

Original Research Article

**«Qavam Shahnameh», Another Perspective on the Art of Persian Painting in Shiraz during the Safavid Period****Babak Attarian<sup>1</sup>** ; **Mostafa Naderloo<sup>2</sup>** 

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**Abstract**

**Introduction:** The illustrated manuscript of the «Qavam Shahnameh», preserved in the Reza Abbasi Museum, includes 38 paintings. This Shahnameh was written by Mohammad Qavam Shirazi in 1000 A.H., but the name of the painter(s) is not mentioned. This artwork is among the manuscripts that have received less attention and is almost unknown. In this research, an attempt is made to gain a more accurate understanding of this manuscript by relying on historical evidence and structural examinations of the Persian paintings, as well as their artistic and stylistic quality. The current research aims to introduce this work, identify the structural and visual characteristics of this artistic masterpiece, and more precisely identify this work, based on evidence and documentation, regarding its stylistic and locational identity. The fundamental questions of the present research are: «What is the painting style of the Qavam Shahnameh?» and «What visual characteristics and values does it possess?»

**Research Method:** The present research was conducted using a descriptive-analytical method, and the findings were obtained through library resources, databases, and the archive of the «Reza Abbasi» Museum. In this study, several Shahnamehs from the Shiraz painting style and two Shahnamehs from the Qazvin style, which were somewhat contemporary with the «Qavam Shahnameh», have been examined and compared.

**Findings:** Although the Qavam Shahnameh is considered to belong to the Qazvin painting style, the findings indicate that this manuscript is similar to other Shahnamehs of the Shiraz style and follows the tradition of «Shiraz Persian paintings» The identity of the calligrapher of this manuscript has also been examined.

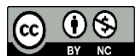
**Conclusion:** The Qavam Shahnameh is among the Shahnamehs which include all the characteristics of the Shiraz style. This Shahnameh bears many similarities with other Shahnamehs from Shiraz, especially the Peck and Britain Shahnamehs; the same painters likely created them. Also, the calligrapher is Muhammad Qavam Shirazi, one of the prolific calligraphers of Shiraz and made all his works in this city. The findings of the present research indicate that the Qavam Shahnameh belongs to the Shiraz style and was probably produced in the professional workshops of Shiraz, and contrary to the common viewpoint, it has no relation to the Qazvin style. The common features found in the miniature paintings of the Qavam Shahnameh and other works of the Qazvin style do not belong solely to this Shahnameh; they are also present in other Shahnamehs from Shiraz. This is because Shirazi painters were influenced by painters from the capital (Qazvin).

**Keywords**

Qavam Shahnameh, persian Painting, Shiraz, Safavid

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### **Introduction and Problem Definition**

Shahnameh is a priceless literary work in the illustrious history of ancient Iranian literature, immortalized by the great Ferdowsi. Iranian literature and miniature painting have long had an inseparable bond. The history of illustrating the Shahnameh in the form of manuscripts dates back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.H., nearly three centuries before the depiction of the «Qavam Shahnameh». With the rise of the Safavids and the establishment of a national government, Iranian nationalism and, consequently, the writing of Shahnameh became widespread and gained more importance compared to previous periods. The city of Shiraz is one of the cities that was very dynamic and creative during this historical period. This art-rich region was the most industrious city in Iran in terms of producing important illustrated manuscripts, especially the Shahnameh. The «Qavam Shahnameh» is one of the works that appeared in 1000 A.H. during the early reign of Shah Abbas I of the Safavid dynasty, and for this reason, it is also referred to as the «Shahnameh of a Thousand». The calligrapher, «Mohammad Qavam Shirazi», was one of the most prolific calligraphers of Shiraz. Unfortunately, the painter or painters of this manuscript are unknown, and their names do not appear anywhere in this manuscript or other existing sources. The present study aims to identify the stylistic features of the Qavam manuscript by examining samples of its illustrations, which have been less scrutinized due to a lack of written information. Understanding this work can significantly aid researchers, scholars, and students active in this field and serve as a step forward in further familiarizing with Persian painting and art. It can also provide new information to cultural institutions and museums. In fact, studying and examining the artistic values of this Shahnameh will help to free this important work from the misconceptions that have surrounded this manuscript for years, and through this, a greater understanding of its artistic values and cultural heritage will be achieved. The nature of the painting style of the «Qavam Shahnameh» and its features and visual values are the questions that will be addressed in this research.

### **Research Method**

The present research is fundamentally descriptive-analytical. The collection of images has been carried out through the archive of the Reza Abbasi Museum, internet databases, and library resources. In this study, the stylistic features and bibliographic aspects of the work have been examined. While reviewing the cultural and artistic backgrounds of the Shiraz style and analyzing the structural and visual characteristics of the artworks, this research seeks to uncover the true identity of this piece.

### **Research Background**

«The Qavam Shahnameh» is one of the works that has received little research and attention. The most well-known source that briefly introduces this Shahnameh is the book entitled «Masterpieces of Persian Painting» by «Hosseinirad» (2005). In some Persian painting sources, there is no mention of this Shahnameh, and in the books that have briefly addressed it, it has been incorrectly introduced, and various errors have been made. Also, in all the sources that mention this Shahnameh, it has been mistakenly attributed to the Qazvin Style without any evidence or documentation. In this context, «Yousefi» (2014) provides a brief explanation of this work in his book entitled «History of Qazvin Painting». He concludes that the Shiraz style influences this Shahnameh, but despite this, he has followed others in attributing it to the Qazvin school. «Namvar Motlagh and Kangarani» (2015) have studied several illustrations from this Shahnameh from a semiotic perspective in their book entitled «Illustrated Dictionary of Iranian Symbols». This book selects an illustration from «Qavam

Shahnameh» entitled «Rostam and Rakhsh», which is mistakenly introduced as «Rostam Pursuing Akvan Div» and incorrectly attributed to Mozafar Ali despite having no resemblance to the works of this illustrator. «Mahvan» (2016), in the book entitled «Shahnameh Studies», confused «Qavam Shahnameh» with «Shahnameh of Shah Ismail II» and considered them to be the same. He attributed all the features and characteristics of this manuscript to «Qavam Shahnameh». «Hosseinirad» (2022) briefly introduced this work in a booklet entitled «Qavam Shahnameh». He considers the composition, coloring, and specific nature of this work to be derived from the Shiraz style and believes its composition, execution, and coloring to be similar to the «Timuri Zafarnameh» manuscript from 935 A.H., which has the characteristics of the Shiraz school; however, like other researchers, he attributes this Shahnameh to the Qazvin style. He mistakenly identified one of the illustrations in this Shahnameh as the feast of Bijan and Manijeh, which is incorrect; the illustration actually depicts the feast at the court of Loharasp. In this regard, the book entitled «Namvarnameh» (1991) by «Sharifzadeh» is the only work that more comprehensively addresses the illustrations of «Qavam Shahnameh» and discusses the visual and aesthetic features of this work, providing detailed descriptions and images of some of these illustrations. However, he is not without errors either, as he mistakenly identified the illustration of the battle of Pirouz and Khushnavaz as the fall of Pirouz and his companions into the well. He also did not correctly introduce the paintings of Solomon and Belqis nor mention them. «Kangarani» (2011) introduced and examined the painting of Ferdowsi in the bathhouse from the «Qavam Shahnameh» in the article entitled «Ferdowsi in the Mirror of Iranian Miniature». «Shayestehfar» (2010) introduced and examined the painting of Alexander and the pilgrimage to the Kaaba from the «Qavam Shahnameh» in the article entitled «Hajj Rituals in Islamic Miniature and their Role in National Solidarity and Islamic Unity». «Safari and Farokhfard» (2023) studied the visual characteristics of the Shahnamehs of the Shiraz school of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.H. in their article entitled «The Connection and Disconnection of Shahnameh Painting in the Schools of Shiraz of the Injuids and Muzaffarids Periods».

### **The Safavids and the Revival of National Governance**

The Safavid dynasty began in 907 A.H. with the arrival of Shah Ismail I in Tabriz (Mojir Sheibani, 1966, 88-89). After eight and a half centuries of foreign domination, he established a national independent state (Savory, 2017, 2). The Safavids created a centralized and unified government throughout Iran, marking the beginning of forming a comprehensive national state in Iran (Zarrinkoub, 2002, 439). The establishment of Twelver Shiism as the country's official religion by the Safavids led to greater awareness of national identity and, in this way, the creation of a more centralized and stronger state (Savory, 2017, 29). Due to the reflection of national identity in the Shahnameh and its importance during this period, Shah Ismail paid great attention to Ferdowsi and the Shahnameh. Shahnameh-writing is another art that flourished during this period (Seyyed Yazdi, 2016).

### **The Qazvin Persian Painting Style**

Due to the repeated and intensified pressures from the Ottomans on Tabriz, the Safavid capital, Shah Tahmasp decided to move the capital from Tabriz to Qazvin, and he carried out this decision in 955 A.H. One of the earliest existing manuscripts of the Qazvin School should be considered the «Falnameh», which apparently was produced under the support of Shah Tahmasp (Ajand, 2013, 522-521). The royal library's art workshop had been in disarray since 955 A.H. When this workshop came under the control of Shah Ismail II, it

was not very prosperous. Shah Ismail II was determined to rebuild this workshop. «Sadiqi Beg Afshar», «Zain al-Abidin», «Qasri Beg Kusa», «Mohammadi Heravi», and «Siyavush Beg Gurji» were among those who joined Shah Ismail II's library (Ajand, 2015, 29). Ismail commissioned a manuscript of the Shahnameh, which became known as the «Shahnameh of Shah Ismail II». This Shahnameh contains 52 paintings and was never completed due to his death (Hosseini-rad, 2022, 7). The painting of Esfandiar's battle with the wolves, created by Naqdi Beg (Fig 1), is an example of the illustrations in the Shahnameh of Shah Ismail II. With Shah Ismail's death and Mohammad Khodabandeh's ascension to the throne, even minimal support for any kind of artistic activity was curtailed, and the realm of art remained barren until the reign of Shah Abbas I in 995 A.H. With the beginning of Shah Abbas's reign, Iranian arts flourished once again. Among the valuable works of this period, created in the Qazvin school and in Shah Abbas's workshop, is the «Shahnameh of Shah Abbas», completed between 996 and 1006 A.H. and housed in the «Chester Beatty» library. One of the important paintings in this Shahnameh is the painting of Zal and Simurgh by Sadiqi Beg Afshar (Fig 2). Another notable work from this period is the «Anvar Soheili» manuscript from 1002 A.H. (Yousefi, 2014, 38).



1

**Fig 1.** «Shahnameh of Shah Abbas», painter: Sadiqi Beg Afshar. Source: Welch, 2010, 107.



2

**Fig 2.** «Shahnameh of Shah Abbas», painter: Sadiqi Beg Afshar. Source: Welch, 2010, 107.

**1. Visual Characteristics of the Qazvin Style:** In this style, the heads in the paintings are proportionally smaller than the bodies, and the faces are elongated, moving away from an oval shape (Yousefi, 2014, 245). The features of the Qazvin and Mashhad Schools of miniature painting can be observed in the figures of young girls and boys, the emphasis on elongated and slender bodies, the focus on wavy lines, and the delicate and refined postures of the figures, the round faces, long necks, and large eyes of the figures, the depiction of elderly and middle-aged individuals with a realism leaning towards caricature, the use of dark green for the background of the paintings, and the delightful and eye-catching landscapes. One of the notable features of the Qazvin School was the production of single-figure or single-portrait paintings (Ajand, 2013, 523). The expansiveness of the painting and the exact composition of lines and edge lines, as well as the various small and large movements and occasionally lifeless strokes seen in Mashhad painting, are also observed here. However, unlike that, the composition in Qazvin painting does not have a multitude of figures. This painting style is characterized by strong and realistic figure painting in the Muhammadi style, minimal decoration of building surfaces and clothing, and an extraordinary simplification of the landscape with bubble-shaped rocks and a type of coloring with olive green and light blue (Yousefi, 2014, 252).

**2. The Painters of the Qazvin Style:** Among the prominent representatives of the Qazvin workshop are «Mohammadi» and «Sheikh Mohammad», whose works reflected the distinctive aspects of the new school (Yousefi, 2014, 251). «Siyavush Gorji», «Sadiqi Beg Afshar», «Zain al-Abidin», «Naghdi Beg», «Morad Deilami», «Ali Asghar Kashani», «Mehrab Borji», and possibly «Abdullah Shirazi» are among the painters who worked on the manuscript of the «Shahnameh of Shah Ismail II». «Siyavauh Gorji» and his brother «Farrokh Beg», «Mowlana Sheikh Mohammad Sabzevari», «Reza Abbasi», «Habibollah», «Sadiqi Beg Afshar», and «Alireza Abbasi the Calligrapher» were among the artists of the Shah Abbas period who engaged in manuscript writing and painting (Ajand, 2015, 31).

### The Shiraz Painting Style of the Safavid Period

The city of Shiraz during the Safavid period enjoyed significant economic and artistic prosperity, and despite numerous political upheavals, it maintained its continuity in the field of manuscript painting. In this city, numerous beautiful manuscripts with fixed patterns and relatively low quality were produced for both domestic and foreign markets, including India and the Ottoman Empire (Soudavar, 2001, 242). This school maintained its 9th-century traditions in the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century AH and was the most conservative school of that era (Yousefi, 2014, 254). Shiraz painters were somewhat influenced by the styles of Tabriz, Mashhad, and Qazvin, but they remained faithful to traditional principles and rules (Pakbaz, 2011, 115). Part of these changes were due to the influences that Shiraz artists received from the court style and the «Tahmasp Shahnameh». With Shah Tahmasp's turn away from art and the end of his patronage, the activity of provincial centers increased (Pakbaz, 2011, 115). Painters from Shah Tahmasp's royal workshop traveled to provincial capitals. Some likely came to Shiraz and spread the compositional principles of the «Tahmasp Shahnameh» everywhere (Soudavar, 2001, 245). As a result, local schools created paintings in the royal style influenced by the great Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, among which Shiraz performed better than other provincial schools (Richard, 2004, 190). In the mid-10th century A.H., Shirazi painters gradually leaned more towards the court style. In the second half of this century, while maintaining the Turkmen School's conservative traditions, these painters also utilized court painting (Canby, 2012, 88). Shiraz saw a significant increase in the production of manuscripts in the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and surpassed other regions in terms of quantity (Soudavar, 2001, 242). The production and growth of manuscripts in the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century were remarkable. «Most surviving Persian paintings from the 10<sup>th</sup> century belong to the Shiraz School» (Canby, 2012, 88). The Shahnameh was a favored text of the Shiraz School during the Safavid period and apparently had many buyers in India and the Ottoman Empire. Some of these manuscripts, especially from the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, possess considerable grandeur and elegance (Ajand, 2013, 714).

**1. Visual Characteristics of the Shiraz Style during the Safavid Period:** Most paintings from this period were market-oriented and popular among the people. These paintings had a mechanical quality and resembled puppets that were constantly repeated. Many of the works in this category should be considered as originating from the regions and outside the prevailing painting standards at that time (Grabar, 2017, 106). Most of the paintings are rough and primitive, reflecting the tumultuous political situation of that era. In these paintings, yellow and green hills covered with grass and flowers are the image's background. The flat surface of the image remains unchanged, but the lines drawn to depict depth are omitted. The space of the image expands in the form of layers stacked from bottom to top, with each new row appearing further away from the layer below it. This principle is



considered one of the hallmarks of the early Shiraz Style (Ashrafi, 2007, 150-151). Most human figures are painted in large dimensions and harsh and relatively austere landscapes (Grabar, 2017, 106). In the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the body parts of the figures became elongated, influenced by the Qazvin court style (Canby, 2012, 88). The Shiraz Style has a decorative nature and is far from naturalism, considered one of its important characteristics. The focus is on the main background and the decoration of the rest of the painting, especially the background landscape and buildings, and the coloring has a more decorative aspect, with large patches of strong and light colors widely used (Gray, 2013, 134-133). One of the important characteristics of this school is its decorative and two-dimensional nature, which, despite its influences from the Qazvin School, still maintained its two-dimensional essence. In the paintings of Tabriz, Mashhad, and Qazvin, the space has a kind of illusory depth, whereas, in the Shiraz paintings, the space is two-dimensional and flat, which is a distinguishing feature of the Shiraz School (Ashrafi, 1988, 135). From the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.H. onwards, the paintings became more skillful, the compositions richer, and the colors brighter, creating continuity and connection between the figures. The painters of this period preferred multi-figure compositions of crowds of spectators, worshippers, attendants, and polo players, and the desire to depict more and more individuals led to the expansion and opening up of the painting field (Yousefi, 2014, 254). The innovative gathering of figures and the interest in presenting concise and precise stories are also characteristics of the Shiraz School (Pope, 2014, 68). The manuscripts and Persian painting of the Shiraz school had a distinct form and appearance compared to other regional schools (Ferrier, 1995, 215), and one of the reasons for this is the proportions of the manuscript and the internal relationship of the text with the size of the pages, as well as the proportions of the miniatures themselves and their internal connection to the framing of the semi-surrounding inscriptions of the image. This systematic relationship between image and text is considered the most distinctive feature of the Shiraz School of Painting (Pakbaz, 2011, 115).

**2. The Painters of Shiraz in the Safavid Period:** There is not much information available about the painters of the Shiraz School, and most of them remain unknown. Many of the paintings in the manuscripts of this period lack the painter's signature. Artistic activity in this city was not solely the domain of artists; ordinary people also participated in such artistic endeavors. The centers for producing manuscripts were not limited to workshops and libraries; every house or stall in the market served as a workshop for producing illustrated manuscripts. The art of book decoration and manuscript production was a significant source of income for Shirazi families (Ajand, 2014, 58). In Safavid Iran, even the lowest families had the opportunity to rise. If a painting apprentice showed extraordinary talent in the market of Shiraz, it was likely that the city's governor would employ him and shortly after send him to the king as a gesture of goodwill (Welch, 2010, 12). Some of the painters whose names are recorded on the paintings include: «Boland al-Din», «Kafi Naqqash», «Sultan Abdullah», and «Taj al-Din Haidar» (Gest, 1949, 32). In Shiraz, many scribes and calligraphers copied manuscripts, and almost all wrote the Shahnameh in the Nasta'liq script (Ghelichkhani, 2017, 11).

### Qavam Shahnameh



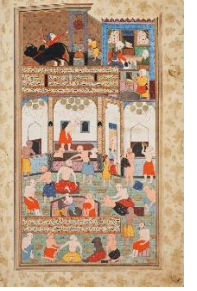
**1. Codicology:** «Qavam Shahnameh» was written in Nasta'liq script by «Qavam al-Din Muhammad Shirazi» and kept in the Tehran Reza Abbasi Museum. It contains 38 paintings and two unsigned frontispieces and belongs to the Qazvin School. The dimensions of this royal manuscript are large (320×460 mm), and it has 1172 pages, with its interior and

exterior adorned with gold leaf (Hosseinirad, 2005, 373). This Shahnameh was produced in 1000 A.H. Another name for this work is «Shahnameh of a Thousand», as its transcription was completed that year. None of the paintings in this Shahnameh are dated, and the painters are unknown. There is also no information about the patrons of this work; only the name of the scribe of this manuscript is recorded. On the final page of this manuscript, it is written: «The book of Shahnameh by Hakim Ferdowsi, may his soul rest in peace. Written by the servant of Qavam ibn Muhammad Shirazi, the year 1000». The cover of this work, depicted in Fig 3, is made using the stamping technique and is adorned with gold leaf and a central medallion; it features a 40-millimeter-wide border and beautiful designs of Khatayi flowers, medallions, and corners on the cover, measuring 221 millimeters. The medallion is decorated with Islamic and Khatayi motifs, with two medallions at the top and bottom and four corners adorned with dragon-mouth Islamic motifs, set against a blue and gold background. The dimension of the cover is 487×336 millimeters. The medallions and sub-medallions have the same designs as the cover and are gilded. On page 12, the introduction of this book begins. Pages 12 and 13 are adorned with intricate floral patterns, and the text is embellished with serpentine arabesques and Khatai flowers, along with dragon-mouth arabesques in the corners and a blue and gold background. The text of the Shahnameh begins on page 38, where the verses are written in four columns, interspersed with gilding and illumination, and filled with floral motifs (Sharifzadeh, 1991, 176). The beautifully embossed, golden cover is astonishing (Sharifzadeh, 1991, 80). The atmosphere of the paintings in all the gatherings is characterized by maturity and uniformity. It seems a single artist created all 38 paintings of this manuscript or their creation was organized under a unified management (Hosseinirad, 2022, 7). All the miniature paintings depict the style of work of a person or their supervision (Sharifzadeh, 1991, 193). It seems that the paintings of this Shahnameh have also served as a model for other contemporary manuscripts and those from nearby years. This manuscript's illustrations exhibit an unparalleled quality considering their date of creation (Hosseinirad, 2022, 10). In Table 1, some of the illustrations from the Qavam Shahnameh are displayed.



**Fig 3.** Cover of the Qavam Shahnameh. Source: Reza Abbasi Museum Archive

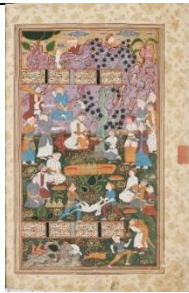
**Table 1.** The Paintings of the Qavam Shahnameh. Source: Reza Abbasi Museum Archive. Source: Authors.

<b>Miniature Painting</b>		
		
1. Title: The Court of Solomon Page number: 10	2. Title: The Court of Bilqis Page number: 11	3. Title: Ferdowsi in the bathhouse Page number: 27

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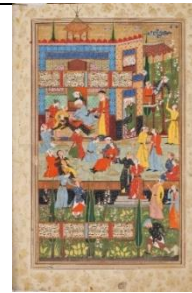
**Miniature Painting**

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4. Title: The Court of Kayumars  
Page number: 44

No Image



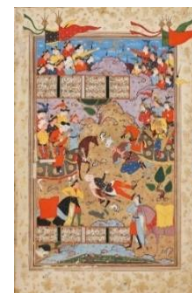
6. Title: The Birth of Rostam  
Page number: 116



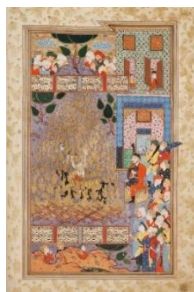
7. Title: Taming Rakhsh by  
Rostam Page number: 124



8. Title: The Battle of Rostam  
and the White Demon Page  
number: 153

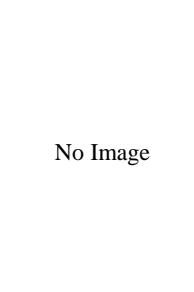


9. Title: Rostam's lament for  
Sohrab Page number: 186



10. Title: Siyavush's passage  
through fire Page number: 201

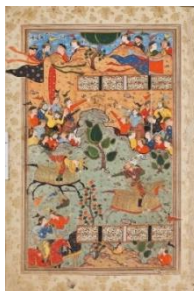
No Image



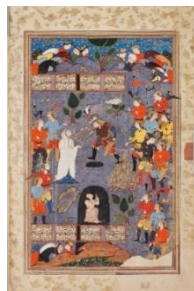
11. Title: The killing of Siyavush  
Page number: 235



12. Title: The killing of Bahram  
by Tageuo Page number: 291



13. Title The battle of Rostam  
and Kamus Keshani  
Page number: 324



14. Bijan's rescue by Rostam  
Page number: 392



15. The Battle of Bijan and  
Ruein  
Page number: 444

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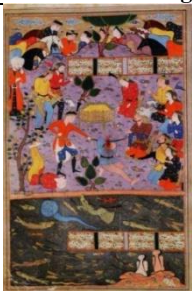


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**Miniature Painting**

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No Image

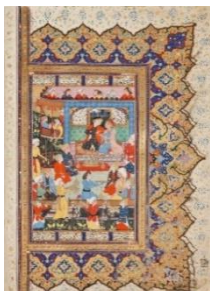


17. The killing of Afrasiab  
Page number: 530



18. The court of Lohrasb  
Page number: 558

16. The Battle of Keykhosrow  
and Shideh Page number: 481



19. The court of Lohrasp  
Page number: 559



20. Polo game of Goshtasp  
Page number: 578

No Image

21. The battle of Esfandiar and  
Biderafsh Page number: 604



22. The capture of Esfandiar  
Page number: 618

No Image

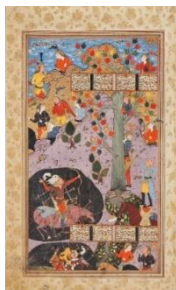
23. The battle of Esfandiar with  
the fourth labor Page number:  
635



24. Throwing a stone at Rostam  
by Bahman Page number: 656



25. The battle of Rostam and  
Esfandiar  
Page number: 678



26. Rostam and Shaghad  
Page number: 689

No Image

27. The killing of Dara  
Page number: 713

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**Miniature Painting**

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28. Alexander's Prayer at the Kaaba Page number: 730

No Image

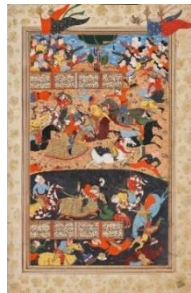
No Image

29. The Battle of Ardashir and the Bandits Page number: 768

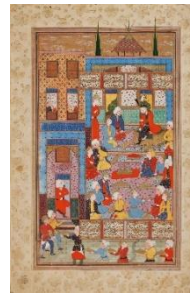
30. The capture of Qeysar Page number: 805



31. Bahram Gur in the hunting ground Page number: 818



32. The battle of Piruz and Khosnavaz Page number: 887



33. The conversation between Anushirvan and Boozarjomehr Page number: 929



34. Blinding of Hormzid Page number: 1028



35. The Battle of Bahram and the Romans Page number: 1066

No Image

36. The killing of Faramin by Hormzid Page number: 1129

No Image



37. Hunting ground Page number: 1152

38. Hunting ground Page number: 1153

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**2. Mohammad Qavam Shirazi:** The calligrapher of this manuscript, Qavam ibn Mohammad Shirazi, was a prolific calligrapher active in the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century

and the early 11<sup>th</sup> century A.H., who worked in Shiraz. Not much information about his life and background is available, but many of his works have survived, all written in the Nasta'liq script (Bayani, 1984, 816). He was one of the famous Shahnameh illustrators of Shiraz (Ghelichkhani, 2017, 16). There is a Shahnameh by him in the Museum of Islamic and Turkish Art in Istanbul, which has the inscription: «Mohammad Qavam ... in the city of Shiraz», and another Shahnameh dated 960 A.H. with the inscription «Mohammad al-Qavam Shirazi», which is kept in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (Bayani, 1984, 816). Numerous works bearing the signatures «Mohammad Qavam», «Mohammad Qavam the Scribe», «Qavam ibn Mohammad Shirazi», and «Hamami» from the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries A.H. have survived, which seem to indicate that all these names belong to a single individual. «Bayani» considers these names to belong to one person. However, there is also a possibility that two calligraphers have similar names. «Ghelichkhani» believes that these names might belong to one person, but he thinks they are more likely to belong to two different individuals. «If he (Mohammad Qavam Shirazi) is indeed the same Qavam, the son of Mohammad Shirazi, he has written the Shahnameh five times, and it is more likely that these two are father and son» (Ghelichkhani, 2017, 17). However, through research on manuscripts and Qavam's inscriptions, Rosen concluded that Mohammad Qavam Shirazi was known by the title 'Hamami' and all these titles belonged to one person (Gest, 1949, 64). In Fig 4, a page from Qavam's Shahnameh, calligraphed by Mohammad Qavam Shirazi, is presented as an example. The manuscripts calligraphed by Mohammad Qavam Shirazi are also compiled in Table 2.



Fig 4. A page from the Qavam Shahnameh, written by Mohammad Qavam Shirazi. Source: Archive of the Reza Abbasi Museum.

Table 2. Manuscripts written by Mohammad Qavam Shirazi. Source: Ajand, 2013, 715-714; Ghelichkhani, 2017, 29-26.


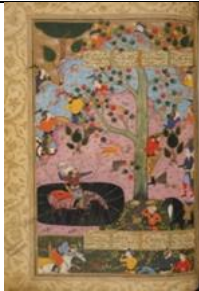

No.	Title	Scribe Signature	No. of Paintings	Date of Creation	Place of Creation	Storage Place
1	Shahnameh of Ferdowsi	Qavam Ibn Mohammad Shirazi	38	1000	Qazvin	Reza Abbasi Museum
2	Shahnameh of Ferdowsi	Qavam Ibn Mohammad Shirazi	?	998	Shiraz	New York, Rosenbach Princeton University, New Jersey
3	Shahnameh of Ferdowsi	Qavam Ibn Mohammad Shirazi	48	999-998	Shiraz	Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul
4	Khamsa of Nizami	Mohammad Qavam Katib	25	951	Shiraz	Cambridge University Library
5	Joseph and Zuleikha of Jami	Mohammad Qavam	4	954	Shiraz	Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg
6	Khamsa of Nizami	Mohammad Qavam Katib	24	950	Shiraz	Oxford, Bodleian Library
7	Shahnameh of Ferdowsi	Mohammad Qavam	31	1009	Shiraz	Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
8	Shahnameh of Ferdowsi	Mohammad Qavam Shirazi (Hamami)	?	10 <sup>th</sup> century	Shiraz	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
9	Shahnameh of Ferdowsi	Mohammad al-Qavam Shirazi	?	960 or 969	Shiraz	

No.	Title	Scribe Signature	No. of Paintings	Date of Creation	Place of Creation	Storage Place
10	Complete Works of Saadi	Mohammad Qavam Shirazi	69	974	Shiraz	British Museum, London
11	The Divan of Hafez	Mohammad Qavam Shirazi	4	982	Shiraz	Kourkian Foundation, New York
12	The Divan of Sanai	Mohammad Qavam Shirazi	7	1016	Shiraz	John Rylands Library, Manchester
13	Khamsa of Nizami	Mohammad al-Katib al-Shirazi	?	943	Shiraz	Kourkian Foundation
14	Joseph and Zuleikha of Jami	Mohammad al-Qavam Shirazi	?	10 <sup>th</sup> century	Shiraz	India Office Library
15	ديوان حافظ	Mohammad al-Shirazi (Hamami)	?	950	Shiraz	?
16	Joseph and Zuleikha of Jami	Mohammad Qavam al-Shirazi	?	10 <sup>th</sup> century	Shiraz	?
17	Sebh al-Ahrar of Jami	Mohammad al-Qavam al-Katib al-Shirazi	?	958	Shiraz	Kourkian Foundation
18	Haft Awrang of Jami	Mohammad al-Qavam Shirazi	?	10 <sup>th</sup> century	Shiraz	Bodleian Library
19	The Divan of Amir Khusrow Dehlavi	Mohammad al-Qavam al-Katib al-Shirazi	?	10 <sup>th</sup> century	Shiraz	Kourkian Foundation

### Comparison of the Paintings in the «Qavam Shahnameh» with other Paintings of the Shiraz Manuscripts

In Table 3, several miniature paintings from the «Qavam Shahnameh» are placed alongside other Shahnamehs from the Shiraz School to highlight the striking similarities between these Shahnamehs. Not only in terms of subject and story but also in structure and visual features, these paintings are entirely alike, and an almost identical pattern has been used to create them.

**Table 3.** Comparison of the Paintings in the «Qavam Shahnameh» with other Paintings from the Shiraz Manuscript. Source: Authors.

Miniature Painting		
		
1. Title: The Killing of Shaghad / Qavam Shahnameh, preserved in the Reza Abbasi	2. Title: The Killing of Shaghad / The Shahnameh of Peck, preserved in the	3. Title: The Killing of Shaghad Shahnameh preserved in the National Library of France, 976 A.H., Shiraz style. Source:



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## Miniature Painting

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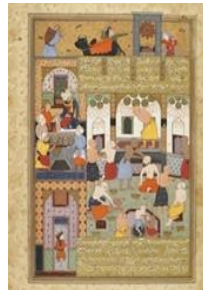
Museum, 1000 A.H. Source: Bahar, 2012, 57.

Princeton Museum, dated 998-999 A.H. Shiraz style. Source: Simpson, 2015, 55.

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8427205j/f684.item>



4. Title: Ferdowsi in the Bathhouse / Qavam Shahnameh, preserved in the Reza Abbasi Museum, 1000 A.H. Source: Archive of the Reza Abbasi Museum.



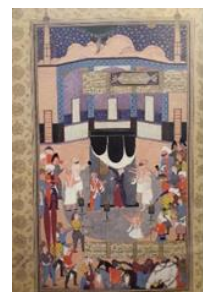
5. Title: Ferdowsi in the Bathhouse / Shahnameh I.Q.Islamic3540 Preserved in the British Library, 999 A.H., Shiraz style. Source: Mahvan, 2016, 372.



6. Title: Ferdowsi in the Bathhouse / Shahnameh dorn334, preserved in the National Library of St. Petersburg, 992 A.H., Shiraz style. Source: Mahavan, 2016, 371.



7. Title: Alexander's Prayer at the Kaaba / Qavam Shahnameh, preserved in the Reza Abbasi Museum, 1000 A.H. Source: Archive of the Reza Abbasi Museum.



8. Title: Alexander's Prayer at the Kaaba / The Shahnameh of Peck, preserved in the Princeton Museum, 998-999 A.H. The Shiraz style. Source: Simpson, 2015, 57.



9. Title: Alexander's Prayer at the Kaaba / Shahnameh preserved in the British Library, 988 A.H., Shiraz style. Source: [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=io\\_islamic\\_3540\\_f001v](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=io_islamic_3540_f001v).

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### Analysis and Review of Two Paintings from the «Qavam Shahnameh»

In this section, some miniature paintings from the «Shahnameh of a Thousand» have been analyzed and examined regarding their visual and structural features. Two paintings from this Shahnameh have been selected and reviewed for this purpose. These paintings are among the lesser-known and more obscure illustrations of this Shahnameh that have been scrutinized and investigated.

**1. The Painting of the Battle between Piruz and Khosnavaz:** Piruz, the son of Yazdgerd, was one of the Sassanid kings and the elder brother of Hormzid. After Yazdgerd's death, Hormzid ascended the throne, but he was overthrown by a coup led by his brother, who then took the throne for himself. Piruz defeated Bahram's forces and invaded Turan, accompanied by his brother and son. Khosnavaz, the son of the Khagan, wrote to Piruz, advising him against this action, but Piruz ignored him and attacked Turan. Khosnavaz

surrounded his army with a moat. A fierce battle began, and in the end, he fell into the moat with the leaders of his army and lost his life. Most of the army's leaders were killed, and only Qobad survived and was captured. This painting depicts the moment of the Iranians' defeat. The painting is divided into two sections. The lower part shows the figures falling into the pit, and the upper part depicts the battle between the two armies. The composition of this painting is dynamic and evocative. The structure of the painting is chaotic and disordered, showing no signs of cohesion. The figures are depicted in combat with each other and are intertwined. In the middle of the painting, warriors fight and slaughter each other. The battle is not face-to-face and hand-to-hand; chaos and disorder prevail. The warriors kill their opponents from behind. Another feature of this painting is the use of weapons other than swords. The most commonly used weapon in this work is the bow, which is also found abundantly in other battle paintings of this manuscript. Another characteristic present in this painting is the unfiltered depiction of violence, which is seen throughout the work. Prominent examples of this violence can be observed in the depiction of severed heads and bisected bodies in the middle of the painting. In the lower half of the painting, figures are depicted with broken and bloody heads. Among the colors frequently used in this painting is red, which contributes to the tension and violence of the painting. In this section, the painter has covered the background of the painting with a dark gray color to depict the space of the well and has suspended soldiers and horses within it, thereby showcasing the moment of their fall into the well. In this painting, elements cut off by the frame are abundant. The only elements that have crossed the inner boundaries of the frame are the battle flags, which are depicted in this manner in most of the battle paintings of the Shiraz Style. In the upper part of the painting, a number of soldiers can be seen observing each other. This pattern is repeated in most battle paintings of this manuscript and other Shiraz paintings. Here, the painter has not paid attention to perspective and dimensionality, depicting the soldiers at the top of the painting as larger than the others. Speed and movement are well represented in this painting. The figures in battle are depicted with great flexibility and dynamism, unlike the static and rigid figures in the upper part of the painting. The horses, like the soldiers, are highly mobile and dynamic, displayed in various poses. Here, the horses are entirely drawn according to the Shiraz tradition and have fundamental differences from those of the Qazvin Style. Despite the horses' great movement in this painting, they lack the flexibility and twists of the Qazvin Style and are all depicted in profile. Another frequently repeated feature of this painting is the attention to symbolic elements such as the royal crown, helmet, weapons, etc. In the upper part of the painting, next to the horizontal text table, a black royal crown can be seen, which is likely the royal crown of Piruz Shah, and the painter thus alludes to his tragic end.

**2. The Painting of the Blinding of Hormzid:** This miniature painting belongs to the historical section of the Shahnameh and narrates the fate of one of the unfortunate kings of the Sassanid Dynasty. According to the Shahnameh text, Hormzid is a king who ascends to the throne after Anushirvan. During his reign, unrest and disorder engulfed the country, and enemies from all sides invaded the land of Iran. Hormzid, with the help of the capable commander of his army, Bahram, could suppress and drive back the enemies. However, due to the conflicts between him and Bahram, he was eventually deposed from the throne. The nobles and courtiers conspired against him, and after blinding him, they placed his son Khosrow on the throne in his stead (Ferdowsi, 2006, 795-760). Here, the painter has remained faithful to the text and depicted the event in all its details. In this painting, Hormzid is portrayed in the middle of the scene with a bare head and a simple, entirely red garment. Most figures in the painting are observers, directing their gaze towards him.

Women are depicted in the palace's inner space, while many courtiers and soldiers are positioned in the outer space of the palace. The astonished expressions of the figures are conveyed through the movement of their hands and heads, and some are depicted looking at each other with fingers in their mouths. The arrangement of the figures next to each other forms a triangle, with its apex reaching the king, Hormzid. According to the text, a group of conspirators have entered the royal courtyard, blinding the king. One of them is holding him from behind, using his knee and hands to prevent the king from escaping or moving, while another is blinding his left eye. A little further on, a young man stands with a small smile of satisfaction on his lips. He is holding a royal crown and watching Hormzid. As the text mentions, Flames can be seen at the courtyard entrance. Half of the painting is dedicated to the inner space, and the other half to the outside of the palace. The sky is golden and has very little space for display. The clouds are represented as white lines full of movement and dynamism. The red color of the curtain behind Hormzid intensifies the violence of the painting and signifies his darkness and corruption. Two horizontal text columns, aligned with each other, are positioned on the left side of the image and are glued to the frame, contributing to the unity of the painting and encompassing the middle section of the image. The vertical columns between the texts are depicted in red, adding to the violence and tension present in the image. The frame of the image is a complete rectangle, with two aligned cypress trees behind the palace extending beyond its boundaries.



**Fig 5.** The Painting of the Battle between Piruz and Khoshnava. Source: Archive of the Reza Abbasi Museum.



**Fig 6.** The Painting of the Blinding of Hormzid. Source: Archive of the Reza Abbasi Museum.

## Discussion

With the rise of the Safavid Dynasty and the revival of nationalism, the art of Shahnameh-writing flourished more than in any other period and was supported by the Safavid kings. One of the prominent centers of Shahnameh writing during the Safavid era was the city of Shiraz, which had long been vibrant and peaked in the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.H. The «Qavam Shahnameh» is one of the many Shahnamehs that blossomed during this period. Besides the numerous artistic workshops, residential houses also served as places for producing Shahnameh manuscripts, and ordinary people engaged in artistic activities in their own homes. Most of these works were popular and had a market-oriented aspect, but considering the elegance and beauty of the «Qavam Shahnameh», it seems unlikely that it was produced in ordinary houses or workshops. In the author's opinion, this Shahnameh was created in

the artistic workshops of the Zolghadr family or at least in the professional workshops of Shiraz. The Qavam manuscript shares many similarities with other Shahnamehs of the Shiraz Style, and it is believed that such works, particularly the «Qavam», «Peck», and «Britain» Shahnamehs, were produced by the same or similar illustrators. Another reason to attribute the Qavam manuscript to Shiraz is that its calligrapher, Mohammad Qavam Shirazi, was active in the city of Shiraz. All the manuscripts written by him were created in this city, and the name of the calligrapher and the city where the manuscript was produced appear on the final page of the manuscripts. The «Qavam Shahnameh» is one of the manuscripts that possesses all the characteristics of the Shiraz Style. This Shahnameh is similar to other Shiraz Shahnamehs, not only in terms of visual features but also in terms of content. Paintings such as the killing of Shaghad by Rostam, Ferdowsi in the bathhouse, Alexander visiting the Kaaba, and so on, are among the illustrations present in the Qavam manuscript and have been repeatedly featured with many similarities in other Shiraz-Style Shahnamehs. The Shiraz Shahnamehs of this period exhibit remarkable similarities. These manuscripts emerged based on a stable pattern and, like production factories, reproduced a single manuscript in a specified quantity. These illustrations were common in the Shiraz Shahnamehs, and it is rare to find similar ones in other styles. Paintings such as Ferdowsi in the bathhouse, Alexander's pilgrimage to the Kaaba, the killing of Shaghad by Rostam, and others are themes that are more frequently repeated in the Shiraz manuscript paintings. This Shahnameh, contrary to the opinion of some experts, cannot belong to the Qazvin Style because it does not have the main criteria and characteristics of that style. In the paintings of the «Shahnameh of Shah Ismail II» and the «Shahnameh of Shah Abbas», which are important examples of the Qazvin Style, the approach of the painter is different both in form and content and does not have many similarities with «A Thousand» manuscripts. Unlike the «Shahnameh of a Thousand», the human figures in these paintings are few in number and have characteristics such as tall stature and usually a protruding belly. However, the figures in the «Shahnameh of a Thousand» do not have such characteristics and the figures have narrower waists and shorter heights compared to the Qazvin figures. The faces in the «Shahnameh of a Thousand» also differ from the Qazvin Shahnamehs. In the «Shahnameh of a Thousand», the beards are less sparse, and the eyes are larger than in the Qazvin Style.

### **Conclusion**

Considering the many similarities of the paintings in the «Qavam Shahnameh» with other versions of the Shiraz Style, it can be confidently said that this Shahnameh may belong to the Shiraz painting style. Features such as long necks and round heads, which are common in the paintings of the Qazvin Style, are not exclusive to this manuscript and are evident in other Shahnamehs of the Shiraz Style. Some of the important reasons for these similarities include the migration of some capital city painters to Shiraz and the influence of the capital's art on the people of Shiraz.

### **Author Contributions**

This article is extracted from the master's thesis of the second author of this paper, and the first author was the thesis advisor who wrote the abstract and introduction of the article and provided extensive guidance and assistance to the second author in the development of this article. The second author gathered the materials, analyzed the images, and drew conclusions.



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## Conflict of Interest

The author (s) declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest related to this research, in writing, and publication of this article

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