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SAN'AT

ART

Navai's Poetry as Reflected in Miniature Paintings

(A study of Illustrated manuscripts preserved in Iranian collections)

Sevda Beheshti¹

Abstract

Based on the full support of Sultan Husayn Bayqara and Amir Ali-Shir Nava'i in the royal library, numerous prominent artists gathered and created valuable works. The works of Nava'i, which held high literary value, attracted the attention of artists and have been reproduced in various regions and across successive periods since then. Additionally, Amir Ali-Shir Nava'i played a significant role in enhancing the writing of Turkish works, such that after the creation of his works, there was a remarkable increase in the number of Turkish works produced.

The question of which stories and themes painters chose to illustrate, and the possible connection of these images with the verses of the poems, was addressed. In the course of this study, it was observed that all illustrations originated from adjacent verses. The exception was found in two manuscripts (Fawa'id al-Kibar and Hayret al-Abrar), where the images were not contemporaneous with the work and were added later, lacking a direct connection between the verses next to the paintings and the text. It is noteworthy that the selected cases for examination were illustrated manuscripts preserved in Iran, comprising seven manuscripts in total.

Key word: *Amir Ali Shir Navai, book illustration, art, Timurid, Sultan Husayn Bayqara, Chagatai Turkish.*

Introduction

The art of bookbinding and manuscript copying has always been a focus of attention among courts, artists, and scholars of science and literature throughout various periods. In the Timurid era,

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recognized as one of the golden ages of artistic creation, we witness remarkable artistry in various fields, including those related to books. The works produced in different regions under Timurid rule primarily include Turkish, Persian, and Arabic works.

One of the prominent artistic centers was the court of Sultan Husayn Bayqara, with Amir Ali-Shir Nava'i being an outstanding figure in this circle. He was a highly talented poet and scholar who authored dozens of extraordinary works, which have been appreciated and welcomed by all sectors of the literary and cultural community since their inception. This attention can be observed from the numerous copies produced of Nava'i's works over more than five centuries. Additionally, the presence of top-tier artists who engaged in the calligraphy and illustration of these works provides further evidence of this acclaim.

Copies of Nava'i's works are scattered across museums and collections worldwide, and depending on their level of craftsmanship, they incorporate various artistic elements such as gilding, illumination, painting, and calligraphy. In this text, we will examine works that have also benefited from the artistry of illustrators. Given that it is not feasible to cover all illustrated works in this context, we have selected illuminated manuscripts preserved in collections in Iran for review.

A question that arises in this journey is which stories from Nava'i's works did illustrators choose to depict? Furthermore, what role and significance did Nava'i's works play in enhancing the transcription of Turkish literature? These questions can help deepen our understanding of the relationship between literature and art during the Timurid period and demonstrate how Nava'i's works functioned not only as an important literary resource but also as an artistic inspiration.

Background of the Research

In the field of book arts and related arts during the Timurid period, numerous studies have been conducted. Amir Ali-Shir Nava'i, as one of the prominent figures of this era, has attracted the attention of historians, biographers, and researchers in the fields of science and literature since his lifetime. Research has been carried out regarding the artistic workshop of Sultan Husayn Bayqara, as well as an examination of the artistic features of Nava'i's works.

Yaqoub Ajand, in his research on the artistic workshop of Sultan Husayn Bayqara, notes that this workshop was a manifesta-

tion of the culture and arts of previous eras and reached its peak of flourishing and perfection under the guidance of Nava'i and his great advisor. Ajand writes that during this period, painting, which was previously subordinate to calligraphy in the Herat school, gradually became equal and on par with it [Ajand 89, 1381].

Bayqara's library can be seen as a fusion of the royal libraries from earlier periods, such as the libraries of Shah Rukh, Baysonqur Mirza, and Ulugh Beg. Several artists who worked in these libraries were drawn to this artistic center and began their work based on existing patterns and templates (same source, 93). There is also information about the artists who joined this artistic library from various art centers. For instance, Nava'i writes about Yari Shirazi, who came from Shiraz to Khorasan and became a master after training: "Indeed, this Yari produced remarkable designs; he was unparalleled in the realm of writing and gilding" [Monshi Qomi 144, 1352].

It is evident that the prominent artists of this period were trained by the great masters of previous eras. The famous calligraphers of this period, who were nurtured under the tutelage of masters such as Mir Ali Tabrizi, Jafar Tabrizi, and Azhar Tabrizi, were able to create numerous works with the support and attention of Ali-Shir Nava'i [Elahi-Zadeh et al., 61, 1393].

Another important topic is the extensive financial support observed in this library. Khand mir speaks of at least two hundred scholars gathering at the court of Sultan Husayn Bayqara [1353, 63-321]. Undoubtedly, this number of artisans received considerable wages. Various sources refer to the significant expenses incurred by Nava'i for compiling and editing exquisite books: "Nava'i spent considerable amounts on the compilation and editing of valuable books written and decorated by the most skilled calligraphers and illuminators" [Zamchi Esfarazi 29, 1338]. Furthermore, Khand mir also mentions in Makarim al-Akhlaq that Nava'i paid monthly salaries to those engaged in various scientific and artistic fields [Khand mir 146, 1378].

From the aforementioned points, it is clear that this library operated around the central figure of Amir Ali-Shir. This article aims to briefly examine the enthusiasm of painters for illustrating Nava'i's works, which are primarily in the Chagatai Turkish language. This examination can aid in a better understanding of the relationship between literature and art during the Timurid period and demonstrate how Nava'i's works served not only as an important literary resource but also as a source of artistic inspiration.

Discussion of the Illuminated Works of Nava'i

In examining the manuscripts of the works of Amir Ali-Shir Nava'i, it is observed that some of these manuscripts, due to their greater embellishments and visual beauty, were produced in the royal court. These works, especially those that allow for more illustration, have attracted the attention of painters and artists, becoming adornments of libraries and museums around the world.

Nava'i's manuscripts have always been of interest due to their literary and artistic richness. To better understand the stories chosen for illustrating these manuscripts, it is necessary to examine the illustrated versions. Since it is not possible to address all manuscripts here, this research will introduce and analyze seven selected illustrated versions of Nava'i's works preserved in collections in Iran.

The sources of information for these manuscripts include Fankha and the National Library of Iran's website. The following seven illustrated versions will be introduced and analyzed in order:

lose relationship between literature and art during the Timurid era and demonstrate how Nava'i's works have served not only as important literary sources but also as inspiration for artists.

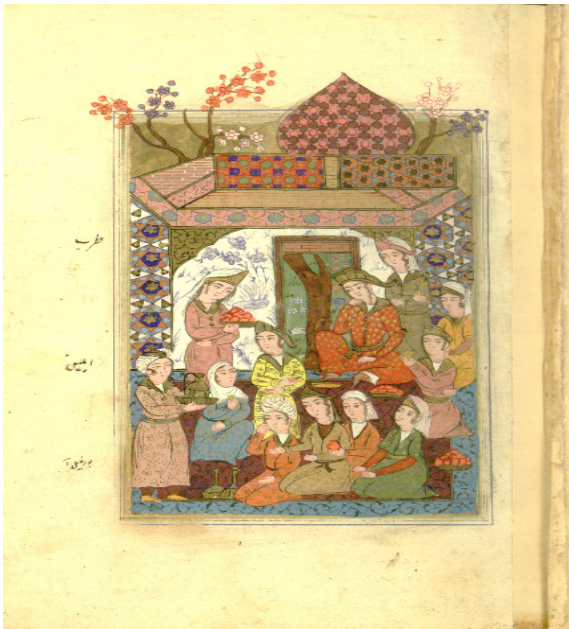


Image 1: : Divan of Nava'i, Astan Quds Razavi, Number 4784.

1. Nava'i Divan - Astan Quds Razavi, Number 4784.

This work, dating back to the 10th century AH, consists of 163 folios. The dimensions of the manuscript are 23.7 x 16.5 cm. It is written in Nasta'liq script with 13 lines per page. The paper of the

manuscript is a creamy color and is bound in a leather cover with a stamped design of corner pieces and a central medallion. This manuscript is decorated with a type of border decoration [1] known as "gold, dark blue, red, and green borders." The divan has a heading and four illustrations. All four illustrations are based on the verses and concepts found on the facing page.

For example, in the first image, we see a delightful and captivating scene of a wine-drinking party in a natural setting with blossoming trees and a group of figures wearing colorful and elegant clothing. On the facing page, the following verse is written:

«هوا خوش ایردی و ایلگیمدا بیر قده می ناب / ایچار ای دیم ولی میدین قده قده
»خوناب»

However, the painter here has only borrowed the concepts of happiness, the spring season, the cup, and drinking wine, and has nothing to do with the poet's drinking of bloody wine. The other illustrations in the manuscript are also inspired by the text of the divan. The general characteristics of all the illustrations include: a variety of bright colors, stiff figures with expressionless faces, a similarity in all the faces, dynamism in the scenes, the presence of both male and female figures in the gatherings side by side, the presence of geometric patterns in all the buildings and also the use of Islimi designs in carpets and rugs, the protrusion of tree branches and the dome of the building and other elements from the border, mostly beardless and mustache-less faces, Mongolian swirling clouds, clothes decorated with delicate golden flowers, the scattering of flowers and plants in various parts of the scenes outside the buildings, and the use of a single color in different elements of an illustration.

2 Navai's Divan – Sepahsalar Library, No. 368.

This manuscript of Nava'i's Divan, housed in the Sepahsalar Library and cataloged as number 368, was produced in the 10th century AH. While the exact date of creation and the scribe's name are not explicitly stated, the content from page 125 onwards suggests that it was copied in the early 10th century AH. Notable features include: 148 pages, 17 lines per page, dimensions of 18x27 cm, Bukhara paper, a double-sided morocco leather binding, and Nasta'liq script. It's worth noting that the manuscript is missing 19 pages.

The border decoration is of the 'dual' type, and there are illustrations on folios 47 and 110. The first illustration depicts a hunting scene. This couplet, which alludes to the story of Bahram hunting a wild ass, is written in the lower margin of the image, and the il-

illustration directly corresponds to the verses in the margins of this page. The next scene depicts Farhad cutting the mountain, based on the verse: 'With a heart full of sorrow, Farhad wanders aimlessly; his fresh face has become like a leopard on the mountain peak.' In both images, the design and color are in harmony. Verses are written within the illustrations, which are the same as the illustrated couplets. The proportions are not strictly adhered to; for example, humans are drawn larger than horses and taller than trees. Elements like trees or rocks extend beyond the border. Qizilbash hats are depicted, and flowers and plants are scattered throughout the image. In some cases, facial expressions are shown, and there is shading on the elements. Cold colors dominate, and there is visual balance in the arrangement of the scene's details. The corner of the border, opposite the binding, is broken diagonally



Image 2: Divan of Nava'i, Sepahsalar Library, Number 368.

3. Navai's Divan, Golestan Palace, Number 2195.

This manuscript of Nava'i's Divan, housed in the Golestan Palace and cataloged as number 2195, was completed in 1014 AH by Shah Husayn bin Fakhr al-Din Ali Shahabi Heravi. It contains 220 pages with 12 lines per page and measures 14x24 cm. The pages are made of colored Bukhara paper. The binding is cherry-colored timaj with a jade-green background, featuring a central medallion and corner pieces. The inside cover is adorned with a lacquer-paint-

ed surface, a gold inscription, and a landscape scene. The colophon indicates that the manuscript was finished in 1014 AH.

The titles of the poems are inscribed on the gold-ground, inlaid, double-page margins, adorned with black Rumi-style arabesques. The script is a clear and elegant nasta'liq, written in gold and white ink, with some elements in other colors. At the beginning of the ghazals, there is a magnificent, double-page, inlaid heading. The border decoration of the manuscript is a 'dual' border of blue, red, and green.

All the illustrations have a direct connection with the verses on the facing page or in the margins near the illustrations. In Image 3, Layla and Majnun are depicted. The verse above the image reads, "ای مصور سیزماغیل لیلی و مجنون صورتین / بس مین و یاریم حدیثی صفحه دوراندا نقش" "This verse served as inspiration for the artist.

The characteristics of the Divan in the Golestan Palace include: elements protruding from the border, Chinese-style clouds, stiff figures, disproportionate elements, a predominance of natural elements, and human figures that are relatively small in comparison to the overall space of the painting. There are no empty spaces within the image.



Image 3: Divan of Nava'i. Golestan Palace. Number 2195.

4. Navai's Divan - Majles Shura Library, No. 8371.

This divan, like the previous ones, is a divan of Turkish poetry

and was likely written in the 11th century. It consists of 159 pages and features various lines. The dimensions of the manuscript are 22.5 × 14.5 cm, and its cover is made of a burgundy fabric with a floral design. The borders are drawn in a single line of lapis lazuli, but the border decoration of this divan is done in gold with three different scripts. At the beginning of the manuscript, there is a beautifully decorated title page, and the pages are arranged in two columns. Apparently, the mention of wine and intoxication was enough to inspire the artist to create the illustrations for this divan. The poem on the page opposite the illustration reads:

"بونوع که آی لار می وصل هوسی دن / مخمور بولوب مین / مشکل که یازیلغای
بوخماری که منکادور / ساغر بولوب افلاک "



Image 4: Navai's Divan - Majles Shura Library, No. 8371.

In this image, we observe a balance of colors and the use of rich tones. The clothing is adorned with golden patterns. The excitement and energy of the gathering are conveyed to the viewer through the movement of the elements. The figures in the foreground are drawn smaller, while the larger figures in the middle emphasize their importance. It is likely that the person holding a cup in one hand and a book in the other is the poet himself, depicted in this scene.

5. Hayrat al-Abrrar, University of Tehran, Number 3645.

This manuscript, dating back to the 10th and 11th centuries AH, consists of 148 pages and 15 lines per page, written in the Nasta'liq script. Its dimensions are 19 × 14 centimeters. The paper is of

Samarkandi type, and the binding is red embossed timaj. This manuscript is unruled and contains six illustrations in the margins of some pages, which do not have a specific connection to the text and appear to have been added later.

Image 5 shows one of these illustrations, depicting a horseman, with the writer unable to find any link between this figure and the text. It is noteworthy that all human features have been erased later, making the facial elements unrecognizable. These characteristics reflect changes in the preservation and artistic interpretation of ancient texts and may provide insights into the manuscript's history and its usage.



Image 5: Hayrat al-Abrar, University of Tehran, Number 3645.

6. Sabai Sayyar, Shiraz National Library, Number 111-3005.

This manuscript consists of 138 folios, with 19 lines on each page, and its dimensions are 19 × 30 centimeters. It is written in Nasta'liq script and was completed in the year 1018 AH (Hijri). The name of the scribe is not mentioned at the end of the manuscript. This version features a religious header, and the titles are inscribed in red.

The manuscript is laid out in a tabular format, specifically

“red lapis lazuli in the middle.” Additionally, it includes six miniatures, two of which remain incomplete and are only at the initial design stage. One of the pages is completely blank, with verses placed at the top and bottom of the image. In the center of this page, there is a frame similar to those in previous illustrations, indicating that the seventh and final illustration was intended to be drawn there.

These images do not refer to specific verses but rather depict stories told by a passerby. The first notable feature of these illustrations is the superiority of design over color. The colors used are very subtle, and the artist has chosen a limited color palette; however, in certain elements like tree leaves, various tones of a single color have been employed. Strong processing is observed in some areas, and the artist has attempted to convey a third dimension in certain parts, such as buildings. The tabular layout on all illustrated pages provides sections at the top and bottom for writing parts of the poem.



Image 6: Sabai Sayyar - Shiraz National Library - Number 111-3005.

7.Fawa'id al-Kibar, Tabriz National Library, Number 1650.

The manuscript “Benefits of Arrogance,” which is preserved in the Tabriz library, consists of 162 pages and is written in two columns. The dimensions of this manuscript are 23.6 × 15.6 centimeters. The cover is made of black, embossed leather with a floral design. This manuscript contains four miniatures on pages 43a, 70a, 86b, and

136b. It appears that the manuscript was originally intended to be illuminated, as there are blank spaces left for headings.



Image 7: *Fawa'id al-Kibar*, Tabriz National Library, Number 1650.

All the illustrations were added to the manuscript later, and the sections that were illustrated had previously been parts of the text that were erased to allow for the painting to be executed over the earlier text (Razmi, 122:1402). In image 7, one example of these illustrations can be seen, where there is no direct link between these scenes and the text on adjacent pages.

The illustrations are richly colored, and dynamism is clearly evident in all the scenes. The frames are irregular and sometimes tiered, with a great variety of patterns on clothing, textiles, and carpets. The figures are executed with precision and delicacy, enhancing the beauty and appeal of the manuscript.

In examining selected manuscripts, in addition to describing their visual and content features, the relationship between text and image has also been taken into account. All the texts in this review are written in Chagatai Turkish. Our selection was not specifically based on the language of the work, but rather focused on the illustrated manuscripts available in Iranian collections, all of which are works of Nava'i. Although there are approximately three hundred manuscripts of Nava'i's works listed in libraries and museums in Iran, only seven of these manuscripts contain illustrations. It is worth noting that throughout history, paintings have been separated from manuscripts and sold, often ending up in other collections, a phenomenon that has

repeatedly occurred.

In other parts of the world, the number of illustrated Navā'i manuscripts is significantly higher than what is addressed here. This is while, before the emergence of this literary, cultural, and artistic phenomenon, the number of Turkish manuscripts that artists referred to for creating artistic works was considerably less. This indicates the growth and expansion of Turkish art and literature in various historical periods and highlights its significance in the culture and art of the region.

Conclusion

Based on the research conducted on illustrated manuscripts of Amir Ali Shir Nava'i's works held in Iranian collections, it was found that the majority of illustrations were directly inspired by the adjacent text and verses. The only exceptions were two manuscripts, *Fawa'id al-Kibar* from the Tabriz National Library and *Hayrat al-Abrar* from the University of Tehran Library, where the illustrations were added later, possibly to enhance the overall value of the works. In these two instances, a direct connection between the adjacent verses and the miniatures could not be established.

Another important point to note is that the flourishing of illustrated Turkish manuscripts by calligraphers, painters, and illuminators coincided precisely with the emergence of the literary genius, Nava'i. Prior to this, Turkish works were not illustrated on such a large scale. Nava'i's works served as a pivotal starting point for the popularity of Turkish texts among artists, leading to their widespread illustration and copying.

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Navoiy she'riyatining miniatyuralarda aks etishi

(Eron fondlaridagi miniatyurali qo'lyozmalar asosida)

Sevda Beheshti¹

Abstrakt

Sulton Husayn Boyqaro saroyida hamda Amir Alisher Navoiyning har tomonlama qo'llab-quvvatlashi asosida ko'plab mashgur ijodkorlar bebaho asarlar yaratdilar. Alisher Navoiyning yuksak adabiy qimmatga ega bo'lgan asarlari ijod ahli e'tiborini tortdi va keyingi davrlarda turli hududlarda ko'chirildi. Amir Alisher Navoiy turkiy adabiyot rivojida katta rol o'ynadi, shuning uchun uning asarlari qo'lyozmalari yaratilgandan so'ng sezilarli darajada ko'plab nusxada ko'chirilgan.

Mazkur maqolada musavvirlar badiiy tasvir etish uchun qanday syujet va mavzularni tanlagani, chizilgan obrazlarning she'riy misralar bilan aloqadorligi ko'rib chiqildi. Kuzatishlar davomida barcha tasvirlar qo'shni misralardan kelib tasvir etilgani ma'lum bo'ldi. Buning uchun ikki qo'lyozma ("Favoyid ul-kibar" va "Hayrat al-abror") tanlangan, ulardagi tasvirlar asar yaratilgan davrda emas, keyinchalik qo'shilgani, rasmlar va matn yonidagi misralar o'rtasida bevosita bog'liqlik yo'qligi ko'rinadi.

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Tadqiqot uchun Eronda saqlanayotgan jami yettita qo'lyozmani o'z ichiga olgan miniatyuralar tanlandi.

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