

Interpretation Of Miniatures Depicting Amir Temur, Drawn For Manuscript Copies Of “Gulshan Ul-Asror”

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ABSTRACT

Several manuscript copies of Haydar Khwarazmi's *Gulshan ul-asror* are preserved worldwide. However, not all of them contain miniatures. Even among the copies with miniatures, the image of Amir Temur is not depicted in every case. This article presents an interpretation of a miniature dedicated to the tale about Amir Temur. The miniature illustrates the episode of Amir Temur and the ant: the ant repeatedly attempts to climb a wall, falling each time, yet eventually succeeds in reaching the top. Inspired by this scene, Amir Temur continues his efforts in battle.

Keywords: Manuscript, image, miniature, history, ant, Tuzuklar, scholarly, artistic, amirs, commander.

INTRODUCTION

Hundreds—indeed, one may say thousands—of works have been written about Sahibqiron Temurbek. Sahibqiron Temurbek was a major statesman, a skilled military commander, and a patron of learning and scholarship. Moreover, while many sultans and rulers left behind a negative reputation, Sahibqiron Temurbek also left an indelible legacy as a great builder and creator. His contemporaries, as well as those who knew him closely or only from afar, wrote about him as they understood him—sometimes deliberately, sometimes knowingly or unknowingly. As mentioned above, Europeans, perhaps even more than we, have written extensively about him. It can be stated that scholarly and literary works about Sahibqiron Temurbek began to appear already in the first half of the fifteenth century and have continued to be produced ever since.

According to the notes of many scholars, the first book devoted to the great commander Sahibqiron was written in 1553 by the Florentine Italian scholar Perondini. In the same period, the Spanish historian Pero Mexía wrote *The History of the Great Timur*; the well-known Sevillian Spanish envoy Clavijo's *Memoirs* (1582) appeared; the

English playwright Christopher Marlowe created the stage work *Tamburlaine the Great*; M. Ivanin published *Two Great Commanders—Genghis Khan and Amir Temur* (1874); Vladimir Cheravansky produced the historical novel *Amir Temur* (1898); Ármin Vámbéry wrote *Bukhara, or the History of Transoxiana* (1924); and Lucien Keren authored *The Empire of Amir Temur* (1987). In addition, one may mention the works of European scholars such as Hammer, Schlosser, Gibbon, Weber, Müller, Voltaire, Goethe, Marcel, Yurion, Jean Aubin, René Grousset; and Russian Orientalists such as V. V. Bartold, I. I. Umnyakov, A. Yu. Yakubovsky, among others, who produced scholarly, popular-scientific, and literary studies.

In the East, the following works may be cited: Ghiyosiddin Ali's *Ruznoma-yi Ghazovoti Hindiston*; Nizamiddin Shomi's *Zafarnama* (1404); Sharafiddin Ali Yazdi's *Zafarnama* (1424); Mirkhond's *Rawzat us-safo*; Hafiz Abru's *Zubdat ut-tavorix* (“*The Cream of Histories*”); Abdurazzaq Samarkandi's *Matla' us-sa'dayn...*; Mu'iniddin Natanzi's *Muntakhab ut-tavorix Mu'iniy*; Fasih Khavofi's *Mujmal-i Fasihiy*; Mirzo Ulug'bek's *Tarikh-i arba' ulus* (“*History of the Four Uluses*”); Muhammad Fazlulloh Musavi's *Tarikh-i hayrat*; Khatifi's

Temurnoma; B. Ahmedov's historical novel *Amir Temur* and the essay *Ulug'bek*; I. M. Mo'minov's *The Place and Role of Amir Temur in Central Asia*; T. Fayziyev's *The Genealogy of the Timurids*; and others. Yet in none of these works is Haydar Khwarazmi's "Tale about Temurbek" from *Gulshan ul-asror* mentioned.

Among the earliest sources, Shomi's *Zafarnama*, Sharafiddin Ali Yazdi's *Zafarnama*, and Ibn Arabshah's *Ajoib al-maqdur fi tarixi Temur* ("The Wonders of Destiny in the History of Temur") are devoted to Amir Temur's military campaigns. Shaykh Mahmud Zangi's *Jo'shu Khurush* is written in verse, and Christopher Marlowe's stage work *Tamburlaine the Great* was also composed after *Sahibqiron Temurbek's* death. However, in the Turkic-language tradition, Mawlono Haydar Khwarazmi's "Tale about Temurbek" was written while Temurbek was still alive, during the period when Iskandar Sultan ruled in Shiraz. Although this work may not have been widely known among the people of Turkestan, it gained considerable fame among scholarly circles in Shiraz, Khorasan, and India.

An image of Amir Temur is also found in a miniature entitled "Two Loyal Friends and Warriors," which illustrates an episode in Alisher Navoi's *Hayrat ul-abror* (added as an appendix to the 8th maqolat). The miniature depicts an event from Amir Temur's Indian campaign, expressing loyalty and affection between two friends who were captured among the defeated side's soldiers.

In her article entitled "The Image of Amir Temur in Miniatures of Alisher Navoi's Epics," Gulzoda Mahmudjonova describes one miniature as follows: during the examination of the "Two Loyal Friends and Warriors" miniature, it becomes clear that the composition is built in a circular form around the main plot, and the figures revealing the idea—namely, a warrior and two bound friends awaiting execution—are depicted. In the center of the image are *Sahibqiron Amir Temur*, attendants holding a canopy over him, and a military commander observing the battle. Among the miniatures created for Navoi's epics, this is considered the first depiction of Amir Temur.

This indicates that in medieval manuscript culture there existed a tradition of creating miniatures dedicated to Amir Temur. Likewise, in manuscript copies of Haydar Khwarazmi's *Gulshan ul-asror*, composed before Alisher Navoi, three miniatures were produced for the tale devoted to Amir Temur.

The first is a manuscript in the Topkapi Palace Library, containing one image with two couplets from the work written within it. The second is a manuscript in the Houston (Texas) Museum of History, also with one image and a single couplet inscribed. The third is a manuscript copy preserved in Turkey in the Ali Amiri collection (No. 951), likewise containing one image with two couplets.

In all three images, Amir Temur is depicted as returning from a battle, having suffered misfortune, resting on the ground, and watching an ant attempting to climb a wall, with one hand placed on his head. Several attendants stand nearby observing the scene.

In the manuscript kept in the Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Temur is depicted wearing a turban and a green robe. Attendants stand around him in readiness. Two of those standing are women: one wears a white headscarf and a yellowish garment. There are four attendants in total; two of them are dressed in brown. These two men in brown may be elders; one of them is looking toward Amir Temur. Of the remaining two attendants, one wears a red robe and a white turban. The man in the red robe is shown staring directly at Amir Temur. In general, Amir Temur pays no attention to anyone around him and looks only at the ant climbing up the wall.

A similar scene can be observed in the manuscript from the library of the Texas museum in Houston. Amir Temur is not preoccupied with giving instructions to his attendants; rather, he is absorbed in watching the ant striving to climb the wall. Near Amir Temur's feet stand two women. One is dressed in dark brown and wears a white headscarf. As in the Topkapi miniature, another female attendant appears in yellow clothing. In this image, two men are standing on the ground, ready to serve Amir Temur. The one in a blue robe is looking toward the ruler, while the one in red is depicted looking down, lost in thought.

It is known that in the epic *Gulshan ul-asror*, Mawlono Haydar Khwarazmi presents historical events connected with Amir Temur in the "Tale about Temurbek." The historian Natanzi, who lived at the court of Sultan Iskandar, may have used this work. When Temurbek, left helpless and alone among enemies in exile, not knowing what to do, went near an old wall and intended to rest in its shade—deciding to turn away from worldly affairs—fate showed him an example in the courage of a wounded ant (*mo'r*) like himself. The ant, firmly believing in its own resolve, girds itself with determination and reaches its goal. This

situation is expressed in the tale in the following lines:

Zaxmu jarohat bila bedastu poy,

Hech kishi yo‘q tegrasinda juz Xudoy!

Kulga uchun tom tubinda yotib,

Mungliq edi tuz ichinda yotib.

Ko‘rdiki bir mo‘r ayog‘i ali yo‘q,

Bo‘ksasi majruhu yorim beli yo‘q.

Keldi va ul tomg‘a yovushti ravon,

Sa‘yi hamon erdi, yiqilmoq hamon.

Ushbu yiqlg‘ong‘a to‘kulmadi mo‘r,

Yormonib ul tomg‘a yana qildi zo‘r.

In this story, after suffering a setback in battle and falling into a difficult situation, Amir Temur is depicted as deep in thought when he sees an ant on the wall—without hands and feet, with an injured body and a half-broken waist. Despite this, the ant continues to move. The ant attempts to climb six or seven times. Taking lesson from the event, Amir Temur, too, is strengthened and continues his own efforts.

Chiqdi yarim yo‘lg‘a yopushquncha to‘nd,

Tirnog‘i sust edi, tishi bo‘ldi kund.

Tushti yona bosh quyi ul tomdin,

Keldi va yovushti yana komdin.

These are the miniatures dedicated to that very episode:

1. Topkapi Palace Library
(Turkey) — source: ترکان
خراسان Telegram channel.



چيقدی یاریم یولغە یاپوشقونچە تند
تیرناغی سست ایدی تیشی بولدی
کند
توشتی یانه باش قوی اول تام دین
کیلدی و یاپیشتی ینه نا کام دین

2. Topkapi Palace Library
(Turkey) — source: خراسان ترکان
Telegram channel.



کیلدی و اول تامغە یاووشتی روان
سعی همان ایردی یقیلماق همان
اوشبو یقیلغانغا توکولمادی مور
یارمانیب اول تامغە ینه قیلدی زور

3. Topkapi Palace Library
(Turkey) — source: خراسان ترکان
Telegram channel.



کیستی اومید اول
تلاگیدین تمام
کونکلی بو اندیشاسیدین
بولدی خام
همتی عالی ینا بیردی
نهیب

In B. Ahmedov's collection *Stories about Amir Temur*, there is a tale of the following kind: Amir Temur's gaze fell upon an ant climbing up a wall toward the top. The ant was striving toward the light coming through a small opening. Yet no matter how persistently it climbed, it would topple over before reaching the opening. It failed again and fell once more. After a short while, it began climbing the wall again, but this time it could not even reach the previous point. Nevertheless, it continued to struggle and climb. Temurbek observed this tenacious creature with great attention.

Although the story cited by B. Ahmedov may have been taken from oral folk tradition, it contains instructive elements. Through the ant episode, the author calls on readers not to stop in the face of failure, but—like Amir Temur—to continue striving.

In the couplets written within the miniature, there is the word “yormonib” (يارمانىب). In the Kazan printed edition, the form “tirmanib” (تىرمانىب) is found, while in the British copy the word appears as “yormonib” (يارمنىب). In B. Ahmedov's narrative, this is rendered as “no matter how persistently it climbed and clung on” (“tirishib-tirmashmasin”). In modern Uzbek, the verb *tirmashmoq* is also used with the meaning “to climb (by clinging),” and it is written in this same form. Identifying such differences with the help of miniatures is of great value when compiling a critical text.

Chiqdi yarim yo‘lg‘a yopushquncha тунд

چىقدى يارىم يولغە ياپوشقونچە تند

In general, by comparing the couplets written in Arabic script across different miniature copies, it becomes possible to clarify certain difficult or obscure words in the text. Through such comparison of miniature couplets, it is also possible to establish missing couplets that have dropped out in some manuscript copies. Miniatures therefore serve not only as interpretive sources for the work, but also as auxiliary sources for comparison with manuscript copies: together with marginal notes, they help reconstruct the text more fully and restore the work's

complete wording.

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