

Synthesis of the Precious Literary Text and Visual Image: An Intermedial and Iconological Analysis of the Miniatures of Alisher Navoi's "Khamsah"

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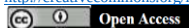
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ABSTRACT

In manuscript culture, classical literary texts are intertwined and miniatures can be not only illustrations but also visual texts with their own semiotic and interpretive meanings. The Khamsa of the poet Alisher Navoi and its miniatures in Eastern book art express the process of the transformation of the meaning, symbols, chronotopes and philosophical concepts of poetry into visual form. The text – miniature relationship is a systemic analytical model that can accommodate a semiotic, a spatial-temporal and an interpretive dimension. The artistic and aesthetic unification of the poems of Navoi's Khamsa and their miniatures, the visual perception of the literary text, and the creation of intermedial and iconological model for their analysis are the subject of this research. A three-part analysis semiotic-semantic, chronotopic and plot-compositional, and hermeneutic-receptive was created and used to analyse the "Dispute between Khusrau and Farhad" from Farhad and Shirin and the miniature of Alexander's meeting with the ruler who abandoned his crown and throne in Saddi Iskandari. The proposed model suggests that the miniature is a separate visual commentary that evokes the philosophical-Sufi and metaphysical aspects of Navoi's poetics. The framework offers a methodological underpinning for continued comparative, interdisciplinary and intercultural analysis of visual materials from the manuscript cultures of the Eastern world.

Introduction

"Text" (*textus* a weave, a connection, a web) term's etymological and specifically constructed interpretation as a formal-semantic connection and a set of signs lays the groundwork for studying this concept in a broader humanitarian and semiotic context. The concept of text is not limited to linguistic structures but encompasses any system of signs that expresses a specific, unified meaning. As G. I. Bogin and M. Lotman noted, it is a bounded, self-contained and completed socio-semantic phenomena and cultural artifacts (cinema, visual arts, music, photography, architecture) are, in a broad sense, "independent texts".

In Eastern classical calligraphy, the dialogue between verbal (linguistic) and visual (pictorial) systems is considered a distinct artistic-philological phenomenon. The history of Eastern miniature art up to the 18th century has undergone an evolutionary development, from simple pictorial illustration to an independent artistic-conceptual phenomenon in terms of the degree of artists' engagement with the literary text and their methods of visual interpretation.

R. According to Barth's theory, the image and text complement each other, collaboratively shaping meaning: the text directs the potential interpretation of the image, while the image expands the literary images in the text into a visual form, increasing their impact. U. Eco's assessment of the literary work as an "open work" (*Opera aperta*) and W.J.T. Mitchell's concept of "imagetext" (text-image) demonstrate that the interaction between image and text creates a new semantic space.

The aim of this research is to systematically investigate the artistic and aesthetic harmony of the poems of Alisher Navoi's "Khamsa" and the miniatures created for them, and the reception of the text in

visual sources. (its reception) in visual sources, and on that basis, to develop and apply a specialized intermedia and iconological analysis model.

Literature review

The problem of synthesizing classical literary text and visual image is explored at the intersection of Western and Eastern art history and philology. Erwin Panofsky's three-stage iconological theory serves as the fundamental methodological foundation for uncovering the true meaning of a visual work. Subsequently, this theoretical system was further refined in the context of book graphics and text-image relations by L. R. Zolotareva and by L. Dodkhodueva, a researcher of the manuscripts of Nizami Ganjavi's "Khamsa" (Table 1).

Table 1. Integrated Classification of Theoretical Methodologies

Stages according to E. Panofsky	Type of illustration according to L. Zolotareva	L. Dodkhuzyeva's classification (in Eastern Miniature)	Evolution and Essence
Pre-iconographic description (Primary/natural meaning)	Interpretation following the author	Miniature illustration: Simply records the event in the text in a visual form.	Stage of literal adherence to the text. The artist copies only the external plot, physical forms, and lines. The image remains in a subsidiary role.
Iconographic Analysis (Secondary/Conventional Meaning)	Interpretation that comprehends the content	Miniature-interpretation: Re-works the philosophical-poetic and psychological content of the literary work.	Encoding Sufi symbols and inner semantics in color and composition in Timurid Renaissance (Herat School, Kamoliddin Behzād) and in Nava'i's poetry.
Iconological Analysis (Inner Meaning/Content)	Accompanying illustration	Decoration (decorative) and independent conceptual depiction: Harmonizing with the page's architecture, it becomes an independent semiotic system.	The miniature transcends the text's frame, becoming a unique phenomenon that expresses the worldview of the era, dynastic ideology, and the artist's metaphysical concept.

As emphasized in A. Erkinov's research, two important academic aspects must be considered when studying miniatures in manuscripts:

The miniature's position in the manuscript: Where the artist or scribe placed the scene within the text of the work and the attitude they expressed toward it;

Interpretation of the work in the miniature: The correspondence of the depiction to the narrative events and inner meaning in the text, within the context of the conventionality and traditionalism of classical Eastern literature and miniature painting.

Research methodology

A special intermedia analysis model was developed and introduced into scholarly discourse for the systematic and step-by-step study of the harmony between the poetics of Alisher Navoi's "Hamsa" and the art of miniature painting (Table 2).

Table 2. Intermedia Model for the Study of the Convergence of Navoiy's "Khamsah" Poetics and Miniature Art

No.	Stage Name	Main Content and Mechanisms of the Analysis	Theoretical and practical significance
1	Semiotic-Semantic Stage (<i>The Layer of Meaning and Signs</i>)	The mechanisms for transferring symbolic, metaphorical, and Sufi-meaning codes from poetic language into visual signs (colors, composition, spatial details) are revealed.	Reveals the laws of the corresponding transition (migration) of poetic similes and metaphors into the system of visual art.
2	The Chronotopic and Plot-Compositional Stage (<i>The Layer of Space and Time</i>)	The procedure for transitioning the epic chronotope (the time and place of events) into a unified spatial and temporal module within the miniature is defined. The poetic plot's climax is concentrated into a single point.	It illuminates the laws of how the main points of the plot and philosophical motifs are highlighted and embodied in the miniature space.
3	The stage of interpretation, perception, and commentary (<i>The hermeneutic-receptive layer</i>)	The painter is approached not merely as a textual decorator, but as an active reader of Nava'i's poetry and its earliest philological-sufi interpreter.	Creates the theoretical foundation for viewing the miniature as an independent visual commentary (tafsir) that reveals the artistic and philosophical essence of Nava'i's works.

Results and discussion

Based on the developed intermedial model and the theoretical methodology of E. Panofsky and L. Doodkhujaeva, two major artistic episodes from Alisher Navoi's "Hamsa": the "Dispute between Khusrau and Farhad" from the "Farhad and Shirin" epic, and the rare miniature titled "At the Court of King Alexander, who exchanged his crown and throne for beggary," created for the manuscript of the "Saddi Iskandari" epic, were analyzed in detail.

The "Dispute of Khusraw and Farhad" miniature from the "Farhad and Shirin" epic (Figure 1)



Figure 1: "The Debate between Khusrau and Farhad"

"Alisher Navoi Collection."

Calligrapher Ibn Abi al-Makārim

Abd al-Wahhab al-Hijazi. 1579.

Gulistan Palace Library. No. 2191.

fol. 382b

In Alisher Navoi's poem "Farhad and Shirin," the debate between Khusraw and Farhad serves to clearly illustrate the ontological and spiritual difference between worldly love and divine love. In this scene, the clash of two different worldviews is depicted through a sharp, stichomythic exchange between the king and the lover.

In the literary-poetic context, Khusrau is a representative of the mundane world, devoid of love. His relationship with Shirin is based on metaphorical and physical possession. Khusrau's goal is to add Shirin to his harem, which is why he invades Armenia with an army. His claims are royal; his love, typical of mortal kings, is incapable of understanding Farhad's divine love and spiritual purification, and he belittles him, calling him "jinni" and "Majnun."

Farhad's love, however, is entirely pure and divine. Lovers of this special love gaze upon the pure face (the beauty of Shirin) with pure eyes and pure intentions, and through this means, they partake in the beauty of the True Beloved. Khusrau cannot defeat Farhad, either in physical authority or in logical and spiritual debate, because worldly power cannot overcome divine power. Through this conversation, Navoi fully reveals the perfection of the intellect, the spiritual realm, and the epic's true philosophical purpose.

Miniature analysis according to the three-stage intermedial model:

1. Semiotic-semantic stage (The layer of meaning and signs):

On the right side of the page, Khusraw sits on a throne, dressed in lavish royal robes and a turban a symbol of worldly power, rank, and metaphorical might. Farrukh, standing opposite the king in a posture of respectful yet proud, humble communion, is the visual embodiment of the codes of love, divine passion, poverty, and spiritual perfection (truth).

The semantics of color and architecture, the yellow and red hues in the palace environment, convey the splendor of worldly sovereignty. The palace architecture and carpet patterns confine the justice of the realm and the court's rules and regulations within geometric frames.

Nawai's "*He said: Where did you come from, O misguided madman?*" / *I said: From my dwelling, O Shahanshah...*" The painter has translated these lines into visual language through the gazes and hand gestures of Khusrau and Farhad, facing each other (communicative mimicry).

2. The Chrono-topical and Plot-Compositional Stage (Layer of Space and Time):

The synthesis of spatial and temporal elements is evident in the tight integration of text and image across *the page spread*. The upper and lower sections are framed by couplets in Nasta'liq script, with the miniature occupying the central spatial module.

The chronotope, the palace interior, represents a temporary secular space, while the moment of the audience reflects the epic's most climactic point of contemplation.

The artist has embodied the point where the worldly kingdom (Khusraw) and the kingdom of love (Farhad) collide into a single compositional center.

3. The Stage of Interpretation, Perception, and Explanation (The Hermeneutic-Receptive Layer):

The painter appears as an interpreter: having grasped the Sufi meaning in Nava'i's text, he depicts Farhad not as a helpless captive but as a spiritually superior and dignified figure.

Through the astonished expressions of the courtiers and spectators, Nava'i's idea that "*The king was amazed by Farhad's intelligence and answers*" is visually interpreted.

An Iconological Analysis of the Miniature "In the Presence of Alexander the Great, Who Has Swapped His Crown and Throne for Begging," from the "Saddi Iskandari" Epic

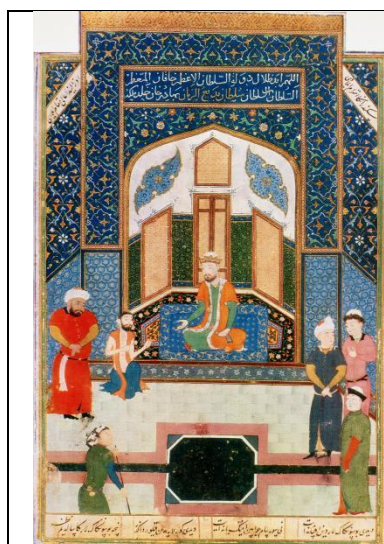


Figure 2: "Before Alexander the Great, who exchanged his crown and throne for beggary."

"Khamsa." Herat. 890/1485.

Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. Elliot 339. fol. 17a. 11.5 × 16.3 cm.

(Suleymannov, 1970. Figure 21)

The central figure in Alisher Navoi's epic poem "Saddi Iskandariy" is the figure of Alexander. In Nava'i's interpretation, he is not the traditional world-conquering ruler, but rather a sufi a perfect human being inclined toward philosophical contemplation, who places justice and enlightenment above political power. This is clearly manifested in his encounter with a former king (a ascetic) who has renounced his crown and throne, and in his realization of the transience of the world.

Chapter 17 of the dastan is dedicated to this very conversation between the ascetic and Alexander. After the Maghribi lands are conquered, the region's ruler is killed on the battlefield. Alexander, wanting to establish the standards of justice in the land, asks the people about the surviving heirs of the former rulers. The people inform him about a dervish who voluntarily left the kingdom and lives in a cemetery, urging the people to turn away from the fleeting pleasures of this world.

The dervish appears before Alexander holding two bones in his hand. Alexander shows him great respect and asks about the significance of the two bones he holds:

*He said, "Tell a tale from these bones,
Whatever I ask, give me your answer right away!"*

The dervish says that while passing through a cemetery he looked at the bones but could not tell which belonged to a king and which to a beggar. Since everyone is equal before death, he poses the question: what is the point of the conflicts and power struggles in life?

*He said: "When passing by the graves,
How many times I have gazed upon these bones.
But this secret remained hidden in my heart,
The king's is the same as the beggar's.
For when you die, these two are the same,
Why do they quarrel in life?"*

Alexander, moved by this wisdom, is left speechless before the Sufi truth and acknowledges that the dervish's spiritual station is superior to his own political station:

*"O Farrokhiyanu Farhunda-roye,
From your insight, he became the problem-solver...
Although he made me honored,
He gave you a resolve higher than mine".*

In this scene from a late 15th-century manuscript copied by Prince Badī' al-Zamān Mirzā (Elliot 339), Alexander is depicted in a palace adorned with fine patterns, with a scantily clad figure opposite him, a half-naked, turbaned, bone-in-hand dervish figure of the abdicated king. The inscription on the pediment of the magnificent ornamented building mentions the name of Prince Badī' al-Zamān Mirzā, written in Sulṭānī script in white and gold ink:

The artist also painted Alexander's clothing very simply; he is only identified as a king by the crown on his head. This is a visual proof of the transition from lavish to modest and simple attire by the courtly elite of the Timurid era and the Herat milieu, influenced by Sufism and the Naqshbandi order.

1. Semiotic-semantic analysis (The layer of meaning and signs):

In the compositional center, Shah Iskandar is depicted seated on a throne against a magnificent architectural pediment and archway backdrop. His dignified and regal posture signifies worldly authority and the standard of justice.

On Alexander's right side (to the viewer's left), a figure kneels with hands raised in supplication and wonder a king who has renounced the throne and kingship, choosing the path of poverty (begging). His simple and humble attire symbolizes the renunciation of worldly wealth (asceticism). The dignitary in red robes and a white turban standing behind the beggar is depicted in a state of contemplation as a witness to the event. The three attendants on the right visually represent the court hierarchy.

The dark blue, gilded, and white colors in the tiles reflect a divine space and purity. The octagonal pool and water symbol at the bottom of the composition allude to Sufi purification and a spiritual source. The muqarnas and geometric order in the architecture encode the correspondence between the divine and worldly orders in Navai's epic.

2. Chronotopic and Plot-Compositional Analysis (Layer of Space and Time):

The miniature has a multi-layered and vertical spatial structure. The inscribed pediment and the Arabic inscription in the gilt border at the top of the page express the palace's exalted status.

The relativity of time and space in Navoiy's poem is infused into the depiction. At the same time, both the palace's interior and the facade and courtyard (exterior) are embodied in a single unified visual plane. As M. Lotman noted, the "frame" and "boundary" in the miniature create a sense of timelessness.

The most important climactic point in the story the philosophical motif of the transience of rank, throne, and worldly wealth, and that true riches lie in spiritual freedom and poverty, is concentrated in a single point: the image of the king who has renounced power, coming to Alexander and kneeling.

3. Hermeneutic-Receptive Analysis (Layer of Interpretation and Explanation):

According to E. Panofsky's theory, this depiction is not a simple "pre-iconographic" description, but rather the highest "iconological" (internal content) and L. It also fully corresponds to Dodkhodayeva's classification of "miniature-interpretation" (interpretation) and to L. Zolotareva's "content-comprehending" level.

The artist, as an interpreter of Navai's text, has deeply understood Navai's inner concept of the just king (Iskandar) and the world-renouncing mystic in "Saddi Iskandariy." He reinterprets this historical-mythical encounter in visual form, revealing the text's inner meanings to the reader.

Book and Text Dialogue:

The marginal muqarrar verses and the inscription above the illustration enter into a direct dialogue with the image, ensuring a dialogue between text and image. This composition created by the artist is a perfect example of the "imagetext" described by R. Barthes and W.J.T. Mitchell, in which text and image complement each other to form an entirely new semantic space.

Conclusion

An intermedial and iconological analysis of the intertextual dialogue between classical literary text and visual art in the space of the manuscript book allows for the following scientific and practical conclusions:

Eastern miniature art, in particular, The illustrations for Navoiy's "Hamsa" are not merely book decoration or repetitive illustration, but an independent "visual text" with a distinct semiotic structure, internal chronotopic laws, and a profound meaning.

The integration of the theories of E. Panofsky, L. Zolotareva, L. Dodkhodayeva, and A. Erkinov demonstrates that Eastern miniaturist painting has evolved from a stage of literal adherence to the text (pre-iconographic) to a profound hermeneutic interpretation (iconological) that reveals the work's inner philosophical-sufi and metaphysical essence to a profound hermeneutic interpretation (iconological) level, proving its gradual evolution from the text's literal (pre-iconographic) adherence to Eastern miniaturism.

The 3-stage (semiotic-semantic, chronotopic, and hermeneutic-receptive) intermedial analysis model developed during the research demonstrates the gradual evolution of Alisher Navoi's poetics from the text-following (pre-iconographic) stage of Eastern miniaturism to a profound hermeneutic interpretation (iconographic) that reveals the work's inner philosophical-Sufi and metaphysical essence.

but also allows for a new philological and art-historical interpretation of Alisher Navoi's poetics, based on the visual-aesthetic reception formed in the minds of painters over the centuries.

This methodological framework will allow for a new philological and art-historical interpretation of Alisher Navoi's poetics, based not only on written sources but also on the visual-aesthetic reception formed in the minds of painters over the centuries. This methodological framework will serve as a comprehensive theoretical and methodological standard for the future comparative interdisciplinary and intercultural study of visual sources in the manuscripts of thinkers such as Nizami Ganjavi, Amir Khusrau Dehlavi, Abdurrahman Jami, and Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur.

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