



'ABDALLĀH BOḶĀRĪ

'**ABDALLĀH BOḶĀRĪ**, a painter active in Bokhara during the middle decades of the 16th century. His paintings are very similar in theme and execution to those of his contemporary Maḥmūd Moḍahheb, who may have been trained in Herat. Both painters appear to have been in the employ of the Shaibanid Abu'l-Ġāzī 'Abd-al-'Azīz (q.v.; 947-57/1540-49). Paintings signed by 'Abdallāh are of two types: compositions showing strong influence from Herat painting of the late 15th and early 16th centuries and studies of couples, often in a garden setting, a theme which appears to have been especially popular in Bokhara.

A copy of the *Būstān* of Sa'dī dedicated to Abu'l-Ġāzī and dated between 949/1542 and 956/1549 contains paintings signed by both 'Abdallāh and Maḥmūd (Lisbon, Gulbenkian Foundation, LA 177). Several paintings in the manuscript are adaptations of well-known compositions by Behzād and other painters from Herat. The painting signed by 'Abdallāh is unpublished but is said to depict a man riding on a leopard surrounded by groups of spectators. The same subject is illustrated in a 931/1524 *Būstān* manuscript which may have been produced in Bokhara (L. Binyon et al., *Persian Miniature Painting*, London, 1933, no. 107, p. 123, pl. LXXXI-A).

'Abdallāh's debt to Behzād and his connection with Maḥmūd Moḍahheb can both be seen in a painting now in Kansas City which shows a group of people gathered at a mosque ([Plate VIII](#); Nelson Gallery of Art; *Handbook II*, pp. 163-64). In general arrangement the scene recalls Behzād's painting "A beggar refused entry into a mosque" from the 894/1488-89 *Būstān* manuscript now in Cairo (Binyon et al., pl. LXX-B). Both paintings depict a mosque courtyard



beyond a facade containing a door and various recesses. In ‘Abdallāh’s painting there is a greater concern for symmetry, and the real wall of the mosque is an elaborately illuminated surface which eliminates any sense of space in this portion of the structure. The figures of men in and around the mosque, however, are drawn to suggest volume and substance. Their plain garments are contrasted with the elaborately patterned surfaces of the walls. Although derived from Behzād’s painting of the beggar at the mosque, the theme of ‘Abdallāh’s painting appears to be a discussion of love in which an old man is speaking to the youth seated before him. The painter’s signature, ‘Abdallāh Moṣavver, appears on a book lying in the courtyard in front of this old man. The figure of a hunched old man in green leaning on a staff to the left of the mosque entrance is reminiscent of the painting said to be a portrait of ‘Alī Šīr Navā’ī attributed to Maḥmūd Moḍahheb (ibid., pl. LXXVI-B, no. 104, p. 122). Although undated, ‘Abdallāh’s painting contains a dedication to Abu’l-Ġāzī, which makes it contemporary with the 1542-49 *Būstān* manuscript in Lisbon.

After the death of Abu’l-Ġāzī in 957/1549, both ‘Abdallāh and Maḥmūd probably continued to execute paintings for his successors. A painting signed by Maḥmūd contains the name of ‘Abdallāh Khan (964-1006/1556-98), and paintings very similar in style to the “Discussion in a mosque” by ‘Abdallāh are found in a manuscript of ‘Alī Šīr Navā’ī’s poetry dedicated to Yār Moḥammad and dated to 960/1553 (Binyon et al., no. 26, pp. 18-19; *Miniatury*, pls. 30-32; Oxford Bodleian Library, Elliot 318, ibid., pls. 12-20; Elliot 340, ibid., pls. 26-29). This manuscript is now divided between Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and the Bodleian Library, Oxford; both paintings in the style of ‘Abdallāh are found in the *Lesān al-ṭayr* portion of the text, in Paris (Suppl. turc 996, fols. 20b., 25a; ibid., pls. 30, 31). In the scene of “Shaikh Ṣaṇ‘ān fainting with love,” both the architectural setting and the portrayal of the figures are analogous to those in the mosque painting. In “Shaikh Ṣaṇ‘ān tending swine,” not only is the figure style very close to that in the Kansas City painting, but the landscape also has affinities to a signed painting by ‘Abdallāh showing a man and a woman standing in a landscape. The latter painting, formerly in the Demotte Collection, is said to have come from a copy of Jāmī’s *Sobḥat al-abrār* dated to 1575 (Rempel, p. 353, fig. 351). The paintings are similar in their use of small, leafless shrubs and their handling of the ground surface. Despite its late date the scene—lovers in a rocky landscape with pear-shaped trees on the horizon—is closely related to the landscape traditions of the 15th century Herat. A pair of lovers in a garden setting, in particular with the woman



wearing an elaborately patterned *čādor* and looking over her shoulder at her beloved, is a favorite theme of Bokhara painters.

Another manuscript with such scenes, a *Būstān* of Sa'dī dated to 983/1575-76, has been connected with 'Abdallāh (Gosudarstvennaya Publichnaya Biblioteka, Leningrad, PNS 269; Gyuzal'yan, p. 22, pls. 9-10). However, the paintings are probably the work of another artist using a style which is related to, and perhaps based on, 'Abdallāh's. One painting, for example, shows a woman teasing her lover with a piece of fruit. It is so similar to the figure style of signed works by 'Abdallāh that even if the inscription on the left side of the page, *šawwarahu 'Abdallāh*, is only an attribution, it probably was painted by an artist influenced by him (Binyon et al., no. 114, pl. LXXVII, p. 125).

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