



'ABDALLĀH ŠĪRĀZĪ

'ABDALLĀH ŠĪRĀZĪ, painter and illuminator of the late 10th/16th century. According to Qāzī Aḥmad (p. 146; tr., pp. 189-90) he was a member of the manuscript atelier of Abu'l-Faḥ Ebrāhīm b. Bahrām b. Esmā'īl for twenty years. This would suggest that 'Abdallāh was connected with Ebrāhīm from the time of the latter's appointment as *ḥākem* of Mašhad and *nāẓer* of the shrine of Emām Reżā in 964/1556-57 until his assassination at Qazvīn on 6 Dū'l-ḥejja 984/24 February 1577. Eskandar Beg Monšī describes 'Abdallāh as a witty conversationalist and an intimate companion of Ebrāhīm Mīrzā, adding that after the latter's death he joined the atelier of Esmā'īl II (Eskandar Beg, I, p. 177). This appointment must have been brief, since Esmā'īl died on 15 Ramażān 985/24 November 1577. According to Qāzī Aḥmad (loc. cit.), 'Abdallāh returned to Mašhad after the death of Ebrāhīm. There he became attached to the shrine and watched over the grave of his former master. It is thus probable that 'Abdallāh returned to Mašhad shortly after Ramażān, 985/November, 1577.

One of the most impressive manuscripts produced by the workshop of Ebrāhīm Mīrzā is a copy of Jāmī's *Haft ovrang* now in the Freer Gallery in Washington (46.12; S. C. Welsh in bibliog., pp. 23-27, 98-127). Its colophons range from Šawwāl, 972/May, 1565. The illuminated heading of *Yūsof o Zolaykā* contains an inscription, *dahhabah 'Abdallāh al-Šīrāzī*, "gilded by 'Abdallāh Šīrāzī" (Plate X; Freer Gallery of Art, no. 46.12, fol. 84b). The marginal decorations and details, such as architectural ornament within the paintings, may be his work as well. None of the manuscript's twenty-eight



miniatures is signed, but some of them may have been painted by ‘Abdallāh: There are similarities between one of the illustrations to *Sobḥat al-abrār*, “A city dweller desecrates a garden,” and a later painting signed by ‘Abdallāh. A copy (finished in 990/1582) of Helālī’s *Şefat al-‘āşeqīn* copied for a certain Salīm Anāmī contains a frontispiece signed by ‘Abdallāh and dated to 989/1581; *Persian and Mughal Art*, no. 24i, pp. 50, 126-27; *Persian Painting*, pp. 116-17. According to Qāzī Aḥmad, ‘Abdallāh apparently was living in Mašhad when this manuscript was produced. The painting shows a princely entertainment set in a garden. On the right is a polygonal pavilion with a delicately ornamented roof in which are three figures. Two of them have their arms wrapped around the supporting poles of the pavilion. The area in front of the pavilion is occupied by various seated and standing attendants. The left-hand page has two rows of standing courtiers and the royal horse, half hidden by a rocky outcropping and attended by a seated groom. The *Sobḥat al-abrār* illustration of “A city dweller in a garden” has a polygonal pavilion in its center which is virtually identical with the one in the 989/1581 painting except that the two youths with their arms wound around the poles are the mirror image of those in the later work. The similarities between these two paintings extend to nearly all details of the style, except that the earlier painting appears to have a more pronounced sense of internal rhythm. The careful placing of landscape elements against a background of a strongly contrasting color and the use of undulating silhouettes may reflect ‘Abdallāh’s experience in producing marginal designs in gold.

A careful examination of the Freer *Haft owrang* and other manuscripts produced by Ebrāhīm Mīrzā may make possible a clearer understanding of ‘Abdallāh’s work for this patron. It has been suggested that ‘Abdallāh was responsible for the marginal decoration of a copy of Helālī’s poetry now in the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon. Dated to 976/1568, the manuscript may have been produced for Ebrāhīm Mīrzā, although apparently it is not dedicated to him (*Arte do Oriente Islâmico*, no. 127; *Arte da Pérsia*, fig. 16). One of its paintings does bear an attribution to Morād Daylamī, a painter in the employ of Ebrāhīm Mīrzā. Although a connection between ‘Abdallāh and this manuscript is plausible, there seem to be no inscriptions bearing his name in either the illustrations or the illumination.

Another signed painting by ‘Abdallāh is executed in a style closely analogous to those discussed above. Now in the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Leipzig, it depicts a youthful musician seated in a garden under a flowering tree



(*Miniaturmalerei*, fig. 70a). The inscription appears to include a date (illegible in the published reproductions). The page seems to be the upper left corner of a larger work, for on two sides it retains an illuminated border, which is very similar to that on the 1581 painting.

From these few samples of ‘Abdallāh’s work it can be seen that, in spite of his connection with Shiraz, he must have been trained in Tabrīz. His style is closely linked to that of painters from the atelier of Shah Ṭahmāsp. The recent suggestion that he might have executed a painting in a Shiraz style found in a *Šāhnāma* tentatively connected with Esmā‘īl II no longer appears likely (B. Robinson in bibliog., p. 7, pl. VIIIb).

Qāzī Aḥmad praises ‘Abdallāh’s skill in lacquer painting (*rang o rowḡan*). This technique was widely used in the decoration of bookbindings during the 16th century, and the examination of surviving bindings may lead to the discovery of further works by ‘Abdallāh.

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