

## INTERPRETATION OF THE RELIGIOUS SUBJECT IN THE MINIATURE OF “BOSTAN” MANUSCRIPT BY SAADI SHIRAZI



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**Abstract:** The article reflects the problem of depicting religious subjects in medieval Oriental manuscripts and miniatures. Masters of book art originally decorated religious books with symbolic patterns and gilding. Relief decorations are later replaced by miniature images. In miniatures devoted to literature, it is possible to identify subjects related to religious themes — prophets, saints, angels, etc. The article also contains a full analysis of the plot and general thoughts of one of the miniatures on a similar topic, the manuscript of Saadi Shirazi “Bostan”.

**Keywords:** manuscript, miniature, Saadi Shirazi, “Bostan”, museum, the Buddha, temple.

**Annotatsiya:** Maqolada O'rta asr Sharq qo'lyozmalari, ularga ishlangan miniatyuralarda diniy syujetlarni tasvirlash masalasi aks etadi. Kitobat san'ati ustalari avvaliga diniy kitoblarni ramziy naqshlar va zarhal bilan bezatishgan. Naqshinkor bezaklar keyinchalik tasvirlar — miniatyuralarga almashadi. Adabiyotlarga ishlangan miniatyuralarda diniy mavzuga oid syujetlar — payg'ambarlar, avliyolar, farishtalar kabilarni ajratib ko'rsatish mumkin. Shu kabi mavzudagi miniatyuralardan biri Sa'diy Sheroziyning “Bo'ston” qo'lyozmasiga ishlangan syujetning to'liq tahlili va umumiy fikrlar o'rin olgan.

**Kalit so'zlar:** qo'lyozma, miniatyura, Sa'diy Sheroziy, “Bo'ston”, muzey, but, ibodatxona.

**Аннотация:** В статье отражена проблема изображения религиозных сюжетов в средневековых восточных рукописях и миниатюрах. Мастера книжного искусства изначально украшали религиозные книги символическими узорами и позолотой. Рельефные украшения позднее сменяются изображениями — миниатюрами. В миниатюрах, посвященных литературе, можно выделить сюжеты, связанные с религиозной тематикой — пророки, святые, ангелы и т. д. Также статья содержит полный анализ сюжета и общие мысли одной из миниатюр на схожую тему, рукопись Саади Ширази «Бустон».

**Ключевые слова:** рукопись, миниатюра, Саади Ширази, “Бустан”, музей, будда, храм.

In the medieval East, many miniatures were illustrated on the works and epics of the thinkers. The formation of Oriental miniature painting is associated with the appearance of the first manifestations of writing and the art of the book. In the Muslim world, calligraphy is considered a high manifestation of art, in which writing has acquired a sacred character, since through writing the Quran Kareem is recited the word of Allah. The practice of writing has been studied all the time, those who occupy it have always been in honor.

“Starting with Khalifa Ali, who first decorated the Quran, it became a tradition to decorate several initial pages of the Book of Quran with a different colored pattern and gilding. A number of scholars believe that the decoration of Middle Eastern manuscripts served as the first example and was given the first pattern and used the achievements of antiquity, in particular Greek and Byzantine ornamentation (e.g., the patterns of crossed circles), in the decoration of the Qurans of later periods. The decoration of the Quran has had a serious impact on the drawing of patterns on

sheets of fiction and scientific books, especially in the Islamic world, since in all of them the decoration of the most important and responsible parts is largely similar”.

The splendor of calligraphy in the ancient manuscripts of the Quran Kareem is often manifested in the design of gold color with predominant oral red, light blue and green drawings. In the decorated headings of Sura names in them and calligraphic art in frontispieces, the inscription harmonizes with plant and geometric patterns. For example, a multi-domed mosque is perfectly depicted on the pages of a Quranic manuscript held in the library of a large mosque dating back to the Omeyyad period in Sana. However, not a single secular illustration from that period has been preserved.

In the XII-XIVth centuries, miniature begins to appear in the art of Book. Early examples are associated with Baghdad (such a so-called Mesopotamian School of miniature painting). The development of miniature art goes back to the countries of the East – Iran, Khorasan, Movarounnakh. The XVth and XVIIth centuries were the most prosperous period of miniature art. Many religious-themed miniatures have been made to the works of the great poets and writers Abulqasim Firdawsi, Saadi Shirazi, Nizami Gendjavi, Khusraw Dehlavi, Abdurahman Jomy, Alisher Nawai. In particular, religious plots can be found in the illustrations of the works of Saadi Shirazi “Bostan”.

“The Bostan” (The Orchard) is the first major moralizing poem written by the brilliant Persian writer Saadi Shirazi in 1257. In his composition of ten chapters, written in the genre of wise reasoning, Saadi touches on political, social, moral and ethical issues, and, as it befits a sage of the East, gives various advice. In an entertaining way, the author narrates his travels and adventures in different countries. One of these stories in the poem is dedicated to Saadi’s journey to India.

At the Indian Somnath, in a temple Saadi saw an idol, which was of great worship. The faith of the idolaters was supported by a miracle: every day at dawn the statue, as if alive, raised its hand. Saadi learned what the secret of the idol was – one of the temple attendants, hiding behind a curtain, manipulated the statue with a rope. Saadi killed the cheating servant, broke the statue and fled away.

The miniature depicted on the right-hand side of a double page of the book illustrates “The story of Saadi and the idolaters” from the “Bostan” by Saadi Shirazi which is dedicated to the poet’s journey to India and the misdeeds of the pagans.

The main events depicted in the miniature take place in the temple. In the mihrab part of the architectural structure there is a golden sculpture of Buddha sitting on a golden throne.

On the right side of the main image is Saadi Shirazi, who was captured during his journey to India and forced to convert to Buddhism. On the left is the Brahman greeting Shirazi, wearing a black robe and black headdress and holding a white rosary in his right hand. A ritual smoking vessel is depicted between them.

On the right there are three male figures of different ages: one holds a book; another is depicted with his hands raised in supplication; the third is an old man holding prayer beads. At first glance, this group of watching people on the right side of the miniature seems to be of different religions.

The main background of the temple walls and dome are made in a dark blue color, on which a flourish pattern of small red, yellow and white flowers is depicted. At the temple entrance are two columns decorated with red and gold-woven curtains with a flourish ornament.

The vegetation and trees depicted in the background are painted in dark green. Presumably, the image of a bowed white bird depicted on a tree reflects the allegorical meaning of apostasy (“broken”, “betrayed” religion). The image of a golden sky indicates daylight hours. In the upper left corner and the bottom part of the miniature there is an accompanying text.



*“A ceremony in the temple”. XVI. Herat school. KK-614. INV-166.*

*The miniature is executed for the “Bostan” manuscript by Saadi Shirazi.*

*This work is a facsimile copy of a miniature from the manuscript kept in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic art in Turkiye.*

The facsimile copies of the miniatures, which are held in the funds of the library of the Topkapi Palace museum, Museum of the Turkish and Islamic Art, the Bodleian library of Great Britain, the National Library of France are kept in the Museum of Oriental miniature named after Kamoliddin Bekhzod. In a large part of the works, we come across images that reflect religious themes and plots, Prophets, Angels and philosophical ideas.

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