



About The Decoration Of Manuscript Books Of The Timurid Period

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ABSTRACT

In the cultural aura of the XV century, the Timurid princes, who were the rulers of that time, occupied a place in a number of historical and literary sources of both literary figures and literary personalities. An artistic manuscript in the epoch of Timurides, as well as the other genres of that period, developed on the basis of creative assimilation of the best traditions of masters who had worked in the previous centuries. It is emphasized that this manuscript is a kind of a rare example of calligraphy and artistic design of a Timurid book.

KEYWORDS

Timurides, Alisher Navoi, divan, kitabat (book compilation), text, calligraphy.

INTRODUCTION

The category of artistic manuscripts in the epoch of Timurides (1370-1507) includes not only manuscripts decorated with miniatures, but also (and these are most numerous) manuscripts created only by calligraphers and designed by ornamentalists.

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assimilation of the best traditions of masters who had worked in the previous centuries. There were certainly numerous artistically designed and illustrated records of «Shakhname» by Firdausi, «Jam-at-tava-rikh» by Rashid-ad-din, «Khamsa» by Nizami as well as other unique records recopied in the XIII—XIV centuries under the rule of mongols, that were kept in public and private libraries of ancient Samarkand, Herat, Bukhara, Tebriz

and Shiraz of the XIV and XV centuries. They could not but exert their influence on the further development and formation of the new style in designing manuscripts in the age of Timurides. In the existing scientific literature dealing with artistic manuscripts the main subject of research is an oriental miniature. That took interest in oriental artistic manuscripts, dealt mainly with the study of miniature painting as an independent genre, thus isolating it from the whole complex of artistic manuscripts.

Historical documents prove that valuable artistic manuscripts were indeed created at the orders of well-to-do people and owners of court libraries: Shakhrukh, Ulugbek, Baisunkur, Sultan Khusein; and those were the people that acquired them for great sums of money. But the client could never predetermine the artistic solution of the design or its aesthetical norms, etc. The client could only appreciate the artistic merits of the finished work and reward the artist according to his deserts.

THE MAIN FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The idea of designing manuscripts had originated and was forming in the workshops of artists in close creative contact with masters of all other genres in the art of book publishing. The craftsmanship of calligraphers, gilders, ornamentalists, miniature-painters and book-binders of the age of Timurides and the skilful synthesis of their art created unsurpassed samples of artistic manuscripts which the whole world admires up to the present time.

Illustrating by means of miniatures was common practice with fiction and historical works. It is no coincidence that the artistically designed and illustrated unique manuscripts that are now kept in all the large manuscript funds of the world mainly consist of records of Alisher Navoi and others. In contrast to miniatures, whose sphere of use was rather

limited, the use of ornaments knew no limits. Beginning with Koran, ornaments were used in all types of theological and secular literature.

Peculiarities of genre and the number of writings included into the manuscript to be stipulated not only the size of the manuscript, but also the character of its artistic design. The handwriting (large, medium or small), placing the text in two or four columns, the quantity and type of frontispieces, headpieces at the beginning of every new work or chapter, the design of the margins, the theme, subject and quantity of miniatures and even the character of book-binding was decided by a group of artists and masters who worked at the creation of every single artistic manuscript.

The harmonious combination of the creation of all these masters which finally resulted in a single artistic synthesis answering the aesthetic demands of the age of Timurides was the constant care of every creator of artistic manuscripts. The development of the art of artistic manuscript and calligraphy as well as of the other spheres of life in the age of Timurides reached its culmination mainly in the second half of the XV century, when such people as Alisher Navoi, Kamal-ad-din Bekhzad, Sultan Ali Meshkheti, Mirik Nakkosh, Mavlyano Yari and others stood at the head of court «Kitobkhana» (library) in Herat. The great protector of science, literature and arts was Alisher Navoi.

In the XV century, in the age of Timurides, there existed Samarkand, Tebriz and Shiraz schools in the art of artistic manuscripts, and among these Herat school distinguished itself by realistic trends, by the variety of genres and by extreme skilfulness of its masters.

In St. Petersburg, in State Public Library named after Saltikov-Schedrin, there is a manuscript of an early divan (a collection of verses) by Alisher Navoi which was re-copied in the year

of 870/1465-1466 in Herat by the famous king of calligraphers Sultan Ali Meshkhedi (Dorn, 564). This manuscript is the earliest record of Navoi's writing and the very first manuscript by Sultan Ali Meshkhedi known to the scientific world. According to the tradition that existed at that time the names of guilders and ornamentalists, with few exceptions, were never mentioned. One shall not find the name of the author of ornaments in this manuscript too. There is every indication that this manuscript was created in the workshops of the court library of Baisankur Mirza, which are known to continue their activities both under Abul Kasim Mirza Babur and Abu Said. As a result of research carried out on the text we could ascertain that the above said manuscript belonged to the private library of Alisher Navoi.

The originality of the ornamental composition of the frontispiece and particularly of the painting and colouring indicates the appearance of a new style in the art of book-publishing in Herat of the XV century. Also important is the fact that the above mentioned manuscript indicates the beginning of creative contacts between two great artistic geniuses of Herat — Alisher Navoi and Sultan Ali Meshkhedi, who then co-operated for nearly 40 years and maintained good friendly contacts. In the second half of the XV century calligraphy and the art of book-publishing flourished unprecedentedly in the court library of Sultan Khusein.

CONCLUSION

The king of the calligraphers Sultan Ali Meshkhedi, the founder of Herat school of miniature painting Kamal-ad-din Bekhzad and the famous master of ornamenting books «nakkosh» (ornamentalist) of mavlyano Yari were great teachers of hundreds of masters who were creating masterpieces in the art of artistic manuscripts. Every artistic manuscript taken separately was in itself a unique work of art. Thus, Tashkent manuscript «Diwan»

Alisher Navoi, even though it has no miniatures in it, can certainly be treated as one of the greatest masterpieces of Timuride. Artistic manuscripts, which are classic samples of the new original style of Herat school in the second half of XV century. The splendid ornament, rich colours and unique proportions in combining all the elements of the two above mentioned manuscripts are primarily stipulated by the high intellectual development and aesthetic demands of the age of Timurides in the XV century.

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