

Archaeological Analysis to Pictorial Shahnameh of Baysongor Mirza Tiymouri

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Abstract

After invention of writing, this new innovation jointed images, and writing together with painting became able to transfer human's information and ideas. During the Islamic period, simultaneously with the widespread use of paper in painting and calligraphy, a kind of painting developed that is called as miniature. The illustrated inscription of Iran in Islamic period have different type of political, cultural historical and etc information. The informations are important to historians, archaeologists and other scientists.

The Purpose of writing this essay is to introduce the pictorial inscription "Shahname of Baysongor Merza" as a historical, archaeological source of tiymourid period. In addition, importance of this pictorial inscription in Archaeology and History interpretations will be expressed.

Keywords: inscription, miniature, gild, Tiymorian, pictorial epochal sources

1. Introduction

In the Islamic time of Iran which is accompanied with widespread of use of paper in calligraphy and painting, a kind of painting is developed that is famous by the name of miniature. The Manuscripts miniatures that have different informations about political, social, cultural, historical, artistical and some other, have a great importance for historian, archaeologist, scientists and some other persons. In this research I have tried to survey and analyze one of these illustrated manuscripts, tiymourid period, that is the most glorified period of preparing illustrated manuscripts.

Tiymour who is the founder of tiymourid dynasty was born in the central Asia got a great skill in ridding and shooting very soon. He could defend his enemies and his rivals and formed an independent government then he called himself the owner of Qoran. After 36 years that he had occupied a great area and wanted to occupy china, died in Atrah city in 807 AH /1404AD.

Shahrokh (807 to 850 AH/1405 to1447AD) after the death of his father could united scattered territories. He established friendly relation with its neighbors and opponent. But he failed to consolidating Timurid power in Iran and outside Transoxiana (Hafezeyebrow, 2001, pp. 203-227). After 43 years of his rule he died in Ray city (Samargandi, 1901, pp. 338-339 & 405-408).

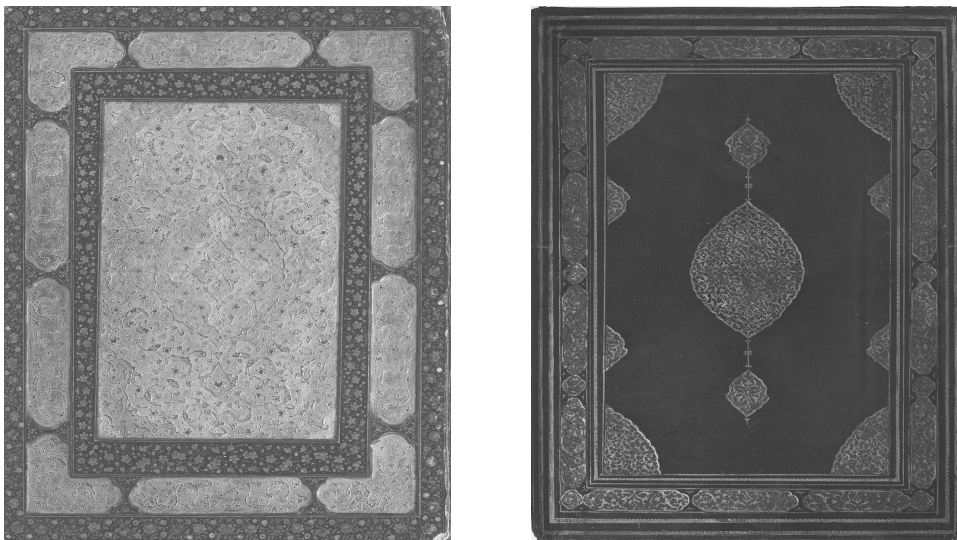
After Shahrokh Mirza's dead, her son, Olog Bayg who was a scientist come to rule. After this time on words, decline of Timurid dynasty began again and war between Shahrokh survivors lasted for ten year, finally Abo Sayed Bahadorkhan, come to rule (855 to 873 AH/ 1451 to 1469AD).

Sultan Hussein Bayqra (862 to 911 AH/ 1470 to1506 AD) In 873 AH /1481AD after Sultan Abu Sayed, death, dominate Harat and seized Timurid power, with creating relative stability and restore cultural prosperity in Khorasan he could rule 35 years (Khvandmyr, 1992, pp 172-174). He died in 911 AH year (1506 AD). After of this year, Timurid princes were the internal conflicts. Shybk Khan Uzbek, using their struggles in 913AH /1508 AD took Harat, and with Khorasan domination ended bicentenary Tiymourian rule.

2. Intruding of Baysongor Merza Shahnameh

Writing the book and binding art progressed in the Timurid period. During this period manufacturing volumes of leather was introduced. Volumes and additional edges to protect the book were painted in timourid period. In side cover of volumes also decorated with designs of plants and animals. For decorating the external surface cover such books; longeur and most technical way was used.

The original copy of the book Shâhnâmeh Baisonghor Mirza Tiymouri is being protected in the library of Tehran Golestan Palace, along with the No. 716. It has been scribed and then illustrated on buff coloured Khanbalegh paper in 833 AH/1332 AD in 700 page Folio size, and in Nastaaliq calligraphy by Jafar Tabrize. The cover of this manuscript is decorated with gold leather sheath with two margins; oily margins outside, and dark golden Moaragh on the azure background in the inside (Figure 1 & 2).



Figures 1 & 2. In side and external surface cover of Shahnameh manuscript volum

Shâhnâmeh is adorned by a central rectangle in which there are two Bergamots³ in the middle, and four Lachaks⁴ in the corners. They have become prominent by gold color, and also contain decorations with Arabesque designs. The designs and colourful flowers are located on a black background around the central rectangle. The cover lining has a central rectangle with one Bergamot and two hangers up and down in Arabesque designs on an azure background.

Among the other illuminated Shâhnâmeh books during Timurid dynasty—even before or after the time period—Shâhnâmeh Baisonghori remains the most famous, the most important, the most beautiful, and the most widely regarded. This book has several features that give preference over Shâhnâmeh Demot in Ilkhani (7AH /14 AD), and Shâhnâmeh of Shah Tahmasbi (10AH /16AD) -the former was created before Shâhnâmeh Baisonghori, and the latter created after.

The first, most prominent feature is that unlike the other two versions, whose sheets are distributed among different museums in the world, this one is complete rather than a few minor losses in context. The other feature is its beauty and adorns; arts such as illumination, painting, calligraphy and binding are all beautifully put to use. The third feature is the introduction page, along with a poem which was added by the order of Baisonghor Mirza for the first time.

Shâhnâmeh Baisonghor begins with a beautiful illumination⁶ and a script with Rogha calligraphy, placed on a golden background which includes the names and titles of Baisonghor Mirza (Figure.3). The scripts of the first page of Shâhnâmeh Baisonghori, which are decorated by red flowers, are by Jafar Tabrizi as follows: I praised the beauty of these poems and I versified these kind verses for the library of powerful Sultan, Baysongor Mirza Bahador Khan whom may God bless his governing, the master of peasants' life, defendant of weak Islamic cities, the greatest kings of all times, the protector of Monarchy and anything inside it; either spiritual or unspiritual affairs.

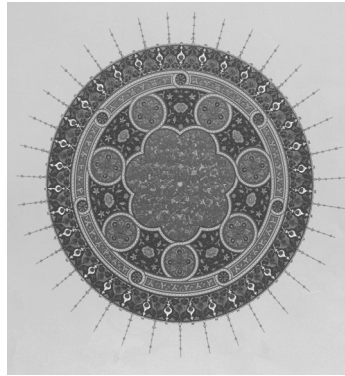


Figure 3. Shamca (sun design)

Baisonghor loved epical poems, hence ordering the preparation of Shâhnâmeh of Ferdowsi and a new preface for it. Baisonghor asked Jafar Tabrizi, the most famous calligrapher of that time, to graph the book. The majority of the book has ornamented margins on a golden background (Sharifzadeh, 1998, pp. 104-105).

Baysongor Merza Shahnameh, is kept in the Golestan Palace Library for more than 110 years. This illustrated manuscript has been awarded to library of this palace by Amir Grovsky, based on available evidence (1858 -1938AD). This effect after registration as a national effect, in March 2005, was introduced to Unesco for register in global memory. After the process of experts, Finally this manuscript was registered in the global memory in June 2007 year.

3. Archaeological analysis to Shahnameh of Baysongor Mirza Tiymouri

With the support of Timourid rulers, many manuscripts were produced and illustrated. Tiymourid manuscripts have miniatures with topics such as archietectual spaces, images of human, animals images, nature pictures and etc. these features help Archaeologist and researchers for identify tiymourid artifacts and techniques.

In this research, one of Tiymourid illusttated manuscripts was introduced and samples of their images were archeologically analized, so that Importance of these images in the interperation of archaeolical science becomes clear.

3.1 Archaeological Analysis to Three Minitures of Baysongor Mirza Shahnameh

The first two illustrated pages of Shâhnâmeh are about Baisonghor Mirza, which depict him both riding a horse, and holding a cup in hand while gazing at a hunting scene. This scene shows the hunting of some animals such as lions, rabbits, deer, and pigs. Bloomy trees, birds, golden sky and hills can be seen in the background of the painting. Baisonghor is painted with a crenate crown on the horse under a pergola with a dragon design (Figure 4). He has a long sleeve shirt and a cloak on his shoulder. Some of his attendants have Turban and some have caps; and the backs of their dresses have golden designs. The margin of this illustrated page has been decorated with Arabesque designs and colourful flowers. The discussable subject is the dragon design on pergola, which is the influence of Chinese arts on Iranian arts in Patriarch period (Ilkhanian). However, it finds its place in Iranian arts at the Timurid period (Blair, 2002, pp. 32-35). In addition to the dragon advent in Timurid Paintings, making things out of Jade Stone or metal with the dragon-shaped handles has been common (Figure 5).



Figure 4. Hunting scene



Figure 5. Jade stone bowl with dragon design (source: blair. p51)

Mourning for Rostam is a subject in *Shāhnāme* Baisonghori which has 22 watercolour paintings without the signature of the painter (Figure 6). In this scene, the palace has a white, decorated inscription on Azure backgrounds which, along with arched portals, are the decoration methods of Timurid religious architecture.

These two methods can be seen in the entrance of Shirin Beig Agha shrine (1385AD -780 AH) in the Shah Zand Cemetery located in Samarkand. The illustrated dome of this two-story brick building is generally the same as the Ahmed Yasovale (1394-1399- AD & 779-780 AH) dome in Turkestan (Figure 7). As far as similarities go between some of the architectural pictures in *Shāhnāme* with some of the Timurid architecture, in case of demolishing of these works, they both can be restored and rebuilt from these pictures as the artist is inspired by the real objects discovered in nature (Goodarzi, 2005, pp. 60-70).

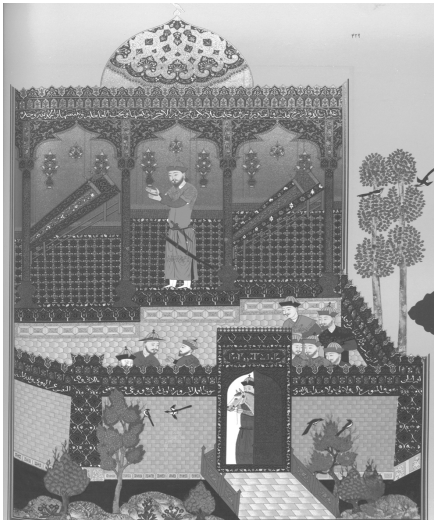


Figure 6. Mourning for Rostam



Figure 7. Ahmad Yasavoli dome in central Asia (source: blair. p50)

Another painting in this book is about ARDESHIR AND GOLNAR - love and beloved. The painting independency during the Timurid period can be considerably seen in this picture, while in calligraphy copies from Seljuk and Ilkhanian dynasties, painting and calligraphy are used together. In the Timurid period, the paintings are done independently, either having no calligraphy involved, or only one line up or down the paintings. In the amorous scene of Ardeshir and Golnar, the brick building of Baisonghor Mirza has been shown as a two-story with frills of white epigraphs on an Azure background. The building has a fenced yard, scalloped edging pond, and tiled floor. In this picture, the outside nature is illustrated by flowers, bushes, fruit and non-fruit trees and an Azure sky. The pergola dome on up of the building can indicate the usage of pergola architecture method even before Safavid and Qajar dynasties in Iran.

One of the *Shāhnāme* Baisonghor pictures shows the discussion of Ferdowsi, the famous epic poet of the Ghaznavi period (11AD). With seven poets in Mahmud Ghaznavi courts in Ghazni, they are each asked to say

poems about the king, with a prize awarded for the best poems. Onsori, Asjadi, Termezi, and Abuyhanifeh Eskaf are among those seven great poets. These poets, along with three others, are in a garden where Ferdowsi also enters. They want to get rid of him. The first suggestion is to make him drunk, which Onsori does not accept. They then try to compete with him through poetry; however, Ferdowsi presents himself in such a way that all poets believe in his knowledge and grace. In this scene, the poets (as do the teachers and scientists of the time) wear turbans and long shirts under cloaks; one of the four poets also wears a white cloth belt. The sky, which is not too expanded, is golden, and in the middle of the garden a black steam flows where different plants and flowers are found beside it. The ground of the garden is full of dry bushes and shrubs on spongy hills.

Jamshid, the Iranian legend King, is another one of the paintings in *Shâhnâme* Baisonghori. In this scene, Jamshid is sitting on his throne with a Mongolian crenate crown and has a bird in his hand and earrings on his ears. He is looking at different scenes of tailors and ironsmiths (Tohidi, 2007, pp. 50-56). People in this painting have different hats; caps, square shape, turban, and circular shape. There is only one person who wears no hats, and is making armours, helmets and other metal tools. This picture is important because it shows the different steps of making armours and helmets; the Blast furnace shape, anvils, dyeing workshop and tailoring scissors are remarkable in this scene (Figure 8).

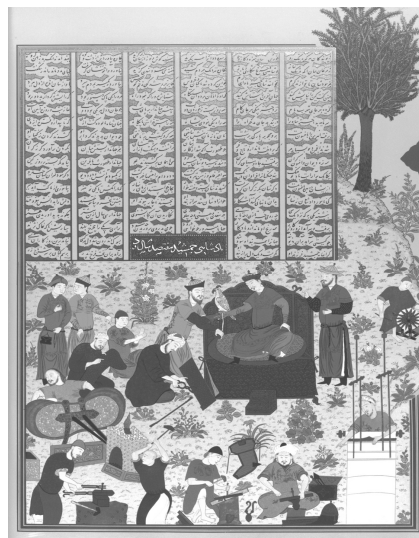


Figure 8. Metal making scen

3.2 Arresting Zhak in Damavand Mountain and the Rudi and Albino Visiting Scene

Arresting Zhak in Damavand Mountain is another subject of *Shâhnâme* Baisonghori. In this page, painting and calligraphy are used together. Zhak is naked while, according to Iranian legends, he has two snakes on each shoulder. He is standing in front of a dark cave where he is being pinned from legs and hands to the mountain by two guards. Around the cave is painted yellow, with red and spongy hills, dried bushes and some birds like partridges. In this painting, a King, quite possibly Freydon the legendary King, is observing the scene of Zhak being pinned to the mountain while a person who has turban, perhaps a scientist, is accompanying him. A shade, which has a design of two Simurghs symmetrically, is above the King's head; it is probably the influence of Chinese arts, because before Timurid and Patriarch periods, Simurgh was merely used in Iranian literature, Irfan and mysticism- not Iranian arts. Simurgh and dragons are used in Iranian arts under the influence of Eastern arts from Patriarch time.

In the Rudi and Albino visiting scene, in which their building is surrounded by a brick wall, calligraphy and painting are used equally on the page. Here the calligraphy method is Nastaaliq on a golden background. The painting's title is written with the use of the Taligh method in white, on a blue Azure and Arabesque sketched background. The white coloured writing inscription on a blue Azure background, which is the decoration characteristic of Timurid architecture, can be seen on the exterior wall of the building where Rudi and Albion are seeing each other. It is told that the building belongs to Baisonghor Mirza Bahador Khan Ghiasodin and Kholdo Allah Malakeh. The last sentence is from political and religious poems in Timurid and Patriarch periods. The wooden entrance door of the building has Geometric decorations, along with an arched portal, which to some

extent is specific to the Timurid era. In this scene, Rudi has a crenate crown, Albion has a turban, and five maids are welcoming them inside the building. The importance of this painting is in showing exterior and interior simultaneously.

3.3 Party in Garden and Giving Robe Ceremony

In a painting of *Shâhnâmeh*, there is a party taking place in Mâzandarân, where the King is sitting on his throne and a few people are welcoming and playing instruments around him. There are three clay bottles in one section of the painting, which are of the same Timurid white and blue clays. These clays either have white backgrounds and blue designs, or white designs on white backgrounds. Most often these clays have birds and flower sketches (Figure 9). Pictures of these kinds of clays somehow help us to recognize Timurid clays. In this party scene, the King wears a crenate hat and others have turbans or caps; two musicians are playing instruments in this miniature. This picture helps us to recognize and study the evolution of Iran's music, as well as the musical instruments in the Timurid period. In this joy scene, where the sky is gold and the hills are full of flowering plants and bloomy trees, the calligraphy has only 12 distiches found at the end of the painting - in other words, the calligraphy is at the service of paintings (Figure 10).



Figure 9. White and blue pottery

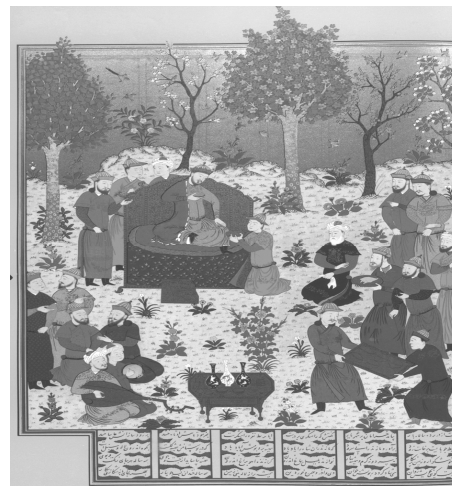


Figure 10. Party in garden

Another miniature painting, named “giving robe of honour to Manzar by Yazdegerd,” shows Yazdegerd sitting on a carpet and pointing to Manzar sitting on a chair. Two women sitting in front of the King show their floral dresses to the guests. In this illustration, most people have turbans and two have caps. Women have long dresses and white and red scarves showing some parts of their hair. Spongy hills along with fruitful and unfruitful trees can be seen in the background of this painting, and above the painting is calligraphy. The importance of this painting is the image of the carpets which can show the characteristics of Timurid carpets; it is possible that the artist has illustrated the carpets based on the real carpets he has seen.

3.4 War Scene in Baysonghori *Shâhnâmeh*'s Paintings

One of the *Shâhnâmeh* Baysonghori's paintings shows Rustam killing a Dave. This scene is happening inside a cave which is surrounded by shrubs and spongy hills; a part of the hill is golden in colour. The blue sky and tree trunks can be seen at the depth of the painting. In the centre of the painting, Rustam is shown wearing armour, a helmet and metal-leather earmuffs has taken the Dave's horn while stabbing him in the heart. Rustam has hung his quiver, which has Simurgh sketch and Arabesque designs, from a tree outside the cave (Akbari & kashani, 2010, pp. 70-71).

Siavosh murdering is another illumination in this *Shâhnâmeh*. In this painting, people and warriors wearing war helmets and clothes use their spear flags and shields to attack. The helmets have earmuffs and the quivers have Arabesque designs and Phoenix and the shields have six-petal or twelve-petal flowers designs. The sky is Azure in this war scene, and the dried shrubs, which exist in the Ilkanid paintings, can be seen here as well. People have high leg boots on; perhaps soldiers were using these kinds of boots in the Ilkanid time.

The other war scene in *Shâhnâmeh* is the war with Indians. Indians, which have elephants in their army, stand in

the war line wearing amour, helmets and shields - the same outfits as the Iranians. Their flag has phoenix print (Figure 11). It is possible that because of the influence of Chinese arts and ideas, phoenix has entered in the Iranian arts during the Mongol times. Even though Iranians are familiar with the phoenix's name through written books—such as *Birds Mantego-alTeir* by Attar Neishabouri—long before Mongol times, the Simurgh has been used in Iranian arts during the Ilkanid (1200 to 1349 AD) period; some samples can be seen in tiles known as "Zarrin" found from Takht-e Soleiman and other Ilkanid places (Khazayi, 1969, pp. 60-65). The hills are golden in colour and are full of dried bushes and shrubs (Kanbay, 2003, pp. 120-123). The Indian flag is red and the soldiers' faces are black; their commander is taken off of the elephant with a rope by an Iranian soldier.

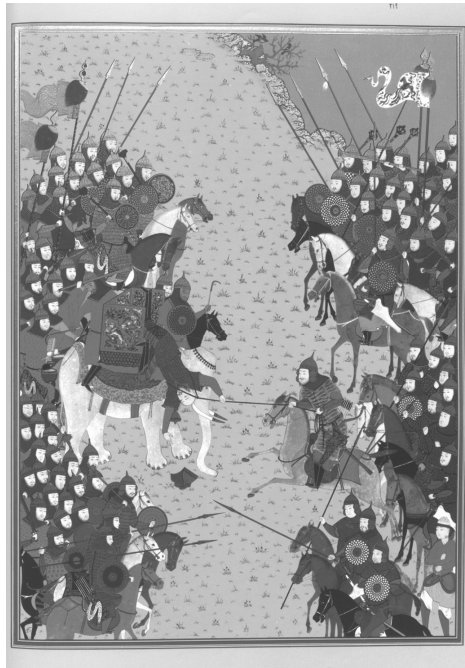


Figure 11. War with Indians

The challenges of Rustam with Afrasiab and Goodarz with Afrasiab are painted separately in this *Shâhnâmeh*. In both of these paintings, the calligraphy is above and under the painting margins and the sky is blue Azure. In the scene of Rustam and Afrasiab fights, the two challengers on horses are in the centre of the painting attacking each other, while some soldiers on the right and left sides are watching the war from the top of a sandy hill. The fighting takes place in a mountain area full of spongy hills. There are three other war scenes in *Shâhnâmeh* Baisonghori. One of these paintings shows two groups of armoured cavalier soldiers queuing in front of each other on a sandy hill. In this painting, swords, shields, quivers, spears and helmets along with the printed flags all have dragon symbols.

Another aspect of the war scenes, which are illustrated on a golden hill, is that elephant riders and horse riders are both equipped with amour. The sky is blue Azure in this scene and Nastaaliq calligraphy used above the margin and cavaliers are superior to the elephant riders who carry a flag with dragon symbol. The final noted detail about this scene is of the commander who is taken down off of his throne. This illustration only shows the fences and the two-story interior castle. The castle surroundings are separated by a river from surrounding lands, and the only connection to the outside world is through an illustrated bridge. The decorations of the castle fence are Azure tiles along with white Tholth calligraphy on a blue Azure background.

Esfandiar's attack to wolves, while wearing helmets and amours, is another illustrated page of *Shâhnâmeh* Baisonghori. A golden plain with flowering plants is in the centre of the painting, where Esfandiar's sword is drawn against the wolves. There are spongy and golden hills, blue skies, fruitful and unfruitful trees located in the depth of the painting (Figure 12). In this scene, calligraphy is limited to only the corner of the page, which shows the painting's independency from calligraphy during the Timurid period. One of the most important subjects in this miniature is the phoenix symbol on the Esfandiar quiver.



Figure 12. Esfandiar's attack to wolves

3.5 Coronation and Sitting Ceremony in Baisonghor Shâhnâmeh Miniature

Lohrasib coronation is another illumination in Shâhnâmeh Baisonghori. In this miniature, Lorasib is sitting on a throne and courtiers are hospitalizing him. He has a crenate crown and there is a square table in front of him, where a renowned white and blue bottle sits (these kind of bottles are either made or imported from China to Iran during the Timurid time). It is necessary to mention that making pots with an oval body and narrow, long neck with white and blue colors and designs of animals and birds were also common after Timurid (Vazeri, 2004, pp. 40-52). Here, the sky is blue Azure and full of golden stars, which is the main characteristic of Timurid paintings; this style can help us to recognize the scattered illustrated paintings which belong to the Timurid time. The columns used in the Lorasib building can be an evidence of using these kinds of columns in Timurid architecture. The column heading is arched and the bottom is like a vase. The calligraphy used in explaining this scene is Nastaaliq, which matures in the Timurid period (Tymouri, 2007, pp. 10-20).

In one painting in Shâhnâmeh, Esfandiar and Rustam are sitting on a table while holding their hands together. Their tables are on a carpet which has octagonal designs; most likely a common characteristic of Timurid carpets. Some warriors with caps and long swords on their waist can be seen around the main scene; their cloths and caps are the same, except for one who has an instrument playing a hand-held instrument (Figure 13). The instrument picture can help us in studying the musical instruments during the Timurid time. In a picture of this book, the ceremony of offering the cloth of honour is done without presence of any military. In fact, everybody in the ceremony is wearing a turban, which is possible that during the Timurid period the scientists used these kinds of hats (Akasheh, 1380; Solar, 2001, pp. 60-80). In this miniature, the floor is covered by octagonal tiles and walls, which have two wooden windows with square meshes and some decorations such as gilding and symmetric pots. At the top of the painting, there is a poem with Nastaaliq calligraphy and an inscription with white calligraphy on a blue Azure background.

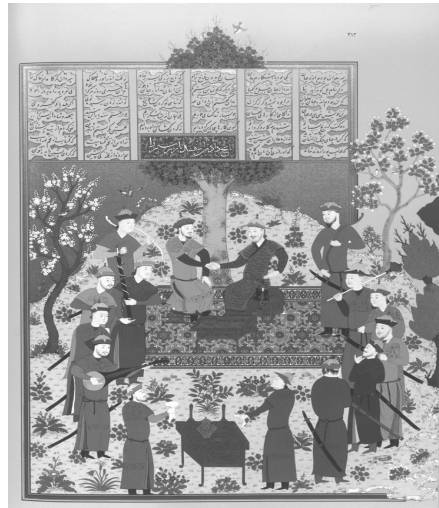


Figure 13. Esfandiar and Rustam in garden

4. Gilding Art in Shahnameh

Gilding skill, or decorating the calligraphy and painting pages in book layout and illustrating arts has been used for a long time. The gilding samples can be seen in Khajeh Mountain Paintings (1AD century), belonging to the Ashkani period, Manavi papers (7, 8 AD) belonging to Torfan, and also the calligraphy decoration of Quran in the beginning of Islam era from the 1AH (8AD) century until 8AH/15AD (Tajvidi, 1971AD, pp. 12-23). However, gilding has been developed during Timurid, and the best gilding samples can be found in the Timurid calligraphy such as Shâhnâmeh Baisonghori (David, 2005 AD, pp. 20-45). One sample of a gilding page in Shâhnâmeh Baisonghori is a gilding decoration of a few verses of Ferdowsi poems about wisdom, which begins with two hemstitches: “in the name of the God the owner of soul and wisdom, that it is the best thought.” Adorning this poetry page, a bergamot with an epigraph inside of it is located at the upper half of the page, and another bergamot with an epigraph inside is found in the lower area of the page. The poems are written in Nastaaliq on a golden background inside of the bergamot, and the margin adorns are red flowers within a rectangular frame (Figure 14).

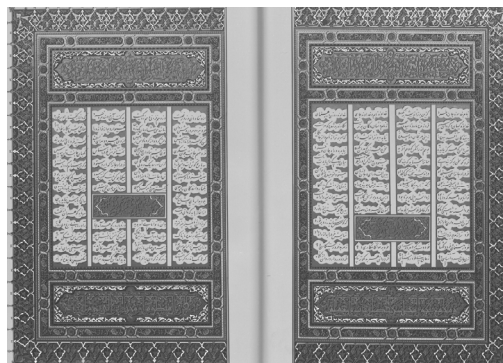


Figure 14. Gild page of Baysongor Shahnameh

5. Conclusion

The text of “Shahnameh Baisonghor” content is related to real and mythical history of Iran and should be considered as historical resources. Though we can use the contents of posts, but pages with painting of the book as effect of material and or archeological data are important and can help us to survey social, economic, scientific, cultural and religious of the Timurid period. For example we by taking help of Baysongor Merza Shahnameh Miniature, of course notice to painter inspiration from nature, can survey clothing, hat, musical instruments, architecture, architectural decorations, flags, pottery of Timourid era.

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Notes

- Note 1. Islamic chronology - prophet Mohammad, s migration from Mecca to Medina city, equal to 622AD.
- Note 2. Baysongori is another name for this artist.
- Note 3. Toranj is a kind of design on paper and carpets.
- Note 4. Lachak is a triangular design in the coner of a rectangular box.
- Note 5. Undercoat or into side.
- Note 6. Shamca or Sun design.
- Note 7. Central Asia is geographical area in east of Caspian sea.
- Note 8. Irfan is a religious attitude in Iranian culture.
- Note 9. Albino or Zal is a hero's name in Iran's epic.
- Note 10. A mythical bird said to be.
- Note 11. Phonix is a bird in legends.
- Note 12. Mogarnas is a decorative style in architecture.
- Note 13. Solar system is Iran's chronology. This chronology based on annual turn over earth around the sun.