horizon, except in the double frontispiece, which may be by another hand.

Another group of four manuscripts produced in Mandu at the turn of the fifteenth century shows the direct impact of contemporary Iranian painting in the Turkman style of Shiraz and the classical style of Herat. The most famous is a copy of Ni‘matnāma, a cookbook with recipes for delicacies, aphrodisiacs, and other epicurean delights. Begun for the Khalji sultan of Malwa, Ghiyath Shah (r. 1469–1500), and expanded by his son Nasir Shah (r. 1500–10), the manuscript can be attributed to the decade 1495–1505. The 116 folios (each measuring some 30 by 20 cm) are copied in a large and bold naskh script with red headings and contain fifty paintings illustrating the preparation of the recipes. Most use a set iconicographic formula showing an enthroned prince surrounded by attendants and servants, all within an architectural or landscape setting. The basic Turkman style has been embellished with such elements from daily life in India as cooking pots and patterned textiles. Women are usually shown in profile wearing local dress, and buildings often have such features common to the vernacular tradition of Mandu as domes and heavy projecting eaves carried on carved brackets [e.g., 207]. Many of the conventions of Persian painting have been altered. In the outdoor scenes, for example, the convention of dividing the sky into a gold lower section and a blue upper one has been reinterpreted so that the gold half continues the ground and is sprinkled with clumps of flowers.

The Ni‘matnāma was probably executed by local artists who had learned the Turkman style from imported manuscripts or from emigrés. These Mandu artists were able to work in various styles, for a manuscript of Sulay‘i’s Risāla

("Orchard") penned by Shulusavur al-Kaith, illustrated by Haji Muhammad, and datable to Mandu 1490 to 1503, has forty-three paintings in a provincial version of the Timurid style of Herat. Features such as the extensive use of the profile, the horizontal decorative bands, and the patterned fabrics are derived from the local school of painting seen in the Mandu Kalpasnita, copied in 1439–40 at the fort of Mandapadurga (Mandu) in the reign of Sultan Mahmud for a Jain monk, and some of the sartorial details, such as the heavy gold ring around a woman’s neck and the local Malwa dress of a long gown fastened up the middle and tied with a sash at the waist, as well as the bright clashing palette, are repeated in paintings done some fifty years later in the Deccani school (see Chapter 19).
CHAPTER 12

The Arts in Iran under the Safavids and Zands

The Safavids claimed descent from Shaykh Safi al-Din (1232–1294), who established a dervish order at Ardabil in north-west Iran. In the late fifteenth century his descendants worked to subvert the Turkoman in western Iran and eastern Anatolia, and in 1501 Isma‘il b. Haydar seized Azerbaijan from the Apponyi and established the Safavid monarchy. Within a decade, the shah had subdued all of Iran. The Safavid state was a theocracy, for Isma‘il and his successors also traced their descent from ‘Ali b. Abu Talib, the son-in-law and successor to the Prophet Muhammad, and claimed semi-divine status as reincarnations of the Shi‘ite imams. Their Turkoman supporters, the Qilbash (or Redheads, from the distinctive color of their caps), owed them both political and spiritual allegiance. Shi‘ism, which had enjoyed sporadic importance in earlier times, was imposed as the state religion, and, in so distinguishing itself from its Sunni neighbors, the country acquired the sense of national identity that has survived to the present. On the east, the Safavids held their own against the Uzbekis, although such frontier towns as Herat and Mashhad frequently changed hands. On the west, they were less successful against the Ottomans, who defeated them at the battle of Chaldiran outside Tabriz in 1514. The continuous insecurity of the border region led the Safavids to move their capital from vulnerable Tabriz, first to Qazvin (1555) and then to Isfahan (1597).

Most of the architecture from the early Safavid period has been destroyed, and the decorative arts are the major source for reconstructing the esthetic of the period. The arts of the book took on an extraordinary significance during the first half of the sixteenth century under Safavid patronage. The manuscripts produced were of the highest quality ever known in Islamic art, and designs for such other arts as textiles, carpets, and architectural decoration were prepared in the royal manuscript workshops. In addition, as the art of the book became a self-conscious art form, a new awareness of its history developed and individual artists took on increased importance.

THE ARTS UNDER THE EARLY SAFAVIDS (1501–76)

The importance and quality of book-painting during the reign of Isma‘il I (1501–24) can be seen in three manuscripts. The first is the magnificent copy of Nizami’s Khamsa (“Five poems”) [see 91] that had been begun for Haysamghur’s son Babur, continued for several Turkoman princes, and, still unfinished, passed into the hands of one of the sons of Shah Isma‘il, Naim al-Din Mas‘ud Zargar Rashiti, at which time several illustrations were added. One of the illustrations bears the date 910/1504–5. As the illustrations added in Safavid times have the same lush vegetation, elaborate architecture, and brilliant coloring as the Turkoman ones, the Turkoman royal workshop in Tabriz must have continued production under the new regime. The Safavid illustrations can be distinguished from the earlier ones, however, by the distinctive headgear of the figures: a tall red cap often wrapped with a voluminous turban. The same style can be seen in another peripatetic manuscript, a copy of Muhammad ‘Azad’s Dastān-i Jāmai-i Jāwād (“Story of Jamal and Jald”) in Uppsala. The copying of the text was completed at Herat in 1522–3, when the city was still in the control of the Timurids. Of the thirty-four illustrations two are dated to 1523–4 and one to 1524–5, but none is done in the classical Bihzadian style associated with Herat. Rather, they all show the distinctive exuberance and lush foliage of Turkoman painting from Tabriz and the characteristic Safavid headgear. The unillustrated manuscript was probably brought from Herat to Tabriz, where its illustrations were added.

The third manuscript associated with Isma‘il, a Shāh-nāma (“Book of kings”), was the most spectacular, for in this instance he did not order the completion of an unfinished manuscript begun by others but undertook one of his own. The manuscript is known only from four detached paintings, of which three have been lost. The illustrations can be dated to Isma‘il’s reign by the style of headgear, which is identical to that shown in his other two manuscripts. The surviving image of The Sleeping Rustam [208] shows the scale and quality of the manuscript from which it was taken and is the undisputed masterpiece of the Turkoman style of painting as continued under Isma‘il’s patronage. The image depicts the great hero Rustam, who unsuspectingly falls asleep in a lion’s lair. He is protected, however, from the returning lion by his trusty chestnut-colored steed Rakhsh. The artist has effectively isolated the sleeping hero with green and yellow foliage which suggests the peaceful detachment of dreamland, and the violent confrontation between horse and lion has been transformed into a stylized ballet in the lower right. The vivid colors, sure draughtsmanship, and brilliant design indicate that no expense was spared to produce this image, but the absence of rulings between columns of text and between text and image show that the manuscript itself was never completed. The idea of commissioning a large (31.8 by 28.8 cm), illustrated copy of the Persian national epic, however, set the precedent for the biggest book project of the sixteenth century, the copy of the Shāh-nāma produced for Isma‘il’s son and successor Tahmāsp I (r. 1524–76).

As Isma‘il’s oldest son, the infant Tahmāsp had been sent to be governor of Herat. There he was trained in calligraphy and drawing; a manuscript was penned by him when he was eleven. He returned to Tabriz in 1522, and many calligraphers and painters of Herat who had continued the Timurid traditions there probably accompanied him, although some may have come earlier. The renowned painter Bihzad was purportedly named head of the royal library in
208. Rustam Sleeping While Raksh Fights the Lion, detached page from an unfinished copy of the Mashhadi, Tabriz, 1513–22. 31.8 × 20.8 cm.
London, British Museum

209. The Court of Gajehram, f. 129, from the Tuhfaq, Mashhadi, Tabriz, 1525–35. 34.2 × 23.1 cm. Geneva, Saltuafin Aga Khan
Already in the sixteenth century this painting was recognized for its greatness. Writing in 1544, the painter and chronicler Dust Muhammad, who himself is credited with having added the painting to Safavid and the Worm (fol. 52v) to this manuscript, described the portraitist and painters in Tashmaq's library:

First is the rarity of the age, Master Nizamuddin Sultan-Muhammad, who has developed depiction to such a degree that, although it has a thousand eyes, the celestial sphere has not seen his like. Among his creations, depicted in His Majesty's Skahnama, is a scene of people wearing leopard skins: it is such that the lion-hearted of the jungle of depiction and the leopards and crocodiles of the workshop of ornamentation quail at the fangs of his pen and bend their necks before the awesome of his pictures.14

The specificity of his description leaves no doubt that Dust Muhammad was describing this very picture.

The 328 paintings in the manuscript show a remarkable diversity of imagination, composition, draughtsmanship, and color, although they share the same technique and jewel-like finish. There can be no doubt that many hands trained in both the classical Timurid and Turkoman idioms were involved in the project. If The Court of Guyamars represents the culmination of the Turkoman style of Tashmaq, an image such as The Nightmare of Zakhub [210] is the culmination of the Buzdietian tradition associated with Herat. Prince Zakhub had been killed by Dilis, the Devil, into killing his father and usurping his throne. Disguised, Dilis then demanded to kiss the new king on the shoulders, whereupon two serpents sprang from the spots. Zakhub had been kissed. The snakes demanded a daily diet of human brains, and under this evil influence the fortunes of Iran began to wane. One night, Zakhub dreamed of his impending death at the hands of a great hero wielding an ox-headed mace. The painting depicts the moment when Zakhub awakes from his dream. The white-bearded king sits behind a balcony on the upper left, but most of the visual interest is concentrated on the ways his courtiers react to his shock. Some on the ground floor are too far away and continue to sleep unaware, while others of his harem on the second floor pass the news from one to the other and raise their forefronts to their lips in gestures of surprise. Guardsmen peer down from the roof to see what has happened. The only indication of night is the narrow strip of deep blue sky with a crescent moon between the two wings of the palace. The artist has used his virtuosity to differentiate the individual courtiers by facial features, gesture, and dress and to display the rich array of tile patterns and architectural details. The intricately detailed representation of architecture stems directly from the Buzdietian tradition [84] and provides the only evidence for what the now destroyed Safavid palaces of Tabriz must have looked like.

This painting has been attributed to Mir Musavvir, one of the two other painters mentioned by Dust Muhammad as working on the Shakhnama.15 The only place in the manuscript where Mir Musavvir's name appears, however, is on the visor of a cap worn by an attendant in the painting of Manchuksh Etchhi (fol. 60v). It is also the only place in the manuscript where any painter's name appears in a painting, but it is unclear whether this is a signature or the identification of an individual. It is hard to see the connection between the pedestrian quality of the painting of Mananiksh Etchhi and the inspired depiction of The Nightmare of Zakhub; furthermore, very little is known about the nature and extent of an individual artist's oeuvre at this moment. Chroniclers such as Dust Muhammad and Qazi Ahmad (ca. 1606) give the names of many contemporary and past artists, but it is rarely possible to attach a name to a particular painting. The names of individual artists are sometimes written in the margins around paintings in manuscripts, but these are ascriptions, not signatures, and may have been added at any time.

Genuine signatures are rare and are placed within the painting, on the architecture, on a book, or in another inconspicuous place, such as beneath the foot of the king, and usually contain the phrase "the work of..." (Pers. 'amal-i...). In the late fourteenth century, the painter Jundah signed the painting of Humay and Humayun on the Day before their Wedding [38] and in the late fifteenth century Buzdiet signed the paintings in the Cairo Bistot [86]. In the early sixteenth century Sultan Muhammad, the painter of The Court of Guyamars, signed two paintings in a copy of the Divin ("Collected poems") of Hafiz made for Sam Mirza, Tashmaq's brother.13 The Allegory of Drunkenness [211] is signed "The work of Sultan-Muhammad" in a panel above the doorway. Hafiz's couplet at the top says

The angel of mercy took the reciting cap and tossed it down As rosewater on the cheeks of hours and angels.

To illustrate this mystical verse, Sultan-Muhammad depicted a wine-shop. In the upper window lolls the boonzy-eyed poet, while angels tipple above him on the roof. A drunken customer staggered out the door, and a thirsty youth hauls a jug up to his balcony. In the front garden courtiers (identified by their turbans with tall batons) and mystics (identified by their long-sleeved cloaks) carouse to music and the shrieks and clamps of three flat-clad wandering dervishes. As in The Nightmare of Zakhub, architecture organizes the composition, landscape plays a minor role, and individuals are distinguished by gesture and physiognomy and are united by pace into small genre scenes. This painting and the other signed painting in this manuscript are different in style from The Court of Guyamars, the Shakhnama painting identifiable as the work of

210. The Nightmare of Zakhub, f. 38v, from the Tashmaq Shakhnama, Tabriz, 1529-35, 34.2 x 27.6 cm. Private collection USA

211. Sultan Muhammad: Allegory of Drunkenness, f. 155v from Hafiz, Divan, Tabriz, ca. 1550, 28.3 x 20.5 cm. Jointly owned by the Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, MA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and S. C. Welsh.
the renowned calligrapher Shah Mahum al-Nishapuri, and the margins of each folio were splendidly decorated in silver and several tones of gold, with animals and birds among flowers and trees. Space was left in the text for illustrations, and the manuscript now contains fourteen contemporary paintings. The images are larger than the text-block and spill out into the margins on three sides. Eleven of the paintings bear later inscriptions to such masters as Aqa Mirak, Muzaffar 'Ali, and Sultan-Muhammad. The image of Nuskhwan in the Ruined Palace [213] bears a faint inscription on the wall of the inn.

Build up the desert heart of those deprived of bliss;
There is no better building in this ruined world than this.
Mir Musaviir penned it in the year 1546 [1539–40].

While out riding with his viceroy, the Sasanian monarch Nushikan, who preferred sport to affairs of state, came upon a ruined palace in which two owls were hooting. The king asked what the owls were saying, and the viceroy replied that one owl was demanding this ruined village and one or two others as a bride-price for his daughter. The other owl agreed, saying that if the king continued on his present course of leaving his people in misery and neglect, he would give not two or three but a hundred thousand ruined villages. To illustrate this moral tale, the artist has created a haunting image in a desolate landscape. The two owls perch on the top left above the ruined palace, whose decay is illustrated by the broken walls and fallen tiles and suggested by the smoke, lizards, and dog that inhabit the ruins. As the bottom, two woodmen chop down old willow trees, undoubtedly an allusion to the misery and neglect of the people. A silver stream, now tarnished to black, cascades between the rocks and has whited-up flowers on the right. Two deer drink from another stream behind the palace, and storks and quail nest nearby.

The manuscript was not finished in Tahmasp's lifetime.

The dedicatory roselle (fol. 15v) was never inscribed and several blanks for paintings were completed in 1675–6 by Mahumot Zaman [226].

The next stage of the illustrated carpet was the textile of the arts. According to later chronicles, the shah used to relax by practicing calligraphy and painting. In his court, the presence of artists of all varieties of state became pressing and his favorite artists were no longer alive, so he devoted less time to these arts. Indeed, no royal illustrated manuscripts survive from the second half of Tahmasp's reign. Although patrons on a large scale continued elsewhere.

The extraordinary attention given to the arts of the book during the first half of the sixteenth century spilled over into the other arts, particularly carpets and textiles. Pile carpets had long been manufactured in the Middle East and Central Asia, but the earliest complete pieces of Iran's manufacture to survive were dated to the sixteenth century. Earlier carpets are known only through their depiction in illustrated manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Although some of the present carpet's characteristics do not appear in known Safavid examples, certain patterns are a confident survival of Mongol-type designs from a much earlier period, and may have been used as prototypes for the Safavid carpet of ca. 1335 depicting an animal carpet, most early examples feature inner fields of small repeat patterns edged with Kufic borders [135].

The second half of the

Sultan-Muhammad, but all three show the same imaginative brilliance. Nevertheless, these three paintings hardly provide the basis for the story-telling in the manuscripts, so little is known about what an individual's role actually was in the production of an illustrated manuscript.

Close scrutiny of surviving manuscripts delineates the broad steps in the production of an illustration. The painter was given a sheet of paper on which the text had been copied, leaving a space for the illustration. In many cases the illustrations of a manuscript were never completed, and in other cases some or all of the illustrations were added significantly later, as was the case with the Khamsa begun for the Timurid prince Babur (see Chapter 5). The next stage was to prepare the paintings. Beginning with a brush and thin black ink, the artist sketched in a composition, sometimes using models or sources for the general composition and individual details. The composition was built up in darker strokes, and errors were corrected with opaque white pigment. The unfinished painting of Bahram Gur and the Shepherd who deserted his Dog for Allowing a Wolf to Steal the Sheep [212] shows this stage of production. The next stage was to color the drawing. Silver and gold were added first, then came the plain ground colors of landscape and the body colors of animals and textiles. Finishing touches included painting vegetation, clouds, architectural details, trappings and furnishings, and faces. The painting of The Sleeping Rustam [228] has been completed to this point, but the final stage involves the adding of the rulings between columns of text and text and image has not been accomplished.

Whether one artist worked sequentially on the various stages of a painting or each step was assigned to a different artist is unknown. Practice undoubtedly varied depending on the level of patronage and the size of the atelier. Tahmasp, for example, had many painters working for him who may well have been specialists, but in other cases a single person may have been responsible for the calligraphy, painting, illumination, and even the binding. Through the middle of the sixteenth century the book, not the painting, continued to be the work of art, and the individual artist's role was subordinated to the overall conception. Calligraphy, illumination, painting, drawing, gliding, and binding by many individuals were perfectly integrated in the books produced at the court of Tabriz. No single element overwhelmed another, and all components were equally splendid. These are some of the most magnificent products of Persian art.

The splendid copy of Nizami's Khamsa made for Tahmasp between 1539 and 1543 epitomizes luxury book production under the early Safavids. The text was copied at Tabriz by