The Patronage of the Vizier Mirzā Salmān
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One often makes suggestions, or proposes theories, without ever discovering new material to reassess them. Thus, when in the 2000 issue of Muqarnas, I surmised that the Divān of Hāfez (Topkapi H986) dated October 18, 1581, was made for the vizier Mirzā Salmān (d. 1583), I never expected additional corroborating elements to come up one day. My proposition then rested on the fact that the Topkapi Divān was illustrated by artists who subsequently worked on the vizier’s 1582 Sefāt-ol-ʿāsheqin, and thus likely to have been prepared for the same patron.¹ Two additional manuscripts, which recently appeared on the art market, not only confirm those assumptions and attributions, but also shed more light on the patronage of Mirzā Salmān and his relationship with the artist Mohammadi; one is a copy of the Bustān of Saʿdi dated 1579 and the other a manuscript of the Salāmān va Absāl dated 1572.² In this article I shall discuss the merits of each and try to illustrate the role of Mirzā Salmān in filling the void in Safavid courtly patronage after the devastating blows that Shāh Esmāʿīl II (r. 1576-78) inflicted upon the Safavid royal family, and hence, on royal patronage. In conclusion, I shall emphasize the pivotal role of Soltān Ebrāhim Mirzā (1540-77) library-atelier in the training of artists who shall pave the way for the development of the next important school of painting, namely that of Rezā ʿAbāsi and his followers.

I. The 1579 Bustān of Saʿdi

The 1579 Bustān is a sumptuous manuscript whose passage through the Indian lands has resulted in two types of damages. The first consists of extensive wear and tear on the periphery of the manuscript, and termite holes close to the covers, including the colophon page (fig. 3). The second is damage through an act of vandalism performed by a religious bigot who took upon himself to deface the miniature figures in a most vicious way: by removing the paint with the tip of a sharp knife, penetrating sometimes into the core of paper (fig. 1).³ Luckily though, he lacked thoroughness in his destructive aims, as one illustration escaped his attention and remains unscathed (fig. 5). The vandal also seems to have concentrated his defacing zeal on the courtiers while sparing attendants and commoners. The smearing on the pages has now been cleaned, and lacunae have been filled through the efforts of master restorer Ahmad Moghbel. But the faces remain blank as no restorer can recreate the expressions emanating from the brush of the original master painter.

³ In their present state, the miniatures have been restored by filling the damaged spots in order to arrest the flaking process.
Fig. 1 – Damaged faces of the Bustān
Fig. 2 – The Bustān’s signed frontispiece by ʿAbdollāh Mozahheb

The colophon of the manuscript reads (fig. 3):

“(This book) was completed by the help of God and through his benevolence. Has written it, this sinful slave who longs for the forgiveness of the Lord of the Earth and Heavens, Soltān Hosayn, in the months of the year nine hundred eighty seven of the Hijra (AH 987/1579 AD.)”

It obviously has much in common with the colophons of the above mentioned Topkapi manuscript, of which, the main one is reproduced here as fig. 4, and reads:

“The (copying) of these noble and auspicious sayings were finished by the hands of this needy weakling who yearns for the favors of the Lord of the Two Worlds, Soltān-Hosayn son of Qāsem of Tun, may God forgive them both, on the twentieth of the Holy month of Ramadan of the year 985 after the Hijra (Dec. 1, 1577).”

They are all by the same hand, and penned by the calligrapher Soltān-Hosayn of Tun. Similarly, the elaborate frontispiece of our manuscript is signed by ʿAbdollāh-e Mozahheb (fig. 2), in a location reminiscent of his signature on the frontispiece of the

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4 The Topkapi manuscript has three colophons, all of them discussed in Soudavar 2000, pp. 62-65. The above quote pertains to the second colophon of the manuscript.
Topkapi Divān of Hāfez, as well as the Freer’s celebrated Haft Awrang manuscript commissioned by Ebrāhīm Mirzā.

As for the illustrations of the manuscript, I shall explain that they were chosen specifically to relate to important events in the political life of Mirzā Salmān. All four are therefore paintings in which the vizier allegorically figures in each of them. Because, as a group, they narrate Mirzā Salmān’s rise to power, rather than present them in the order they appear in the manuscript, I shall weave them into a brief biography of the vizier in order to show the relevance of each illustration.

I-2. The historical narrative
Mirzā Salmān was a scion of the powerful Jāberi Ansāri family of Isfahan who traced back their ancestry to Jāber b. `Abdollāh-e Ansāri, one of the early companions (ansārs) of the Prophet Mohammad. His father had achieved high ranks in the Safavid administration, and the young Salmān followed suit under his tutelage. He soon became the superintendent of the royal household (nāzer-e boyutāt), and it is in this capacity that, after the demise of Shāh Tahmāsb (r. 1524-76), he accompanies Ebrāhīm Mirzā to greet the arrival of Esmā`il II on the outskirts of Qazvin in May of 1576. He was initially appointed Chief Scribe to the vizier Mirzā Shokrollāh (d. 1581). But he must have quickly gained the favors of the new shāh, for within a year he is nominated vazir-e a`lā or Supreme Vizier in lieu of Mirzā Shokrollāh, at a time when Esmā`il had consolidated his power and was ready to eliminate all potential contenders.

I-2-1. The Syrian king and the apprehensive dervishes
This folio, being the third and only intact miniature of the book, illustrates Mirzā Salmān’s witnessing, from close quarters, the momentous decision of Esmā`il II to decimate each and every possible contender to the throne (fig. 5). Being apprehensive about the Qezelbāsh amirs’ reaction to such a decision, Esmā`il moved cautiously and put a group of six princes under house arrest, each guarded by a trusted lieutenant. He then seized upon an incident, perhaps instigated by him, to divert attention from his scheme: he neutralized the Qezelbāsh amirs by sending them to quell the unruly Safavid dervishes who had attacked city guardsmen while, concurrently, ordering his lieutenants to do away with the princes in their custody. Once he got word that all six princes had been killed, he came back and pardoned the arrested dervishes brought to court.

The Bustān story chosen to illustrate this episode is one from the section on Humbling: a Syrian king, who is visiting in disguise the local markets, overhears two dervishes disparaging him; he summons them to his court in order to reprimand them, but heeds their pleas and ends up releasing them.

The common denominator to the two stories embedded in this painting is that dervishes face punishment in both but are ultimately pardoned. However, while the Sa`di story specifies the number of dervishes as only two, our miniature depicts one more, slightly

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7 Qomi 1980, II:618.
8 Qomi 1980, II:648.
9 Monshi-yé Torkamān 1971, I:208-09
apart, in order to allude to the higher number of Safavid dervishes involved in the attack against city guardsmen. As witness to the Shah’s sinister ploy, Mirzā Salmān is standing in the doorway and holding his usual staff, but signals his detachment from the scheme by turning his head, and by feigning disapproval through a murmur addressed to a young subordinate, perhaps his own son. The king, though, is listening to the dervishes, and seems noticeably satisfied, presumably after receiving the reports of the execution of the Safavid princes, conveyed by the lieutenant holding a bow and standing behind him. In the Iranian tradition, the spilling of the blood of princes portended bad omen, and that is why their execution was usually carried through strangulation by a bowstring. Hence the brandishing of the bow by the shāh’s acolyte.

In my 2000 article, I had enumerated a number of stylistic characteristics for Muhammadi’s paintings, many of which are recognizable here, including: his penchant for transgressing out of the image frame and blending into the margins; the inter-columnar gold foliage and arabesques on a lapis background; pencil-thin headgear batons; the arrow-shaped fingers of his plane-tree leaves; and his signature interacting pair of foxes. The highly polished painted surface and the crispness of details notwithstanding, we can see the true measure of Mohammadi’s genius in the facial expressions of his various actors (fig. 6): the dervishes have an apprehensive look fearing the wrath of the Shāh; the latter is attentive to the pleas of the dervishes and looks amused; Mirzā Salmān is feigning disinterest, while his young subordinate is urging him—through finger pointing—to listen to the Shah’s phony questioning of the dervishes.

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**Fig. 5 - The Syrian king and the apprehensive dervishes**

**Fig. 6 – Varieties in facial expressions (detail of fig. 5)**

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10 Monshi-ye Torkamān for instance, gives the added information that princes were strangled with a cord (rīsmān; Monshi-ye Torkamān 1971 , I:212), or with a bowstring (be zeh-e kamān; idem, I:240). The practice goes back to Sasanian times as reported in Ebn-e Balkhi, where both Khosrow II (r. 590-628) and his father are said to have been killed by a bowstring (pp. 100 and 107).

1-2-2. The story of an old man abusing a young girl.

It is the last painting in the manuscript (fig. 7), from the section on Education, and it illustrates Mirzā Salmān’s role in the discovery of Esmā’īl II’s death.

Safavid princes often indulged in wine, opium, or homosexuality. Incarcerated for years in the remote fortress of Qahqaheh, Esmā’īl had developed a strong penchant for all. Once he consolidated his power and eliminated his rivals, he set his eyes on one Hasan Beyk the son of the Halvāchi or halvā-maker who became his lover. On the eve of November 24, 1577, Esmā’īl and Hasan Beyk had roamed around town, and consumed a fair amount of fluniā,12 in addition to heavy drinking. Later in the night, they retired to Hasan Beyk’s quarters, but neither could rise the next morning. By noontime, as a faint voice crying for help was heard through the locked doors, Mirzā Salmān took upon himself to break the doors and enter the private quarters of the king’s lover. A suffocated Esmā’īl lied motionless and breathless on the ground, while holding in his arms Hasan Beyk, whose limbs were equally numbed. The shāh passed away shortly after, but his debilitated lover survived, and explained that the fluniā bottle (hoqqeh) of the night before had been unsealed and tampered with, suggesting foul play from Esmā’īl’s enemies, of which he had many.

A story of Sa’di in which he encounters a huge black man abusing his beautiful slave provides the necessary setting for the illustration of the decisive role that Mirzā Salmān played in the instances that led to the discovery of Esmā’īl’s death. Because suffocation is commonly referred to in Persian as “turning black,” the image of a black man squeezing a young slave in his arms was to evoke the fate of Esmā’īl, lying suffocated next to his beloved Hasan Beyk. Thus, Sa’di watching the entangled lovers, alludes to the vizier bursting into the scene and discovering the dying corpses.

The private quarters that Esmā’īl had set up for Hasan Beyk was next to the Secretarial Palace (Daftarkhanheh), and one of it doors gave on to the Royal Equestrian Square (Meydān-e asb).13 It was attached to the Dowlat-khāneh, the House of Government, built under Tahmāsb as a pavilion surrounded by gardens.14

Although the dying scene is transplanted unto a garden, in order to reflect the Bustān story, it is accurately placed by the side of the Dowlatkhāneh, marked by an elaborate dome, not referred to in the Bustān. The first building must be the Daftarkhāneh, and the small pavilion in between the Daftarkhāneh and the Dowlatkhāneh therefore depicts the private quarters of the shāh’s lover, where they were actually found.

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12 The fluniā was a potent mixture of opium and cannabis, see http://www.loghatnaameh.com.

This illustration (fig. 8), from the section on Justice, is about the rise of a court functionary to the post of vizier causing jealousy with the previous one. It admirably reflects Mirzā Salmān’ maneuvers to take the place of Shāh Esmā‘īl II’s original vizier, Mirza Shokrollāh. In the illustration, the kneeling Mirzā Salmān, as the newcomer, is pleading his case before the king by refuting accusations brought by the older vizier, alias Mirzā Shokrallāh, standing with a silk red robe in the doorway and holding a ministerial staff. In the preamble of this Bustān story, the newcomer deflects the attacks of his rival by arguing that:

حسودی که بیند بجای خودم
How can he not say bad things about me,

وزیری که جاه من آش ببریخت
the jealous rival who sees me taking his place.

One must far runaway, from the malevolence of a vizier
Who lost face by my rise to prominence.
While these verses seem to have offered better choices for the key verse around which this miniature should have been composed, the choice of the artist fell instead on a verse in which the functionary sites, as proof of his devotion to the king, his long years of service in his retinue and how he lost his pearl-like teeth in the process:

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\text{دُو رَسْتِه ذُرُم درَهْن دَهشَت جَائِ} \\
I \text{had two rows of pearl-like teeth in my mouth,}
\]
like a wall built out of silvery bricks

We can only assume that the prominence of this verse in the composition, was an obvious pointer to the identity of Mirzā Salmān, one that a contemporary reader would have immediately understood. Unfortunately, no other document gives us a physical description of Mirzā Salmān to ascertain this hypothesis. Two additional indices, however, corroborate the identity of the kneeling man: a) he has a golden pen box tucked in his waistband, which conforms to Mirzā Salmān’s position as chief scribe before his assumption of the vizierate, b) the depiction of his face (figs. 9, 11), with a distinctive black beard, is not only consistent with all other images of him in this manuscript, but also with the elaborate face of a dervish depicted by the artist Shaykh Muhammad, which we had previously surmised to represent Mirzā Salmān (fig. 10).

**I-2-4. The story of a devout man being beheaded unjustly.**

The second illustration of the manuscript (from the section on Justice) is its grandest. It fittingly evokes the crucial event that propelled Mirzā Salmān to the forefront of the political stage, and placed the reins of power in his hands, albeit for a few years only.

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15 In his research on the Shāhnāma manuscripts, F. Mehran has concluded that the last verse in the upper half of the illustration (which he calls the break-line verse) is the one that sets the tone for the illustration and provides its major compositional element; Mehran 2006. I believe that this was an almost universal practice and that the break-line verses in the illustrations of our manuscript also defined their composition

After Esmāʿīl II’s death, the amirs “in the company of the Āsaf of the age”17 (i.e., Mirzā Salmān) went to Pari Khān Khānum (1548-1578), in order to discuss the fate of the kingdom and kingship.”18 The latter was Tahmāsb’s influential daughter who in the last years of her father’s reign had become all powerful and acted as his éminence grise. Upon the death of Tahmāsb, she championed the cause of Esmāʿīl against all other candidates, thinking that some twenty years in prison had taken a toll on him, and she could continue to play her role of éminence grise as before. But contrary to her expectations, no sooner had Esmāʿīl ascended the throne that he put her under house arrest, and lured her powerful uncle, Shamkhāl Soltān-e Cherkes, into the circle of his close lieutenants in charge of princely executions.

Now, Mirzā Salmān knew very well that with Esmāʿīl II gone, Pari Khān Khānum was going to take revenge on all those who had prospered at her expense, especially the grand vizier. Therefore, before the princess could close the gates of the city he escaped toward Shiraz where the only surviving son of Tahmasb, the blind Shāh Mohammad (r. 1578-87), was preparing to join the capital. In Shiraz, he offered his services to the new king and his very ambitious wife, Mahd-e Olyā, in whom he saw an ally against Pari Khān Khānum. The former quickly understood that unless the princess was eliminated, the amirs would gravitate around her and not the queen. And thus, Mahd-e Olyā’s first act upon arrival in Qazvin was to order the execution of Pari Khān Khānum, along with her uncle Shamkhāl Soltān the Cherkes.19 The road was now clear for the vizier to not only assume control of the administration, as before, but also to hold sway over the military, supposedly on behalf of the queen.

A joint attack by the Ottoman commander Osmān Pāshā and the Tatar chieftain Ādel Gerāy Khān provided the opportunity for Mirzā Salmān to prove his military valor. The invaders were defeated, Osmān Pāshā fled to Shirvān, and Ādel Gerāy Khān was captured. Rather than allowing Mirzā Salmān pursue his campaign, the queen summoned him back to Court, along with his prisoner. Capitalizing on “her military” victory, Mahd-e Olyā decided to settle some old scores with her own cousins who by a decision of Tahmāsb had taken the governorship of Māzandarān, once a fiefdom of her father. A first military expedition resulted in the capture of a local governor named Shams-od-din-e Div. Angry at the amirs’ failure to capture Mirzā Khān, the ruler of Māzandarān, she ordered a new expedition. The two veteran commanders, Pireh Mohammad and Shāhrokh Soltān, in charge of the expedition, realize that they cannot overtake the lofty mountain fortress in which Mirzā Khān had taken refuge and therefore, they negotiate his surrender by giving their words that he will not be executed. Meanwhile, Mahd-e Olyā’ not only commands the execution of the Tatar prisoner, but parades Shams-od-din in a most humiliating way through the city before killing him as well.20 And upon the arrival of Mirzā Khān, she orders his execution, despite the objections of the veteran amirs and the pleas for clemency from various courtiers. Seeing the vengefulness of the queen and

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17 Since Āsaf was the vizier of the Prophet Soleyman, his name was often used to describe a prominent vizier, especially Mirzā Salmān who was referred as such in the colophon of his Sefāt-ol- āsheqin; Soudavar 1992, p. 227.
18 Qomi 1980, II:656.
19 Monshi-ye Torkamān 1971, 1:226
20 Shams-od-in was paraded beardless, and dressed as a woman on a camel with a man hugging him hugging him from behind; Qomi 1980, II:690-702.
fearing for their own lives, the Qezelbāsh *amirs* decide to eliminate her. She is executed shortly after.

The one who gained most from all these events was of course Mirzā Salmān, who had a hand in the plot and now stood unchallenged in the political arena. With all rivals eliminated, he further consolidated his position by marrying his daughter to the young prince Hamzeh Mirzā, the elder son of the blind Shāh Mohammad. But less than two years later, the vizier’s arrogance caused his own downfall, and he in turn was assassinated by the very Qezelbāsh *amirs* whom he had used to eliminate his own enemies.

Thus, the killing of Mirzā Khān constituted a defining moment in the political career of Mirzā Salmān, and an event that had to be grandly illustrated. To achieve this task, Mohammadi uses the story of the beheading of an innocent devout man from the *Bustān* in lieu of the beheading of Mirzā Khān whom the Safavid chronicles qualify as *Sayyedzādeh- ye bigonāh*, or the innocent descendant of the Prophet Mohammad.

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21 Both Mahd-e Olya and Mirzā Salmān had leaned on Hamza Mirzā to consolidate their power base, Maeda 2001, p. 159.
22 Qomi 1980, II:690-702.
At the same time, the killing of the queen was a reprehensible act that needed justification. It had to be advertised as a reaction to an odious act, disapproved even by the queen’s own son. That is why the original verses of Sa‘di that are imbedded in the illustration—and explain the subject of the illustration—have been modified in the following manner:

| گﻔﺘﺶ ﺍی ﻧﺎﻣﻮﺭ ﺷﻬﺮﻳﺎﺭ (One) | یکی) یسر گفتش ای نامور شهریار His son told him, O great king |
| ﭘﺴﺮ (yeki) | (پیکی) یکی نست ازین مرد صالح بدار (Come) Let this pious man be free, at once |
| ﻢﻨﺪ ﻣﺮﺩ ﻣﺮﺩ ﺧﻠﻖ ﺑﺪﺍﺭ | Whom many trust and rely upon |
| ﻢﻨﺪ ﻣﺮﺩ ﻣﺮﺩ ﺧﻠﻖ ﺑﺪﺍﺭ | It is not wise to alienate with one stroke so many people |

The original—but suppressed—words are presented in parenthesis, and their replacements are underlined. In the original poem, it is an anonymous person (yeki, one) who addresses the king, but here, it is the son (pesar) who stands before the ruler and pleads for the innocence of the about-to-be-executed kneeling man. This deliberate modification of the text is a phenomenon encountered in a number of other manuscripts in which the illustrations were meant to refer to an historical event, in addition to the story of the text. The production of such a manuscript was in reality an intellectual game devised between patron and artist. Therefore, its self-imposed rules could easily be modified, and the authenticity of the text sacrificed, in order to obtain more potent images. The modified text of the Bustān here, in conjunction with the illustration, was meant to show the opposition of Hamza Mirzā to the king’s decision (but in reality to his mother’s decision) to behead the innocent sayyed.

2-1. Inheriting the Ebrāhim Mirzā library-atelier

With the discovery of Mirzā Salmān’s Bustān manuscript, we can see that soon after the demise of Ebrāhim Mirzā, the vizier appropriates for himself the services of two painters from the prince’s library-atelier, namely Abdollāh-e Mozahheb and Mohammadi, to whom he shall commission more works later on. This should come as no surprise to us, for his position as Superintendent of Royal Households under Tahmāsb, had brought him into close contact with Ebrāhim Mirzā who was then the Ishik Āqāsi Bāshi or Court Minister. By the year 1579, the senior contributors to the prince’s celebrated Haft Awrang (Freer 46.12), namely Āqā Mirak, ‘Abd-ol-‘Aziz, Mirzā Ali and Mozaffār ‘Ali must have been all dead or incapacitated. The hand of Shaykh Mohammad, however, who was younger and still alive, is conspicuously absent in the first two manuscripts of

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23 I had observed a similar manipulation of text in relation to the great Mongol Shāhnāma, nicknamed Abusa‘id-nāma (Soudavar 1996, pp. 173-75), and also in a French manuscript of the History of Alexander the Great, prepared for Charles the Bold of Burgundy (1433-77), which is now at the Getty (Soudavar 2008, pp. 73-73).

24 Qomi 1980, II:618.

25 For the Freer Jāmi paintings attributed to these artists see Welch 1976, pp. 24-27, 98-125; and Simpson 1997, pp. 366-68.
the vizier, i.e., his 1579 *Bustān* and 1581 *Divān* of Hāfez. Perhaps his idiosyncratic style and his turbulent compositions were not to the liking of Mirzā Șalmān who seems to have favored more classical settings. But Shaykh Mohammad’s hand reappears in the 1582 *Sefāt-ol-`āsheqin*.26 Perhaps because the latter manuscript was meant as a gift destined for the crown prince Hamza Mirzā. Not only the addition of a work by a third painter from the library-atelier of Ebrāhīm Mirzā would have enhanced the prestige of such a work, but his subtle humor may have amused the young prince. Indeed, in the last painting of said manuscript, *The Poor Man and the Prince*, Shaykh Mohammad adds a humorous touch by twisting the foot of the polo-playing prince backward (fig. 13). As a result, his foot engages the stirrup in the wrong direction and in an anatomically impossible manner! It’s a device that the painter had tried once before for a pastoral scene27 in which one of the princesses has actually two left hands (fig. 14). A closer look even shows that this came as an afterthought, and the painter deliberately reworked the hand to create an impossible gesture.

By all accounts, Ebrāhīm Mirzā’s atelier had been able to produce a new crop of painters whose association with the prince was a source of enormous prestige. Thus, the legend Behzād-e Ebrāhimi on one of the paintings of the 1981 *Divān* of Hāfez (H986) clearly denotes affiliation to the prince’s library atelier (fig.15). But said painting is visibly attributable to Mohammadi, and as argued elsewhere, this added attribution must have been the result of a misunderstanding by the Ottomans of explanations provided by a gift-bearing Safavid mission.28 Members of the latter mission were surely trying to enhance the value of their gifts by explaining that Mohammadi was like the “Behzād” of Ebrāhīm Mirzā. The metaphor was probably lost on the Turks who simply understood the painter as named “Behzād-e Ebrāhimi.” From our perspective though, this appellation is

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27 For a complete reproduction of this painting in color see Hunt for Paradise, p. 132.
28 As I have argued elsewhere, the Safavid library had been badly depleted, and the Safavid mission that Hamzā Mirzā was preparing to send to the Ottomans had to refurbish many manuscripts, including the 1581 *Divān* of Hāfez, to have worthy manuscripts for the Ottoman Soltān Morād II, a reputed bibliophile and avid collector; Soustavar 2000, pp. 66-67. The merits of these newer works had therefore to be explained and advertised.
indicative of the state of mind of the Safavid delegation, and the prestige of Ebrāhim Mirzā’s atelier in Safavid circles. Bypassing any reference to Tahmāsb, they were equating Ebrāhim Mirzā’s library-atelier to that of the Timurid Soltān Husayn Bāyqarā (r. 1469-1506), and the painter Mohammadi as its Behzād.

2-1. The Golestān Library’s Selselat-oz-zahab

If Mohammadi was really the star of Ebrāhim Mirzā’s atelier—at least of its latter days—we must be able to find more of his works from this period. I believe that an illustrated manuscript of the Selselat-oz-zahab of Jāmi at the Golestān Library in Tehran (no. 671), copied in Ramazān 977AH/1570 by the calligrapher Bābāshāh, may be relevant in this respect.29 Although of modest size (24.5x15.5cm), it glitters by the quality of its gold speckled margins, and shines by the beauty of its 14 miniatures, a few of which are attributable to Mohammadi. Moses carrying a sheep on his shoulders (fig. 16), for instance, already incorporates many elements that we have recognized as characteristic of his style: a typical ascending mountainous landscape sprinkled with red and blue flowers, an imposing plane tree with his favored autumn-colored leaves, a prominent running stream, and most importantly, a rock-descending goat in full balance alongside his favorite black-and-white colored goat. It’s a subject that he revisits in the 1580’s with his single contribution to Hamza Mirzā’s magnificent Haft Awrang (Topkapi, H. 1483, fol. 130b).30 Another painting, The Imam Zayn-ol-ʿābedin visiting the Kaʿba (fig. 17),

30 Soudavar 2000, p. 65; Soudavar 1999, p. 58.
displays Mohammadi’s fondness for scrollwork illumination, visible on the blue and black portions of the Ka’ba coverings. As for the faces, one can already notice his penchant for open-ended eye contours as well as a black beauty spot next on the cheeks, which characterizes for instance the face of the prince in his painting of the 1982 Sefā’ol-ʿāsheqin or even that of simple attendants in Sa’di and the fallen pious man of the Rezā 'Abbasi Museum in Tehran (figs. 18, 19).31

This manuscript also puts into evidence Mohammadi’s talents as an illuminator and book cover painter. We had previously attributed a Topkapi binding to him on the basis of its figures.32 The illumination pattern on the binding here (fig. 20) ties in with the margin illumination of the Bustān’s Jealousy among rivals, as well as the decorative scheme of the back wall therein, especially in terms of its hanging and flipping pheasants (fig. 8). We thus see in Mohammadi an accomplished painter who could singlehandedly handle the entire illustrative and decorative program of a manuscript, including its binging.

While the study of this sumptuous manuscript merits a separate monograph, one can already attribute, on the basis of the published material, at least two paintings to Mozaffar-ʿAli and one to ʿAbdollāh-e Mozahheb.33 Therefore, not only its roster of artists points to an affiliation with the library-atelier of Ebrāhim Mirzā, but its sumptuousness also vouches for an expensive production affordable only to a prince of high rank. As for Bābāshāh, he is the master calligrapher who has been credited with bringing the script of nastā’liq to full maturity during the sixteenth century.34 As such, he was the most accomplished calligrapher of his age, and the most suitable choice for a connoisseur such as Ebrāhim Mirzā, in lieu of calligraphers like Mālek Daylami who had participated in the production of his Haft Awrang but was no longer available. It is with this manuscript in mind that we shall speculate on the patronage of our next manuscript.

31 Painting P6 in Soudavar 2006, pp. 54, 60, and figs. 9 & 10. For a complete color reproduction see Binding of the Divān of Amir Shāhī, copied by Shāh Mahmud Nayshābūri in 1542 (Topkapi Palace Library, R. 999), see Soudavar 2000, fig. 22.
32 Paintings reproduced in Atābāy pp. 224+4, 5 are attributable to Mozaffar-ʿAli, and the one on pp. 224+3 to ʿAbdollāh-e Mozahheb (illustrated pages in this volume do not bear page numbers, hence the numbering “+” from the last numbered page).
33 The celebrated Mir ʿEmād was but a follower of the canons developed by Bābāshāh; Bayānī 1966, I:85-91.
Copied in Zol-Hijja of 979/May 1572 by the same calligrapher Bābāshāh, one could of course see it as a sequel to the previous manuscript, especially since its lone illustration is attributable to Mohammadi. Both texts are part of the *Haft Awrang* of Jāmi, but whereas the *Selselet-oz-zahab* shines by its opulence, the *Salāmān va Absāl* is a mere shadow of the former. Slightly smaller in size (20.1 x 11.9cm.), its decorative program is meager and limited to a single illustration and one small opening heading. Its binding however imitates closely the *Selselet-oz-zahab*’s (fig. 21). It is as if a member of the circle of the prince, such as Mirzā Salmān, had seen the previous manuscript and desired to have a similar one but could not afford it, therefore settled on a more modest version. Given the constant presence of Mohammadi in the later manuscripts of Mirzā Salmān, one can reasonably speculate that the relationship between the two developed at an earlier stage, when the artist was still in the employ of Ebrāhim Mirzā. For it seems that in addition to his talent as artist, Mohammadi had this intellectual capacity to find a suitable text, and match it with an inventive composition in order to allude to contemporary events. From one patron to another, he continued to create such compositions, even under the Ozbak occupation of Herāt.  

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artist to Mirzā Salmān who himself was fond of metaphors, and famously pronounced this verse from Jāmi: "To be ‘double-sighted' is to be fickle / the object of love is one and only one," to prevent the split of the Safavid empire between two competing faction one supporting Hamza Mirzā and the other, his younger brother `Abbās, the future Shāh `Abbās I (r. 1587-1628).  

In conclusion, in the person of Mirzā Salmān we see a patron who was well acquainted with the library-atelier of Ebrāhim Mirzā, had built a rapport with its artists, and who for a short while after the demise of the prince, picked up his mantle and began to commission a series of prestigious manuscripts in the same tradition. At the center of this new activity stood Mohammadi who, by mixing the styles of his predecessors, namely Mirzā `Ali and Shaykh Mohammad, pushed the development of Persian painting into a looser and more fluid mode that paved the way for the next generation of painters.

Abbreviations: APC = Art of the Persian Courts (Soudavar 1992).

**Bibliography**


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36 Soudavar 1992, p. 228.


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