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A SURVEY OF TURKISH PAINTING THE ORIGIN OF TURKISH PAINTING

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I

The Western world, in general, has been as unfamiliar with Turkish painting as it has been with Turkish architecture. In fact, art historians of the West have written hardly anything on the subject of Turkish painting. When they did write about Turkish painting, they failed to recognize its artistic value, and maintained that Turkish painting was a mere imitation of Persian painting. This opinion was put forth without having first made an appreciative study of the thousands of miniatures illustrating various texts, or kept as separate plates that are available in public libraries and museums in Istanbul, most of them in the Museum of Topkapi Palace.

We shall try in this survey to point out that Turkish painting actually exists, that it has a style of its own, and that numerous beautiful works of art have been created in this style. We shall try to prove these assertions by giving examples of such works, but before doing this, we must first speak about the origin of Turkish painting.

The art of Turkish painting, like Turkish architecture, is based on a very ancient tradition that originated in Central Asia. Turkish paintings existing within the present Turkey, starting with those of the Seljuqs of Anatolia, cannot be fully comprehended without examining the earliest examples of Turkish painting in Central Asia.

It is an historically established fact that the vast Central-Asian plateau, extending from Tibet Plateau to the Himalayas, from Itil River to Baikal Lake, and from the Caspian Sea to China, for centuries had been the homeland of the Turks. On this plateau, many Turkish communities had founded states that coexisted with or succeeded earlier states. The most prominent of these states were the T'oukiou and the Uighurs. The tribe which the Chinese called T'oukou is no other than the Turkish people, as the letter "R" does not exist in the Chinese alphabet.

These people who called themselves by the common term, "Turk", developed after the fifth century and gained predominance during the sixth century. During the reign of Mou-han, they gradually came to dominate the boundless stretch of territory extending from the Korean Gulf to the Caspian Sea, including the Desert of Gobi.

After the fall of the T'oukiou state under the attacks of the Uighurs in 744 A. D., the Turkish independence was mainly preserved by the Uighur state, and it was the Uighurs who developed Turkish culture. Uighurs, who like T'oukiou, were of Hiyoung-Nou origin, founded a powerful state in the Orhon Valley, and made Balaghsoun its capital. The language of the Uighurs was a Turkish dialect very close to that of T'oukiou. The Uighurs were the first Turks who attained a high level of culture and civilisation. In 762 A. D., Bogu Han, the leader of the Uighurs, was converted to Manichaeism, a blend of Christianity and Zoroastrianism, and most of the Uighur people, who had been Buddhists until that date, followed their ruler in his new faith.

The Uighur state, which had been founded on the ruins of the eastern T'oukiou Empire, attained a high economic and cultural level. It lasted until 840 A. D., when it was conquered by Kirghezes, another Turkish political community. After the downfall of the Uighur State, part of the population moved southward to Turfan, Besbalik, Qarashar, Bezaklik, and Koucha. In this region they adopted Buddhism, and founded a minor state that maintained its independence until the fourteenth century.

Another group of Uighurs settled down in Kansou (Kan-tcheou) and Touen-Huang areas, and stayed there until 1028 A. D., when they were defeated by Tangouts. Thus the Uighurs and the other Turkish communities scattered in the immense Central Asian plateau. In the twelfth century all of Central Asia fell under the domination of Chenghiz Han.

After the reign of the Uighurs, the two Turkish tribes influenced by the Uighur culture were Karkluks and Oguzes. The Karkluks, living on the Kara Irtysh shore during the time of the Gök-türks (T'oukiou), and afterwards living in the Ili and Çu valleys, assembled around Karahanlis, who was also Turkish in origin, to found a powerful state. It was these Karahanlis, who, in the tenth century, founded the first Turkish-Islamic state, and conquered Maveran-nahr, with its capital cities of Semerkant and Buhara.

Oguz Turks, who were of Hiyoung-Nou descent, called themselves Seljuqs after Seljuq, son of Dakak, who was a subject of the Uighur state. They united around Togrul Bey, a grandson of Seljuq, and founded a state in 1038 A. D. The Seljuqs adopted the Islamic religion towards the end of the tenth century, and began to flourish with the victory they gained over Mesud, Sultan of Gazna, at Dandanakan on the 22nd day of May in 1040 A. D.

Togrul Bey, founder of the state of Seljuqs of Horasan (who are also referred to as The Great Seljuqs), made a rapid conquest of Curcan, Taberistan, and Harzem, and then invaded Hamadan, Rayy, Belh, and Ispahahan (1041-1050 A. D.). On the eighteenth day of December in 1055 A. D. Togrul Bey reached Baghdad, where he was proclaimed Sultan. Although Mahmud of Gazna was the first Turkish ruler in the Islamic world to gain the title of Sultan, it was Togrul Bey who propagated it throughout the Islamic world.

Togrul Bey died in 1063 A. D., after having brought Irano-Arabian and Iraco-Persian regions, Azerbeycan and Iran up to Harzem, under Seljuq rule. His successor, Alp Arslan, defeated the Byzantine Emperor, Romanos Diogenes, at the battle of Malazgird on the 26 day of August in 1071 A. D., and led the Turks into Anatolia. Thus Alp Arslan changed the course of Turkish history. Under the reign of his successor, Melikshah, the Great Seljuq Empire attained the climax of military, administrative, scientific, artistic and literary development, and the Rumi-Seljuq Empire was founded in Anatolia. The Rumi-Seljuq Empire lasted until 1308 A. D., and created the most remarkable works in the fields of art and culture. The present day Turkish Republic was founded in 1923, after the collapse of the Empire of the Ottoman Turks, who had been out-post vassals of the Seljuqs in Anatolia, and who were of Oguz origin, as the Seljuqs had been. Most of the works of art created by the Seljuqs in Anatolia and by the Ottomans in Istanbul, Rumeli, and Anatolia, have survived to the present day.

In the course of history, the Turks founded several states, known by various names, and were able to achieve a high stage of development in world civilization. In the course of the last half century, excavations in Central Asia conducted by Russian, German, French, English, and Japanese archaeologists¹, have brought to light paintings in books, and on walls of temples

¹ The names of archaeologists who excavated in the Tourphan Valley are, in chronological order of excavations: Klementz (1897), Grunwedel (1903), A. Von Le Coq (1905), Sir Aurel Stein (1907), Paul Pelliot (1907), Serge d'Oldenbourg (1909-1910), Tachibana (1910-1911).

carved in rocks, dating from the seventh and ninth centuries. These are the earliest known Turkish paintings, dating from the Manichaean and Buddhist periods. The illustrations in the books date from the Manichaean period, and they depict the priests, founders, and musicians of a religious society. Human figures, although slightly larger than natural size, seem to be quite faithful reproductions of their models. They are arranged in rows against a red background, a technique which persisted also in the Great Seljuq Period.

As for Uighur miniatures, of which only very few have reached us, they seem to reveal a still higher artistic skill and ability: "We have no written records of the technique of the Manichaean miniatures. It would seem that the surface to be painted was compacted, that the outlines were then drawn with red or black ink, and finally the design was filled in with body colours. Some areas were covered with gold leaf. The basic colours were dark red and yellow, in various gradations. Green is less common"².

Human figures depicted in the mural paintings as well as in book illustrations, are characterized by their round face, slanting eyes, small nose, style of clothing, particular form of headdress, and, if female, by their hair braids. We find the same characteristics also in paintings adorning the bowls that have survived from the Seljuqs of Horasan, as well as on pieces of faience that have survived from the Seljuqs of Anatolia. Besides, Uighur book illustrations are characterized by marginal ornaments of curved branches and flowers. This style travelled in the following centuries to countries far away from Uighur regions, and the masterpieces in this style were created toward the end of the fifteenth century, and in the sixteenth century, in Turkestan, Anatolia, and Iran. In Turfan art, nature is represented as a background by stylized mountains, and a parallel to this technique is found in Ilhani miniatures.

This art did not perish after the fall of the Uighur state, but persisted among the Mongols, who founded a new state. We know that during the Mongol period, a great number of Uighur employees served in government offices. We also know that the Buddhist temples erected during the reign of Mongol rulers, Argun Han and Ghazan Han, were planned by Uighur architects, and the walls were decorated by Uighur artists. Unfortunately, all these works of art were destroyed after Ghazan Han's conversion to Islam. Recent studies have revealed that the miniatures illustrating the *Jami at Tawarikh*, written in 1314 A. D. (714 A. H.), now in the Royal Asiatic Society in London, were not executed by Iranian painters, but are actually works of the Uighur artists who emigrated to Western Asia³. Moreover, commenting on the landscape miniatures of an anthology manuscript, dated 1398 A. D., now in the Museum of Turkish-Islamic works, in Istanbul, Mehmet Ağaoğlu arrives at the same conclusion by stating that the miniatures of *Jami at Tawarikh* have nothing in common with Persian iconography so far as their subjects are concerned, such as Indian mountains, or the Boudha Tree, and that by the character of their style they are typically Central Asian. Mehmet Ağaoğlu, therefore, also considers them the works of an Uighur painter⁴.

A remarkable taste for colour, and purity of design are the two outstanding characteristics of Uighur painting which Jean Buhot expresses in the following lines: "That purity, somewhat dry, which seems to us quite characteristic of Turkish art in all countries The harmony of colors is remarkable and unexpected"⁵.

2 Ugo Monneret de Villard, "The Relations of Manichaean Art to Iranian Art" in A. U. Pope's *A Survey of Persian Art*, Vol. 111, 1925.

3 Ernest Dicz. "Sino Mongolian Painting and its Influence on Persian illumination," *Ars Islamica*, Vol. 1, Part 11

4 Mehmet Ağaoğlu. "The Landscape Miniatures of an Anthology Manuscript of the year 1398 A. D.," *Ars Islamica*, 1906, Vol. 111, Part 1, p. 85

5 Jean Buhot. "La region de Tourfan" in *Histoire de l'Art*, tome 1. Encyclopedie de la Pleiade, (Paris 1961), p. 1956.

Although these are verified points, and in spite of the fact that there is not a single illustrated book, or even a single page, known, dating from the Parths or the Sasanians, enabling us to make a comparison, Uighur art is still represented as Persian. Rene Grousset, a member of the French Academy, commenting on miniatures depicting Manichaen priests with white cassocks and high headdress, which were discovered by Von Le Coq in the course of excavations made at Tourphan, concludes as follows: "Le caractère iranien de ces oeuvres est trop évident pour qu'il soit nécessaire d'y insister. Nous avons là, les premières miniatures persanes connues, et il est intéressant de les rapprocher de certaines figures (d'ailleurs de même époque) des fresques abbasides de Samarra"⁶.

Grousset classifies Samarra frescoes also as Persian works. This opinion is contradicted by historical facts, for we know that Samarra was built by the Abbasid Caliph Mu' tasim (833-842 A. D.) in order to lodge Turkish soldiers and officers who were his bodyguards. It is highly probable that Turkish artists had accompanied Turkish soldiers to Samarra and Baghdad. Monneret de Villard calls attention to the information given by the Arab author Ibn an-Nadim (936-998 A. D.) in *Fihrist* regarding the fact that from 946 A. D. to 957 A. D. during the caliphate of El Muti', three hundred Manichaen painters had worked in Baghdad. He comes to the conclusion that "the frequent communication between the Manichaens in Turkestan and those in Babylon, which was apparently the principal center of religion in the eighth and ninth centuries, certainly had some effect on the arts"⁷.

In our opinion, what misled Grousset and other art historians was the identity of Mani himself. The Sassanid history speaks of the founder of a religion by that name. Born in 216 A. D., Mani was a Persian painter. We have already pointed out that in 762 A. D. the Uighurs were converted to Manichaeism.

This historical fact may be shown as a reason for attributing the Uighur mural paintings and book illustrations to Persian artists, for as we have mentioned before, not a single painting dating from Parthian and Sassanid periods has been found to make a comparison possible.

Going still further in his unproved hypothesis, Grousset couples Persian painting with Chinese painting and regards Uighur art as a mixture of Persian art and Chinese art. "De fait l'art de Tourfan, en dépit de séries gandhariennes habituelles, nous apparaît surtout comme un art sino-iranien. La plupart des princes laïques ou des guerriers représentés sur les fresques bouddhiques de Bezeklik et, de Murtuq et tels que Von Le Coq les reproduit dans son magnifique album sur Chotscho s'avèrent, de dessin, de costume, d'armement et de type physique moitié Sasanide, moitié T'Ang"⁸.

Early Persians left us no paintings, but if we compare the above-mentioned characteristics with those of Chinese paintings, especially with those of T'Angs who were contemporaries of Uighurs, it will become evident that this resemblance does not exist at all. To maintain that there is a physical similarity between Uighur Turks and Sasanians or Chinese, reflects a

6 Rene Grousset, *Les Civilisations de l'Orient*, Tome III - La Chine (Paris 1930) p. 170.

"The Iranian character of these works is too evident to necessitate further insistence. We have there the first Persian miniatures that we know, of, and it would be interesting to compare them with certain figures dating from the same period as the Abbasid frescoes of Samarra."

7 Ugo Monneret de Villard, "The Relation of Manichaen Art to Iranian art, in *Pope's A Survey of Persian Art*, Vol. III, p. 1827, Oxford University Press, London 1939.

8 Rene Grousset, *op. cit.*, p. 169 "In fact, Turfan Art, despite the familiar gandharian works, appears to us mostly like a Sino-Iranian art. Most of the nonreligious princes and warriors represented on Buddhist frescoes of Bezeklik and of Murtuk, such as those reproduced by Von le Coq in his magnificent album on Chotscho, appear by their design, dress ornament and physical type, half Sassanid, half T'Ang".

sorry lack of observation. Paintings depicting the common Uighur types do not confirm the above-mentioned view, neither do documents from Chinese sources, which show Uighur Turks as round-faced and of small stature⁹.

The golden age of the Uighur civilization corresponds to the period of the T'Ang state from the seventh to the ninth centuries. It certainly would not be a scholarly approach to include Uighur works in Chinese art, knowing that they reflect at least an equal artistic achievement, and to support this belief just because of the facts that the two arts were contemporaneous, and the Chinese civilization had attained a high level of development in this period, without first having examined Uighur art thoroughly. Therefore, Wolfram Eberhard, Professor of Chinese history in California University, presents the contrary theory that Uighur Turks influenced Chinese art during the T'Ang period. Pointing out the fact that Chinese literature had flourished under Turkish influence, Eberhard admits, "in painting as well as in poetry" the presence of "strong Western influences" and continues, "The most famous Chinese painter of the T'Ang period is Wu Tao-tzu, who was also the painter most strongly influenced by Central Asian works"¹⁰. Oswald Siren also has pointed out the influence of Uighur art on Chinese painting, supporting his theory with several examples¹¹.

No art originates and develops in isolation. Interinfluences and interrelations occur in the arts of all communities. The aim of this short survey is to stress the fact that it is not reasonable to reduce Uighur art to ancient Persian art or to Chinese art, and consider it an imitation of both. For we believe not only that the art of a people draws invigorating inspiration from the art of other peoples, but also that the art of a people degenerates under the influence of mere imitation.

* * *

The Uighur approach to art is also reflected in Seljuq art in Horasan and Anatolia. The use of the triangle and the pointed arch to support the dome on a square was an architectural device the Seljuqs took from the Uighur. Moreover, such characteristics as the use of a red background, marginal ornaments, the dominance of dark blue and yellow, and the arrangement of human figures in several parallel rows are all apparent in Seljuq miniatures, and they can all be traced back to Uighur painting. This style of painting is seen not only in works produced in the Seljuq workshops of Turkestan and Iran, but also in those executed in Mesopotamia in the period when the latter was under Seljuq domination. Therefore, we agree with Ernest Kühnel, who at first attributed miniatures made in Mesopotamia to the *Baghdad School*¹², but afterwards called them *Seljuq Miniatures*. E. Kühnel, in his section on "History of Miniature Painting and Drawing" in Pope's *A Survey of Persian Art*, Vol. III, explains this change in attribution: "It has become the custom to gather together under the general inclusive rubric 'Baghdad School', a group of paintings that should rather be called Seljuq miniatures. The manuscripts in which these paintings appear undoubtedly derive from a number of different centres which may well have been at some distance from each other, but they were all within the Seljuq domains. If the painters themselves were Persians or Arabs, and not Seljuq Turks, still they must have been working to the order of the Seljuq ruling class, so that the denomina-

9 James Russel Hamilton, *Les Ouighours D'Après les Documents Chinois*, passim.

10 W. Eberhard, *A History of China*, p. 197 London 1950.

11 Oswald Siren, "Central Asian Influences in Chinese Painting". *Arts Asiatiques*, tome 111, fasc. 1, 1956, pp. 2, 3, 5, 15, 18.

12 E. Kühnel, *La Miniature en Orient* (Traduction Française de Paul Budry) Paris, S. D. p. 14-16.

tion 'Seljuq' is doubly justified"¹³. This point of view is undoubtedly agreeable as works of art are identified by the group of people who created them rather than the geographical location in which they may have settled and ruled.

The Seljuqs lived, developed their culture, and produced works of art not only in Iran, but also in Turkestan, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Anatolia. Therefore, Persian or Arab painters who had to work with Turkish painters for the Seljuq rulers, had to abide by their ruler's taste and directions. In the Middle Ages this was true everywhere.

Unfortunately Ernest Kühnel, who corrected his first attribution, and verified the latter point of view, placed the section including Ilkhani and Timurid paintings as well as Seljuq in a book on Persian art, and by using the words, "Persian Seljuq Style" or Persian Seljuq Work, he misrepresented Seljuq painting as Persian.

On the other hand Kühnel, who affirms the necessity of attributing the Baghdad School to the Seljuqs, talks about a "Seljuq-Persian Style," although no Persian miniature of that period has been found. This can only be explained by the fact that he considers Seljuqs either Persian in origin, or a group of people who became totally Persian in character. This, of course, is contradictory to history. We previously mentioned that Seljuq art stems from Uighur art, but unfortunately, E. Kühnel, like many other European scholars, regards not only Seljuq Turks, but even Uighur Turks as Persians. As a matter of fact, the following lines express this erroneous view. "No example of Iranian book painting is known prior to the eighth or ninth century, and then we have only the fragments of Manichaen books recovered at Turfan, followed by another gap of three centuries without any material. Hence it is impossible to trace the history of Persian miniature painting of the Islamic period prior to the thirteenth century"¹⁴.

Certainly after the fall of the Sasanian Empire in 659 A. D., neither the people of Persia nor the artists of the Persian community totally disappeared; they lived and worked under the following rulers. Therefore why should a Persian Seljuq Style, and not a Persian Style exist?

The reason for placing the word "Persian" before "Seljuq Style", in our opinion, is that sometimes the subjects or the themes used by the artists, were taken from Persian history. Yet it is not possible to defend this point of view as, in works of art, *subject matter is nothing but a medium which helps the artist to express his ideas and present his style*. Renaissance painters in Europe have one after another depicted the same theme.

Inspired by Uighur art, Seljuqs undoubtedly developed a new style in painting and the Mongols improved and continued this artistic tradition. This is asserted by Ernest Kühnel, himself, who in connection with Al-Biruni's *Athar-i Baqiya* of 1307 A. D., which is now in Edinburgh University Library, says, "the figural compositions seem to combine the Seljuq tradition with Central Asiatic elements such as appear in Turfan paintings. This connexion may have been established in Persia by the Uighur secretaries employed in the Court Chancelleries of the first Mongol rulers"¹⁵.

Consequently we arrive at this conclusion: Although there were painters of Persian descent in the Seljuq period, they followed this new style created by the Seljuq artists, and the following Mongol and Timurid periods brought novelty and development to this, and works of great importance were executed.

¹³ E. Kühnel, "History of Miniature Painting and Drawing" in Pope's *A Survey of Persian Art*, Vol. III, pp 1829-1830.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 1829.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 1833

Now the question is, how can one attribute this style of painting, which in the Seljuq, Mongol, and Timurid periods developed and differed according to the ethnic and political character of these states to the Persian artists? *If it had been a Persian style, it should have kept its Persian character through the successor kingdoms, and have no connection with the incoming new styles. On the other hand, if the Persian artists followed the style of the new settlers, it means they lost their Persian character.*

INTRODUCTION TO OTTOMAN PAINTING

II

The only data we have on painting of the Ottoman period are the data given in *Menakib-i Hunerveran*¹⁶ of Mustafa Âli of Gelibolu (died about 1599-1600), in the *Seyahatnâme* (travels) of Evliya Çelebi (died 1693), and in *Shuarâ Tezkireleri* (short accounts of the poets accompanied by selected verses.) We possess no other data on painters of the Ottoman period. These data, moreover, are not very reliable, and are reduced to some eulogistic remarks praising certain artists.

In the above-mentioned sources, no attempt was made to state accurately which manuscripts were illuminated by these painters. Likewise, the registers of the guilds simply lengthen their lists by adding more names of artists we already know.

On the other hand, the meaning of the term "painter" was quite complex in ancient Turkey; it applied, in fact, to various kinds of handicraftsmen such as illuminators, designers, gilders, colorists, etc., and that is why it is quite impossible for us to find out which of these are really painters, at least in the modern sense of the term.

Rıfki Melul Meric in his *Türk Nakış Sanatı Tarihi Araştırmaları* (Research on the History of Turkish Pictorial Art)¹⁷ mentions certain artists such as Dervish Bey, Abdulgani Shah Mehmed as portraitists; some others such as Abdurrahman and Musi as colorists, and a number of artists are simply classified under the title "Nakkaş" which means painter. Were they really painters? This question remains to be answered. Another problem is identifying the painters of illustrated manuscripts, as Turkish miniatures with rare exceptions, are unsigned, and the name of the painter is not mentioned on the last page of the manuscript, as is usually done by calligraphers. Therefore, it is impossible to tell which of the above cited artists painted them. To date the miniatures according to the date of the manuscript which they illustrate, and to examine their stylistic characteristics are the only methods of research for discovering the different phases of Turkish painting between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries.

Turkish Painting, which is almost unknown abroad, and which has only become a field of interest in Turkey in the last twenty years, flourished and enjoyed a Golden Age about the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 A. D. by Mehmet II, the Conqueror. It was then that the manuscripts were adorned with magnificent miniatures. But as no art reaches its height of development without having a past tradition, one has to accept the existence of the art of painting among Ottoman Turks even during their *period of principality*. Unfortunately this stage of Ottoman

16 This work on artists completed in 1587 A. D., dedicated to Murad III, was published in 1926, by Ibn-ul-Emin Mahmud Kemal with a biography of the author.

17 Rıfki Melul Meric, *Documents on the History of Turkish Miniature Painting (in Turkish)*, Ankara, 1953.

painting remains obscure, as there are no miniatures we can attribute either to Ilyas bin Ali, decorator of the Green Mosque at Bursa, or to Safi of Bursa, of whose existence we know through the biographies written by Latifi and Riyazi, in which books he is mentioned as a poet and a painter. Examples abound for the subsequent periods, and an era opens with the Conqueror reaching its full maturity in the sixteenth century. The transfer of the capital from Bursa to Istanbul was not only characterized by commercial and economic prosperity, but also by cultural and scientific development. It is noteworthy that the Conqueror knew Greek and Latin, and had a library containing works written in these two languages. It is also noteworthy that the humanist *Ciriaco of Ancona* was in his immediate entourage, and that he was on very friendly terms with Lorenzo di Medici¹⁸. The Conqueror was gifted with a refined artistic sense. In order to develop Turkish painting, he not only invited Italians, one of whom was the renowned Gentile Bellini¹⁹, but he also sent to Italy some of the Turkish painters, such as Sinan Bey of Bursa, to improve their artistic education. We do not know the names of any other painters from the period of the Conqueror, and have not discovered any other miniatures that could be attributed to that period, except the miniatures of a certain book on surgery.

Despite all the efforts of the Conqueror to orient Turkish painting with new forms, it remained faithful to its own tradition. It was in that direction that it developed and continued to give masterpieces.

After Mehmed II, under Beyazid II (1481-1512 A. D.), Şiblizâde Ahmed, under Selim I (1512-1520 A. D.) Tacuddin Girihbend and his son Hossein Bali were outstanding among the artists of their time. Under Suleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566 A. D.), Kinci Mahmud, the portraitists İbrahim Çelebi and Memi Çelebi of Galata, Nigâri surnamed Reis Haydar, Matraki Nasûh, Hasan Kefeli, and the poet Sâi, whose real name was Mustafa were among the brightest stars in the artistic firmament. Under Murad III (1574-1595 A. D.) Osman and Lûftü Abdullah stood out among the distinguished artists of their time. Under Mehmet III (1595-1603 A. D.) Hasan Paşa was prominent among the artists of his time. Under Mustafa I (1617-1618 A. D.) and under Osman II (1618-1622) A. D. Nakşi was a most illustrious artist. Under Ahmed III (1703-1730) Reşid of Selimiye, Levni and Abdullah Buhari were among the most creative artists of their time.

The flourishing Turkish painting attracted many artists from Iran and Turkistan. At the Court, besides the "Workshop of Turkish Art" (Nakkash-hâne-i-Roûm), a second workshop was established, which was called the "Workshop of Persian Art" (Nakkash-hâne-i-Adjem). Among the artists who worked in this second workshop, there were painters of Turkish origin coming from Tebriz. Selim I, returning from his Iranian expedition, brought with him portraitists from Tebriz, such as Shah Mehmed, Abdulgârni, Dervish Bey, as well as other artists such as Alauddin Mehmed, Semihan, Mansur Bey, Sheyh Kemal, Ali Bey, Abdulhâlik, Mirza Bey, Abdulfettah, Mîr Aka, Sheref, Ali Kulu²⁰. The art historians of the West hastily regard these artists as Persian, and thus they attribute Ottoman pictorial art to Persians. However, in order to prove that the artists in question are true Turks, one has to consider the fact that even in our days, the spoken language in the Tebriz region, even in Tebriz itself, is no other than Turkish. We are informed by Aşık Çelebi (who died about 1571-1572 A. D.) that one of these painters, and a talented one, wrote poems in Turkish under the pseudonym of Penâhi. Aşık Çelebi men-

18 Halil Inalcık, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Tarihi Yeri", (The Historic Place of the Ottoman Empire) *Unesco Haberleri* (Nouvelles de l'Unesco) March 24-25, June 1960.

19 Bellini came to Istanbul in 1480 and stayed for fifteen months. He decorated some of the rooms of the palace with landscape paintings and painted a portrait of the Conqueror in oil, which is now in the National Gallery, London.

20 M. Cevdet, *Zeyl Alâ Fasl-il-Ahiyyet-il-Fityan-it Türkkiye*, Istanbul, 1932, p. 382.

tions him in his *Meşair-uş-Şuara*²¹, and quotes selections from his poetry. The painter in question is Shah Kulu, who, under Bayazid II, came from Tebriz to the court of Prince Ahmed in Amasya. After the enthronement of Selim I, he came to Istanbul, where later on he was promoted to the rank of "Chief Court Painter".

Another argument stated by these art historians who believe Turkish miniatures are actually the works of Iranian painters, is the fact that some of these miniatures are found in books written in the Persian language. In order to prove the inaccuracy of these beliefs, it would be enough to recollect the fact that certain great Turkish poets, even Sultans themselves, composed *Divans* in Persian, and that for centuries, Persian was regarded as the literary language *par excellence*. Mr. Ivan Schoukine, author of the studies on Islamic miniatures, fortunately confirms our point of view when he writes, "The fact that manuscripts of the XIIIth century and part of the XIVth century which we know are in the Arabic language, does not prevent us from regarding their paintings as Persian works"²².

If such is the case, the fact that some of the illustrated manuscripts of the Seljuq and Ottoman Period were written in the Persian language, could not be a valid reason for considering them Persian works. In fact, a simple comparison will be enough to demonstrate that some of the manuscripts in Persian contain Turkish miniatures, and others in Turkish contain Persian miniatures. As examples, let us take the famous manuscript, *Nefahat-al-uns* of Abdurrahman Jamî (1414-1492 A. D.) now in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin (No. 474), and copied in Istanbul, most probably in June 1595. This manuscript is in the Persian language, but the style and the coloring of its nine miniatures prove them to be the works of a Turkish painter²³. The University of Istanbul possesses among its manuscripts, the *Shahinshahnâme* (Yıldız 2652/260) of Alâuddin Mansûr-i Shirâzi. This epic poem in honor of Sultan Murad III is also in Persian, but its 58 miniatures are most beautiful examples of sixteenth century Turkish miniature painting. The *Iskendernâme* of Ahmet Rumi, on the other hand, kept in the museum of Turkish and Islamic works (No. 1921), and copied in Shiraz in 1519, is the work of a Turkish poet. It is composed in the Turkish language, but nevertheless, its four miniatures are of Persian character. Another example, one of great significance, is the five miniatures of Fuzuli's *Divan* in Turkish, now in the Chester Beatty Library (No. 440). In this manuscript, copied in the seventeenth century, the five miniatures in question are representative of the Safavid period, and are most probably executed by a Persian²⁴. A comparison between the miniatures of the two manuscripts in Turkish and Persian in the Topkapı Saray Museum and those in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic works, leads us to the same conclusion. Therefore, to attribute this or that nationality to miniatures, according to the language in which the manuscripts are written, is not the correct approach. It is in fact, the characteristics in the style that indicate the origin and the source of a miniature.

Ottoman Turkish painting developed according to esthetic norms of miniature painting without its evolution being hindered in the least by any religious obstacles. This is what differentiates it from the paintings of other Moslem countries. This evolution, however, was delayed by periods of temporary inactivity, and miniatures in a certain number of manuscripts suffered seriously because of religious fanaticism. Consequently, the period between the reign of Murad IV and Ahmed III, that is from 1623 A. D. to 1703 A. D. was rather poor and unproductive as far as painting was concerned, and the number of painters decreased.

21 *Meşair-ush-Shuarâ*, manuscript No. 40902, Library of the Faculty of Language, History and Geography, p. 168.

22 I. Schoukine, *La Miniature Iranienne*, Paris 1936, p. 64.

23 V. M. Minorsky, the Chester Beatty Library *A Catalogue of the Turkish Manuscripts and Miniatures* 1958, pages 112-113.

24 *Op. cit.* pages 71-72

The library of the Topkapı Saray Museum possesses among its Turkish manuscripts the *Kıyafet-el-İnsaniyye fi Shemâil-el-Osmaniyye* (Inventory No. 710, formerly No. 1562) by Lokman B. Hossein El Ashuri, the historian of Murad III. This manuscript contains twenty-seven miniatures, twenty-three of which depicted the Sultan. The faces were obliterated. Likewise, in the Paintings of the sixteenth century (Collection No. 1968 of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic works), all the faces were systematically destroyed with red paint.

All this vandalism dates from the aforesaid period. On the other hand, the subsequent removal of the oil portrait of the Conqueror, by Bellini, from the court, and its sale on the market, and the absence of the mosaics of which Bousbecq speaks in his *Turkish Letters*²⁵, are also the disastrous effects of the religious fanaticism. Bousbecq was the ambassador of Austria to the Court of Suleyman the Magnificent, and lived in Istanbul in 1555 A. D. This era of fanaticism was of short duration in the history of Ottoman painting, which actually developed greatly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

History of painting and history of art in general are based mainly on style. Iconography, studies and defines the subject, the theme, and the different types dealt with in the works of art. Islamic painting, just like Christian painting, has its own distinctive subject matter and themes, which differ from one Moslem country to another. The importance of the subject matter and themes in the history of painting is that they reflect, through the medium of design and color, the different tastes and temperaments of various societies in the course of their history. This is confirmed by the fact that in certain periods, certain subjects and themes aroused no artistic interest at all, while in other periods, the painters were stimulated by the same subjects. This was for instance, the case of Nizami of Gendje (1140-1204 A. D.). Although he used the themes "Leyla and Madjoun" and "Khosrew and Chirine" for two of his five poems in his *Hamseh* (1175 A. D.), no painter was interested in these works either in the Seljuq or the Ilkhanid periods (1256-1336). It was only in the Timurid period (1370-1469 A. D.) that these works were illustrated. This can only be explained by the birth of a new form of romanticism, compatible only with conditions prevailing in the fifteenth century. Mongolian (Ilkhanid) pictorial art, woven out of love and nostalgia, was altogether strange to that form of romanticism. This was also the case of *Boustan* and *Goulistan* of Saadi (deceased 1291 A. D.), which had to wait for a period of time before they came to inspire the artists. Certain works, such as the *Shahnâme* of Firdousi (1009) which was illustrated in the Ilkhanid period, were taken up again in the Timurid period, and they became works of an entirely different character, with a radically different spirit and form. This difference is apparent when we compare the miniatures of the *Shahnâme* of these two periods. In the Timurid period they lose their mournful atmosphere and their dark colors; the backgrounds and details change, the faces become unexpressive, and a mildness marks the landscape.

Similarly, in Ottoman painting, one can refer to the *Sournâme* of Murad III, illustrated in the sixteenth century by Osman and the *Sournâme* of the poet Vehbi, written for Ahmet III, and illustrated in the eighteenth century by Levni. Although the subject matter is the same, the two painters have nothing in common as far as their style, coloring, and composition are concerned. These differences can be explained by the transformation which took place between the XVIth and XVIIIth centuries when the outlook on life, and the tastes changed totally under the effect of multiple political and social factors.

25 "... I was granted the authorization to visit several pavilions of the Sultan. On one of the doors, I saw very vividly depicted in mosaics the Battles of Selim I against the Iranian Sovereign Ismail (Campaign of Tchaldiran)" Bousbecq, *Turkish Letters*, Trans. H. C. Yalçın, pp. 58-59, Istanbul, 1936.

The themes principally used by the painters can be divided into three groups: 1. *History*, 2. *Literature*, and 3. *Religion*. Most popular were the manuscripts included in the first group. Some of these historical works relate life in general, or describe the lives of the Sultans. Certain others depict the conquest of a country, and a sub-group describes the lives of Turkish scholars and poets. We should include among these historical works, the manuscripts dealing with cosmography and geography and those describing the festivities organized on the occasion of the ceremonies of circumcision, which reflect the social life of the period.

Next to History, Literature was the subject most appealing to the painters. Among the most highly reputed literary works we should mention the modified Turkish translation of the *Masnavi*, mentioned above, entitled *Khosrav and Chirin* of Nizamî, *Leylâ* and *Madjoun* of Fuzûlî, and the *Divan* of Bâkî.

As to the religious works, most important are the biographies called *Siyeri Nebi*, which depict the life of the Prophet.

A great number of these illustrated manuscripts within the three groups, are kept in the Museum of Topkapı Saray, and in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Works, both in Istanbul.

Besides these three groups there are several folio miniatures, assembled in albums called *Muraqqa*, of which the Topkapı Saray Library possesses a very rich collection. In that museum there are more than ten thousand miniatures, most of them unsigned. Moreover, since no name is mentioned on the last page of the manuscripts (this omission is very frequent), we know nothing about the identity of the painters who illustrated them. Fortunately we are able to identify some of the greatest miniature painters of the Ottoman period, although the number of the identified painters is no more than a dozen.

In conclusion, I may say that the history of Turkish Ottoman miniature painting can be considered in the following three aspects:

- 1 - Painters whose works are unknown.
- 2 - Works, the painters of which are identified.
- 3 - Works, the painters of which are unidentified.