



## AFŽAL AL-ḤOSAYNĪ

---

**AFŽAL AL-ḤOSAYNĪ**, painter active during the reign of Shah ‘Abbās II (1052-77/1642-66). The principal evidence of him comes from an extensively illustrated *Šāh-nāma* of Ferdowsī now in the Leningrad Public Library (G.P.B. MS Dorn 333). According to the preface, it was prepared as a gift for Shah ‘Abbās II by order of Qūrčībāšī Mortažā-qolī Khan. The calligrapher, Moḥammad-Šafī‘ b. ‘Abd-al-Jabbār, states that the manuscript was begun in 1052/1642 and completed in 1061/1651. Approximately half of its 128 paintings are by Afżal Ḥosaynī; sixty-two bear his signature, and four more can be attributed to him on the basis of style. The remaining paintings appear to be the work of two artists tentatively identified as Pīr Moḥammad Ḥāfeẓ and Moḥammad-Qāsem. Of Afżal’s signed paintings, forty-two are dated 1054-55/1644-45.

The subjects of his works suggest that Afżal must have specialized in the depiction of battles, single-combats, and other violent themes. The two published examples show groups of armed riders attacking each other with vehemence. The compositions are dense with little sense of space between the closely interwoven combatants; the figures have a distinctive physiognomy with broad, almost square faces and heavy beards or luxuriant moustaches. When Afżal’s paintings are compared with those in Dorn 333 by other artists, the unusual character of his style becomes apparent. Both Pīr Moḥammad Ḥāfeẓ and Moḥammad-Qāsem clearly belong to the tradition established by Reżā ‘Abbāsī in the early 11th/17th century at Isfahan. But Afżal reflects the traditions of Herat painting of the late 9th/15th century which were kept alive



in Bokhara until the early 11th/17th century. An example of a Bokhara manuscript from this period showing an affinity with the style of Afżal ĤosaynĪ is ms. P.N.S. 276 in the Leningrad Public Library, dated to 1006/1598.

Afżal's name has also been linked with a number of album paintings in the Isfahan style showing single figures or couples reclining in garden settings or enjoying wine. One such painting of a girl in disheveled clothing now in the British Museum bears the inscription *raqam-e kamĪna MĪr Afżal TŭnĪ*; a second, showing a pair of lovers intertwined, is inscribed *raqam-e kamĪna Afżal al-ĤosaynĪ* and bears the date of 1056/1646. The similarity of these two paintings has led scholars to conclude that MĪr Afżal TŭnĪ and Afżal ĤosaynĪ are the same person. It should be noted that these figural studies close in spirit to the work of Isfahani artists such as Moĥammad-Qāsem or Moĥammad-Yŭsof appear to be at odds with the stylistic characteristics exhibited by the paintings of Afżal ĤosaynĪ in Dorn 333. A close affinity with the paintings in the Leningrad manuscript can, however, be seen in the painting of an Armenian bishop now in the Los Angeles County Museum. Linking the painting with Dorn 333 are both the physiognomy of the bishop, who is shown with a broad, clearly modeled face, and the script of a mutilated signature which appears to read . . . *żal al-ĤosaynĪ*. A clearer understanding of the style and career of this artist must await the further publication of documented examples of his work.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

L. T. Gyuzal'yan and M. M. D'yakonov, *Rukopisi Shakh-name v Leningradskikh Sobraniyakh*, Leningrad, 1934.

Idem, *Iranskie Miniatury v Rukopisyakh Shakh-name Leningradskikh Sobraniĭ*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1935.

Gyuzal'yan, ed., *Sredneaziatskie Miniatury XVI-XVII vv.*, Moscow, 1964.

I. Stchoukine, *Les Peintures des Manuscrits de Shah 'Abbas I<sup>er</sup> à la fin des Safavis*, Paris 1964.



M. M. Ashrafi, *Persidsko-Tadzhikskaya Poèziya v Miniaturakh XIV-XVII vv. iz Sobranii SSSR*, Dushanbe, 1974.

P. Pal, ed., *Islamic Art: The Nasli M. Heeramanek Collection*, Los Angeles, 1974.