



## 'ABD-AL-ŞAMAD ŐIRĀZĪ

'**ABD-AL-ŞAMAD ŐIRĀZĪ**, painter, calligrapher, and courtier; he entered the service of Homāyūn at Kabul in 956/1549 and remained an important artistic and governmental figure under Akbar (963-1014/1556-1605). Still active in 1008/1600, he appears to have died before the accession of Jahāngīr in 1014/1605. A painting recently in the art market bears an inscription stating it was painted by 'Abd-al-Şamad during his 85th year, despite failing health, as a keepsake for his son (Moĥammad) Őarīf. This would place 'Abd-al-Şamad's birthdate sometime before 923/1517. The majority of 'Abd-al-Şamad's surviving paintings come from an album assembled for Jahāngīr, the *Moraqqa'-e golšan*.

The Iranian background of 'Abd-al-Şamad is less well documented. Both Abu'l-Faẓl (*Ā'in-e Akbarī*, tr., I, p. 495) and Jahāngīr (*Tūzok*, tr., I, p. 15) say that he came from Őirāz, and his son Moĥammad Őarīf wrote poetry using the *taĥalloş* Fārsī. It has been said that 'Abd-al-Şamad's father was a certain K̄vāĵa Neẓām-al-molk of Őirāz who served there as vizier to Shah Őojā', a son of Shah Esmā'īl II, ca. 985-986/1577-78 (Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 217, 220, 226). Even this brief moment of prominence suggests that 'Abd-al-Şamad's family must have been allied with the Du'l-qadar Turkomans who controlled the Őirāz region during much of the second half of the 16th century.

'Abd-al-Şamad's training must have occurred in Tabrīz. According to Abu'l-Faẓl, Homāyūn met him there (autumn, 951/1554; *Ā'in-e Akbarī*, tr., I, p. 495; see also *Akbarnāma*, tr., I, pp. 444-45). Paintings executed by 'Abd-al-Şamad in Afghanistan and India show strong links with the style used by artists in the



employ of Shah Ṭahmāsp. A particular affinity exists between his paintings and those attributed to Mīrzā 'Alī. Recently S. C. Welch has suggested that one painting from the *Šāhnāma* of Shah Ṭahmāsp may be by 'Abd-al-Şamad (A Kings's *Book of Kings*, New York, 1972, p. 184). Unlike Mīr Sayyed 'Alī, his companion in Mughal service, 'Abd-al-Şamad does not appear to have been well known in Iran prior to his departure for Kabul. From his subsequent work it can be seen that 'Abd-al-Şamad was trained as both calligrapher and painter.

Homāyūn apparently summoned Mīr Sayyed 'Alī and 'Abd-al-Şamad by a *farmān* entrusted to an envoy from Shah Ṭahmāsp who was returning to Iran (see *Akbarnāma*, tr., I, p. 552; Bayāt, *Tadkera*, pp. 65-69). This event suggests that both artists may have been attached to Ṭahmāsp's atelier. Due to the unsettled conditions in Homāyūn's kingdom, the artists were delayed in Kandahar but finally reached Kabul in Šawwāl , 956/November, 1549. Their arrival fell between the failure of Homāyūn's expedition to Balk and his defeat by Kāmrān at Qepčāq. 'Abd-al-Şamad was captured and apparently spent some time with Kāmrān until the latter abandoned Kabul (*Akbarnāma*, tr., I, pp. 564-69).

During the years of political chaos, until Kāmrān's capture in late 960/1553, 'Abd-al-Şamad and his fellow artists still managed to execute paintings for Homāyūn. The known works by 'Abd-al-Şamad from this period are single page paintings now preserved in the *Moraqqa'-e golšan*. The prevalence of this mode over that of illustrated manuscripts is also suggested by a list of gifts sent by Homāyūn to his distant relative Rašīd Khan, the ruler of Kāšgar. Included were several single page paintings executed by Homāyūn's painters. 'Abd-al-Şamad is among the five artists mentioned by name, and his page is described as having been executed on Nowrūz (Bayāt, op. cit., pp. 67-69).

A painting now in the *Moraqqa'-e golšan* bears an inscription stating that it was painted by 'Abd-al-Şamad during Nowrūz, 985/early March, 1551, in half a day. It is thought that the inscription pertains only to the upper portion of the page where two youths are seated in an open landscape, one playing a musical instrument and the other executing a painting. In the opinion of some, the youth of the painting should be identified as Akbar, since 'Abd-al-Şamad is said to have instructed him in the art of painting (Binyon et al., *Persian Miniature Painting*, no. 232, p. 148, pl. CV-B; see *Akbarnāma*, tr., II, p. 66). Although executed in a style reminiscent of Mīrzā 'Alī's, the landscape lacks the complexity and delicacy of several other paintings ascribed to 'Abd-al-Şamad.



In addition to paintings executed on single pages (destined to form part of an album or *moraqqa*), ‘Abd-al-Şamad is said to have painted and written on grains of rice, a form of dexterity much esteemed in this period. Homāyūn describes several such works executed by his court painters in a letter sent to Raşid Khan of Kāşġar (written after Rajab, 959/June-July, 1552). ‘Abd-al-Şamad is listed with the honorific epithet Şirīn-qalam which would confirm Jahāngīr’s statement that this title was bestowed by Homāyūn (Jahāngīr, *Tūzok* I, p. 15).

Both ‘Abd-al-Şamad and Mīr Sayyed ‘Alī accompanied Homāyūn back to India (see Bayāt, op. cit., p. 177; *Akbarnāma*, tr., II, p. 66). For the reign of Akbar, due to the corporate nature of the court atelier, it is often difficult to speak with precision of ‘Abd-al-Şamad’s contribution to the evolution of painting. Two paintings now in the *Moraqqa’-e golšan* give an indication of ‘Abd-al-Şamad’s style during the early years. One shows the youthful Akbar presenting a painting to his father, Homāyūn; the other, executed during Nowrūz, 985/1558, shows a horse led by a groom (Binyon et al., op. cit., nos. 230, 233, pp. 147-48, pl. CIVb). The former shows his debt to the school of Tabrīz and his virtuosity with respect to miniaturization. The influence of Tabrīz is seen most clearly in the basic structure of the composition: an octagonal pavilion linked by a walkway to a treehouse, preceded by a fenced courtyard and situated in a garden. Similar garden palaces are found in paintings executed for Shah Ṭahmāsp, such as “The nightmare of Żahġāk” from his *Şāhnāma* manuscript or “Bārbad playing music to Kōsrow” from his *Kamsa* of Neżāmī. Figures grouped in twos and threes are used to define areas of the composition and, when placed along diagonal lines, to create a sense of depth. Most of them are shown in three-quarters profile, and their postures are oriented to planes parallel with the surface of the page. These traits are frequently encountered in the work of Ṭahmāsp’s painters.

Other aspects of the painting reveal his personal taste and that of his patrons. Most of the figures wear the special cap invented by Homāyūn in 939/1532-33. A peacock perched in the crotch of a plane-tree also adds a note of local color. Inscriptions placed above and below the painting when it was mounted in the *Moraqqa’-e golšan* specify that the painting depicts Akbar’s presentation. Possibly the painting within a painting alludes to ‘Abd-al-Şamad’s status as the teacher of Akbar, because it was common for students to copy the work of older masters. The presence of wall paintings on the two storeys of the pavilion accords not only with ‘Abd-al-Şamad’s reputation for reproducing miniature paintings but also with the report that he executed wall paintings in



the residence of one of Akbar’s chief officials, Kān-e A’zam ‘Azīz Kōka (*Ā’in-e Akbarī*, tr., I, p. 517). It has been suggested that the figure wearing a Persian turban seated in the courtyard to the right of the vaulted chamber is ‘Abd-al-Şamad himself (Binyon et al., op. cit., pl. CIVb). A book in front of him on the ground bears the painter’s name prefaced by the phrase *Allāho akbar* (probably added during Akbar’s reign).

The painting of a horse and groom has never been published (*ibid.*, p. 147). Horses were often given to Akbar by his officials on Nowrūz and it is possible that the painting was in lieu of, or even accompanied by, the animal depicted.

Little else is known about ‘Abd-al-Şamad’s activities during the first decade of Akbar’s rule, but he was probably employed in the royal painting workshop. When Mīr Sayyed ‘Alī departed for the pilgrimage to Mecca ca. 981/1572, ‘Abd-al-Şamad took charge of the painters entrusted with producing Akbar’s monumental copy of the *QessĀja-ye Amīr Hamza*. More than half of this project (1,400 paintings in twelve volumes) was executed under ‘Abd-al-Şamad. A comparison of surviving paintings from this project with known works by ‘Abd-al-Şamad suggests that his direct influence on their style was slight and that his control was largely administrative. ‘Abd-al-Şamad was then given a number of administrative appointments. During 1577-78 he was made director of the mint at Faṭḥpūr Sīkrī (*Akbarnāma*, tr., III, p. 321). By 1573-74 he had been removed from this position; subsequently he assumed various responsibilities in the management of the royal household (*ibid.*, pp. 585, 598). His last official appointment was as *divān* of the city of Multan in 1586-87 (*ibid.*, p. 799).

‘Abd-al-Şamad continued to execute paintings during these later years. More significant, however, was the influence he exerted through his former students. Abu’l-Faẓl mentions his skill as a teacher and says that Akbar entrusted to him the education of a gifted young Hindu, Daswanta. This painter may have been active as early as 1560-65, a date suggested for a manuscript containing his work (Chandra, *The TĀjĀrūtī-Nāma*, pp. 77-78, 88-89, 182-84).

The influence of ‘Abd-al-Şamad as teacher is seen most clearly with respect to his two sons Behzād and (Moḥammad) Şarīf. ‘Abd-al-Şamad’s role as teacher of Behzād is confirmed by a painting in a *Dārābnāma* manuscript now in the British Library which bears an inscription saying it was painted by Behzād and corrected by ‘Abd-al-Şamad (Or. 4615, fol. 103b.; Chagatai, “‘Abd-al-



Şamad,” p. 168). The career of (Moḥammad) Şarīf (c. 977-1021/1569-1612) is closely interwoven with that of his father; he was approximately the same age as Akbar’s eldest son Salīm (Jahāngīr) and the latter’s lifelong companion. During 1582-96 he is known to have worked in Akbar’s manuscript atelier, where he not only executed paintings in a style clearly derived from that of his father, but also followed his father as the supervisor of important manuscript projects. An important ingredient in the son’s impressive career may have been his enthusiastic espousal of Akbar’s new religious system which can be documented from inscriptions in manuscripts with which he was connected. Styles of father and son can be compared in two paintings from the *Moraqqa’-e golšan*. The painting by his father now in the Freer Gallery in Washington (63.4r) is dated to between early December, 1587 and early March, 1588. The painting by the son now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (L.69.24.220) is dated ca. 20 March 1591. They are so similar that, despite Şarīf’s name on the latter painting, it was published as the father’s work (*Arts of India and Nepal: the Nasli and Alice Heeramanek Collection*, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 1966, pp. 143-44). ‘Abd-al-Şamad’s painting of 996/1587-88 is accompanied by verses which allow the subject to be identified as a depiction of the mythological Iranian hero-king, Jamšīd, who is preparing to inscribe some verses on the surface of a rocky outcropping (PLATE V). Jamšīd was often associated with the Achaemenid ruins of Persepolis which were commonly known as Taḳt-e Jamšīd, and hence he was also associated with the rock-cut carvings of the Şīrāz region. This image may have had a particular significance for ‘Abd-al-Şamad because of his connection with Şīrāz, but its specific message remains obscure. Executed in a style blending Iranian and Indian elements, this painting has the delicacy and quiet opulence associated with manuscripts produced in Lahore during Akbar’s residence in that city (1586-98). ‘Abd-al-Şamad’s Iranian background is discernible in the neatly segmented landscape in which groups of figures await the completion of the inscription and the resumption of their hunting expedition. The linear precision visible in the silhouetted figures or the trunk of the plane-tree also shows ‘Abd-al-Şamad’s continued fidelity to the style of Tabrīz. New, however, is the tendency to give form and substance to the figures and to elements of the landscape through a use of modulated color. This technique may have come to ‘Abd-al-Şamad from his contact with European paintings and engravings or through the work of the Mughal painters who used modeling with light and shade.

Moḥammad Şarīf’s painting, a young Moghul prince on horseback with his



retainers, is executed in a modified version of this same style. Despite the dramatic use of silhouette, particularly in placing the gold-clad prince against the dark landscape, greater emphasis is given to modeling with colors and less concern is shown for linear control. The rocky masses surrounding the party of riders are broken into many small units and executed in an almost pointillistic technique. It is probable that the painting was executed for Akbar, since the signature includes the formula of allegiance to Akbar’s new religious system. Although it is difficult to identify the resplendent rider, it is probable that the kneeling hunter in the lower right corner is Jahāngīr. It is assumed that this portion of the painting was added when it was mounted in the *Moraqqa‘e golšan*.

A hunting scene attributed to ‘Abd-al-Şamad is found in a manuscript whose illustration was supervised by Şarīf (Binyon et al., op. cit., no. 132, pl. LXXXVII-A, pp. 130-31). This copy of Neẓāmī’s *Kamsa* (mid-December, 1595) is now divided between the British Library (Or. 12,208) and the Walters Gallery Baltimore (W.613). In composition and execution this painting is reminiscent of the scene of Jamšīd painting and the hunting scene in Los Angeles. ‘Abd-al-Şamad’s last known painting, executed at Şarīf’s request, shows both his Iranian training and the new freer style which he adopted in India (PLATE VI). The scene of a camel fight is a copy in reverse of a late painting by the famous Iranian painter a century before, Behzād (Brown, *Indian Paintings*, pl. XXXVI). ‘Abd-al-Şamad may have wished to compare his own skill (at age eighty-five) with that of the Iranian master in his old age. The painting by Behzād is preserved in the *Moraqqa‘e golšan* with a copy done by the painter Nanhā in 1018/1608-09. In addition to reversing the main figures, ‘Abd-al-Şamad has altered the posture of the camels, making their battle more vivid, and also included his characteristic grouping of rocks and trees in the upper horizon. Despite a somewhat looser and broader treatment of the landscape than in his early paintings, his handling of details such as the snarling camels is remarkably sure.

Although ‘Abd-al-Şamad’s style underwent some modifications in his long career, he appears to have remained faithful to the compositional canons he learned in his youth. He and his son must have been relatively conservative figures in the royal workshop, perhaps providing artists with a sense of compositional equilibrium and linear precision. In this manner the style favored by the painters at Ṭahmāsp’s court in the first half of the 16th century was transplanted to India where it survived to become one of the basic



ingredients in the Mughal court style.

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