flowers, regular tufts of grass and architectural details conform to Jalayirid norms and differ from Arab scientific painting of the same period in which setting is not implied. In the Jalayirid illustration the artist has included the necessary diagrams for lunar stages and houses to the right and below figures of the moon and the old man Saturn. Yet, the mood of the painting is as anecdotal as it is didactic and represents a rare merging of Iranian and Arab taste.

From 1406 to 1410 Ahmad Jalayir enjoyed a final period in Tabriz. Two manuscripts have been assigned to Jalayirid royal patronage at this period. One, a Khamsah of Nizami, relates closely to the Three Poems of Khwaju Kirmani, though its scenes are slightly more intimate than those of the earlier manuscript. The other, the Divan of Sultan Ahmad Jalayir, in some ways ranks as the more remarkable of the two. Eight of the 30-odd folios in this book of poems, composed by Ahmad Jalayir himself, contain marginal drawings of figures in landscape and angels in swirling clouds. In keeping with the mystical bent of Sultan Ahmad’s poems, the drawings have been interpreted as representing the seven stages of attainment of union with God, as described in the poetical treatise The Language of the Birds by ‘Attar (died c.1230). Stylistically, the drawings combine an awareness of Chinese brush-painting technique, already in evidence in early and mid-fourteenth-century miniatures, and a more spontaneous version of the figural types found in Jalayirid painting.

For this period the inclusion of drawings, especially such fresh renderings of scenes of daily, rural life, is exceptional, if not unique. While some scholars have attributed the ‘Abd al-Hayy, another possibility might be considered. In discussing the artists at the court of Sultan Ahmad, Dust Muhammad mentions that ‘Abd al-Hayy instructed the Sultan, who in turn produced an illustration to an Abu Sa’idnameh in qalamisabili (literally, ‘black pen’, but essentially brush or pen and ink) technique. Would it be too far-fetched to imagine that the marginalia in Sultan Ahmad’s Divan are the work of the great patron himself? In the end, whoever the artist was, his works flesh out our understanding of the profligous contribution of the Jalayirid school to Persian painting. With the encouragement of Sultan Ahmad, Jalayirid artists worked in a variety of techniques, created many of the archetypal compositions used by the next five generations of Persian artists, and attained the level of perfection and harmony of colour that set Persian book painting apart from all other styles.

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**CLASSICISM AND EXUBERANCE**

**THE 15TH CENTURY**

**Timur and his successors**

One hundred and fifty years after the Mongols had first invaded Iran, Timur and his armies swept in from the north-east, sowing terror and devastation in equal measure across the land. By 1400 Timur had conquered all of Iran, parts of Asia Minor, Iraq, India as far as Delhi, and had advanced in Russia to within 200 miles of Moscow. Even in old age his appetite for conquest was insatiable; when he died in Utrar in 1405 he was on a military expedition with the aim of taking China. In the Middle East, only the lands of the Mamluks, rulers of Egypt and Syria, eluded his grasp.

While Timur modelled many aspects of his military organisation and campaigns on those of the Mongols, his attitude to the arts differed substantially from theirs. Whereas the Mongols began to patronise architecture and the visual arts only after their territorial gains were consolidated, Timur’s ‘artistic policy’ was integral to his political and military aspirations. He would offer the governors of the cities or regions he defeated the opportunity to avoid destruction in exchange for fealty. If the offer was refused, Timur invited his armies to massacre the population, destroy or steal property, and spare only children, the aged and artists and craftsmen. These artisans were then deported to his capital at Samarkand, where they were employed on the massive building projects he commissioned. Additionally, Timur’s sons and grand-
sons, who were given governorships in the conquered cities, had access to artists and craftsmen from the capitals of the Muzaffarids. (Shiraz, Isfahan), Jalal al-Din (Tabriz, Baghdad) and Karts (Herat). The story of Persian painting from the first half of the fifteenth century is that of princely patrons and their artists.

From 1370, when he established his capital at Samarkand, until his death in 1405, Timur spent the majority of his time away from his native region of Transoxiana. Even when he stayed in Shahrisabz, the city nearest his place of birth, or in Samarkand, he lived as often in lavish tents as in his palaces themselves. The remains of buildings Timur commissioned – the Friday Mosque (‘Bibi Khanum’) and Gur-e Amir mausoleum in Samarkand, and the Aq Saray (‘White Palace’) in Shahrisabz – embody the grandiose vision of a ruler now thought to have been obsessed with achieving legitimacy in the eyes of his Iranian and Turko-Mongol subjects. Certainly the sheer size and lavish decoration of the buildings announce his power and wealth, yet, oddly, not one illustrated manuscript or mural painting can be firmly attributed to his patronage. Presumably, since Timur spent so much time on military campaigns and accompanied by a full retinue, including artists, he would have had access to illustrated manuscripts. Moreover, certain scholars believe that some of the paintings – especially those depicting Persian princesses with Central Asian demons or guardians – found in albums now in Istanbul must originally have come from Samarkand and could have been royal commissions. Unfortunately, the written documents which confirm such a theory have not so far come to light, and, since Timur was illiterate, he may have had no interest in books, even illustrated ones.

During most of his life Timur attempted to limit the power and independence of his sons and grandsons by appointing them to governorships of the localities he conquered and assigning non-royal Regents to act as their watchdogs. Thus, when Timur died, although he had named his grandson Pir Muhammad b. Jahangir as his successor, the path to the sultanate was by no means clear. Another grandson, Khalil Sultan, challenged Pir Muhammad immediately and proclaimed himself Sultan in Samarkand. Meanwhile, Shah Rukh, Timur’s only surviving son, strengthened his position in Khurasan, where he was governor, and extended his hold over Gurgan and Mazandaran (north-central Iran). By 1409 he was ready to take Transoxiana, where he easily defeated Khalil Sultan in Samarkand. Instead of moving his seat of operations to Timur’s capital, however, Shah Rukh returned to his own city, Herat, and appointed his son, Ulugh Beg, governor of Samarkand.

Lacking the personal charisma of Timur, Shah Rukh was forced to spend his first decade as Sultan consolidating the central territories of the Timurid realm. While Tabriz and Anatolia were ultimately wrested from the Timurids by the Turkmans in the mid-fourteenth century, Shah Rukh and his sons enjoyed enough stability in Khurasan, Transoxiana and Fars to sponsor a cultural revival on a grand scale. The manuscripts produced for Shah Rukh himself tend to embody his own imperial aspirations, as well as a desire to identify himself and his dynasty more completely with the metropolitan world of Islamic Iran as opposed to the tribal Turko-Mongol traditions of Timur and Central Asia. Yet, because of the accidents of survival, the tale of Timurid painting begins not with Shah Rukh in Herat, but with his nephew Iskandar Sultan in Fars province.

Like most Timurid princes, Iskandar Sultan served as governor of several cities. In the late fourteenth century he was appointed acting governor of Shiraz; he then held the governorships of Fergana, Kashgar and Hamadan, finally returning to Shiraz in 1409. Rebellious even during Timur’s lifetime, he continued to foment treachery against Shah Rukh and finally brought about his own downfall by laying waste to the city of Kirman. In 1414 Shah Rukh removed him from his governorship in Shiraz and had him blinded, putting an end to
both his political and artistic career. In 1415 he was put to death.

Long before he met this sorry end, possibly even as an adolescent, Iskandar in Shiraz had begun to patronise the arts. A Collection of Epics, dated 1397 and presumably copied and illustrated for Iskandar in Shiraz, combines in its miniatures elements associated with the Muzaffarid style of Shiraz, on the one hand, and those of the Jalayirid painters of Baghdad, on the other. Thus, while the pointed moustaches and high horizons recall Muzaffarid painting, the meticulous treatment of geometric and floral ornament stems from the Jalayirid school. The inclusion of gold ornament on a gold ground, a favourite device of Iskandar Sultan’s artists working around 1410, may indicate either the patronage of the young Iskandar or that of his brother, Pir Muhammad.

By 1410 Iskandar Sultan’s artists were producing an exceptional group of manuscripts in a style in which the promise of the 1397 miniatures was now fully realised and a complete synthesis of the Muzaffarid and Jalayirid styles was achieved. In this period, two Anthologies, one from 1410, the other from 1410–11, a horoscope manuscript from 1410–11 and an astronomical manuscript of the same date are known to have been commissioned by Iskandar. The 1410–11 Miscellany embodies his taste in manuscripts; on many of the small-scale pages the scribes wrote two texts, one in the centre of the page and one in the margins. Some pages contain marginal drawings and triangular illuminations reminiscent of the Divan of Sultan Ahmad Jalayir. Additionally, double-page paintings appear in the body of the manuscript, not just as a frontispiece. Stylistically the manuscript is marked by numerous original compositions executed in harmonious colours on a minute scale. The elongated human bodies and lyrical treatment of nature recall the Jalayirid style, but the gold or starry lapsi lazuli skies and organic, coral-like rock formations anticipate the great Timurid manuscript illustrations of the 1430s and 1440s.

Perhaps because Iskandar Sultan’s attention turned to architectural commissions in Shiraz around 1412, fewer manuscripts can be assigned to his patronage after 1411. Upon expelling Iskandar Sultan from Shiraz in 1414, Shah Rukh removed his artists and scribes to Herat. Nonetheless, Ibrahim Sultan, Shah Rukh’s son and Iskandar Sultan’s successor, must have retained some artists, as manuscript production continued at Shiraz and other Fars centres and several manuscripts can be attributed to his patronage. An anthology, dated 1420 and now in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin–Dahlem, contains a dedication from Ibrahim Sultan to his brother Baysunghur, whom Shah Rukh had sent in the same year to be governor of Tabriz. Most likely the manuscript was a gift
that the illustration was unfinished and the artist perhaps intended to include the sky, the horizon of the picture as it stands is high and typical of Shirazi Timurid painting. Far from meticulous, the rendering here nonetheless communicates the event of the siege in an abbreviated, almost symbolic manner.

Another page from the same manuscript exhibits an equally irrational sense of spatial relationships. Especially odd is the section in which the cypress is covered with a cloud, a flowering tree, the canopy and the carpet, tipped up at an impossible angle. Yet neither did this artist who felt free to overlap elements in this way shrink from using broad passages of strongly contrasting colours with panache. The leafy vegetation covering the ground marks a departure in the Timurid painting of Shiraz and anticipates the Turkmans' treatment of greenery in the second half of the fifteenth century.

The miniatures from a dispersed Shahnāme produced in Shiraz about ten years later show less reliance on Jalayirid forms and a closer kinship with Muzaffarid painting of the late fourteenth century. While the artist still extends the picture into the margin, as in 'Rustum slaying Pīsān in single combat', he has revived the Muzaffarid facial type with its ovoid shape and spiky moustaches. Moreover, the native Shiraz taste for sinuous line and ornamental forms is amply evident in the dragon and jagged spars of 'Isfandiyar slays the dragon'. While the men's physiques in these
33 'Kuyuk the Great Khan', from a Tarikh-i Jahan-gusha of Aqa Malik ibn Muhammad Juvasni. Timurid, Shiraz, 1458. Page 26.5 x 17.2 cm. The third Great Khan of the Mongols and grandson of Chinghis (Genghis) Khan, Kuyuk ruled from 1246 to 1248. His enthronement took place at his camp near Qaraqorum. After being seated first on a gold throne and then on a felt blanket, Kuyuk received gold, silver, jewels and other gifts from his nobles.

34 opposite 'The sages of China bringing books on history to Uljaytu', from a Majma' al-Tavarikh of Hafiz-i Abru. Timurid, Herat, c. 1425–30. 33.8 x 23 cm. The Timurid historian Hafiz-i Abru based the section of his Majma' al-Tavarikh from which this page comes on Rashid al-Din’s History of the Mongols, begun under Chagan Khan (r. 1295–1304) and completed in the reign of Uljaytu (1304–16). Here the Chinese sages Li ta-chih and Maksun present books on history to the Ilkhan, seated under a tree.
paintings are rather more robust than those in the poetical manuscripts commissioned by Ibrahim Sultan, possibly the bellicose nature of the narrative called for more masculine, muscular figures.

During the years following the demise of Iskandar Sultan, Shah Rukh and his sons Baysunghur and Ulugh Beg employed the most forward-thinking artists in the Timurid realm, most of whom had been deported from Shiraz to Herat by Shah Rukh, or earlier from Tabriz and Baghdad by Timur. Additionally, in 1420 Baysunghur apparently found artists still living in Tabriz who had worked for Sultan Ahmad Jalayir, and he duly brought them to Herat when he returned there in 1421. With such a collection of talent, Shah Rukh and Baysunghur in Herat and Ulugh Beg in Samarkand set about commissioning illustrated manuscripts to suit their own temperaments and tastes.

Shah Rukh (r. 1409–47) not only sought to ensure the supremacy of his own line of descent from Timur, but also aimed to establish order and stability in his empire by the rule of Islamic law. By most accounts an upright and decorous leader, Shah Rukh favoured straightforward illustrations to the historical texts he commissioned. The best known of these, the Majma’ al-Tavarikh of Hafiz-i Abur, is a continuation of the Mongol Jamshid al-Tasarikh of Rashid al-Din (see fig. 16). Several copies of this manuscript were illustrated during Hafiz-i Abur’s lifetime: one, in Istanbul, is dated 1435 and another, whose pages are widely dispersed, must be roughly contemporary with it. Rendered in a style which Richard Ettinghausen has dubbed ‘the historical style of Shah Rukh’, paintings such as ‘The sages of China bringing books on history to Uljaytu’ contrast markedly with contemporary Shiraz work. Both the size of the illustrations and the scale of the figures are large. A pervasive flatness characterises the composition, in which the figures are arranged in a band across the foreground, the pale blue ground undulates across the middle, and the blue sky streaked with red and gold implies infinite distance. Unlike Shiraz painting after 1415, the spatial relationships are clear and rational, and details such as the figures’ headresses and accoutrements serve to make their role understandable. Like the Jamshid al-Tasarikh of the previous century, Shah Rukh’s historical illustrations did not provide the basis for future developments in Persian painting. Perhaps the narrative historical mode smacked too much of real life and contained too little embellishment to suit the tastes of most later patrons or their artists.

By contrast to Shah Rukh’s manuscripts, those prepared for his son Baysunghur (r. 1399–1433) represent to many scholars and lovers of Persian art one of the pinnacles of miniature painting. Despite an addiction to wine which caused his untimely death at the age of 34, Baysunghur succeeded in inspiring the best artists of his day to new heights in the illustration of such well-known books as the Shobnameh, Kalila wa Dimnah, and the Gulistan of Sa’di. Additionally, the artists in Baysunghur’s atelier made designs for textiles and leather, wall tiles, metalwork and jewellery. In short, the visual environment of the Timurid realm derived its unity and high level of perfection from one prime source, the royal workshop at Herat.

A bibliophile and calligrapher in his own right, Baysunghur began commissioning books as a youth. By the mid 1420s the crystalline, utterly balanced style of Baysunghur painting was essentially formulated. Like the manuscripts made for Shah Rukh, those of Baysunghur were mostly large-scale. Yet in the place of bland, predictable compositions, his artists gloried in subtle variations of pose, vegetation and rocks. No one element in a composition outweighs another, except the main protagonist, be he the seated prince holding his wine cup or Isandiyar slashing at a fierce wolf. The geometry and harmony of Baysunghur’s pictures often, though not always, rely on the interplay of horizontals and diagonals and the rhythmic repetition of colours at intervals across a page. Unlike the provincial Shiraz artists, who struggled to paint within contours, Baysunghur’s painters achieved complete clarity through their meticulous attention to detail and proportion. The quiet, ordered world presented in their work is worthy of the mind and must reflect Baysunghur’s sophisticated intellectual aspirations, if not the actual fabric of his life. Upon Baysunghur’s death in 1433 his atelier was not dispersed, although some artists may have emigrated to centres in Fars, Azerbaijan or even India. Royal patronage continued at Herat, as exemplified by a well-known manuscript of the Shobnameh produced in the 1440s for another Timurid prince, Muhammad Juki. While the figures in the Muhammad Juki illustrations are smaller in scale than those in the Baysunghur manuscripts, the precision of execution, preference for compositions constructed on the diagonal, and extraordinary combinations and harmonies of palette all derive from the Baysunghuri precedents. Nonetheless, some of the compositions are strikingly original and the manuscript as a whole is of a very high standard, a fact underscored by the presence of owners’ stamps of every Mughal emperor from Babur (r. 1494–1530) to Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707).

Many of the compositions in Baysunghur’s manuscripts served as prototypes or at least points of departure for illustrations of the same stories by artists of succeeding generations. In fact, painting paralleled literature by becoming increasingly self-referential. The
35 'Isfandiyar slashing at a wolf', from a Shahnameh of Firdausi, Timurid, Herat, 1430. Page 38 x 26 cm. In the first of the Seven Stages, or tests, which he undertook on a journey to Turan, Isfandiyar fought two wolves, which he riddled with arrows and then beheaded with his sword. Tehran, Iranian Organization for Cultural Heritage, Gulistan Palace Library.

36 'The battle of Ruhham the paladin and Bazur the sorcerer', from a Shahnameh of Firdausi, Timurid, Herat, c. 1340. 33.4 x 22.2 cm. Much of the Shahnameh centres on the age-old enmity between the Turanians and the Iranians. Here Ruhham has found the Turanian sorcerer Bazur, who has sent snow and freezing weather and caused the defeat of the Iranian army. As Bazur wielded his mace, Ruhham cut off his hand with his sword and the climate returned to normal. London, Royal Asiatic Society.
borrowing of vignettes and complete compositions abounded in later Timurid painting and continued into the seventeenth century. While painting flourished under royal Timurid patronage, numerous illustrated books were also produced for non-royal and provincial patrons. A tiny detached page of a hunting scene from a 1427 manuscript of Khwaju Kirmani’s *Humay and Humayun* combines the minute scale associated with Iskandar Sultan’s anthologies with distinctively striated rocks unlike those in Shiraz or Herat paintings of the same period. Despite the manuscript having been assigned to Shiraz in the past, the name of the scribe, ‘Ali bin Yusuf al-Mashhadi, may indicate that it was prepared at Mashhad or another provincial centre.

Detached folios such as ‘Courtiers by a stream’, the left-hand portion of a painting whose right section is in Boston, are often difficult to situate in time and place. With its high horizon, gold sky and decoratively silhouetted tree, the painting might be assigned to either Shiraz or Sultanate India in the 1440s. The artist has depicted the bearded square-faced men and their slender smooth-faced pages with more care and precision than one encounters in many Shiraz works of the same period, and although the thriving artistic milieu in Shiraz enabled artists of varying levels of expertise to prosper, it is also possible that this is the product of an Indian court school under strong Shiraz influence.

An important phenomenon of fifteenth-century Persian painting and design is the profound influence of Chinese ornament. We saw in Chapter 2 that during the Ilkhanid period the format, brushwork and palette of Chinese painting were adopted wholesale in such manuscripts as the *Jami` al-Tawarikh*. By contrast, Timurid artists working at the royal atelier derived innumerable designs for bookcovers, textiles, saddles, metalwork and manuscript borders from Chinese decorative arts such as textiles and ceramics. During the reign of Shah Rukh numerous embassies were exchanged with China, and for a few years around 1420 the Timurids enjoyed excellent trade relations with the Ming Chinese. Even when the Chinese returned to the position of considering all commodities presented by foreigners to be tribute, trade continued. As the century progressed, the Mongols increasingly became middlemen in overland trade, while the Chinese themselves plied the seas between South-East Asia and the Arabian peninsula, using blue and white porcelains as ballast for their ships.

Various works on paper and silk collected in albums in Istanbul and Berlin and dispersed in many public and private collections attest to the strong impact of Chinese painting and ornament on Persian artists of the second quarter of the fifteenth century. A drawing such as ‘Two pheasants in a landscape’ features Chinese motifs such as the curving, knotty tree, the curious fungus which envelops it, and the craggy root or rock in and on which the birds perch. The painterly use of ink and brush represents an attempt to imitate Chinese technique. Yet, the conception of this drawing and the sinuous treatment of the flowers and stems on the right-hand side, not to mention the somewhat later border, rely on that most Islamic of designs, the arabesque.

While some fifteenth-century Chinoiserie drawings such as these pheasants were arguably produced as complete works of art, many others were sketches intended for transfer to other media or to larger compositions. A drawing of two fabulous lions could have served as a model for a section of a bookbinding, manuscript borders or even a textile design. Such was the appeal and ubiquity...
38 ‘Hunting scene’, from a *Humayun* and *Humayun* of Khwaju Kirmani. Timurid, Shiraz or another provincial centre, 1427. Page 15.2 × 9.1 cm. Unlike the late 15th-century illustrates of Khwaju Kirmani’s mystical poem, this painting and others from the same manuscript rely on the standard repertoire of princely themes: hunting, battles, and enthronement scenes.

39 opposite ‘Courtiers by a stream’, the left-hand side of an enthronement scene. Timurid or Sultanate, Shiraz or India, 1449. 18.1 × 11.3 cm. This painting has been divided into two parts, so that the object of the figures’ gaze is unseen. In fact, they are looking at a king enthroned in a garden pavilion.
40 ‘Two fabulous lions’. Timurid, Herat, early 15th century. Drawing 4.4 x 10.7 cm. Fabulous lions, phoenixes known as simurghs, dragons and other imaginary beasts were borrowed and adapted by Persian artists in all media in the 15th century.

of Chinese floral and animal motifs that artists and craftsmen throughout the fifteenth century incorporated them at every opportunity.

By the mid-fifteenth century the formulae introduced by the artists of Iskandar Sultan and Baysunghur had become established and codified. Thus, collections of ghazals, a form of Persian love poetry, were generally written in manuscripts of tall, narrow format and small size, essentially pocket anthologies. The borders of the pages were stencilled with geometric, vegetal or fanciful designs. Here, the angels in vines and arabesques are outlined in gold on tinted paper, a design also found on a page of ghazals in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, presumably from the same manuscript.

**Timurids and Turkmans**

After the death of Shah Rukh in 1447 internecine strife once again erupted over the question of succession. Ulugh Beg, the virtually independent governor of Samarkand, took Herat and deported Shah Rukh’s artists to his own city. Within two years of wresting control of the Timurid realm, Ulugh Beg had fallen victim to a plot by his own son ‘Abd al-Latif. In 1449 he was executed and another period of instability ensued.

By 1451 ‘Abd al-Latif had himself been killed and the Timurid throne passed briefly to one of Shah Rukh’s descendants and then to Abu Sa’id, a great-grandson of Timur in the line of his son Miran Shah. Most of Abu Sa’id’s eighteen-year reign was spent trying to secure former Timurid territories. For eight years he attempted to take Herat; he kept a firm hold only over Transoxiana and Khurasan, and a tempestuous footing in Mazandaran and Sistan. Western and southern Iran had by the mid-fifteenth century come under the sway of the Qaraqoyunlu (Black Sheep) Turkmans, whose leader Jahan Shah even managed to occupy Herat briefly in 1458. In 1467 the balance of power shifted again in western Iran when Uzun Hasan, the leader of the Aqquyunlu (White Sheep) Turkmans, killed Jahan Shah in battle. Thinking the time was right for reasserting Timurid rule in the north-west, Abu Sa’id invaded Azerbaijan. His gross underestimation of Turkman power led to his death and a further contraction of the Timurid empire.

As one might expect of a period in which the control of various regions of Iran was at times in the hands of the Timurids and at times in those of the Turkmans, artists moved from one court to another depending on the availability of patrons. Thus, between the death of Shah Rukh in 1447 and the accession of the last Timurid ruler, Sultan Husayn Bayqara, in 1470, almost no illustrated manuscripts were produced that can with any certainty be assigned to Timurid patronage. Apparently, the Turkman courts at Tabriz, Shiraz and Baghdad offered more attractive opportunities for artists in the 1450s and 1460s than did the embattled Timurid court at Herat. Moreover, in the 1450s Jahan Shah steadily enlarged his dominions, securing western Iran, Fars, Kirman and Isfahan in addition to continuing to hold sway in Azerbaijan. Thus, artists from cities such as Shiraz, Tabriz, Isfahan and Yazd became available to the Turkmans. Perhaps because Jahan Shah was occupied with conquest, no unified style emerged in the 1450s.

Instead, a single manuscript, such as a *khamsah* of Nizami, could contain some illustrations in the Shiraz style of Ibrahim Sultan’s artists and some paintings in the Herat style of the Baysunghur period.

The rebellious son of Jahan Shah, Pir Budaq, provided the environment and guidance necessary to consolidate the various stylistic strains present in manuscript illustration of the 1450s. Having deposed his father while governor of Shiraz, Pir Budaq was appointed to Baghdad in 1450. The illustrations to two manuscripts produced during his tenure there provide the link between the earlier Herat style of Baysunghur and Muhammad Juki (see figs 35 and 36) and the later style of Sultan Husayn’s artists. A *Khamsah* of Jamali, copied in 1465 at Baghdad, owes much to earlier Herat painting, especially in the proportions of the figures, landscape details such as flowering trees silhouetted on a gold sky, and the careful execution of the illustrations. However, the expressive interaction and supple poses of some figures and the inclusion of humorous vignettes all anticipate the work of the atelier of Sultan Husayn.

Unfortunately, Pir Budaq brought about his own untimely end in 1465 by rising up once more against Jahan Shah, whose troops then invaded Baghdad and slew the rebel prince. Within two years Jahan
42 'Ikandar visiting the hermit', from a Khamsah of Nizami. Timurid, Shiraz, mid-15th century. 21 x 12.5 cm. Seeking advice on how to take a fortress near Darband, Ikandar set out at night with an attendant to find a sage who lived in a cave. When he reached the cave, he entered and knelt before the hermit, who had recognised him as the king. Following the sage’s prayers, the door of the besieged fortress opened and Ikandar’s forces took control of it. London, Royal Asiatic Society.

43 'Fariburz comes before Kay Khosrau', from the 'Big-Head Shahnameh', of Firdausi. Turkman, Gilan, 1404. 24.4 x 16.2 cm. Fariburz and Kay Khosrau were rivals for the Iranian throne. To determine who would prevail, King Kay Kavan promised the throne to the one who could storm the enemy fortress of Rahman. Eventually with divine intervention the castle wall collapsed, and Kay Khosrau won the crown.
Shah was himself murdered by his rival Uzun Hasan, and the Aqqoyunlu Turkmans replaced the Qaraqoyunlu as the dominant force in most of Iran. Although there are written accounts of wall-paintings in Uzun Hasan’s palaces at Tabriz, his capital, the only illustrated manuscript to bear his name is one that his son Khalil ordered to be completed and dedicated to him. Nonetheless, fine manuscripts were produced for a variety of other patrons during his reign (1467–78). One such elegant, small manuscript is an Anthology copied in 1468 by the scribe Sharaf al-Din Husayn at Shamakha in the province of Shirvan. Farrukh Yazar, the ruler of Shirvan and presumed patron of the book, recognised Turkman authority, but Shamakha was a wealthy trading post near the Caspian which might well have attracted artists from other Turkman centres. While the orderly poses and groupings of figures in the Shamakha Anthology relate to Timurid painting, their proportions, with large heads resting on slender necks and small bodies, anticipate later Turkman paintings. Furthermore, the spirited palette, billowy fungal clouds and occasional ebullient floral spray look forward to the high Turkman style of the last quarter of the fifteenth century. By the end of the fifteenth century the Turkman style was fully established at Shiraz, where large numbers of manuscripts were produced not for individual patrons but for sale in the marketplace. The quality of most commercial Turkman manuscripts does not match that of books commissioned by rulers and wealthy individuals. Nevertheless, the sheer quantity of illustrated books produced in Shiraz ensured the dissemination of the Turkman style throughout Iran and in Ottoman Turkey and Muslim India as well.

Among the distinctive Turkman illustrated manuscripts of the late fifteenth century is a Shahnāme copied in 1494 for Sultan ‘Ali Mirza of Gilan, another Turkman feudatory in the Caspian region. The nearly 350 miniatures from this manuscript are rendered in two styles, one of which is characterised by figures with excessively large heads. As a result, the manuscript is commonly called the ‘Big Head Shahnāme’. Although ‘Farīrubz comes before Kay Khusrav’ does not include figures with outsized heads, it exhibits the other traits that typify the manuscript: a bright, light palette; robust, large-scale figures, evenly placed tufts of grass, and a blithe disregard of realistic spatial relationships. As one would expect of a special commission, the painting has been rendered with meticulous care and more varied detail than commercial Turkman pages.

The final royal Turkman manuscript, a Khamsheh of Nizami, provides a link not only with Timurid painting and patronage but also with the early years of Safavid painting. A long note in the manuscript states that it was originally produced for the Timurid prince Babur b. Bayazungur (d. 1457). It passed into the hands of the Aqqoyunlu Turkman Khalil, who ordered its continuation for his father Uzun Hasan. Upon Khalil’s death in 1478, his brother, Yaqub Beg, received it, but eventually, still unfinished, it was taken by Yaqub Beg’s arch-enemy, the first Safavid Shah, Isma’il, following his defeat of the Aqqoyunlu. The miniatures from the period of Yaqub Beg reveal a greater affinity with some of those of the Shamakha manuscript than to those of the ‘Big Head Shahnāme’. Though larger and far more complex in composition than the Shamakha Anthology, the Khamsheh includes similar figures with very slender necks. The presence of angels, a harpist, and a gardener who almost does a jig as he works are novel additions to a scene whose antecedents go back to Jalayirid painting (see fig. 24). Compared to the more sober Herat School miniatures of the same period, this painting and its fellow illustrations in the Khamsheh redound with surprising juxtapositions of colour and compositional anomalies that nonetheless combine to produce deeply appealing pictures. One such oddity is the night sky found within the borders but not outside them, as if Khusrav were in a different time zone from Shirin. In fact, at its best, late fifteenth-century
46. On page 10, ‘Khusrau at Shirin’s palace’, from a Khamsah of Nizami. Tabriz, Tabriz, late 15th century. Page 2.9 x 19 cm. The subject of Khusrau before Shirin’s palace was a perennial favourite of Persian painters, for it enabled them to combine architecture with landscape and include a variety of figures. Keir Collection.

47. ‘Iskandar and the Seven Sages’, attributed to Bihzad, from a Khamsah of Nizami. Timurid, Herat, c. 1494-5. Page 24.3 x 16.8 cm. Much of the narrative of the Iskandarnamah concerns the wondrous sights and strange events that occurred in the far-flung places to which Iskandar travelled. Here he confers with the seven sages before setting out across the Western Sea. British Library.
Turkman painting demonstrates an understanding of nature which is as intuitive as Timurid painting of Herat was rational.

Just as Turkman painting flourished in the reign of Ya‘qub Beg (1478–90), so the accession of Sultan Husayn Bayqara to the Timurid throne in 1470 ushered in a brilliant period of painting in Herat. Wisely content to rule the lands between the Caspian and the Oxus, Sultan Husayn, the ultimate successor to Abu Sa‘id, managed to keep his throne for thirty-six years. In the face of mounting Turkman power in the west, continued insurgency on the part of rival Timurids in Transoxiana and the rise of the Uzbek in the east, his ability to maintain a stable rule from Herat ranks as a notable achievement. Despite the constant military and political threats to Sultan Husayn’s rather small realm, he gained the abiding support of the people of Khorasan by stimulating economic prosperity and ensuring the safe passage of traders and other travellers. The calm and well-being of Herat enabled Sultan Husayn to develop his own penchant as a patron of literature and the arts. With his vizier, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nawa’i, Sultan Husayn sponsored the birth of Chaghatai (eastern) Turkish as a literary language, and patronised two of the most important figures in the history of Persian culture, the poet Jami and the artist Bihzad.

The elegance and refinement which characterise Herat paintings in this period reflect the complex and mannered society of Sultan Husayn’s court. At royal gatherings guests were not only seated according to rank but also expected to conform to strict rules of etiquette when discussing fine points of poetry, music or art. Within these strictures there thrived a highly intellectual and literate coterie. The painting of the period gives no hint that the court was in fact declining in political significance, as if the last Timurid ruler and his subjects had purposely turned their backs on the troubled world that lurked outside Khurasan.

By far the most famous and influential painter at the court of Sultan Husayn was Kamal al-Din Bihzad of Herat. An orphan, Bihzad was reared and trained by the artist Mirak Naqqash, who distinguished himself as a painter but also enjoyed weight-lifting and other sports. A single sixteenth-century voice of dissent notwithstanding, Bihzad has been universally recognised as peerless, the ‘pride of the ancients in illumination and outlining, the rarity of the age’ (Thackston, p. 147). He lived to the age of about 75, and had a number of successful students who worked in a style closely related to his. As a result, much discussion has centred on questions of the date and authenticity of works attributed to him. Although he most likely began his career in the early 1470s, the great majority of his work dates from the 1480s and 1490s. Thanks to a Būstan of Sa‘di of 1488–9 in Cairo, with four miniatures signed by, as opposed to attributed to, Bihzad, illustrations in at least seven other manuscripts can be assigned to him.

Rather than investigate Bihzad’s stylistic development, a general study of late Timurid painting must focus on his innovations. While maintaining the rational spatial relationships and meticulous depiction of ornamental detail characteristic of the manuscripts illustrated for Baysunghur, Bihzad humanised the style by giving his figures realistic gestures and telling looks. The painting of ‘Iskandar and the Seven Sages’ from a Khamsah of Nizami of 1494–5 is a case in point. Iskandar, who sits in the centre of the scene, is probably a portrait of Sultan Husayn Bayqara. The sages arrayed to his right and left may also be based on actual people, for each differs markedly from the next. The one at the far left huddles in his shawl as if suffering from circulatory problems whereas the man closest to Iskandar gestures openly with both hands. These men vary not only in age but also in their complexions, which range from ruddy brown to pink and nearly white. In contrast with the staid gathering within the walls, life in its variety carries on outside. A properly burly gatekeeper blocks the entrance to the palace while chatting with two friends. Meanwhile, an encounter of a different sort takes place between a gaily clad soldier and a city dweller holding a teapot. Bihzad’s paintings are consistently enlivened by such vignettes, which add flavour and interest to his scenes even if they do not literally illustrate the narrative. Although certain figurals, such as hunched shoulders and arms held out from the torso, occur regularly in his oeuvre, underlying his work is a gift for variety within the constraints and canons of Persian academic painting; indeed, he relaxed the formality of court art. Yet, as his contemporaries recognised, he contributed a new vision to his school and fundamentally changed the course of Persian painting.

Complex but not confusing, gloriously colourful yet realistic, Bihzad’s work represents for many the high point and even the epitome of the Persian miniature.