



# JONG

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**JONG** (known also as *safina*), literary miscellany of Persian prose and poetry, and album of pictures and illustrations.

i. *Persian jongs*. See *SAFINA*.

ii. *Illustrations of Persian jongs*.

## ii. ILLUSTRATIONS OF PERSIAN JONGS

The earliest, and possibly clearest, application of the term *jong* to a manuscript appears in a *Monša'āt* of Šaraf-al-Din 'Ali Yazdi (d. 1430 or 1454) dated 867/1463 (Istanbul, Topkapi Palace Museum, R. 1019, fols. 57b-61b). The document is a preface to a *jong* composed by K̄vāja Rokn-al-Din Mas'ud Sa'di for Esmā'il (son of Ebrāhim Solṭān b. Šāhroḡ b. Timur). The concluding passage of the preface (fol. 61b) lists the categories of poetry that constitute the 50,000 couplets copied in the *jong* (*ḡazaliyāt*, *tarji'āt*, *moqṭa'āt*, *robā'iyāt*, *mo'ammāt*, *maṭ-nawiyāt*, in that order), and thus squarely identifies the manuscript as an anthology of poetry.

A much better known literary reference to the *jong* in the Persian arts of the book occurs in the art historical preface written by Dust-Moḡammad (q.v.) to introduce the Bahrām Mirzā (q.v.) album (Istanbul, Topkapi Palace Museum, H. 2154). Dust-Moḡammad completed the album in 951/1544-45. In the section on the history of "depiction," we read of a project commissioned by the



Timurid prince Bāysonḡor (q.v.; d. 1433) to reproduce a jong made for the Jalāyerid ruler Solṭān Aḡmad (d. 1410) (Thackston, pp. 13-14). This copy involved a collaboration between three artists—painter Ostād Sidi Aḡmad, portraitist K̄vāja ‘Ali, and bookbinder Ostād Qewām-al-Din—who were ordered to travel from Tabriz to Herat where they worked with calligrapher Ja‘far of Tabriz and painter Amir K̄alil (he was responsible for both decoration and painting [*tazyin va taṣwir*]). Bāysonḡor instructed the team of artists to follow the manner of the original (*oslub be-hamān dastur*): they were asked to make a copy of the same size, page layout, and identical in its choice of subjects for illustration which were to be positioned in the same places (*qaṭ’ o maṣṭar o mawāzi‘-e taṣwir be-‘aynhā*). According to Dust Moḡammad, the anthology was completed after Bāysonḡor’s death by his son ‘Alā’-al-Dawla Mirzā. He contracted the talent of yet another painter, K̄vāja Ġiyāt-al-Din Pir-Aḡmad Zarkub, to complete the jong.

The earliest known usage of the term in an actual manuscript is found in a double-page illuminated table of contents (*fehrest-e jong matn*) which synthesizes the sections of an anthology completed in 823/1420 (Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, I. 4628; Enderlein, p. 19). Stylistic features of the book, especially its illumination, suggest that it may have been produced in Shiraz but the provenance is not mentioned in the colophon. The ex libris contains a dedication to Bāysonḡor. The 950 folios bring together selections from Ferdowsi’s *Šāh-nāma*; the *Manteq al-ṭayr* of Farid-al-Din ‘Aṭṭār (q.v.); the *K̄amsa* of Neẓāmi (*Maḡzan al-asrār*, *Ḳosrow o Širin*, *Layli o Majnun*, *Haft Paykar*, *Eskandar-nāma* [*Eqbāl-nāma* and *Šaraf-nāma*]); the *K̄amsa* of K̄vāju of Kermān (*Rawzat al-anwār*, *Kamāl-nāma*, *Jawhar-nāma*, *Homāy va Homā-yun*, and *Nowruz o Gol*); and the *K̄amsa* of Amir Ḳosraw Dehlavi (*Maṭla‘ al-anwār*, *Ḳosrow o Širin*, *Majnun o Layli*, *Hašt Behešt*, and *Ā‘ina-ye Eskandari*). Twenty-nine narrative polychrome paintings illustrate specific scenes from the poetry which is arranged in two spaces, the central field (*matn*) and the margin (*ḡāṣhiya*). A generous program of illumination executed in gold and polychrome, dominated by a palette of blue and orange, introduces the work in a double-page table of contents (*fehrest*), and then marks the principal divisions with round medallions (*šamsa*) and sub-divisions with headers (*‘onwān*).

This anthology, presented to Bāysonḡor as a gift (presumably by his brother Ebrāhim Solṭān, governor of Shi-raz), and the textual reference from Yazdi’s *Munša‘āt*, suggest the range of formal outcomes for the jong in the Persian arts



of the book at the beginning of the 1400s. The term itself does not appear to reference a specific type of anthologizing book, such as the *safina* (an oblong book bound on the short side), but rather to connote foremost a gathering of texts. There is no evidence to suggest, as some scholars have (Robinson, p. 602; Togan, p. 8; Woods, p. 109), that the incidence of the word ‘jong’ in primary written sources references the codex-album format (*moraqqa*) of the 1400s and 1500s, or even that ‘jong’ is a fitting term for an album because anthologies (jongs) were defined primarily through heterogeneous (most commonly multi-author) gatherings of texts. The Bāysonḡor anthology from 1420 and the near contemporary reference from Yazdi’s *Munša’āt* together indicate that a Persian jong could combine poems of various structures and lengths. The reference made by Dust-Moḡammad is evidence of the continuity of both a practice and a nomenclature well into the 1500s. It is also important to note that while Dust Moḡammad infers the anthology’s conceptual origin in the bibliophile patronage of Solṡān Aḡmad Jalāyer, which is, in part, corroborated by the strong influence of bookmaking practices and aesthetics of Tabriz on the arts of the book of Bāysonḡor’s time in Herat, his narrative history of art neglects the profound inventions of bookmaking in Shiraz since the mid-1300s. The evidence of extant manuscripts shows that workshops in Shiraz played a critical role in the development of the anthology (jong) before, but especially under, Timurid rule.

From these limited instances, it is reasonable to extrapolate that the Persian term ‘jong’ could refer to a multi-author anthology (also referred to by the term *majmu’a*) of poetry and or prose, as well as to a collection of poetry by a single author (most commonly referred to by the term *divān*, or in the case of a complete collection, *kollyāt*). The jong, or *majmu’a*, contained an array of texts that were often densely copied over many folios to produce thick, comprehensive volumes. The *safina*, by contrast, was not only smaller in size but also had fewer folios: these features enhanced its portability; it could be tucked under the belt.

Several examples of the former type—multi-author anthologies—are known from Shiraz in the late 1300s through the early 1400s. One of the earliest is an anthology dated 801/1398 that was copied by Maṡṡur b. Moḡammad b. Baraka b. ‘Omar b. Baḡṡiār Behbahāni (Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, no. 1950). It contains the *kamsas* of Neḡāmi and Amir Ḳosraw Dehlavi as well as *divāns* of the poets Sa’di, ‘Obayd, ‘Emād, Kamāl Esmā’il, and ‘Obayd al-Malek. Each page is structured as two spaces for the text—the *matn* and *ḡāṡiya*—and



chief elements of illumination, used to mark divisions amid this dense collection of texts, include a *fehrest*, *šamsas*, and *ʻonvāns*. Though the paintings are numerous—taking up the full space of the *matn*, or filling the paper left over beneath a colophon—they do not depict overt themes of the poetry or illustrate their narrative episodes. These enigmatic and evocative paintings (with one exception showing a royal hunt) portray a number of landscape scenes devoid of figures but often inhabited by birds (for illustrations, see Ölçer, pp. 208-9). As such, the pictorial images might have a general symbolic meaning, resonating at a thematic level with the accompanying poetry.

This semantic range of text-image interrelation is more fully developed through a group of anthologies fashioned for the library of Eskandar Solṭān (1384-1415), grandson of Timur and governor of Shiraz. Building on the techniques developed by artists and calligraphers in earlier examples, Eskandar Solṭān’s anthologies similarly use a standard arrangement of *matn* and *ḥāšiya*, a typology of illumination that signals divisions between texts or transitions within them, a number of textual protocols (including on-page rubrics, and the triangular shape used to organize colophons), and various scripts to differentiate headings or captions from the main text. All of these efforts helped the reader to find his way through a dense book packed with poetry and prose in the absence of an index and pagination. In a manner comparable to earlier anthologies, Eskandar Solṭān’s anthologies also utilize polychrome painting to illustrate selected stories from narratives—especially *matnawis*—and polychrome with gold illumination. But his anthologies differ from earlier examples in critical ways.

Their chief difference lies in what might be termed pictorial intelligence. As if announcing the diverse textual genres housed in these thick anthologies, the imagery accompanying the texts also resorts to studies in monochrome—ink drawing sometimes tinted with colored washes or highlighted with gold—or uses materials conventional in one medium of the arts of the book (e.g. illumination) for another (e.g. painting). This is one order of substitution at work in the anthologies’ visual program.

Eskandar Solṭān’s anthologies also contain designs that have no bearing on the text that they accompany but that seem to function as allegories of the process of making an anthology of texts. A key example is one page in an anthology dated 813-14/1410-11 (London, British Library, Add. 27261, fol. 543a) which is composed entirely of alternate designs for book bindings (Roxburgh, 2001, pl. 3) executed in ink and wash—the page makes a theme out of the activity of



collecting by showing aggregate designs for book bindings. It is, in effect, a pictorial analogy to the anthology as an artifact. One often finds that pages are formatted to receive text even where no text was to be copied on it, hence preserving the presence of text despite its absence (Roxburgh, 2001, pl. 2/2A). Other changes include the positioning of narrative images at some great distance from their relevant text—these images might activate the memory of a literary text, but they are radically distanced from it within the physical form of the book and were to be enjoyed without the process of reading. Pages such as these are structured in Eskandar Solṭān’s anthologies as a form of visual pleasure whose meanings were activated by the reader-viewer’s memory and associative faculties. The achievement of Eskandar Solṭān’s anthologies led the collection of texts into uncharted conceptual and aesthetic territory.

While Eskandar Solṭān’s anthologies were never wholly repeated, they did show the potential for the jong as an aesthetically elaborated book. Over the course of the 1400s and into the 1500s, the production of Persian jongs responded to ongoing developments in technique (e.g., stenciling, *découpage* calligraphy, filigree binding [*monabbat-kāri*]), and a desire for greater technical virtuosity as one medium and its effects were sometimes dissembled into others. The relief effect of wood or stone carving inspired artists to fashion filigree bindings, for example. The making of Persian jongs also shows how artists responded to external factors such as the repertoire of Chinese animal and plant motifs and to imported Chinese papers decorated with gold designs.

One poetic anthology made in Yazd in 835/1431 for Šāhroḡ’s military commander Jalāl-al-Din Firuzšāh, contains poetry composed in Persian and Chaghatay Turkish written in Arabic and Uighur scripts by the poets Kamāl-al-Din Ḳojandi, Amiri, and Bāḡer Maṣṣur Baḡši, the latter also the book’s scribe (London, British Library, Or. 8193). Here visual ambition is manifest in a program of stenciled (*aks*) designs that comprise clouds, plum trees, pine trees, lotus flowers, birds and foxes, geometric patterns based on stars or hexagons, designs associated with book bindings, landscape or garden scenes, or texts arranged in grids resembling the glazed ceramic revetment of architectural decoration. Fine drawing in black, gold or silver ink provides the designs’ inner details and outer contours. Different colors of pigment—brown, red, pink, silver, and magenta—complement the subtle hues of white, ivory, and pink papers (Roxburgh 2005, pp. 153-55). This repertoire of visual subjects,



made of modest mediums and labor-intensive in technique, produces a rich and varied effect.

The non-narrative aspect of Jalāl-al-Din Firuzšāh's jong was repeated in other examples that combine stenciling with polychrome illumination and, in some examples, polychrome painting. An early safina copied by Ja'far of Tabriz in 835/1431-32 (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Per. 122), that comprises the *Lama'āt* ("Flashes") of Faḵr-al-Din 'Erāqī with ghazals (*ḡazals*) by various poets (Arberry et al, I, pp. 41-42), utilizes stenciled designs—roundels or medallions containing animals and or plants, geometric schemes, prunus and conifers, vases holding plants—and narrative painting. The painting illustrates a scene from Neẓāmi's *Kosrow o Širin*. The stenciling itself exploits both positive and negative techniques: color is applied to the figures in the positive form; color is applied to the ground in its negative form. Oftentimes, designs are mirrored across the axis of the open book constituting yet another formal conceit.

A later example of a safina, dated to 853/1449 combines the ghazals of Sa'di, K̄vāju of Kermān, Ḥasan Dehlavi, 'Erāqī and Awhādi (qq.v.), with other poets from the retinue of Bāysonḡor (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Per. 127). This example uses stenciling as both frames bordering the poems and as motifs inside the field of the written text, polychrome painted elements amid the stenciling, and a developed program of illumination including *'onwāns*, half-medallions with rays, and floral borders (see fig. 1 for a page from a closely related anthology). On pages where the written surface has been circumscribed and enclosed within a stenciled border, the poetry resembles a miniature text page attached to the folio of the safina: such folios, through *trompe l'oeil*, appear to result from collaging one sheet onto another. The text on these and other pages is written on horizontal, diagonal and vertical axes recalling the layout used by calligraphers when copying *qeṭ'a* (single sheets), which they made for occasional purposes. All of these effects are enhanced by a variety of colored papers and pigments and motifs culled from both Persian and Chinese art traditions.

A cluster of anthologies commissioned for the library of the Qarā Qoyunlu Pir Bodāq in Shiraz (1456-60) and in Baghdad (1460-66) continue some aspects of the earlier Timurid examples. In fact, one of the defining characteristics of his bibliophilism seems to have been the formation of anthologies, custom-made collections of poetry and other texts that show his literary preferences. Such books show a blending of idioms from both Shiraz and Herat and focus on a uniform paper color, inventive and artful illumination that meditates on



precedent, and the superb calligraphy of Šayḵ Maḥmud (for examples, see Roxburgh, 2005, pp. 158-59).

Creativity and inventiveness in the production of jongs peaked in Persia in the 1400s and continued into the 1500s when techniques such as *découpage* (*qaṭʿe*, “cut paper”), gold-sprinkled (*afšān*), stenciled, and/or painted borders, and the use of colored inks or outline (*tahrir*) for calligraphy were introduced and became commonplace. While the preceding examples—a small selection of extant anthologies—show the formal creativity of artists beyond the conventional modes of straightforward illumination and painting, they also had the effect of prompting bookmakers to dispense with the single sheet of paper. Increasingly in the late 1400s and into the early 1500s, books of whatever type were composed of gatherings of folios that were in themselves composed of separate pieces of paper. The folio was now assembled from a sheet set inside a border. The causal effect of the anthology, embraced as both an organizational and aesthetic challenge in the late 1300s through the early 1400s, and augmented by ongoing technical developments and new media applications, was such that it prompted the reinvention of the Persian book. Visual meaning was no longer confined to the illustrative elements of painting or to the symbolic aspects of illumination but lay increasingly in technique and a self-referential visual language.

Figure 1. Folio from an anthology of Persian poetry, Iran, c. 1450.

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