



## RUZBEHĀN

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**RUZBEHĀN**, the proper name used in artist signatures in twelve manuscripts with illumination, which are associated with 16th-century Shiraz workshops. All are dateable between 1509 and 1560. The craftsmanship is of exceptionally high quality, but at the current state of research on manuscript book production in Safavid Iran (see [SAFAVID DYNASTY](#)) it cannot be determined with absolute certainty whether all twelve signatures belong to a single artist.

A Shiraz calligrapher (see [CALLIGRAPHY](#)) named Ruzbehān is lauded by Qāzi Aḥmad (d. after 1606) in his *Golestān-e honar*. According to this Safavid author, Ruzbehān wrote most of the local inscriptions together with several other Shiraz masters, and most of the calligraphers who have made a name for themselves in [Fārs](#), [Khorasan](#), [Kerman](#), and [Iraq](#) are “eaters of crumbs from their table” (Qāzi Aḥmad, 1959, p. 67; for the Persian, see idem, 1973, p. 28).

The placement of the Ruzbehān signatures makes it possible to divide ten of the twelve manuscripts into two groups; for the two manuscripts in the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum in Istanbul (Sakisian, p. 218; cf. Teece, pp. 327-28), there is, as of July 2016, not enough published information to determine how they fit into this corpus.

The first group consists of six manuscripts, comprising one Quran and five codices with classic works of Persian literature: a *Šāh-nāma* of [Ferdowsi](#) (d. 1019 or 1025) a *Kamsa* of Neẓāmi (d. 1209), a *Kolliāt* of [Sa’di](#) (d. 1291 or 1292),



and two manuscripts with works of Amir Ƙosrow Dehlavi (d. 1325). Their Ruzbehân signatures appear on illuminated leaves and indicate that Ruzbehân worked as an illuminator (*moḏahheb*) and came from a family of artisans of the book. The signature in the Neẓāmi (New York, MMA 13.228.6) gives the names of Ruzbehân’s father and grandfather: Na‘im-al-Din b. Şadr-al-Din (Rettig, p. 163). Although the colophon of this manuscript is signed by Na‘im-al-Din, it cannot be determined whether the codex was the result of a father-and-son collaboration, as there are at least two Shiraz scribes with this name (Uluç, 2006a, p. 96 n. 13). The colophon of the Amir Ƙosrow in Berlin (MIK ms. 16016), which has illuminated opening pages signed by Ruzbehân, carries the name Mon‘em-al-Din Moḥammad al-Awḥadi al-Ḥosayni. The very same name also appears as the patronym in the signature of the Shiraz scribe Na‘im-al-Din Aḥmad b. Mon‘em-al-Din Moḥammad al-Awḥadi al-Ḥosayni in the *Şāh-nāma* (Washington, D.C., Sackler Gallery, S1986.58.1). It is therefore also possible that Ruzbehân collaborated with the father Mon‘em-al-Din in MIK ms. 16016 as well as with Mon‘em-al-Din’s son Na‘im-al-Din in MMA 13.228.6.

The second group comprises four Qurans with colophons signed by Ruzbehân. David James (1992, p. 148) considered the Ruzbehân of the Quran colophons and the Ruzbehân of the illuminated leaves to be the same person, even though the wording of the signatures varies. Only in the Quran colophons does Ruzbehân also use the proper name Moḥammad. At the same time, these signatures do not include the patronym Na‘im-al-Din, which occurs only on some of the illuminated leaves. With regard to the colophon of a Chester Beatty Quran with a Ruzbehân signature (Dublin, CBL ms. 1588), James (1980, p. 20) translates the phrase “taşarrafa be-taḥrirehi wa-taqaddama be-tarqimehi” as he “was ennobled by copying it and undertook to pen it.” The translation suggests that the terms “taḥrir” and “tarqim” are taken to mean that Ruzbehân copied and illuminated the text. These terms do not, however, necessarily signify two separate functions, since they are also used as synonyms. Indeed, Anna Contadini (pp. 64-65, n. 2) considers his interpretation “subject to debate.” Elaine Wright (p. 134) agrees with James, though she assumes that Ruzbehân worked “surely with the help of a number of assistants.” Sheila Blair (p. 419 and 461-62, nn. 12-20) also assumes that the Ruzbehân of the Quran colophons was the same individual as Ruzbehân b. Na‘im-al-Din. While there is not any clear evidence to prove or disprove these speculations, the illumination of CBL ms. 1588 is stylistically similar to the other leaves signed by Ruzbehân Moḏahheb. Stylistic attribution to known masters, however, is not a reliable method, especially in the case of Shiraz

manuscripts, since repeated formulas abound in work from this prolific production center.

In addition to these twelve manuscripts, unsigned illuminated leaves from three other codices have been attributed to Ruzbehān. One is a copy of the *Divān* of Amir Ƙosrow Dehlavi in Paris (BNF Supp. Pers. 731). In Washington, D.C., the Sackler Gallery has the frontispiece of a Quran (S1986.82.1-2) and the forementioned *Šāh-nāma* copied by Na'im-al-Din Aḥmad b. Mon'im-al-Din Moḥammad al-Awḥadi Ḥosayni (S1986.58.1). The Sackler Gallery received these two manuscripts in 1986, when the Smithsonian Institution purchased the extensive collection of the French jeweler Henri Vever (1854-1942; cf. Lowry et al.). The design of the Quran frontispiece S1986.82.1-2 (h = 29 cm) is almost identical to the frontispiece of the Quran CBL ms. 1588 (h = 42.7 cm), though the latter is a significantly larger codex. The colophons of the *Šāh-nāma* S1986.58.1 and of the Neẓāmi MMA 13.228.6 carry the same name. Simon Rettig (p. 163) has compared the *nasta'liq* of the Neẓāmi MMA 13.228.6 with that of signed work by both Na'im-al-Din Aḥmad and Na'im-al-Din b. Šadr-al-Din, and concluded that the scribe of the New York Neẓāmi was Na'im-al-Din Aḥmad.

Some of the illuminated leaves signed by Ruzbehān appear in the most refined manuscripts of his time, although it cannot be determined if Ruzbehān worked as both scribe and *modahheb*. These works introduced new trends, which in the following decades became characteristic of the illumination found in Shiraz manuscripts. The first example of these appears in the signed frontispiece of Sa'di's *Kolliāt*, datable to about 1510-20 (Oxford, Bod. Fraser 73). Instead of having horizontal and vertical divisions, Ruzbehān's design comprises a single lobed medallion with pendants surrounded by a border in each central rectangle; the border, in turn, also has a lobed edge.

A second trend-setting innovation in Shiraz illumination is found in the frontispiece of a *Šāh-nāma* (London, BL I.O. Isl. 133), the colophon of which is dated 967/1560-61. Its design is in a new tripartite formula that was introduced in Shiraz in the second half of the 1550s and became popular from the 1560s onwards (Uluç, 2006a, p. 173, fig. 122). It has a rectangular central field designed with one full and two half medallions that define a prominent vertical axis for the page, with its two sides as mirror images. This codex is, moreover, closely linked to TSMK H. 1500, as both *Šāh-nāma* manuscripts have the same distinctive styles in their figurative illustrations (BL I.O. Islamic 133, fols. 96a and 203a; TSMK H. 1500, fols. 103a and 272a). This observation



suggests that painters from the same workshop, whose names were unfortunately not recorded, were involved with their production (for a detailed stylistic analysis, see Uluç, 2006a, pp. 162-73). Although the frontispiece of BL I.O. Isl. 133 (fols. 2b-3a), unlike that of the TSMK H. 1500 (fols. 1b-2a), does not carry Ruzbehān's signature, its exceptionally high quality and fine brushwork suggests that he, or a close associate, may also have worked on it

A third trend-setting innovation is the use of gold floral scrolls in the margins of illustrated leaves. This feature can already be observed in BL I.O. Isl. 133, as a single gold floral decoration appears on the lower left corner margin of the illustration depicting Rostam's slaying of Sohrāb (fol. 96a; cf. Uluç, 2006a, p. 166, fig. 116). From the late 1560s onwards, golden animal and vegetal motifs in the margins of illustrated leaves became more popular in luxury Shiraz manuscripts, and they were ubiquitous by the 1580s.

Ruzbehān's signature in the illuminated frontispiece of the Sa'di Bod. Fraser 73 establishes a concrete historical context, into which to place his work, since this codex belongs to a corpus of ten manuscripts with colophons that identify their locale as the *āstāna* (lit. "threshold") or *boq'a* ("mausoleum") of Ḥaẓrat Mawlānā Ḥosām-al-Din Ebrāhim in Shiraz (Uluç, 2006a, pp. 98-99; 2006b). The most recent manuscript from this Shiraz locale is a copy of Neẓāmi's *Ḳamsa* (Washington, D.C., Sackler Gallery, S1986.37), which has two colophons dated 915/1509-10 and 934/1527-28; this codex is also part of the Vever collection. Since the most recent manuscript which carries Ruzbehān's signature is the *Šāh-nāma* TSMK H. 1500, which is datable to around 1560, it seems that the artists who were associated with this Shiraz locale continued to be active after the 1520s.

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Amir Ƙosrow Dehlavi, *Divān* – Berlin, Museum of Islamic Art (MIK: Museum für Islamische Kunst), ms. 16016 – MS pers., 27 × 16 cm; the colophon is dated 920/1514-15 and signed by Mon‘im-al-Din al-Awḥadi al-Ḥosayni, while the illuminated opening fols. 2b-3a are inscribed with “ḍahhaba al-‘Abd Ruzbehān” (cf. James, 1992, p. 148; Enderlein, p. 138).

Sa‘di, *Kolliāt* – Oxford, Bodleian Library, Fraser 73-75 – MS pers. in 3 vols., 24 × 15 cm, undated (ca. 1515-20; copied at the *āstāna* of Ḥażrat Mawlānā Ḥosām-al-Din Ebrāhim; the illuminated opening fols. 2b-3a of Fraser 73 (that is, vol. I) show in the inner border’s bottom left rosette of fol. 3a the signature “alā yad al-‘abd Ruzbehān al-moḍahheb” (reproduced in Teece, pl. 5.26; Ethé 687, <http://www.fihrist.org.uk/profile/work/2fbda3d3-2c0e-4fb5-b195-b4b6ab4f1482> Arts of Islam, cat. no. 592; Akimushkin and Ivanov, pp. 38 and 45, fig. 22; Robinson, 1980, p. 155; Uluç, 2006a, pp. 100-102, figs. 49-50; Teece, pp. 149-50).

Quran – Tehran, National Museum of Iran, call number not available – MS arab., 29 × 18 cm, dated 929/1522-23, copied by Pir Moḥammad al-Ṭāni; the illumination is signed by Ruzbehān and dated 930/1523-24 (Bayāni, 1949, II, pp. 38-39, s.v. no. 79; cf. James, 1992, p. 148).

Ferdowsi, *Şāh-nāma* – Istanbul, Topkapı Saray Library (TSMK: Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kutuphanesi), H. 1500, <http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk/new/jnama/card/cemanuscript:-112461575> – MS pers., 38 × 23 cm, no date (ca. 1560); the illuminated double frontispiece on fols. 1b-2a carries the inscription “ḍahhaba ... Ruzbehān al-moḍahheb;” the illuminated headpiece of fol. 15b, which marks the beginning of the *Şāh-nāma*, is inscribed with “tadhib-e Ruzbehān Şirāzi” (Uluç, 2006a, pp. 162-65, figs. 112-115).

Amir Ƙosrow Dehlavi, *Hašt behest* – Ann Arbor, Michigan University Library, Isl. Ms. 266, [http://mirlyn-classic.lib.umich.edu/F/?func=direct&doc\\_number=006804550&local\\_base=AA\\_PUB](http://mirlyn-classic.lib.umich.edu/F/?func=direct&doc_number=006804550&local_base=AA_PUB) – MS pers., 23.5 × 15 cm, the colophon is undated, but the illuminated fol. 1b is dated 968/1560-61 and signed “tadhib-e Ruzbehān Şirāzi.”



Qurans with colophons signed by Ruzbehān, in chronological order.

Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, ms. 1588 – MS arab., 42.7 × 29 cm, undated (ca. 1520), and signed Ruzbehān Moḥammad al-Ṭab'ī al-Širāzi (Arberry, cat. no. 156; James, 1980, pp. 77-79, s.v. nos. 58-60; James, 1981, cat. no. 21; Wright, pp. 134-45, fig. 97; cf. James, 1992, p. 148; Blair, pp. 419-21).

London, Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, QUR 60 – MS arab., 32.5 × 21 cm, undated and signed Ruzbehān al-Ṭab'ī al-Širāzi (James, 1992, pp. 158-63, s.v. no. 40, for the full text of the colophon on fol. 382a, p. 248; cf. James, 1980, pp. 77-79, s.v. nos. 58-60; James, 1981, cat. no. 21).

London, Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, QUR 111 – MS arab., 26.6 × 17 cm, dated 952/1545-46 and signed Ruzbehān al-Ṭab'ī al-Širāzi (James, 1992, pp. 150-57, s.v. no. 39, for the full text of the colophon on fol. 240a, see p. 248).

Mashhad, Āstān-e Qods Library, no. 136 – MS arab., 28 × 18 cm, dated 954/1547-48 and signed by Ruzbehān (Golčīn Ma'āni, pp. 184, 189, and unnumbered plate, s.v. no. 86; cf. James, 1992, p. 148).

Manuscripts with unsigned illumination attributed to Ruzbehān, in chronological order.

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Amir Ḳosrow Dehlavi, *Divān* – Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF), Supplément Persan 731 – MS pers., dated 932/1525-26 (Richard, p. 136).

Quran fragment – Washington, D.C., Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, S1986.82.1-2, [http://www.asia.si.edu/collections/edan/object.php?q=fsg\\_S1986.82.1-2](http://www.asia.si.edu/collections/edan/object.php?q=fsg_S1986.82.1-2) – MS pers., 29 × 19.4 cm, undated (ca. 1550), detached frontispiece (Lowry et al., p. 19; cf. Lowry, pp. 66-67; Blair and Bloom, p. 338; Canby, pp. 148-49, s.v. no. 5.6).

Unpublished manuscripts with Ruzbehān signatures not examined in person, in chronological order.

Sa'di – Istanbul, Istanbul, Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum (TEİM: Türk ve

İslam Eserleri Müzesi), no. 1574 – MS pers., dated 1516, signed by Ruzbehān Moḡahheb (title, hijra date, size, and the signature's location are not indicated in Sakasian, p. 218, n. 5).

Quran – Istanbul, Istanbul, TEİM, no. 186 – MS arab., signed by Ruzbehān Şirāzi (date, size, and the signature's location are not indicated in Sakasian, p. 218, n. 6).

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Nezāmi, *Kamsa* – Washington, D.C., Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, S1986.37, [http://www.asia.si.edu/collections/edan/object.php?q=fsg\\_S1986.37](http://www.asia.si.edu/collections/edan/object.php?q=fsg_S1986.37) – MS pers., 28.2 × 17.8 cm, dated 915/1509 and 934/1528 (Lowry et al., pp. 217-21).

Ferdowsi, *Šāh-nāma* – London, British Library (BL), India Office Islamic 133, formerly cited as Ethé 863, <http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk/new/jnama/card/cemanuscript:379630437> – MS pers., 38 × 22.5 cm, Shiraz, the colophon is dated 18 Du'l-Qa'da 967/20 August 1560; with an unsigned illuminated double frontispiece on fols. 1b-2a (Robinson, 1976, pp. 89-97, esp. p. 89).

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