



'ABD-AL-ḤAYY, K̲vĀJĀ

'ABD-AL-ḤAYY, K̲vĀJĀ, miniaturist of the late 8th/14th century and the beginning of the 9th/15th century. The earliest patron with whom he is associated is the Jalayerid Ovays b. Ḥasan (r. 757-76/1356-74). Dawlatšāh (ed. Browne, p. 262) states that Ovays's skill in drawing was so great that he became 'Abd-al-Ḥayy's teacher; the particular style of drawing they practiced is called *qalam-e vāseṭī*, but the precise artistic significance of the term is uncertain. A more extensive account of 'Abd-al-Ḥayy's career is given by Dūst Moḥammad in his essay on calligraphers and painters (*Treatise*, pp. 23-24). He stresses 'Abd-al-Ḥayy's connection with Ostād Šams-al-dīn, Ovays's chief painter. Although their association may have begun during that ruler's reign, Dūst Moḥammad suggests that it was closest in the period after his death and before the accession of Aḥmad b. Ovays in 784/1382. During this period, Šams-al-dīn was not affiliated with any patron but devoted his energy to instructing 'Abd-al-Ḥayy. The fact that 'Abd-al-Ḥayy subsequently became the teacher of Aḥmad b. Ovays suggests that Šams-al-dīn's instruction had the desired effect.

The two painters' association was abruptly terminated by the Timurid invasion of Iraq in 795/1393; 'Abd-al-Ḥayy was taken to Samarqand and remained there the rest of his life. After his death, other painters there copied his compositions. Ebn 'Arabšāh (ed. S. H. Manger, II², p. 877; Persian tr., p. 314) mentions 'Abd-al-Ḥayy among the skilled painters employed by Timūr, but he gives no details about his paintings. From Ebn 'Arabšāh's mention of wall paintings he saw in Timurid palaces, scholars have concluded that 'Abd-al-Ḥayy was responsible for their production; the text does not, however,



actually suggest this. Only Dūst Moḥammad gives a direct reference to the type of painting practiced by ‘Abd-al-Ḥayy. He states that the painter, assisted by Aḥmad b. Ovays, prepared an *Abū Sa’īd-nāma* containing black and white drawings. No such manuscript has survived, but a considerable number of ink drawings which appear to be of late 14th century date are preserved in various albums. Some bear the notation that they were copied from ‘Abd-al-Ḥayy’s drawings by a certain Moḥammad b. Maḥmūd Šāh Kayyām. Since the latter painter is known to have been associated with Bāysonqor b. Šāhroḡ in Herat, it is plausible that he had access to the older master’s drawings. The diverse subjects of these drawings—a swimming duck, lions, Chinese warriors doing battle—do not allow one to form a clear sense of ‘Abd-al-Ḥayy’s repertoire; their style, however, implies that he used a subtle and varied line which could suggest both texture and volume. A drawing in the Diez Album in Berlin, showing a pair of herons, has such qualities, but it bears an illegible attribution to another artist.

The scanty pictorial and textual evidence taken together suggest that ‘Abd-al-Ḥayy specialized in ink drawings and was connected with the vogue of such drawings in the late 14th and early 15th centuries. Beyond this, any precise evaluation of his work is difficult. As to wall paintings, it is of interest that most representations of them in manuscript illustrations appear to be executed in a monochrome style. Thus it may be that ‘Abd-al-Ḥayy’s monochrome ink style influenced the concurrent tradition of wall painting. While these wall paintings usually show landscapes with birds and animals, a few have figural subjects. It is therefore possible that the paintings of Tīmūr and his court mentioned by ‘Arabšāh were executed in the monochrome style associated with ‘Abd-al-Ḥayy.

Although Dūst Moḥammad suggests that ‘Abd-al-Ḥayy’s work was in a monochrome ink style, the album connected with the essay contains a painting, labeled as his work, in a different technique. Not only is the figure of a sleeping prince fully painted, but is executed in a style associated with the painter Jonayd Baḡdādī. The latter’s signature appears in a manuscript of Ḳvājū Kermānī’s poetry, made for Aḥmad b. Ovays, which is now in the British Museum (Add. 18113). Unfortunately, there is at present no way of resolving the contradiction between this painting’s style and that attributed to ‘Abd-al-Ḥayy by Dūst Moḥammad. Further visual and textual documentation is needed.



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