The Majālis al-‘Ushshāq: Written in Herat, Copied in Shiraz, Read in İstanbul

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The Majālis al-‘Ushshāq ("Assemblies or meetings of Sufi Lovers") was compiled at the Timurid court of Sultan Ḥusain at Herat. The concluding lines of the book itself say that its composition was commenced in 1503 and was completed in the course of the following year. It starts with an introduction which treats mystic love as typified in the myth of Yusuf and Zulaikha, followed by legendary or imaginary incidents from the lives of seventy-six notable individuals. Its recurring theme is the ecstasy of love, in which to attain ideal love, a person must cross the bridge of material love. Therefore, the "majalis" are mostly romantic accounts of worldly love, first of famous mystics, second, of legendary lovers and third, of royal princes. The last person to be treated is Sultan Ḥusain himself.

This article will explain the connection of this text with the three cities, Herat, Shiraz and İstanbul, demonstrate that the increased

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2 Rieu, Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts, p. 352.
3 Browne mentions that Bihār called it "a miserable production, mostly lies, and insipid and impertinent lies to boot, some of which raise a suspicion of heresy. Thus he [i.e. Gāzārgāhī] attributes carnal loves to many prophets and saints, inventing for each of them a paramount." (Browne, A Literary History of Persia, vol. IV, pp. 439–40.)
production of the Ḥājīl āl-Uṣhshāh at Shiraz effected the illustrative cycles of the Persian classics that were being produced there, and finally discuss the reasons for its popularity within the Ottoman realm.

Determining the author of the work with certainty is somewhat problematical. It is frequently attributed to the Timurid Sultan Ḥusain himself, largely because its preface describes him as its author. Additionally, the sixteenth-century chronicler ʿṢām Mīrzā also ascribes its authorship to Sultan Ḥusain, whom he treats under the “poets” section of his taḡkīrā. Two other contemporary writers, Bābur Mīrzā and Khwāndāmīr, however, say that the author of the work was Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusain Gūzarūḡānī, who was Sulṭān Ḥusain’s intimate companion and saḍr (a religious official). Gūzarūḡānī’s name also presents itself as that of the author throughout the book. He is one of the famous personages treated in the book and has a maqālī devoted to his life. Here, Gūzarūḡānī’s own verses are quoted and have the explanation “by the author” before them. As a result of this particular trait of the book, Storey was convinced that its author was indeed Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusain Gūzarūḡānī. Modern scholarship following Storey mostly accepted his conclusion. Browne, writing before Storey, was not necessarily convinced that the author was Gūzarūḡānī. Even though Browne also knew that Gūzarūḡānī’s verses were assigned to the “author” of the book and that Bābur attributed it to Gūzarūḡānī, Browne himself still attributed the book to Sultan Ḥusain Mīrzā.8

8 Ṣām Mīrzā, Taḥżīl-i Ṣāmī [dated 957 (1549)], ed. V. Dasligiri (Tehran, 1314 Sh. [1935–6]), p. 15. Rieu accepts this attribution (Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts, pp. 351–52).


Storey, Persian Literature, p. 960 and note 1.

Browne says “the great Bābur disputes the authorship of this book, which he criticizes very harshly, and which he declares was really written by Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusain Gūzarūḡānī.” Browne additionally quotes Bābur as saying: “Another piece of folly is that while describing the book in the preface as the work of Sulṭān Ḥusain Mīrzā himself, over every one of his own verses and sometts occurring in the course of the book he [Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusain] puts ‘by the author.’” (A Literary History of Persia, pp. 439–40.)

The Ḥājīl āl-Uṣhshāh appears to have first begun to be systematically illustrated at Shiraz during the second half of the sixteenth-century. The single earlier copy of the text that I have been able to trace is now in Istanbul. It was copied at Herat and is dated 909 (1504), which is the year that the author of the book completed its composition. This manuscript has eighty-two illustrations, which appear to have been somewhat carelessly executed and are difficult to attribute to a center without further study. Some may also date from a later date.

The earliest dated and illustrated Shiraz copy of this text carries the date 959 (1552). There are also a few undated copies which can be assigned to Shiraz and to the 1550s and 60s on stylistic grounds. These are followed by many others, mostly from the 1570s and 1580s.11

9 Topkapı Palace Library H. 1086. The date of completion of the text is also mentioned in an unillustrated eighteenth-century copy in the British Library (Or. 208, dated 1215 [1800]). (Rieu, Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts, pp. 351–53.)


11 An undated Ḥājīl āl-Uṣhshāh (Bibliothèque Nationale Spp. Pers. 775) appears to be slightly earlier than the Oxford copy of 1552 and from Shiraz. Both Robinson and Stichoukine have published it as a Shiraz manuscript from c. 1550 (Robinson, Persian Paintings in the Bodleian Library, p. 122; Ivan Stichoukine, Les Peintures des Manuscrits Safavides de 1502 à 1587 [Paris, 1959], p. 110, cat. no. 122.) Francis Richard, however, has not included it in his recent catalogue of the exhibition of Persian manuscripts from the Bibliothèque Nationale. He thinks that this copy may have been produced in Baghdad ("peut-être réalisé à Bagdad") (Splendeurs Persanes: Manuscrits du XII au XVIIe siècle [Paris, 1997], p. 197.) A second copy which appears to be from the 1550s was recently acquired by a private collector. This manuscript used to be in the Kevoronian collection and was exhibited in the London exhibition of 1951 (Laurence Binyon, James V. S. Wilkinson and Basil Gray, Persian Miniature Painting, including a critical and descriptive catalogue of the miniatures exhibited at Burlington House, January–March 1951 [London and Oxford, 1953], nos. no. 103, plate LXI B.) It has fourteen illustrations now, but the entry in the 1951 catalogue says that it had sixteen illustrations then. A third copy, now in London, appears to be from c. 1560–65 (British Library Or. 11837). (Norah M. Tiley, Miniatures from Persian Manuscripts: A Catalogue and Subject Index of Paintings from Persia, India and Turkey in the British Library and the British Museum [London, 1973], cat. no. 229.)

The illustrative cycles of the extant Shiraz Majalis manuscripts support the hypothesis that it first began to be illustrated in Shiraz around 1550. The copies which are either dated or stylistically attributable to the 1550s show more variations in their illustrations than their counterparts from the 1560s. It appears that while it was being newly produced at Shiraz, there were more variations between the manuscripts, but once its illustrative cycle was formulated, the resemblance among the individual manuscripts increased.

The illustration from the section on the legendary Islamic ruler Sulaiman is a good example of this point. The incident depicted by this scene is Bilqis walking on a glass stream built by one of Sulaiman’s demons. It is from the narrative of Sulaiman’s courtship of Bilqis and is found in other written sources as well, including the Qur’an. In the story, one of Sulaiman’s demon servants tells him that since Bilqis was mothered by a female jinn, she had hairy legs. To prove this the demon constructs a pavilion with a double tiered glass floor and puts fish between the two layers of glass to create the impression of a stream. When Bilqis enters this room, she uncovers her legs in order to wade in the water and thus Sulaiman sees her hairy legs. A depilation was later invented by another demon who constructed a bath for this purpose and made the depilation from the lime encrusted in the bath pipes, so that Sulaiman could have his heart’s desire and wed Bilqis with her plucked legs.

The composition of the scene in the c. 1580 Majalis al-’Ushshāq manuscripts are all closely related to the one from the Istanbul copy illustrated here. It is, however, absent in the Paris copy from c. 1550 and interpreted differently in the Oxford copy of 1552, which suggests that the illustrative cycle of this text was indeed developed during the

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12 Priscilla Soucek, “Solomon’s Throne/Solomon’s Bath: Model or Metaphor?” Ars Orientalis 23 (1993), p. 115; Thomas Arnold, Painting in Islam (Oxford, 1928), p. 108. Arnold points the Qur’anic verse (xxii: 44), which says “It was said to her ‘Enter the palace’; and when she saw it, she thought a lake of water and bared her legs. He said, ‘Lo! it is a palace smoothly paved with glass.’” This was later elaborated by commentators.
that the illustrative cycle of this text was indeed developed during the second half of the sixteenth-century. Another example is the scene of Ādam being adored by angels, which is not found in the copies from the 1550s but is included in the later ones.¹⁵

The second half of the sixteenth-century was a prolific manuscript production period in Safavid Shiraz. None of the substantial numbers of extant Shiraz manuscripts contain a patron’s name, which implies that they were not commissioned by noble patrons for inclusion in their private libraries; instead, they were created in a provincial center for unknown, prospective buyers. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence suggesting that some of the prolific Shiraz production, especially the luxuriously produced examples, were targeted for the consumption of courtly circles.

Inscriptional documentation on extant luxury manuscripts from Shiraz, in the form of ownership notes and seals, confirm that their owners belonged both to the Safavid and Ottoman ruling elites. Furthermore, archival inventories from the Topkapı Palace Museum demonstrate that, in addition to their being included in the Ottoman imperial collection, illustrated and illuminated examples of Persian literary classics were highly valued by influential Ottoman officials.¹⁹

The principal evidence for concluding that luxury Shiraz manuscripts of especially the 1570s and 1580s were targeting the consumption of highly connected individuals, however, comes from the extremely richly conceived manuscripts themselves. Shiraz manuscripts

¹⁵ All the copies of this text which I have seen, and attribute to the 1580s, in the libraries around the world contain this scene. These are: British Library Or. 11837 of c. 1560, fol. 9v; Topkapı Palace Library, E.H. 1513 of c. 1575, fol. 9v; H. 829 of c. 1580, fol. 6v; Bibliothèque Nationale, Spp. Pers. 1150 of 1580, fol. 3v; Spp. Pers. 776 of c. 1580, fol. 11v; and Spp. Pers. 1559, fol. 10v. The last one is illustrated in Arnold, Painting in Islam, pl. XXXIV. The early copies that do not contain this scene are the Paris copy of c. 1550 (Bibliothèque Nationale, Spp. Pers. 775), the Oxford copy of 1552 (Bodleian Library, Out. Add. 24), and the c. 1550 copy which used to be in the former Kevorkian collection but was recently acquired by a private collector (Binyon, Wilkinson, and Gray, Persian Miniature Painting, p. 103, no. 103, plate LXI 91).

began to display a higher degree of richness from about the middle of the 1570s, that reached its zenith in the 1580s when a remarkable number of illustrated manuscripts were made incorporating all the outward trappings of sumptuous court productions. To this end, Shiraz workshops spared no expense in costly materials, the appropriation of the courtly style of painting, of its fashions and its architectural settings. These luxury manuscripts were of extremely large sizes, had lacquer painted bindings, were copied on highly sized gold-flecked paper, had lavish illumination and numerous illustrations. All this indicate that they were purposefully made to resemble royal manuscripts. The imitation of courtly models combined with lavish decoration was meant to enhance the book’s value and establish its status as a “luxury” object.20

Shiraz copies of the Majâlis al-’Ushâbî, either dated or attributable to the 1580s, were created by the same group of artisans who produced the deluxe copies of the Persian classics. This is attested by a painter’s signature found in one of the manuscripts of the Majâlis, in the illustration depicting Bilqis walking on the glass stream.21 The steps leading to Sulaimân’s throne carry the inscription “anâl-i Jalâl” (“the work of Jalâl”). The same signature is found on the steps leading to Sulaimân’s throne in the frontispiece of a deluxe Shiraz manuscript of the Khamsa of Nizîmî from c. 1585 depicting Sulaimân and Bilqis enthroned.22

There is also ample stylistic evidence supporting this conclusion. The lacquer painted binding of one of the Majâlis copies shares the same aesthetic with a second luxury copy of the Khamsa of Nizîmî from c. 1585.23 The same Khamsa copy also contains an illustration of Adam being adored by the angels, a composition that was created for the Majâlis manuscripts.24 There are no other known

21 Topkapî Palace Library, H. 829, fol. 134v.
24 Topkapî Palace Library, B. 146, fol. 14v.
Figure 4: Binding, upper cover. Khamsa of Nizami, c. 1580-85. (Topkapi Palace Library, B. 146)

Figure 5: Adam adored by the angels while the devil watches. Khamsa of Nizami, c. 1580-85. (Topkapi Palace Library, B. 146, fol. 14b)
they provide the viewer with a window into the street life of Shiraz during this period.\textsuperscript{25}

An example depicts an incident from the life of Ḥakīm Šanāṭ, who was enamored of a fine looking butcher boy. The boy asked Ḥakīm Šanāṭ to show his love by giving him five hundred goats.\textsuperscript{26} Ḥakīm Šanāṭ did not have the means to make such a present, but left his much mended shoes with the butcher boy. Soon afterwards, the governor of Khurasan made the mystic a gift of five hundred goats, which he immediately brought to the butcher boy. The illustration in the Oxford copy of 1552 shows Ḥakīm Šanāṭ and the butcher boy in front of the butcher’s shop.\textsuperscript{27} The boy holds a large butcher’s knife while a pair of shoes sit on the ground in front of the shop. The Istanbul copy of c. 1580 illustrates the second stage of the story and shows the bare footed Šanāṭ bringing the 500 goats to the butcher boy in order to reclaim his shoes.\textsuperscript{28}

Majūls copies also contained images which reflected the Safavid court milieu. The Istanbul copy of c. 1580 contains an echo of a contemporary palace setting in the illustration depicting Ayār playing claquoy (polo).\textsuperscript{29} The game takes place in front of a pavilion with musicians on its roof terrace.\textsuperscript{30} The usual place for musical bands were on the roof of entrance pavilions, in the fashion depicted in this painting. Such bands, called nuqārā, were named after the kettle drums which were prominently visible.\textsuperscript{31} They were an inherent part of traditional court


\textsuperscript{26} The word used in the text is gūfand (Karrāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Gāzārgāhī, Majūls al-ʿUshāqī, p. 93), which can mean either a sheep or a goat. I have preferred to use a goat, because the illustrations of this incident in some of the Majūls al-ʿUshāqī manuscripts depict goats.

\textsuperscript{27} Bodleian Library, Ous. Add. 24, fol. 44v. Robinson, Persian Paintings in the Bodleian Library, pl. XIV, cat. no. 763.

\textsuperscript{28} Topkapi Palace Library, H. 829, fol. 50v. This composition is repeated in two other c. 1580 copies of the work: Bibliothèque Nationale, Spp. Pers. 776, fol. 84v; and Topkapi Palace Library, E.H. 1513, fol. 64v.

\textsuperscript{29} Topkapi Palace Library, H. 829, fol. 166r.

\textsuperscript{30} In Shiraz polo scenes, it is far more usual to find just the players depicted in a field (Sichovitsa, Les Peintures des Manuscrits Safavids, pl. LXXII). Other Shiraz polo depictions exist, however, which also show the entrance pavilion of a nobleman’s residence from this period. An example is found in a copy of the Divān of Ḫūṭ (Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms.ībīsī 207, fol. 177v), reproduced by Richard, Splendeurs Persanes, p. 200, cat. no. 140.

ceremonies. The Isfahan maidān had a naqṣāra-khāna at its northern end. Both Chardin and Thevenot describe the playing of drums from the top of the balconies in the Isfahan bazaar. 27 According to Lambrton there was a high tower in Yazd known as the naqṣāra-khāna and “each provincial leader … probably had a naqṣāra-khāna in his residence.” 28 The Safavid historian Junābād also describes mansions built by the Safavid elite during the period 1596–1611, and notes that each had an entrance pavilion: “at the entrance of each park, they built lofty structures of brick and stucco, the walls and roofs of which were faced with colored tile work.” 29

The combination of a pavilion with a polo field is also a common feature in sixteenth-century city planning. The primary example of such a use can be found in the Maidān-i Shāh (royal square), adjacent to the palace complex of ʿAbbās I, which functioned as an extension of the palace grounds and was used for a variety of purposes including sports. 30 The combination of an entrance pavilion overlooking a maidān in royal palaces was clearly imitated by the elite. Such a maidān, which was provided with polo posts, was appended to the residence of Imām ʿQūf Kháñ, the governor of Shiraz (1616–1632). 31 It was sketched by Engelbert Kaempfer, who was attached as a doctor and secretary to the Embassy of the Swedish King Charles XI to the Persian court of Shah Sulaimān (1684–88). 32 Although the maidān in front of Imām ʿQūf Kháñ’s garden dates from a later period than the Istanbul Majālis of c. 1580, similarly positioned maidāns existed as early as the Aq Ḥūṣnī period. The Ottoman painter Mattrakçı Nasuh may have been the first to


31 According to Lawrence Lockhart, “Imām ʿQūf Kháñ built a palace in the maidān and walls around the city and planted cypress trees on both sides of the Isfahan road in imitation of the Cūhār Bāgh of Isfahan.” (Persian Cities [London, 1960], p. 46.)

depict a polo field adjacent to a palace in his view of Tabriz, which shows a māḏānī in front of the palace of Āq Quyunlū ruler Uzun Hasan (1466-78).38

The Majālis painting was therefore reproducing another type of an urban image inspired by the contemporary built environment, which was not the bazaar. Whether this type of image was also developed for this particular text or not is difficult to say. It appears, however, that this was a manifestation of a particular tendency in Shiraz manuscripts of this period. Other local locations also occasionally appeared in Shiraz illustrations from the second half of the sixteenth-century.39

Once it was developed, the Majālis illustrative cycle became an important source for scenes from daily urban life which then appeared in the copies of the Persian classics as well. One unusual example is a tavern scene first used in a Majālis copy,40 but was then emulated in two c. 1585 Istanbul copies of the Khames of Nizāmī.41 The Majālis composition illustrates the biography of Sūfī Yaʿqūb Āq Quyunlū in the Paris copy from c. 1580, where the author talks about taverns, drunkenness, love, jealousy, tears and the beloved in a general fashion.

The two Istanbul Khamses from c. 1585 both contain a tavern scene in the section in Makhzan al-Asrār which are more elaborate versions of the smaller Majālis al-ʿUshshāq illustration with many of the same features. Especially interesting is a group of four figures, found in all three scenes—both the Paris Majālis and the Istanbul Khamses—where a jealous lover tries to stab the person who is embracing a young

39 For example the grave of the famous Shiraz author Sâdī and a subterranean pool next to his grave were systematically reproduced as double folio frontispieces or finials in Shiraz manuscripts of his works from the second half of the sixteenth-century. For a detailed discussion of these images please refer to Lake Ullac, “The Grave of Sâdī Shirâz as depicted in Sixteenth Century Shiraz Copies of his Works,” Atpoallah Koran ıcin Yändar/Expositions in Honour of Atpoallah Koran, ed. Ç. Kafescioğlu and L. Thys-Scneceak (Istanbul, 1999), pp. 333-339.
40 Bibliothèque Nationale, Spp. Pers. 776, fol. 322r. A second tavern scene is also found in the c. 1580 copy of the Majālis al-ʿUshshāq in the Raza Library at Rampur, India. There, it illustrates the episode from the life of the mystic Ahmad-i Jām. (Schmitz, Moghal and Persian Paintings in the Raza Library, Rampur, catalogue no. IV.21, fol. 130.)
41 Topkapı Palace Library, A. 3559, fol. 26v and B. 146, fol. 23r. These illustrations were also reproduced by Giner Inal, “Topkapı Sarayı Müzesindeki iki Osmanlı Yüzey Hazinesinin Manşetleri,” Arkeologî-Sanat Tarihi Dergisi 1 (1982), figs. 17 and 18.
boy, obviously the object of his desire, while a fourth person holds his upraised arm to stop this act. In the 1580s, tavern scenes were also included in copies of the works of Hafiz, a poet who had a predilection for referring to taverns in his poetry. An example is found in an Istanbul copy of his Divan dated 989 (1581).\textsuperscript{62}

Another aspect of daily urban life is seen in the illustrations which show mystics preaching in mosques. Two such examples are found in the Oxford Majalis manuscript of 1552 which show Rūzbihān Baṣīl and Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī preaching in Shiraz and Khwarazm respectively.\textsuperscript{63} Women are conspicuously visible in both of these illustrations. The crowd of women sitting in a section of the mosque listening to the preacher may reflect a long-standing Shiraz custom. Ibn Bāṭṭa writes: “The people of Shiraz are pious and upright, especially the women, who have a strange custom. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday they meet in the principal mosque to listen to the preacher, one or two thousand of them, carrying fans with which they fan themselves on account of the great heat. I have never seen in any land so great an assembly of women.”\textsuperscript{64} Although Ibn Bāṭṭa had visited Shiraz more than two-hundred years before these illustrations were executed, these paintings in Shiraz manuscripts, in which women are depicted listening to sermons in mosques, seem to indicate that this custom continued into the sixteenth-century.\textsuperscript{65} Illustrators of the Majalis al-Usbūhāq manuscripts incorporated this theme into their images, perhaps because they were developing illustrations for a new text and were drawing upon local customs during this process.

A similar illustration of women listening to a sermon in a mosque is also found in a copy of the Hafiz‘ Avarang of Jāmi‘ from c. 1575, now in Istanbul.\textsuperscript{66} It forms one half of a double folio illustration. The incident

\textsuperscript{62} Topkapı Palace Library, H. 1014, fol. 168v. The group of four people where a jealous lover tries to stab the person who is embracing his beloved is repeated in this image as well.

\textsuperscript{63} Oxford Bodleian Library, Orb. Add. 24, fols. 54r and 55v. Stechoukine, Les Peintures des Manuscrits Safavides, pl. XXXVIII(b); Arnold, Painting in Islam, pl. LXII(a).


\textsuperscript{65} Similar scenes are also found in four copies of the Kulliyat of Sa'di: British Library, Add. 24944, dated 974–977 (1566–68), fol. 67v; and Add. 5601 from c. 1570, fols. 33v and 34v; Topkapı Palace Library, H. 740; from c. 1570–75, fol. 133v; and National Library of Russia, Don 362, dated 978 (1579–80), fol. 235v. (The last one is reproduced by Mukaddima Asrafi, Persian-Tajik Poetry in XIV-XVII Centuries Miniatures from USSR Collections (1974), p. 74, fig. 59.)

\textsuperscript{66} Topkapı Palace Library, H. 751, fol. 21v.
Figure 10: A brothel scene. *Haft Aurang* of Jāmi', c. 1575, copied by Hidayat Allīh al-kāhib al-Shirāzī. (Topkapı Palace Library, H. 751, fol. 22r)

Figure 11: Men and women listening to a sermon in a mosque where the preacher asks the congregation to turn away from evil places and come back to God. *Haft Aurang* of Jāmi', c. 1575, copied by Hidayat Allīh al-kāhib al-Shirāzī. (Topkapı Palace Library, H. 751, fol. 21v)
that these pages illustrate is of a preacher who asks the congregation to turn away from evil places and come back to God. Opposite the illustration of the congregation listening to this sermon, is a graphic brothel scene representing the evil place (fol. 22r). Although brothel scenes are not common, they are occasionally found in Shiraz manuscripts.47

Figure 12

Bazaar scenes were also incorporated into the illustrative cycles of the luxury manuscripts of the Khamsa of Nizāmī. An example is an illustration depicting a Magribī at the jewelers market.48 Here, the artist used the formula which had been developed in the Majālis al-Ushshāq illustrations to represent a commercial establishment, but put several of these simple units next to one another to achieve a larger and more complicated representation. One such scene is found in the Istanbul Majālis copy from c. 1580 depicting ‘Ain al-Qazat Hamadānī in front of a goldsmith’s establishment.49 The larger Khamsa composition has three shops and a festive scene in front of them with diverse street characters. There is a group of musicians, a buffoon-like figure, and some children playing with swords and shields.

Shiraz representations of shops also appear to have been inspired by the actual physical form of the contemporary local bazaars. Clifford Geertz describes the layouts of small shops in the Moroccan bazaar (ṣūq), where the “seating pattern” of each trader was that he would have “a small cubicle ... where he squats with his goods about him as market goes stream in front of him.”50 Geertz also provides a schematic drawing of such arrangements which closely resemble the depiction of shops from the Majālis manuscripts.51

Figure 13

Once echoes of urban life started permeating Shiraz manuscripts, largely because of the Majālis illustrations, diverse scenes were developed for other texts in which urban activities were represented. A composition depicting the arrival of a Chinese princess in Iran from a luxury copy of the Shāhnāma of Firdausī dated 993 (1585) creates a

47 Examples are found in copies of the Kitāb al-Sa’d, Topkapi Palace Library, H. 926, dated 939 (1532), fol. 444r as an illustration to a poem of Sa’dī which was on lovemaking techniques and in British Library, Add. 24944, dated 974-977 (1566-68), fol. 333r.
48 Topkapi Palace Library, A. 3559, fol. 294r.
49 Topkapi Palace Library, H. 829, fol. 51v.
50 Clifford Geertz, Hildred Geertz, and Lawrence Rosen, Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society: Three essays in Cultural Analysis (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 177-80.
51 Geertz, et al., Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society, p. 180, fig. 5.
crossed swords and shields. The shopkeepers display castanets and porcelain or metal ware, while the inhabitants of the second story dwellings watch the procession from their balconies above the shops.

This illustration was directly based on the contemporary custom of decorating the bazaars to celebrate the arrival of a ruler in a city. Sixteenth-century travelers remark on this custom. Two accounts come from Italian travelers: The first, Angiolello, wrote: “Ismail” returned to Tauris, where, on his arrival, the bazaars were richly decked out, a triumphal procession taking place in the city and rich banquets being held, according to custom.” A second anonymous merchant also remarked that for Ismail’s return great preparations were made, and all the shops were decorated for the festival and triumphs. He additionally said that the shah “came every day to the ma‘ādi ol to divert himself with archery with his lords who received many gifts from him. And there was dancing, music and songs in honor of the great Sultan Ismael when he was present in the ma‘ādi ol.” In this illustration, we see a similarly festive atmosphere created by the existence of jesters, children, and musicians in the street.

A fitting companion for this illustration is found in another luxury copy of the same text, also datable to the mid-1580’s, depicting the reunion of Kai Ka‘us and Kai Khursad. This painting successfully creates an urban festive atmosphere just outside what appears to be a city gate. The general crowd, clown like creatures, people in animal costumes, dancers, musicians, street vendors and large flower gardens made up of sugar and wax, contribute largely to this feeling.

Crowded scenes with echoes of contemporary and urban way of life became one of the leitmotifs of Shiraz luxury production in the 1580’s.

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52 Topkapı Palace Library, R. 1548, fol. 460v. For former reproductions of the scene please see Günter Inal, “Realistic Motifs and the Expression of the Drama in Sixodd Miniatures,” Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı 7 (1976-77), fig. 7; and idem., Türk Minyatür Sanatı (Başlangıçdan Osmanlılara Kadar) (Ankara, 1995), fig. 106.
54 Anonymous, A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia, p. 206.
55 Topkapı Palace Library, H. 1475, fol. 142v. For earlier reproductions of the scene see, Günter Inal, “The Influence of the Kazvin Style on Ottoman Miniature Painting,” in Fifth International Congress of Turkish Art, ed. by G. Fehér (Budapest, 1978), fig. 2; idem, “Realistic Motifs,” fig. 9; and idem, Türk Minyatür Sanatı, fig. 104.
56 For Ottoman examples of the same type of gardens called “nobiil,” see Metin And, Osmanlı Şehirlerinde Türk Sanatları (Ankara, 1985), pp. 207–37; pls. 118–125.
Figure 14: Bahram returns to Iran with the Khagān's daughter. Shāhnāma of Firdausī, 993/1585, copied by Nizāmī b. Amīr Jalāl Kašī, illuminated by Qāsim 'All Shīrūzī. (Topkapı Palace Library, R. 1548, fol. 460v)

Figure 15: Kai Kūlūn receives Kai Khurṣūn. Shāhnāma of Firdausī, c. 1580–85. (Topkapı Palace Library, H. 1475, fol. 142v)
This appears to have been a direct result of the development of the new illustrative cycle created for the Majalis al-‘Ushshāq manuscripts.

My research indicates that the Majalis al-‘Ushshāq was a popular text for the Ottoman as well as the Safavid literati. This is suggested both by the inscriptive evidence from the extant Majalis manuscripts in Istanbul and archival documents from the Topkapı Palace. The sultan’s library had multiple illustrated copies of the text, three of which are still part of the Topkapı collection. Additionally, many of the extant Majalis manuscripts appear to have formerly belonged to Ottoman owners since they carry later Ottoman seals.

Archival inventories from the Topkapı Palace testify that Ottoman bureaucrats’ libraries often included the Majalis al-‘Ushshāq. The book lists of private collections found in the Topkapı palace archives show that the owners of this text were also collecting Persian literary classics. All the book lists that include the Majalis al-‘Ushshāq contain multiple copies of what appear to be Persian luxury manuscripts. I say luxury manuscripts, because the lists contain additional information written next to many of the Persian titles, consisting of varying descriptive phrases that all refer to an outstanding quality of the individual book. Thus they sometimes describe a luxurious feature of the book, such as the terms illustrated (musavver), illuminated (müzehhbeş) or just richly decorated (murassage). In other cases, they refer to the penmanship of the manuscript by saying “copied by a master scribe” (be hatt-i ıştəd), or merely to its size by saying “a large volume” (cild-i kebir).

Library inventories of Ottoman bureaucrats found in the Topkapı Palace Archives are often included in the complete registers of their estates drawn up for the imperial confiscation process. For example, the confiscation register (muhallefat) of Rumeli Beylerbeyi Mehmed Paşa’s estate dated 997 (1589) lists an illustrated and illuminated (musavver ve müzehhbeş) copy of the Majalis al-‘Ushshāq among the books in his library. He had been one of the “royal conversation companions” (musahib) during the reign of Murad III (r. 1574–1595), but was killed by rebelling janissaries in the same year that the confiscation register of his estate was drawn up.

There are also anonymous archival inventories of thousands of books which came to the royal treasury from unidentified sources. One of the most informative of these is entitled “precious and illustrated books” (kütāb-i nefise ve musavvervan). One third of the books on this list are noted as illustrated (musavver). Most of the illustrated books are the works of the classical Persian authors, such as Firdaüş, Nizām, Jāmī, etc. This list also contains copies of the Majalis al-‘Ushshāq. Other untitled book lists include Majalis copies as well as those of the Persian classics.

In the sixteenth-century, the inflexion of Persian manuscripts into Ottoman territories appears to have intensified during the two main periods of active conflict between the Ottomans and the Safavids. These are the eastern campaigns of Süleyman the Magnificent, between 1534 and 1555, and the twelve year Ottoman-Safavid war between 1578 and 1590, during the reign of Murad III.

The decade of the 1580s, which is covered by the twelve-year war, is also the period when most of the extant Shiraz copies of the Majalis al-‘Ushshāq were produced. Ottoman demand for this particular text may have been one of the reasons for the increased production of its

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58 The e. 1550 Majalis which was formerly in the Kervansar collection, as well as the Paris copies (Bibliothèque Nationale, Spp. Pers. 1150 of 1580, Spp. Pers. 776, and Spp. Pers. 1559) have Ottoman seals in their flyleaves indicating former Ottoman owners. The last one appears to have been acquired first by an Ottoman and then by an Indian owner. Its binding was tampered with, possibly both in the Ottoman and later in the Indian collections to which it belonged. Its doublures were first used as the outer covers, either in the Ottoman collection or later in the Indian one; they were then lacquer painted in India and were decorated by some lacquer painted flowers, in an Indian style. In the illustration on fol. 2v of “Adam adored by the angels” (illustrated in Arnold, Painting in Islam, pl. XXXIV), the figure of the devil was wiped out and a figure of the ruler of Golconda, Navab Asafir Afzad, kneeling on a Indian prayer rug, was painted in. The signature of the scribe Ahmad ‘Ali indicating that the manuscript was penned by him for the library of Navab Asafir Afzad (Stéchonike, Les Peintures des Manuscrits Safavī, ms. no. 146, p. 119) was also added to the manuscript during its Indian ownership. Its Indian owner was presumably the Navab Asafir Afzad, who was the ruler of Golconda. (I would like to thank Mr. Francis Richard, Curator of Oriental Manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, for the information on the ruler of Golconda.) The manuscript retains its Shiraz-style double folio illuminated title page on fol. 1v and 2r, and some illustrations in their original condition in a Shiraz style. (Stéchonike, Les Peintures des Manuscrits Safavī, fig. LXXVII.)
60 Topkapı Palace Archives, D. 4057.
63 For example, Topkapı Palace Archives, E. 288572.
64 Bekir Kânumenk, Osmanlı-İran Sıyasî Münasebetleri (1578–1612) (Istanbul, 1962), first section (passim).
illustrated copies at Shiraz during this decade. Although the popularity of this text for Ottoman book collectors is at first puzzling, this was probably due to the common belief that the author of the book was the Timurid sultan Husain Mirza.

Ottoman written sources contain frequent references indicating the Ottoman idealization of Husain Mirza, his court, and especially his companion, Mir ‘Ali Shir Navâlî. For example, Shihâb ‘Alî (d. 1548–49), who was the author of the first Ottoman tezkire, says in the introduction of his work, Heşt Bihişt (completed in 1538–39), that in writing his own book, he was inspired by Navâlî’s Majalis al-Nafisâ’îs. In the same tezkire, Shihâb ‘Alî never fails to note a Persian connection in his entries. Thus, we always know if one of the poets he writes about went to Persia. He refers to Persia as “Acem,” which according to Göntü Tekin often stands for Herat, rather than any other Persian center in Shihâb ‘Alî’s tezkire, since such remarks are often followed by accounts of meetings between the Ottoman poet in question and Navâlî or Jâmî. ‘Ali Shir Navâlî’s influence reached its apogee in the Ottoman realm, during his lifetime. Ottoman Sultans sent him gifts, and Ottoman poets started writing nazîres (poetic parallels) to his poems. The celebrated Ottoman poet Ahmed Paşa, who was Navâlî’s contemporary, was among them. Ahmed Paşa, had been both a teacher and a viceroy to Fatih Sultan Mehmed and later, the Bursa Sancakbey of Bayezid II. It is said that he used to wait anxiously for Navâlî’s latest ghazals, which used to reach Bursa by caravans. Writing nazîres to Navâlî’s ghazals remained fashionable among the Ottoman poets up to the nineteenth-century, while even the greatest and proudest among them, such as Nedin and Sheyh Gâlib followed that fashion. Some even wrote nazîres in Chaghatali Turkish. Seydi Ali Reis, a sixteenth-century Ottoman poet, also wrote poems with the penname Kâtibi in Chaghatai Turkish under the influence of Navâlî. He refers to Navâlî in his poetry and proudly mentions in one of his poems that he was called Mir ‘Ali Shir Sânî (the second) by Humayun during his trip to India. According to Fuat Köprüülü, Chaghatai dictionaries and grammar books were written specifically to aid the Ottoman readers in understanding Navâlî’s writings. In his catalogue, Karatay wrote that one such dictionary, now in the Topkapı Library, especially included words used by Navâlî in his works. The former Ottoman royal collection includes multiple copies of Navâlî’s works, most of which are illustrated. Furthermore, during the 1530s, three volumes of his works, two Divâns and one Khamsa were also copied and illustrated at the Ottoman palace workshop at Istanbul.

Many indications of the Ottoman admiration of Sultan Husain’s court at Herat are also found in Ottoman literary writings. The poet Fuzûlî (d. 1556) completed his mesnevi, Leyla ve Mecnun, in 1533–36 at Baghdad, about a year after the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman conquered the city in 1534. Fuzûlî dedicated this work, which he composed in Turkish, to the Ottoman governor of Baghdad. In the section where he talks about the great poets of ancient times who enjoyed high patronage, he mentions Çağatayca Şiirleri II, Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyat Dergisi XIX (1971), pp. 171–184.


3 “Çağataysci’dan Osmanlıca’ya lagat ama bihlâsça Nava’î’in eserlerinden toplamın kilcalerini itibara əder. (Fehmi E. Karatay, Topkâpi Sarayî Masâsî Zikr-ı Hanımsâsî ve Türkî Yezmalar Kataloqü [Istanbul, 1961], no. 2103 [Topkâpi Palace Library, A. 2773].)”

4 Books from the former Ottoman royal library are found in three catalogued collections in Istanbul: Topkapı Palace Library, Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, and Istanbul University Library, Karatay, “Türkçe Yezmalar Katalogni, nos. 2289–2300, pp. 102–7; Kemal Çağ, Türk ve İslam Mecmuasî Masalî Bir Tarihçesi [Catalogue of the Illustrated Manuscripts at Istanbul’s Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum] (Istanbul, 1961), no. 2; Fehmi Edhem and Ivan Stouchkine, Les Manuscrits Orientaux Illustrés de la Bibliothèque de l’Université de Stamboul (Paris, 1933), pp. 35–37 and 43–44, nos. XXVII, XXIX, and XXXV, pl. XIV.)

Hussein Mürzə as Navət’s patron and refers to him as the “King of Kings.” Fifty years later, Kınahzade referred to Fuzüll, about whom he wrote in his Tezkire, as having written poems in the style of ‘Ali Shîr Navâ.”

A similar theme is taken up by the Ottoman historian Mustafa Âli in the second half of the sixteenth-century. He made constant references to the courts of both Fatih Sultan Mehmed and Sultan Hussein Mürzə as the paradigmatic models of statecraft and literary patronage. He considered himself the Ottoman equivalent of Firdaüşi and Jâmi, and asked the Ottoman sultan of his time to allow him to be what the poet and vizier Ahmed Paşa had been to the Ottoman Fatih Sultan Mehmed, or Mîr ‘Ali Shîr to the Timurid Sultan Husain Mürzə.

In the seventeenth-century, Evliya Çelebi shows his generation’s veneration for the Timurid Sultan Husain in his Seyahatnâme. In one instance, he groups Sultan Husain together with the legendary rulers Jamshid and Iskandar as paradigms of virtue. He also talks about Ottoman music festivals called Hüseyin Baykara fasılari, and refers to special Ottoman gatherings called Hüseyin Baykara mecîlisleri or Hüseyin Baykara sölhbetleri.

For the purposes of this paper, the most important allusions to Sultan Husain’s court at Herat are those made by the Ottoman historian Mustafa Âli, who saw it as the perfect political and cultural environment. Mustafa Âli’s life and writing covers the decades of the 1580s, precisely the years when most of the extant copies of the Majalis al-‘Ushšahî were being produced at Shiraz.

In addition to its celebrated author, the Majalis al-‘Ushšahî, contained the biographies of princes from former Turkish dynasties, which represented the Ottoman cultural background. The princes whose biographies were included in the Majalis were the Safi rulers Sultan Mas‘ud and Sultan Sanjar, Timur’s grandsons İbrahim and Bâṣâingshar b. Shâhrukh, the Qârâ Quyunlû prince Pir Bâdî b. Jahâshîsh b. Qârâ Yûsuf, the Aq Quyunlû ruler Ya‘qûb b. Uzun Hasan and finally the venerated ‘Ali Shîr Navât and Husain Mürzə. Therefore the text itself contained valuable information about the notable personalities idealized by the Ottomans, whose ultimate goal was to create a level of civilization comparable to that of the former Turkish dynasty, the Timurids. Thus the work would be a desirable addition to any Ottoman library, because of its content as well.

Ottoman collectors who desired to own a copy of the Majalis al-‘Ushšahî also wanted to collect other works stemming from the late fifteenth-century Timurid court at Herat. The collections which contained copies of the Majalis al-‘Ushšahî also included ‘Ali Shîr Navât’s works and Husain Mürzə’s own Divân. This is true for the former royal collection in Istanbul, and is also indicated by archival documentation. For example, the cataloging instruction of the estate of Beylerbeyi Mehmed Paşa dated 997 (1589), which includes a copy of the Majalis al-‘Ushšahî, also contains both a copy of the Majalis al-Nafizî of ‘Ali Shîr Navât and a copy of his Divân.

81Tekin writes about the Ottoman ideal of competing with the Timurid achievements. (“Fatih Devri Edebiyatı,” p. 180.)
83Topkapı Palace Archives, D. 4057.
In conclusion, it is possible to infer a chain of events, which show the close ties between the Ottoman and Persian realms during the second half of the sixteenth-century. The Ottoman admiration for the Timurid court of Sultan Ḥusain led to the Ottoman book collectors desire for including copies of the Majālis al-USHSHĀQ, a text which they believed was composed by Sultan Ḥusain himself, in their libraries. Since the Ottoman demand was met by Shiraz copies of the text, it must have been part of the reason for the increased production of this text in Shiraz. Deluxe copies of the Majālis had up to eighty-five illustrations, many of which illustrated incidents that took place in urban venues. Thus, a new genre of painting which contained urban scenes developed in Shiraz. These compositions were then used in copies of the Persian classics affecting their illustrative cycles as well.64

An Accomplished Artist of the Book at the Ottoman Court: 1515–1530

Ayşin Yoltar-Yıldırım

The Topkapi Hamse of Ali Şir Nevai (Topkapi Palace Library, H.802) is known to have been copied in 937/1530–31 by Pir Ahmed bin Iskender according to its colophon.1 It has been suggested to have been produced in the Ottoman realm, most likely at the Ottoman court.2 The Topkapi Hamse is an important manuscript in the study of Ottoman arts of the book since it is one of the few dated manuscripts attributed to the court production of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520–66). It is copied in nastālīq script and has several finely illuminated pages and miniatures. Above all, it has an exquisitely decorated lacquer binding which has been the focus of recent scholarship. The binding is a good example of the “suz” style that is thought to have been created by Şah Kulu in the Ottoman palace workshops and disseminated to other media.3 On the other hand, the miniatures of the manuscript are found to be reflective of the early Ottoman style with a peculiar stylistic eclecticism that has led

64 I have presented a shorter version of this paper for the 11th International Congress of Turkish Arts at Utrecht in September 1999. I have also sent this version to be published in an internet site not yet specified by the organizers of the conference. Paris of the paper are taken from my doctoral thesis, “Arts of the Book in Sixteenth-Century Shiraz” (New York University, 2000). The system of transliteration follows that of the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES). For Turkish words I have chosen to use the modern Turkish spelling. This brings a problem, however, since some words and many names are identical in Persian and Turkish. When I use such a word in a Persian frame, I use the transliterated version. If, however, I use it in a Turkish context, then I use its modern Turkish spelling. An example for such usage is the spelling taşkura for referring to Şams b. Mihrāb’s work, Taşkura-i Şamsi, and the spelling taşkura when referring to Şahi Ney’s work Hez̄i Rihâş.

3 Çağman, Soliman le Magnifique et son temps, p. 201.