The Turkman Commercial Style of Painting: Origins and Developments Reconsidered

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The so-called ‘Turkman Commercial Style’ in the classification of Persian painting generally refers to a particular style from late fifteenth century Iran that applies to miniature painting. The term was coined by B.W. Robinson in the 1950s in order to distinguish it from a refined style associated with the contemporary Timurid and Turkman courts. The category was labelled ‘Turkman’ since the style largely prevailed during the second half of the fifteenth century in western Iran where Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu tribes, known as Turkmans, dominated.

In terms of its stylistic origins and evolutionary process, north-western Iran - particularly Tabriz - has generally been suggested as a possible origin. Here the style likely developed into the form of what we now call Turkman Commercial Style under the patronage of Qara Qoyunlu Turkman, which later introduced the style into Shiraz and other centres during the course of territory expansion. A basis for this idea can be seen in the earliest copy of Mihr and Mushtarī, dating from 1419, in which miniatures exemplify the early phase of the style largely based on elements descending from the Jalayirid painting, so that the manuscript has been roughly attributed to Tabriz.

Whether this attribution is plausible is one of the topics that this paper deals with. By looking at a colophon and a scribe’s career, as the other authors have already pointed out, there can be little to suggest the manuscript’s link to Tabriz, whereas we can notice elements related to the Timurid and their realm. The paintings themselves also demonstrate a close affinity with Shiraz and Yazd art. Several works made during the 1440s within the Shiraz-influenced milieu also show an early phase of the style, which implies the possibility that the style originated and developed at places other than Tabriz.

**Keywords:** Persian painting, Turkman art, Timurid art, Qara Qoyunlu, Aq Qoyunlu

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I. Introduction
The concept of Turkman painting was created by Western scholars during the mid-twentieth century who sought to distinguish a particular painting manner that prospered in fifteenth century Iran from the art of contemporary Timurid painting.\(^1\) The first efforts to identify Turkman painting occurred when the periodization of Persian miniature painting was first attempted in the 1930s. Ernst Kühnel classified the painting of each period by referencing published examples from major collections of Persian illustrated manuscripts. In his article in Pope and Ackerman’s *Survey of Persian Art* (1938-39), Kühnel referred to the Qara Qoyunlu Turkman and their painting in the division of the ‘Tabriz School,’ and he regarded it as a continuation of the styles established under their predecessors, especially the Jalayirids.\(^2\)

The term became fixed following the 1954 publication of Basil W. Robinson’s work, which provided stylistic criteria by which to identify what he called ‘Turkman Commercial’ and outlined its development up to 1505.\(^3\) Robinson continued to expound the Turkman Commercial Style in his publications and the term was extensively accepted by other authors in the field who generally consented to Robinson’s view. This view was further cleared up in his contributions to *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia: 14th – 16th Centuries* (1979) and *Art et société dans le monde iranien* (1982), and in his publication *Fifteenth-Century Persian Painting: Problems and issues* (1991). Although the series of Robinson’s publications truly had great consequences for those devoted to Persian painting, the study of Turkman Commercial Style itself eventually became quiescent and focused only on individual manuscripts rather than pondering the development of the style more generally.\(^4\) Consequently, a discussion of this style of painting is long overdue and the definition may have to be redefined as a number of examples and information relevant to the style have received scholarly attention over the last two or three decades, which were mainly unknown or unnoticed by Robinson.

The essay that follows deals with a topic that doubts the generally accepted idea of stylistic evolution. It is probably a subject more sensitive and subtle than any other on the study of the style, in which there is a pronounced arduousness to connect paintings of the first half of the fifteenth century with the Qara Qoyunlu Turkman as no certain established patronage has been connected with this tribe before the time of Pîr Bûdāq, the Qara Qoyunlu prince and governor of Shiraz. Nevertheless, considering descriptions in Robinson’s publication that touched on problems of the origins and early development of the Turkman Commercial Style, the idea that “the style originated in north-western Iran
and was introduced among the already established styles by the Turkman themselves\textsuperscript{5} has been commonly understood by scholars in the field although the idea still neglects to provide specific comparisons and explanations of examples to support it. This can therefore provide sufficient reason to review the idea of its stylistic evolution with a close analysis of paintings executed prior to the time of Turkman occupation of Shiraz, and to advance a new view to understand the origins and developments of the Turkman Commercial Style.

II. Turkman Commercial Style of Painting

1. Historical Background

Qara Qoyunlu Turkman was the nomadic tribe of a confederation, who settled in Armenia, Upper Mesopotamia, and Anatolia in Seljuq times, and moved gradually eastwards into north-west Persia in the Mongol period. In the late fourteenth century they established themselves in the region of Lake Van as dependents of the Jalayirid rulers, and became a rising political force. In 1390, Qarā Yūsuf, the leader of Qara Qoyunlu, took possession of Tabriz, the capital of the eastern half of the Jalayirid dominions, and declared himself independent ruler. Although once he had to flee before the conquering Timūr, he occupied Tabriz again shortly after the death of Timūr. Qarā Yūsuf then defeated Mirānshāh, son of Timūr, and expanded his territory to most of Azerbaijan and Mesopotamia.

Qara Qoyunlu’s interest in the expansion of territory made them further invade the Timurid empire. In 1420, Shāh Rukh, another son of Timūr and ruler of the Timurid empire, and his son Bāysunghur decided to reoccupy the territories wrested by Qarā Yūsuf. But before they arrive, Qarā Yūsuf died, which gave an extremely favourable opportunity since Qara Qoyunlu fell into confusion by lacking their leader. Ispand and Iskandar, Qarā Yūsuf’s sons, were attacked by Shāh Rukh, and were repeatedly defeated. However, Jahānshāh, another son of Qarā Yūsuf, deserted his brother Iskandar, and went to the Timurid camp. In 1436 Shāh Rukh conferred on Jahānshāh the governorship of Azerbaijan. Jahānshāh then defeated Iskandar and succeeded to the throne of Qara Qoyunlu.

When Shāh Rukh died in 1447, Jahānshāh and his son Pir Būdāq began to encroach upon Timurid territories, and in 1452, they overran Iraq-i Ajam and Fars, and took possession. Pir Būdāq was appointed as governor of Shiraz, but he gradually began to establish his independence at Shiraz. In 1460, Jahānshāh transferred Pir Būdāq to the governorship of Baghdad, and in 1465 he finally killed Pir Būdāq.
In 1467, Jahānshāh decided to extend his territory further to Diyarbakir, realm of the rival dynasty Aq Qoyunlu which was another nomadic tribe of a confederation, who settled around Diyarbakir. Jahānshāh attacked Uzun Hasan, the leader of Aq Qoyunlu, but he was surprised and slain by Uzun Hasan. Aq Qoyunlu then annexed the territory of Qara Qoyunlu including Azerbaijan, Iraq-i Ajam, Iraq-i Arab, and Fars, and consequently Uzun Hasan was in a position to become ruler of western Iran.

Uzun Hasan died in 1478, and was succeeded by his son Sultān Khalil, Turkman governor of Shiraz. Six month later, however, he was killed by forces supporting his younger brother, Ya‘qūb who came to the throne at the age of sixteen, under his mother’s control. Consequently this young ruler showed more interest in cultural pursuits and luxurious living. The Aq Qoyunlu dynasty finally ended a decade after the Ya‘qūb’s death in 1490, when Isma‘il of Safavid and his supporters captured Tabriz. This event substantially brought to an end of the Turkman period.

2. Turkman Commercial Style
The term ‘Turkman Commercial Style’ was coined by Robinson who discussed that the style was particularly prospered in the manuscripts produced on a commercial scale. Although the discussion of whether the production was commercial purpose or not requires further research, the term Turkman Commercial Style is generally referred to the simplified and conventionalised style which regularly appears in the illustrated manuscripts produced at Shiraz in the Turkman period, particularly in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The Turkman Commercial Style basically has three characteristic components; (1) stocky shape of human figures with round childish faces; (2) simplified settings of landscape with large hillock and pale ground or rocky mountain, flavored with stylised bulbous flowers; (3) a simple composition consisting of two or three main figures. Such are the basic criteria for identifying painting as the Turkman Commercial Style.

The style’s actual connection to the Turkman tribes is only seen after Qara Qoyunlu occupied Shiraz in 1452. Pir Būdāq, son of Jahānshāh Qara Qoyunlu, is the earliest known Turkman patron for the production of illustrated manuscript. Shiraz was a place where had a long tradition of book production since as early as the Inju period of the early fourteenth century. When he moved to Shiraz in 1452, thus, several workshops with talented artists and skilled craftsmen may had been ready to operate for a new lord. An illustrated copy of Nizāmi’s Khamseh in the Topkapi Palace Library, Istanbul, H. 779, is dated 1453 with the
name of prominent Shiraz scribe ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Khwārazmī. Some miniature paintings in this book are executed in the style of what we call ‘Turkman Commercial.’ For instance, folio 187r (Plate 1) shows an outside scene with Bahrām Gūr and the dragon, in which we find Turkman representation of human figures characterised by squat shape of body with round childish faces and small feet. Background setting of simplified round hillock and pale ground with spectators and a single tree is also one of the major patterns of the Turkman Commercial Style. The painting is also characterised by very simple compositions with the bare necessities of figures for the illustrated scene that only Bahrām and the dragon dominate the centre, while a few spectators are arranged at the each side of upper corners.

The Shiraz painters continued to enjoy these characteristics of Turkman representation, and finally the style was crystallised in the 1480s. Amīr Khusraw’s *Dīwān* in the British Library, London, Or. 5770, dated 1488, copied by Shaykh Murshid al-Dīn at ‘Shiraz,’ contains paintings of the style’s crystallised form. An illustration on folio 139r (Plate 2) shows a simple composition with a hunting horse rider whose round childish face and stocky shape of body with short hands, short legs and small feet are much emphasised than the figures of Pīr Būḥāq time. Large lopsided turbans seen on the head of spectators are also of Turkman trait. A simplified setting of background consists of high horizon, round hillock, pale-coloured ground with tufts and stylised bulbous flowers, and puffy comma-shaped clouds, which combination is one of the Turkman formats of background regularly used for outside setting.

The style prospered between the 1480s and the 1490s, and almost completely disappeared soon after Aq Qoyunlu was destroyed by the Safavid power in the beginning of the sixteenth century, while the new style of painting immediately rose and took its place.

The development of the Turkman Commercial Style is thus clearly recognisable only after the Qara Qoyunlu’s occupation of Shiraz in 1452, and the style’s origins and early stage of evolution has never been studied in depth. This means that there is no reason to take it for granted that the style is indigenous to the Turkman tribes and the style’s characteristics of representation was a reflection of the Turkman’s own pictorial sense. Yet, the label ‘Turkman’ often misleads us to consider as if the style’s origins and early evolutions are also related to the Turkman tribes. In this paper, in order to avoid confusion, I use the label ‘Turkman’ only for the works of the style produced within the Turkman dominions, whereas the word ‘Pre-Turkman’ is applied for the works of the style produced in the Timurid realm before the Turkman domination began.
III. Origins:

1. Mihr and Mushtar of 1419; manuscript

Let us begin with the paintings in the manuscript dated 1419, the earliest known copy of the celebrated poem *Mihr and Mushtar*, composed by 'Assār Tabrīzī in 1376. This manuscript, now in the Art and History Collection, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington D.C., has five miniatures and a colophon stating the name of scribe Ja'far al-Hāfiz al-Tabrīzī with the date 822/1419. Although the colophon does not refer to the place of its production, it is highly probable that all paintings were executed by the same hand whose painting manner clearly expresses the stylistic traits which were later developed into what we call the Turkman Commercial Style. A painting on folio 32v shows an outside scene with Bahrām, a seated man on a carpet, receiving four merchants. (Plate 3) It is a simple painting with a large depiction of human figures occupying most of the painting space, with trees and plants between the human figures. These human figures have big round childish faces supported by long narrow necks and slender bodies, wearing large turbans with ends that occasionally droop down from the top of the back of head like a ponytail. The facial features have thick and naturally curved eyebrows, eyes with clearly emphasised outlines, small pink lips and short moustaches.

We know that similar characteristics are found in the paintings of north-western Iran, Jalayirid Tabriz, from the late fourteenth to the early fifteenth centuries, while some Herat paintings, especially those produced for Shāh Rukh, show facial features relatively similar to those in the painting. Robinson and Titley, from the first point of view, attribute this manuscript to Tabriz, and claim that Turkman Commercial Style originated in north-western Iran where the Qara Qoyunlu Turkman was established, and they presume that the style was introduced by the Turkmans themselves during the course of their eastward and southward expansion. On the subject of this Robinson-Titley attribution, however, much remains to be discussed. First of all, we know the name of the copyist of this manuscript, Ja'far al-Tabrīzī, who later joined the Timurid service of Bāysunghur in Herat where he became the director of the workshop. Although little is known about his activity before joining the service of Bāysunghur, he had copied a manuscript of Nizāmī’s *Makhzan al-Asrār* in 1417 in the Timurid dominion of the city of Yazd. He had also completed a copy of *Dīwān of Hāfiz* in 1418 and a copy of *Khamseh* of Nizāmī in 1420, although neither gives any information about the place of execution or the patron of production. The earliest dated work by Ja'far for Bāysunghur is a copy of Nizāmī’s *Khusraw and Shirin* dated 1421. It is therefore understandable that
he was at Yazd in 1417 and moved to Herat by 1421, while he continuously worked between 1417 and 1421. This information reveals the fact that Ja’far might not have necessarily worked solely in the Turkman dominion of Tabriz, but may also have worked in the realm of the Timurids before he joined Bāysunghur’s service in 1421.

Furthermore, Soudavar points out that in the colophon, “Ja’far used the title Khāqān for praising his ruler, a title frequently used for Shāh Rukh and his descendants but rarely used for Qārā Yūsuf of Qara Qoyunlu, indicating that Ja’far likely copied this manuscript somewhere within the Timurid domain.”

These aspects lead us to the suggestion that the manuscript was produced not in the Turkman realm of north-western Iran, but in the Timurid domain, an attribution that is further supported by its miniatures.

2. Mihr and Mushtari of 1419; Painting

Although the paintings of Jalayirid Tabriz during the late fourteenth century show certain similarities with the paintings of Mihr 1419 as Robinson and Titley suggest, there are apparent differences between them in the representation of certain other elements, including the colour scheme and the quality and touch of the painting. While no certain illustrated manuscript from Tabriz between the 1410s and the 1460s has so far been recognised and no record is known to suggest the production of illustrated manuscripts at Tabriz under the dominion of Qara Qoyunlu, it is likely safe to argue that the similarity is largely derived from Jalayirid painting of the late fourteenth century to which all Persian painting of the early fifteenth century more or less owes certain influences.

The painting tradition in Yazd probably originated with Iskandar Sultan, who became Timurid governor of Yazd in 1405, and continued even after Iskandar left Yazd. The Anthology, dated 810 / 1407, is a good example of Yazd painting during the time of Iskandar, which is closely in touch with preceding examples of Jalayirid court painting. In the paintings of this Anthology we see the Jalayirid influence in the depiction of architecture, trees and flowers, and the composition of the painting is also closely related to that of Jalayirid court painting. But at the same time figures are somewhat stiff and the drawing coarse. B. Brend describes the style of Yazd painting during the time of Iskandar as “a junction between Jalayirid and Timurid styles.”

The paintings of Mihr 1419 show a certain continuation of Jalayirid influence but are much closer to the style flourished at Yazd and Shiraz in the early fifteenth century. Folio 3r is a Mi’rāj, the ascent of Muhammad to Heaven, close to that of Anthology 1407 where the composition, type of angel wings and
facial features are very similar, while details of cloud are more emphasised. Folio 55r shows Mihr slaying a lion in which a certain non-Jalayirid influence can be seen. (Plate 4) The lion is shown without the fierceness, and its fur is more like that of a tiger whose knees are emphasised with a swirl motif. Such representation of lion has never appeared in Jalayirid painting where lions are generally depicted in the more gallant and realistic form. The landscape and flowers, on the other hand, owe a lot to Jalayirid inheritance in the models of small flowering plants as well as the flowering bushes on the rocky ground, which are found in īn of Khwājū Kirmānī, made at the Jalayirid court of Baghdad in 798/1396, although these are also used in Timurid Shiraz painting of the early fifteenth century. The human figures also retain relatively Jalayirid features such as the type of moustache but with small and high-placed turbans, round childish faces and stubby body shapes, the figures seem to have already well developed into what later becomes the Turkman Commercial Style.

The human figures in the painting on folio 49r are much closer to those of Timurid Yazd painting of the mid fifteenth century. Although the brick structure rising to the top of the left side and the figure of a central polo player are, as Titley notices, similar to that of Jalayirid work, the impression of the whole painting is surely of Yazd because a muted colour scheme of sandy yellow, dark orange and brown tones, and a carelessly organised composition are indicators of Timurid Yazd painting. The Khamsah of Nizāmī in the collection of the Topkapi Palace Library, Istanbul, H.866, dated 1446-47, is an example that demonstrates the style of Timurid Yazd painting in the 1440s. The paintings of H.866 show figures relatively larger than those of Mihr 1419 with faces tending to plumpness and eyes rendered expressive by the dark intelligent pupils. The colour scheme and the characteristics of human figures, as well as the softer touch, with stiller and less angular figures, and the type of horse representation distinguish the painting from those of Timurid Shiraz during the same period. More than ten manuscripts can be attributed to Yazd between 1407 and 1450, appearing to demonstrate a certain consistency in the style of painting during this period, which may imply the existence of a workshop maintained by patrons, possibly by Timurid governors or high ranking officers. But no work in this style of Timurid Yazd is known from the period after the provinces of Fars and Yazd were lost to Qara Qoyunulu in 1452.

The importance of Timurid Yazd painting in the development of Turkman Commercial Style has never been examined, while scholars such as Robinson and Titley take it for granted that the style has had its roots in the north-western Iran by attributing Mihr 1419 to Tabriz. Admittedly, Mihr 1419 contains the
The Turkman Commercial Style of Painting: Origins and Developments Reconsidered

style of the miniatures stemming from the Jalayirid models of the late fourteenth
to the early fifteenth centuries found in manuscripts from Tabriz. But in the
paintings of Mihr 1419, as we discussed above, such Jalayirid inheritance
harmonises well with the characteristics of Timurid painting, a combination
which had already been established in Iskandar Sultān’s Anthology 1407, produced at Yazd.

As far as we can judge from the analysis of the manuscript and its
miniatures, it is reasonable to say that there is a certain possibility that the style
originated at places other than Tabriz, where an environment in which a mixture
of the Jalayirid and non-Jalayirid styles existed and where Ja’far al-Tabrīzī was
enabled to work for it, which may be Yazd or Shiraz.30 Although little is so far
known about the painting tradition of Yazd, the topic will be more noticed once
light has been shed on the tradition of Yazd painting with more accurate
identification and attribution of related manuscripts. Yazd is therefore be a
significant place when we consider the formation period of the Commercial
Style.

IV. First Development
As for the development of the style, strangely enough, preceding studies of the
Turkman Commercial Style neglect to look at pre-Turkman examples from the
Timurid period of Shiraz, Yazd and others.31 There is, however, little doubt that
the style underwent a certain phase of development in the pre-Turkman period,
which can be traced to the time after the death of Ibrāhīm Sultān, son of Shāh
Rukh and Timurid governor of Shiraz, in 1436. As far as I have examined, four
particular manuscripts contain paintings which strictly demonstrate strong
relations to the Turkman Commercial Style. Here we take one or two works
from each manuscript for examples, and analyses how the pre-Turkman works
relate to the style of Turkman period.32

1. Shāhnāmeh of the Cambridge University Library (Or.420)
To the best of my knowledge the earliest among these is found in a copy of
Shāhnāmeh of Firdawsī in the collection of the Cambridge University Library
(Or.420), dated 841/1437.33 Unfortunately the manuscript is in a seriously
damaged condition so that all the written area has been cut off from the original
pages and stuck onto the brighter white paper. These have been cut along the
rectangular frame, so that we have certainly lost the parts of painting extending
to the margin.34 Colophon appears on the last page, bearing the date of its
production – 1437 – but it makes no mention of the place of its origin or the
name of the calligrapher. All eleven miniatures suffer the sparse execution of repainting and an insufficient quality of retouch on the faces of the human figures, probably made at the same time when they were cut off from the original pages. However, the damage does not seem to extend to the other elements of painting, which indicates that the representation of the other parts of the figures, as well as the composition and the landscape of the painting, must retain its original form.

As for the manuscript’s origin, Shiraz is the most conceivable place for its production. This attribution is based on the survey of the manuscript’s paintings that we find several Shiraz characteristics of the 1430s and the 1440s in the paintings. For example, the type of rocky horizons with a band of which rock marked in segments containing small circles and the type of severely simplified landscapes often with single trees and cut stumps or stylised bulbous flowers are clearly Shiraz traits of the 1430s and the 1440s. The type of armoured horses and helmeted heads of watching warriors also link to those of the works executed for Ibrāhīm Sultān, though the relatively small scale of the figures found in the paintings of this Cambridge Shāhnāme of 1437 does not correspond to other contemporary works of Shiraz.

An illustration of ‘Gurgi’kills Andarimān’ on folio 236r, for instance, shows pre-Turkman Shiraz type of horses. (Plate 5) Although these are not as large and formidable as those of Ibrāhīm Sultān’s Shāhnāme, the horses have massive bodies with small head and curved chest, which are the typical features of horses in the Timurid Shiraz painting of the time of Ibrāhīm Sultān. However, this painting shows human figures of which appearance is quite distant from that of contemporary Shiraz. In the paintings associated with the patronage of Ibrāhīm Sultān, human figures are usually tall and lanky, with smaller, paler and elongated faces. In this painting, however, figures are smaller and have not the lankiness. The figures rather have stocky shape of body, with large head and shorter legs. Although faces of the figures are seriously damaged, the shape tends to plumpness. From this point of view, the human figures in this painting have close similarities with those in the works of the Commercial Style from the Turkman period of Shiraz. Likewise, the painting exhibits landscape with a simple large hillock in pale colour, flavored with stylised bulbous flowers arranged to cover empty space. Such treatment of landscape is quite unusual in the work of the Ibrāhīm Sultān’s period of Shiraz which often leaves empty space uncovered, but it become a usual manner of landscape in the Turkman period.

The scene of ‘Kay Kāvūs gives up throne in favour of Kay Khusraw’ is
illustrated on folio 148v, of which composition, landscape, as well as the representation of human figures, a canopy, a throne and a comma-shaped cloud are undoubtedly of the same manners appeared in the works of the Turkman period of Shiraz. This may lead us to an argument supposing the painting as the later addition in the Turkman period. The painting, however, shares certain respects with the other miniatures of the manuscript, whose demonstration of close kinship with other contemporary works of different manuscripts imply that all paintings in this manuscript are contemporary with the text. Folio 33v is probably a good example representing the two mounted horsemen in combat that often appear in the Shiraz works of the late 1430s. (Plate 6) One of its close parallel is a scene of ‘Kay Khusraw kills Aila’ from Ibrāhim Sulṭān’s Shāhnāmeh of Firdawsī (folio 216v) in that the two paintings share the placement and posture of the mounted horseman attacking. (Plate 7)

2. Shāhnāmeh of the Golestan Palace Library (Ms.2173)

Another copy of Shāhnāmeh of Firdawsī gives us a further idea of the pre-Turkman development of the style. It is a copy in the Golestan Palace Library, Tehran (Ms.2173), dated 847/1443 and copied by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad ʿAlā al-Ḥanafī Shushnaqī. 37

There are thirteen miniatures, including a double page frontispiece. The execution of the painting is apparently superior to the standard quality of the 1440s of Shiraz, in that all miniatures must have been painted by a single hand as the touch is consistent throughout the manuscript. Since the elements of the landscape and the characteristics of human figures (especially facial features) belong to the Shiraz type of the time, it can be attributed to Shiraz.

However, we also notice certain a connection with the Herat painting. The double page frontispiece, one of the most beautifully executed works in this manuscript, shows a similar representation of trees to that of contemporary work attributable to Shiraz, such as a double page frontispiece in the Cleveland Museum of Art. 38 But models for its painting must originate from the work of Herat, because its nearly identical posture and the placement of the human figures are seen in a double-page frontispiece in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington D.C., datable to 1425-30, associated with the patronage of Bāysunghur. 39 Some other paintings of the Tehran Shāhnāmeh 1443 also demonstrate certain affinities in the composition and posture of figures with those in the paintings of Shāhnāmeh made for Muḥammad Jākī, the Timurid prince and son of Shāh Rukh, in the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ms 239), London, which has been attributed to Herat in the 1440s. 40 It is therefore
most probably that painter of the Tehran copy would have referred to the sources from the Herat works of *Shāhnāmeh* and applied its compositions and postures of figures into the pictorial tradition of Shiraz.

The painting ‘Rustam discovers Suhrāb’s identity’ displays the style’s early phase in the pre-Turkman Shiraz. (Plate 8) The hillock landscape of pale colours dotted with stylised bulbous flowers, together with comma-shaped Chinese-style clouds in the sky, are the basic elements of the Commercial Style in the Turkman period of Shiraz, while the representation of human figures and horses are of the Timurid Shiraz of the 1440s. Some flowers are located on the horizon, which rarely appeared in the painting of the Turkman period, though they are often found in Timurid Herat and Timurid Shiraz works from the first half of the fifteenth century. The painter’s use of space also links to the style of the Turkman period of Shiraz in that comfortable size and number of figures within a simple composition harmonises with the empty space of the background. This may suggest that the painters preferred to include only a few essential figures and tried to maintain enough space in the background, probably in order to avoid the painting being too crowded by the figures. This combination is a unique aspect of the style of Turkman period of Shiraz, which often helps to give us an impression of the style, together with the puffy comma-shaped cloud and the pale colour of the field with the stylised bulbous plants. The simplification of the representation of figures and landscape also leads us to distinguish the painting from other Timurid Shiraz of the time. The painting from the contemporary Shiraz work of *Shāhnāmeh* of Firdawsī in the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, dated 1444, is probably a contrastive example showing the more elaborated depiction of figures and landscape, which can be regarded as the typical Timurid Shiraz style of the time.41

Two other copies of *Shāhnāmeh* of Firdawsī from the period after the death of Shāh Rukh must also be included in the first development group. The quality of these copies is obviously inferior to the other preceding works. As scholars generally confirm, the illustrated fine-quality Persian manuscript is rarely found from the period between the death of Shāh Rukh in 1447 and the Pir Būdāq’s installation to governor of Shiraz in 1452, which can be ascribed to the lack of royal patronage and serious political confusion in the Timurid court. The works from this period are therefore sometimes classified into the category of ‘provincial style’ and often remain unnoticed, even though the style of painting shows certain continuation.
3. *Shāhnāmeh of the Riza Abbasi Museum (Ms.1971)*

A copy in the Riza Abbasi Museum (Ms.1971) in Tehran, dated 853/ 1449, is perhaps an important example of work demonstrating the continuation of the style’s development within Shiraz-influenced milieu.\(^{42}\)

The painting ‘Bahār Chūbīna wears the woman’s clothes sent by Hurmuzd’ is clearly shown in the style of pre-Turkman period of Shiraz in that although the faces of the human figures have been depicted in the typical manner of Timurid Yazd and the band of white rock on the horizon is in the manner of Timurid Shiraz, the painting shares certain aspects with those in the first development group of the style in the pre-Turkman period, including the simplification of figures and hillocky landscapes, the use of space, the comfortable size of the figures and the stylisation of cloud and flowers.\(^{43}\) (Plate 9)

The scene of ‘Rustam shoots Isfandiyār in the eyes with a double pointed arrow’ has been illustrated in a very simple format showing two mounted soldiers on a pale pink ground with flowers, while the high horizon with hilly humps rises without a cloud in the golden sky. All the pictorial elements in this painting have been boldly simplified and carelessly painted, the execution of which suggests that this and the painting ‘Bahār Chūbīna wears the woman’s clothes sent by Hurmuzd’ discussed above are the works of different painters. This type of coarse and rough painting can be attributed to the workshop in Yazd where the simplified style has continued until the beginning of the 1450s. In the next section of this paper, we will closely see its parallels in a copy of *Shāhnāmeh* of Firdawsi in the collection of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul, which must be the latest and the largest volume of work in the group of the first development.

4. *Shāhnāmeh of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art (1945)*

According to the colophon, the manuscript was copied by Shaykh Islām b. Husayn b. ‘Alī b. Maḥmūd al-Ṣādiqī in 855/ 1451 at Yazd. Although little is known about the scribe Shaykh Islām, the manuscript contains sixty three miniature paintings, of which sixty two are contemporary with the text.\(^{44}\)

Apparently two or three painters worked for this manuscript as the touch of the painting is not consistent throughout the manuscript. A simple composition dominates in this manuscript focusing on only a few essential figures in the centre, occasionally surrounded by attendants or soldiers. The landscape is also simple and three major patterns are rendered repeatedly: a pale colour with stylised grass tufts, flowers and a simple rocky horizon; a lush green covered
with large bushy masses of vegetation often picked out in yellow and without a rocky horizon; or a grotesque rocky mountain with human face-like hollows. The sky is painted in either gold or blue, and occasionally has puffy comma-shaped clouds. Decoration of costumes tends to be simple towards the end of manuscript, while the surfaces of buildings and furniture are not elaborately decorated.

The majority of paintings in the Yazd Shāhnāmeh 1451 have been executed in the simplified manner which had already appeared in the Tehran Shāhnāmeh 1449 as discussed above. The painting ‘Gustaham beheading Farshidvard’ on folio 249v shows mounted figures depicted in a manner akin to that of the Tehran copy, while the landscape contains a variety of flowers and comma-shaped clouds. (Plate 10) A warping tree behind Gustaham may suggest his impetus. The shocking representation of the decapitated body from which blood is spouting is the central focus of the scene, a prototype of which can be found in Muḥammad Jūkī’s Shāhnāmeh of Firdawsī, where the representation of two mounted warriors in the Yazd Shāhnāmeh 1451 and that of Muḥammad Jūkī’s Shāhnāmeh (folio 206v) are almost identical. There are some other illustrations analogous to those of Muḥammad Jūkī’s Shāhnāmeh, including the scenes ‘Rustam drags the Khāqān from his elephant’ and ‘The dīv Akvān lifts the sleeping Rustam’ although the posture of the figures in the latter is slightly different.\footnote{The link between Yazd Shāhnāmeh 1451 and Muḥammad Jūkī’s Shāhnāmeh is, however, not clear. It may be conjectured that the painters of both copies referred to the same source for the representation of the scenes, or perhaps the painter of the Yazd copy had a chance to look at the Muḥammad Jūkī paintings.}

Yazd Shāhnāmeh 1451 contains many illustrations of scenes of single combat which are also frequently used in Timurid Shiraz painting of the 1440s. Those from Shiraz painting depict much larger and more dramatic figures, while a coulisse is often employed at the top of the composition to emphasize the helmeted heads of a row of watching warriors. In Timurid Shiraz painting, particularly those made for Ibrāhīm Sulṭān, figures are generally tall and high shouldered, and have elongated faces with horizontally extended narrow moustaches, traits that differ from the figures of Yazd Shāhnāmeh 1451. Some human figures in this manuscript, such as those in the painting ‘Kay Khusraw receives Rustam and Zāl’ on folio 133r are depicted in the manner not related to that of Ibrāhīm Sulṭān’s Shiraz. The composition of the figures is, however, closely related to that of Ibrāhīm Sulṭān’s Shāhnāmeh (folio 232v) in that the scenes in both paintings are reduced to essentials, although other courtiers are
present in the story. In fact, the illustration of the scene ‘Kay Khusraw receives Rustam and Zāl’ is not frequently included in other copies of Shāhnāmeh, and any other parallel of this reduced composition can rarely be found.

The style of painting in Yazd Shāhnāmeh 1451 truly belongs to the Commercial Style of the pre-Turkman period, but it seems to pursue more simple drawing, a more reduced scale and more hybrids of different styles. As the manuscript contains a large number of miniatures, each painting has also suffered rough and coarse finishing without careful attention to details. It is therefore most likely that the manuscript was neither commissioned by an enthusiastic patron of manuscript production nor produced at a royal atelier, as the miniatures are not of princely quality. Perhaps it was commissioned by a local officer who was influential during the period of confusion that occurred after the death of Shāh Rukh in 1447. Some scholars believe that painters working at the Timurid court in Herat also affected this political confusion and some might have left Herat to escape the turmoil and to pursue local patronages to other places, such as Shiraz and Yazd. Although no clear evidence is so far known to prove this speculation about the migration of Herati workers, some paintings of the composition do actually demonstrate a certain relationship with Herat court painting, which may suggest the existence of works or workers from the workshop at the Herat court.

Having discussed the works in the group of first development, it seems reasonable to conclude that there is a much larger possibility of presuming that the first development of the style took place within a Shiraz-influenced milieu rather than the idea of Turkman origins. This is indicated by the contemporary Timurid Shiraz paintings such as those in Toronto Shāhnāmeh 1444, which display the borderline between the Timurid Shiraz style and the Commercial Style of pre-Turkman period. The distinction between these can be made by considering the following elements: the Commercial Style has a reduced setting with a simply arranged landscape (usually a hillock in a pale colour with stylised bulbous flowers, a band of horizon and puffy comma-shaped clouds) and a few essential figures drawn in a smaller size than those of usual Timurid Shiraz figures but not rendered in a dramatic form. The painting tends to maintain large empty space around the main figures in the centre, so that the illustration is not too crowded with figures and gives a certain sense of depth and a release from a feeling of oppression. In the first development of the style, the elements from Timurid Herat painting of the 1430s and the 1440s only limedly appear in the composition of painting, but the relationship with Herat becomes much closer and more important during the first Turkman period of Shiraz under the
V. Conclusion

This paper is considered with the question of to what extent we can approach the appropriate definition of the Turkman Commercial Style in a practical way. The importance of classification in a specific and systematic way has gradually been noted, while, despite the label ‘Turkman,’ the presentation of the strict relationship with this ethnic or political category has still failed in most of the examples, particularly in those from the pre-Turkman period of the first half of the fifteenth century. The study of this style is, therefore, still beset with the risk of misidentification, which some attributions and discussions have often done in implicit conditions by taking it for granted that the style is indigenous to the Turkman tribes and gradually developed by sharing figural and decorative manners with those of Timurid art. The outline of this idea is, as mentioned, found in Robinson’s publications in which he points out the stylistic relationship with Timurid painting but only in the course of development after the time of Pîr Bûdäq.

However, the analysis of paintings and manuscripts picked up in this paper demonstrates that the style has a lot of elements taken from Timurid Shiraz and Herat paintings, well before the Turkman territorial expansion of the mid fifteenth century. It may, therefore, suggest a concluding view that the style was established at Shiraz, Yazd or other Shiraz-influenced milieus where the early stage of stylistic development occurred. This idea so far seems to be more plausible than the possibility of regarding the style as indigenous to the Turkman tribes. Although in the study of Persian painting it is habitual to serve the arts of Timurid and Turkman realms separately, perhaps this cannot work for further understanding of Timurid and Turkman paintings which are appreciably related to one another.

List of Plate


The Turkman Commercial Style of Painting: Origins and Developments Reconsidered


Notes

1 This paper was prepared for the 52nd annual meeting of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan, on 7th November 2010 in Tokyo. I would like to thank Professor Minako Mizuno Yamanlar, Professor Toh Sugimura and Mr Yoshifusa Seki for their valuable advice and suggestions on the draft of this paper. I also wish to express my gratitude to Dr Sheila Canby and Dr Anna Contadini for suggesting me some important arguments and problems relating to Turkman painting, and to Professor Tomoko Masuya for drawing my attention to some studies on Timurid Shiraz painting relevant to this paper.

2 Kühnel 1939, 1843-44. In this article, however, most of the examples from the Aq Qoyunlu Turkman were identified as a part of the Herat School even though Kühnel himself described this attribution as rather “dubious,” and suggested alternative ascriptions as a West Persian School under the domination of Uzun Hasan.

3 Robinson 1954, 105-112.

4 See, for example, Katz 1963.

5 Robinson 1991, 23.

6 General references of the Turkman’s historical background are found in Browne 1902 or Savory 1965.

7 See, Robinson 1967, 91. He used to call the style as ‘Utility Style.’

8 In fact, there is one illustrated manuscript of the Commercial Style, known to have been made for Bāyūnghur ibn Yaʿqūb, the eldest son of the Aq Qoyunlu ruler Yaʿqūb, which is Firdawsi’s *Shāhnāmeh*, dated 1485-6, now in the collection of Nasser D. Khalili, London, Ms. 713.

9 There are two colophons stating names of two different scribes and different dates; these are ‘Imād Khubbāz Abarkūhī, dated 1440, and ‘Abd al-Rahman Khwārazmi, dated 1453. This can be
read as though it was copied originally by ‘Imād Khabbāz Abarkūhī who, for whatever reason in 1440, abandoned his work in a defective and unfinished state and it was taken over by ‘Abd al-Rahman who completed the work in 1453. The manuscript contains twenty paintings of which five are in the manner of Yazd between 1440 and 1450, and the others belong to the Turkman Commercial Style between 1453 and 1460. See Stchoukine 1977, 27-29.

10 There are eleven miniatures in this manuscript but some are seriously damaged. The execution of the painting is considerably superior to the other contemporary works of the Commercial Style, which may suggest that the manuscript was made for a particular person of high rank.

11 See basic information on this manuscript and miniatures found in Soudavar 1992, cat.no.45a-e.

12 Robinson believes these to be the work of several different painters of varying ability since the style is mixed. See Robinson 1982, 30.

13 For Herat painting, see Khamseh of Nizāmī, dated 1431, Herat, in the State Hermitage Museum, St.Petersburg, VP.1000. Reproduction in Adamova 1996, 97-159.


15 For the general information of Ja’far, see Bayani 1984-5, 114-123. Bloom and Blair 2009, vol.2, 343-344. See also Thackston 2001, 43-46.

16 Only the colophon has survived in Diez A. fol.74, Orientabteilung der Staatsbibliothek, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin. See reproduction in Gray 1979, 23.

17 Diwān of Hāфиз in the Topkapi Palace Library, Istanbul, R.947 (627). Khamseh of Nizāmī in the British Library, London, Or.12087. For the latter, see Brend 2006, 15-24, in which she concludes: “It is very probable that Or.12087 was copied in Yazd. Shortly thereafter, the scribe Ja’far was translated to Herat, probably leaving the manuscript behind.”

18 Khusrav and Shirīn of Nizāmī in the National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg, Ivan 93, B 1332.

19 Soudavar 1992, 131.


21 Brend 2003, 46.

22 This swirl motif on the tiger’s knee is perhaps derived from China or Central Asia, as we find the same characteristic in the lion image of ‘Chinese-taste’ drawing in Album H.2153, The Topkapi Palace Library, Istanbul, fol.96r.

23 The same characteristic is found in the representation of tigers in Al-Qazwīnī’s ‘Ajū ib al-Makhlūqāt of the 1440s, in the collection of John Rylands Library, Manchester, Ryl Pers 37. See reproduction in Robinson 1980, 62, cat.322, where the manuscript is attributed to Shiraz.


25 For a general definition of Yazd painting, see Stchoukine 1963; Stchoukine 1966; Gray 1979, 142; Petrosyan et al 1995, 184-185, cat.no.30.


27 These may include Khamseh of Nizāmī, dated 1420, The British Library, Or.12087; Anthology, dated 1432 Yazd, The British Library, Or.8193; Zafarnāmeh, dated 1436, Smithsonian Institution, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, S86.0133.001/002; Khamseh of Nizāmī, dated 1439, Uppsala University Library, Tornberg 151; Majnūn and Laylā and Hasht Bihisht, Chester Beatty Library, Per.253; Khamseh of Nizāmī, dated 1445, John Rylands Library, Pers.36; Khamseh of Nizāmī, dated 1450, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, no.13.228.3; Khamseh of Nizāmī, dated 1447, Topkapi Palace Library, R.866; Khamseh of Nizāmī, dated 1442, Topkapi Palace Library, R.862; Shāhnāmeh of Firdawsi, dated 1445, The Russian Academy of Sciences, C-1654.

28 In fact Anthology Or.8193 states the name of patron as Mir Jalāl al-Dīn known as Chaqmaq Shāmī, governor of Yazd.
The Turkman Commercial Style of Painting: Origins and Developments Reconsidered

29 See Robinson 1979, 245, note 20, in which Robinson mentions Mihr 1419 and attributes it to Tabriz at the court of Qara Yusuf, although he also refers to another of Ja’far’s work finished at Yazd in 1417.

30 See Soudavar 1992, 130-132, in which he attributes the manuscript to Yazd. See also Brend 2003, 55, in which she follows the Soudavar attribution.

31 Robinson begins his discussion with manuscripts of mixed style as the first phase of Turkman Commercial Style, and believes them to be works made under the Qara Qoyunlu Turkman. See Robinson 1991, 22-23.

32 I particularly take illustrations of hillside scenes from each manuscript, which, I believe, make the comparison much clearer.

33 This is an unpublished manuscript, listed by Browne 1922, 129, cat.no.785. The manuscript most recently appeared on the ‘List of the illustrated Shahnameh manuscripts in British collections’ appended in the exhibition catalogue held at Cambridge, but no reproduction has been made from this copy. See B. Brend and Melville 2010, 248-251.

34 As far as I am aware, some parts of the original text area within the frame have also been lost, to which the text has been rewritten and re-margined.

35 Folio 273r is the worst of all in that the original painting is hardly recognisable.

36 The colour scheme of the paintings is also close to that of Shafranumeh, dated 1436 which is considered to have been commissioned by Ibrahim Sultan at Shiraz.


38 The Cleveland Museum of Art, collection no.56.10 and no.45.169. See Gray 1961, 96. This frontispiece must belong to a copy of Shahnameh in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Suppl. Persan 494. See Richard 1997, 81, cat.no.46.

39 See Lentz and Lowry 1989, 125 and 337, cat.no.42.

40 See Brend and Morton 2010.


43 It may also refer to the elaborated decoration of arabesque and geometrical designs on the surface of canopy and carpet which seems to be a mismatch to the simple depiction of landscapes and human figures. Although this mismatch is quite common in the Turkman Commercial Style of the 1480s and the 1490s, it may relate to the Persian tradition of the depiction of heroes whose appearance has been sometimes modelled on the actual appearance of the patron, so that the canopy and the carpet have to be brilliant and gorgeous. Although the painting seems not to have been commissioned by a particular individual patron, the tradition might have been continued as a custom when canopy and carpet are depicted.

44 One miniature, folio 1r, is clearly a later addition, probably in the early Safavid period. This miniature forms the left part of the double-page frontispiece, of which the right part has now disappeared.


46 In my opinion, in case of the scene ‘Gustaham beheading Farshvard,’ no other copy from the fifteenth century is so far known to contain the same representation of the decapitated body, while the representation of the scene in both copies is so identical that one seems to be a
duplication of the other, which raises certain difficulties relating to the former speculation.


48 For further discussion on this argument see for instance Lukens-Swietochowski 1979, 179-214.

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The Turkman Commercial Style of Painting: Origins and Developments Reconsidered


