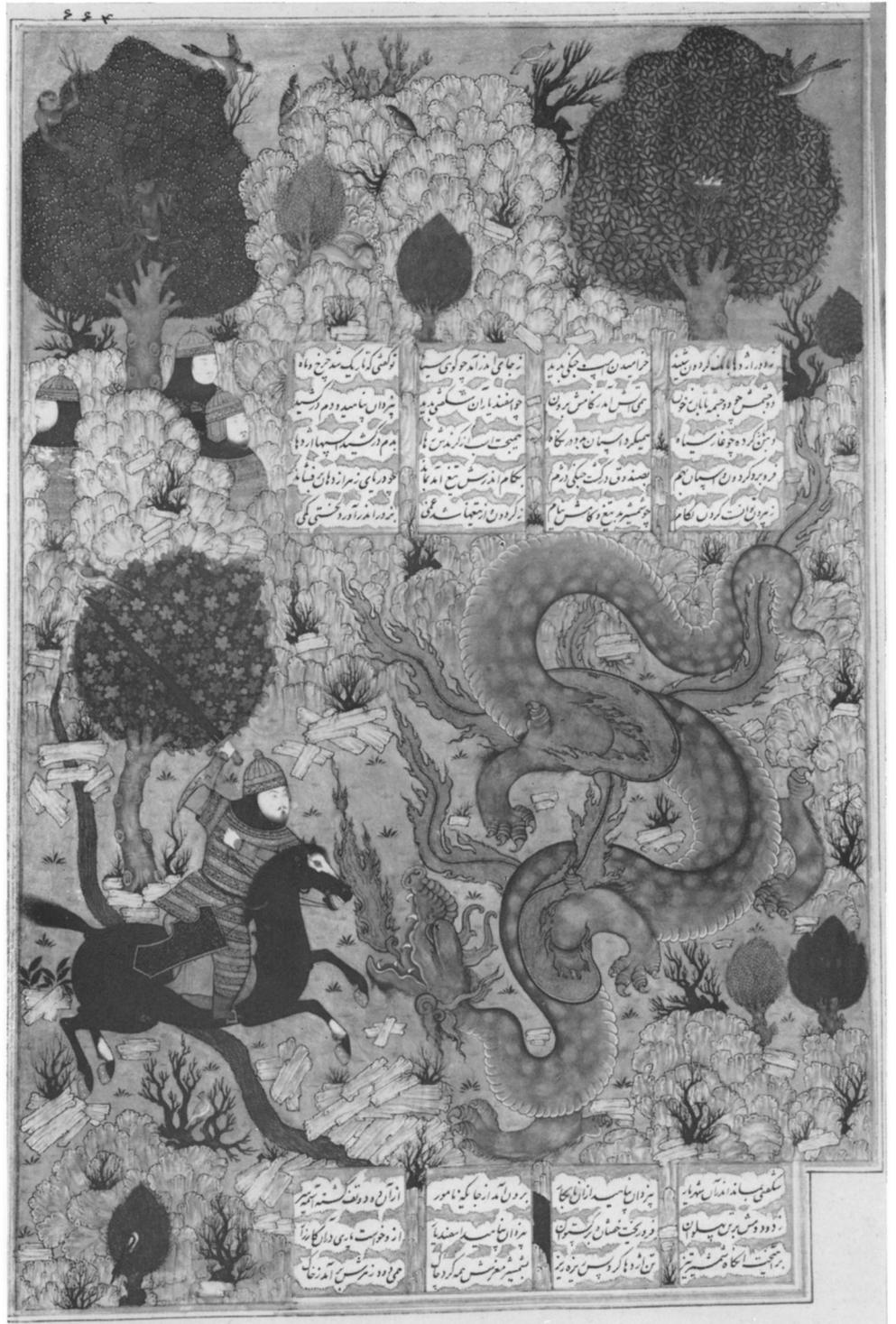


14. *The Vizier Buzurghmihr demonstrates the moves of chess to the Hindu envoy in the presence of Shah Nushirwan. From the Teheran Shah Nameh of 1430*

15. *The Vizier Buzurghmihr demonstrating the moves of chess. From the Museum's XVII-century Shah Nameh. Colors on paper, 13 1/8 x 8 7/8 inches. Fletcher Fund, 64.135.4. The Safavid painter has followed his model in the Timurid Shah Nameh of 1430 (Figure 14), but has added another scene to the composition, probably representing the execution of the heretic Mazdak. Also, considerable changes have been made in the architectural setting, and a great deal of landscape detail, absent in the model, has been added. It is clear that the artist followed his model only in general terms, treating the individual details quite independently and recreating rather than simply copying the Timurid style*



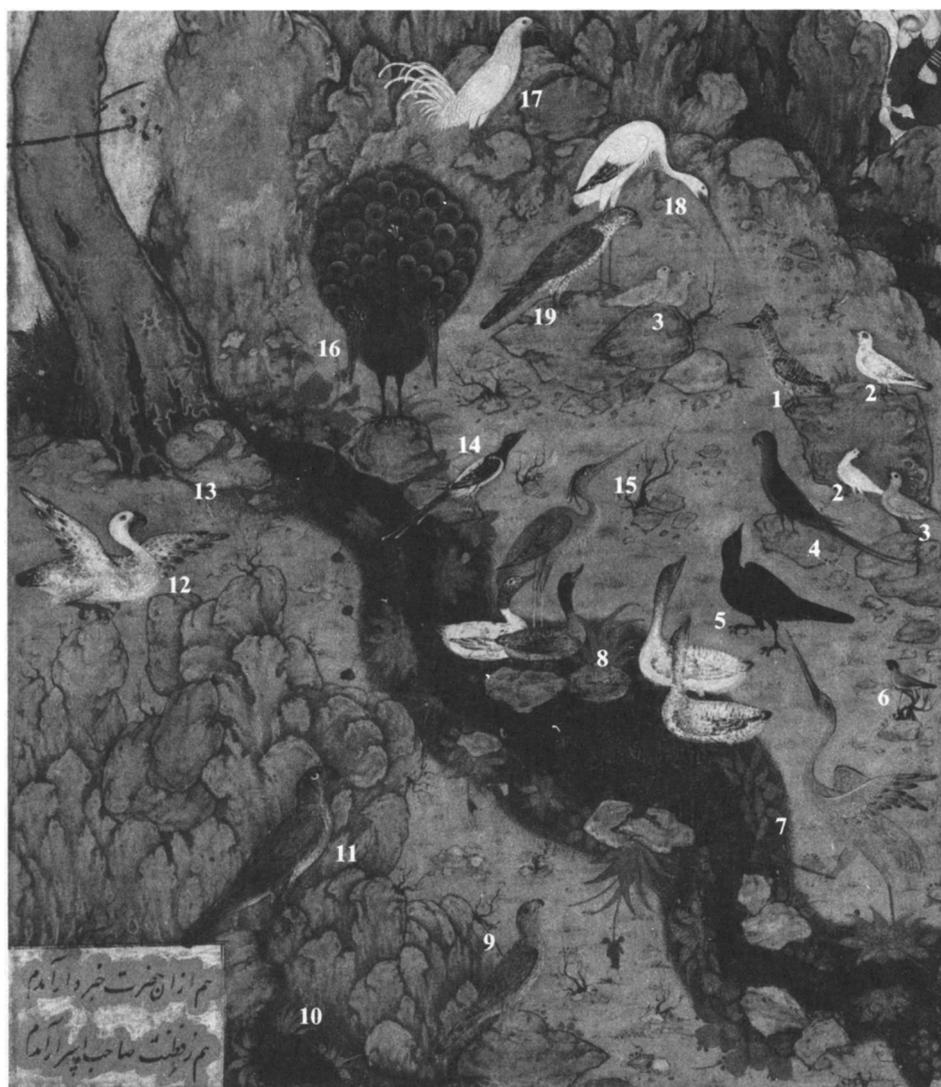
16. *Isfandiyar Killing a Dragon.*  
 From a *Shah Nameh* made for  
 Shah Abbas in Isfahan in 1614.  
 Colors on paper, 14 $\frac{5}{16}$  x 9 $\frac{7}{8}$   
 inches. Spencer Collection, The  
 New York Public Library, Astor,  
 Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.  
 Many of the paintings in this  
 manuscript were fashioned after  
 those in the *Teheran Shah Nameh*  
 made for Baysunghur Mirza  
 in 1430. Others lack models in  
 that manuscript. This one, which  
 has no known model, may be  
 considered a true recreation of the  
 Timurid style



Charles Vaurie, of the Department of Ornithology at the American Museum of Natural History, provided the following identifications of the birds shown on the Cover and in Figure 4 of the second article. "They were not," Dr. Vaurie commented, "drawn by an ornithologist."

## Note

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Hoopoe ( <i>Upupa epops</i> )               | 11. Probably Saker Falcon ( <i>Falco cherrug</i> )   |
| 2. Domestic Doves                              | 12. Phoenix (not the simurgh, which was represented as the Chinese <i>fêng huang</i> , also called phoenix in English) |
| 3. Turtledoves ( <i>Streptopelia</i> )         | 13. Probably Bee Eater ( <i>Merops apiaster</i> )  |
| 4. Indian Parakeet                             | 14. Magpie ( <i>Pica pica</i> )  |
| 5. Common Crow ( <i>Corvus corone</i> )        | 15. Gray Heron ( <i>Ardea cinerea</i> )  |
| 6. Orphean Warbler ( <i>Sylvia hortensis</i> ) | 16. Peacock ( <i>Pavo cristatus</i> )  |
| 7. Sarus Crane ( <i>Grus antigone</i> )        | 17. Rooster ( <i>Gallus gallus</i> )   |
| 8. Domestic Geese                              | 18. White Stork ( <i>Ciconia ciconia</i> )   |
| 9. Kestrel                                     | 19. Goshawk ( <i>Accipiter gentilis</i> )  |
| 10. Unidentifiable                             |  |



An epithet of the hoopoe, or hudhud as it is called in Iran, is *Tajidar*, “crown wearer,” because of its crest. The crown and a “mystic mark” on its breast were supposed to indicate its special relationship with divinity. Most of the tales about the hoopoe relate its role as King Solomon’s messenger and confidant. In *The Language of the Birds*, it leads the other birds in the search for spiritual redemption that is the subject of the poem.

There was a tradition that anyone whom the shadow of the wings of the phoenix passed over was destined to become king; this legend perhaps explains the outstretched wings of the phoenix depicted here.

M. G. L.

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