

# A Review of Fantasy and Motion in Human Figures of Sultan Muhammad Naghash's Portraits

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## Abstract

In the Persian traditional painting, we confront a special view. It changes the coordinates of our visual comprehension in order to abstraction from matter and representation of realities which are cryptographic behind that, and it changes the known rules of seeing and accepting. In a fantastic atmosphere such as Persian painting, there is a special system which the whole of qualities are affected. "Movement" as an important element is one of those elements. Persian painter who is affected by rich Persian philosophy and literature, notes "movement" as an important matter and although he does not have any tools for actual ideogram of "movement", he tries to express his slightly moves in 2D paper, that is his equipment in best conditions. All of the exaggerations and stylization which applied on the human figures are special movement creators. One of the greatest Persian painters, whose artworks contain the element of movement more visible than others, is "Sultan Mohammad Naghash", one of the painters at school of "Tabriz". The importance of his art is "movement" ideogram in human and pseudo human figures (such as Bogy and Angle). This article aims to visualize the actual movement ideogram in these figures in his artworks.

Key words: Persian painting, Sultan Muhammad, figure, fantasy, movement

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## Introduction

While watching an animation as a form of entertainment, we may not notice the myriad of visual elements and special effects, sometimes missing them all. Among all the elements composing the content of animation, “movement” and “fantasy” are considered as two key elements in this art-industry. It matters what type of fantasy atmosphere prevails in the whole story, affects its graphic structure and personalities development and also the movement of characters. Animators and directors spend the first phase of their project studying various books and visual sources in search of ideas even for months. It is certainly one of the most important pre-production phases. Such sources are historical visual sources related to various nations or the researchers’ papers on psychology and sociology associated with story themes. As an example, if the story occurred in Italy in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the first step is an investigation into their lifestyle, garments, and social norms in 14<sup>th</sup> century Italy and even more importantly is the paintings of that era. This initial research is followed by ideation, personality-design, graphic style, and the visual structure of the movie. Comprehensive and technical studies into Persian visual traditions background are considered a

fundamental stage in order to achieve such high goals as aesthetic expression and integrated and original structure in Persian visual art in a new and modern form--with the art-industry of animation an instance of this). Such traditions have preserved their origins and their unifying spirit against the sometimes forced influences of foreign art across the history: one of these visual sources with fantasy atmosphere and meta-world is called Persian painting. It is a window to Alam Mithal, coinciding with the imaginary world of animation. Alam Mithal is the mystical world where all physical limitations are removed. It is a celestial world; it exists yet it is immaterial, connecting this world with the world above. A Persian painter strives to inspire the world beyond this material world using the implications in Alam Mithal, its imagery, the material elements in this world on the 2D surface of paper and also by eliminating 3D qualities such as perspective. The world of fantasies is based upon nature but it impinges on its laws sometimes violating them.

This paper aims to provide a dialectic link between the fantastic world of Persian painting and the modern art of animation and to define shared terms such as “fantasy” and “movement” in order to identify the structural and

visual system of Persian painting on the one hand, and the semantic connection of that system with the general goal of a piece of art on the other, to reach intuition and revives the hidden traditions in the paintings in the visual expression of Persian modern animation. Upon further investigation on the historical texts and pictures of Persian painting across eras, Second Tabriz (Safavid) was selected. It is the most noble and the best era in Persian painting history during which geniuses such as Agha Mirak, Sultan Muhammad, Mir Mossavar, and others developed and established a style which is mostly away from the direct influence of Chinese, Mongolian and Byzantium painting. On the other hand, in terms of composition, color richness, color purity, and the dynamism of human body are highly developed. "Sultan Muhammad Naghash" was selected among all the painters of Second Tabriz School of Art for two reasons: first, he is considered a top representative of this school and as quoted by Roen Pakbaz, he is the greatest "heir of Behzad style". In addition, Sultan Muhammad was in charge of Safavid Palace Royal Library and Painters, making his influence to be seen in the majority of illustrated manuscripts remained from that era such as Cartie Divan-e Hafez,

Tahmasb Shahnameh, and Nezami Khamseh; second, a lively dynamic expression and round colorful compositions, and above all, imaginary and mystical creatures can be seen in his art. His paintings are a remarkable example of Alam Mithal and the world of fantasy.

The strategic question is thus asked: "If the human bodies in Sultan Muhammad's paintings could move, how would they be like and what qualities would they hold?"

## **Review of Literature**

A quest to find an answer to the above question led the author to another world of open questions, answers, and secrets. Each and every issue which was a prerequisite to understand the above question called for an extensive and independent research which was hard to conduct. Unfortunately, Iranian researchers did a small percentage of studies on Persian painting and although foreign researchers did a large amount of research in this regard, they made fundamental mistakes. They did not describe the principles and philosophy of Persian art and traditions or why and how a Persian artist could create such fantastic and abstract paintings, while in the West in the

Renaissance period painters tried to re-express human body with its real proportions. Most research is related to the background, naming the painters and their paintings. Some point to the aesthetic visual principles, coloring and the composition of paintings. Yaghub Azhand, PhD, in his book “Sultan Muhammad Naghash’s Face” compiled a collection of comments and analyses of Iranian and foreign authors on his life and paintings and also introduced his real and attributed works. Other Iranian authors such as Aidin Aghdashloo, Muhammad Hussein Halimi, Amir Farid and others tried to analyze some of his paintings in their technical articles. Roen Pakbaz, Muhammad Ali Karimzadeh Tabrizi, Qamar Arian, Mahnaz Shayestehfar and others also pointed to his works. Among foreign authors, Stewart Cray Welsh had the most contribution. He elaborated on Sultan Muhammad Naghash’s paintings by a precise post-Islam analysis of Persian works, especially Turkman, Tabriz, and Qazvin-Mashad paintings. Other authors in this regard are Shila Kenby, Arthur Pope, Bazel Gray, Abu Ala Soudavar and others who tried to introduce him.

Using the above mentioned literature, the present paper aims to take on a different approach to describe this

innovative painter and analyze his works from the perspective of “fantasy” and “movement” in human body and humanoid creatures, e.g. angels, and beasts.

## **Methodology**

The research method of this article is a visual and structural analysis of Sultan Muhammad Naghash’s works with an emphasis on human and humanoid bodies. It aims to investigate his alterations in the classic and ideal proportions of human bodies in terms of quality and quantity and compare them with Ancient Greek golden criteria. In some parts, a statistical analysis of his methods is provided in terms of aesthetic qualities using different variables with schematic diagrams and visual analyses.

## **A Measurement of Anatomical Proportions in Human Figures of Sultan Muhammad’s Paintings**

As you read the studies and critiques on Persian paintings, you come across terms such as “abstract painting”<sup>1</sup> or “stylization”. Roen Pakbaz defines it as follows:

“Re-expression of basic features and re-identification of natural elements based upon a contractual method (opposite naturalization). In this method, techniques such as simplification, regular repetition, symmetrization, changing proportions, and visual exaggeration are used. The remarkable examples of abstract painting are found on Neolithic pots (pre-history era) and Byzantine mosaic. (Pakbaz ۲۰۰۲:۱۹۳)

The painter’s worldview and his fantastic atmosphere paved the way for particularly Persian abstract painting and of course with the associated stylistic feature of any given era, leading us to a particular type of abstract painting. This term can affect the coloring, exaggeration, size alteration, increasing or decreasing details, decreasing face features or altering the anatomy of human or animals. In the former, some simplification in real anatomical proportion of human body is noticeable. Hence, the painter cared more about his visual expression than the physical proportion due to the time period, his worldview, and the story type. In general, the more recent the history of painting goes, the more painters’ ability to observe the physical proportion develops, especially from Harat School of Painting on. Anyway, the painter never leaves abstract

painting and his heavenly outlook on the world. He strives to create a pleasant admirable picture to imply his particular meanings by strengthening his visual tools. A glance at Kamaleddin Behzad, Mir Mosavar, Agha Mirak, Sultan Muhammad, Muhamadi Heravi, Sadeghi Beyk Afshar and finally, Reza Abbasi reveals a developing trend in human physical real proportions with Sultan Muhammad’s works being at the zenith in terms of physical proportion and abstract painting and personal impinges on it. He seriously insists on following traditional principles and values, yet he believes in expressionism and precision in painting. In picture ۱ (taken from Tahmasb Shahnameh displaying beasts defeated by Tahmourth), striking examples of Sultan Muhammad’s innovation and dexterity can be seen in drawings of various forms of human figure with proportion.

Here, you might wonder, what are the perfect and ideal physical proportions of the human body? Is there a unanimously accepted criterion for the measurement of proportion and comparing various figures of human being across nations, races, and cultures? The answer to these questions may have been investigated for centuries. Given the long history of human body representation in past



Figure 1: Tahmourth defeating beasts, Tahamasb Shahnameh- By Sultan Muhammad

works, it is worthy to be researched. Aesthetic artists have been long obsessed with the question of finding out the coordinates of a possibly perfect human physique.

"Ancient Greek artists used the proper anatomy, and physical balanced proportion more than any other civilization. Having conducted profound studies into human anatomy, Greek sculptors could establish criteria for human body and its proportions, making it possible for them to adjust human body size... Ideal sizes and beautiful proportions have been

introduced by Policleto, a Greek sculptor in 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. He created sculptors based on these criteria (Figure ۲) (Vaziri Moqadam, ۲۰۰۴:۲۵).

Another scientist who delved into human body proportion is Italian artists, Leonardo da Vinci, who lived in the Renaissance period. He established a method of measurement for proper human proportion (Figure ۳). His best-known work about human body measurement is a man with his hands and feet spread out/closed in a circle and square.

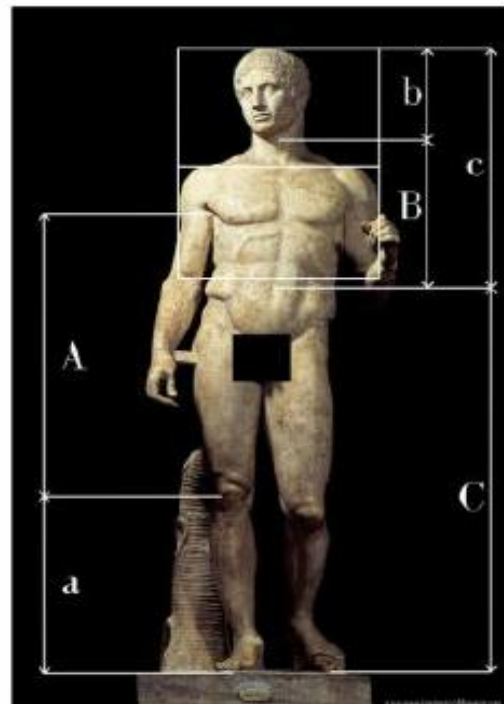


Figure 2: Physical Proportion in Ancient Greek by Policleto

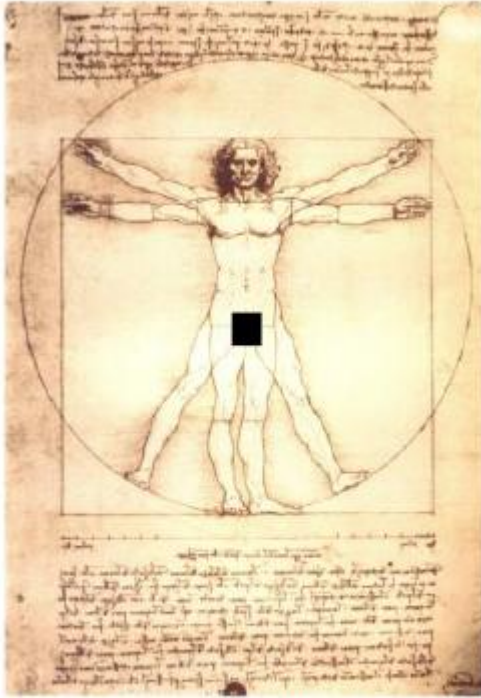


Figure 3: Human Body Anatomy in a circle  
By: Leonardo Da Vinci

Another one who founded standards in the measurement of human body proportion is the German artists, Albrecht Dürer. In 19<sup>th</sup> century, Zeising illustrated his standards by some research into the relations between human body sizes. He conducted precise measurements and compared them with golden ratio. His finding, however, did not capture attention until recently when an extensive study by E. Moessel confirmed Zeising's method. Since 1945, Le Corbusier used golden ratio for all of his projects, which he called Le Modulor. (Neuvert 2002:15). It can be inferred that physical proportions of

the human body has been developed throughout centuries and has become more and more scientific. The proportion sizes now at hand are the result of centuries of test and trial which can be used as a yardstick for measurement of proportions. It should be noted that the question of proportions is still open and new sizes and measurements can be proposed based on new perspectives and calculations.

### **A Schematic View of the Bone Structure of Human Figures in Sultan Muhammad's Paintings**

Out of hundreds of human figures in Sultan Muhammad's works, some have been selected to better understand their proportions and also their movement. This section illustrates the type and amount of Sultan Muhammad's alteration of human body proportions. Figure 4 is the first sample which shows one of the human figures of the picture "Fereydoun destroys Zahak". To better measure the proportions, circumference lines are used and trifle details are removed where possible. It is a striking example of standard physical proportions; there are, however, some manipulations in the form of exaggerations on feet and

hands. For instance, the length of arm is not proportionate to the face (given the standard that the area of face is as large as a spread-out hand). Another point is the way it twists and turns in the upper part of the trunk owing to the strong strike on the head, suggesting that the painter exaggerates it to stir up viewers' emotions, not to display an outside stimulus.

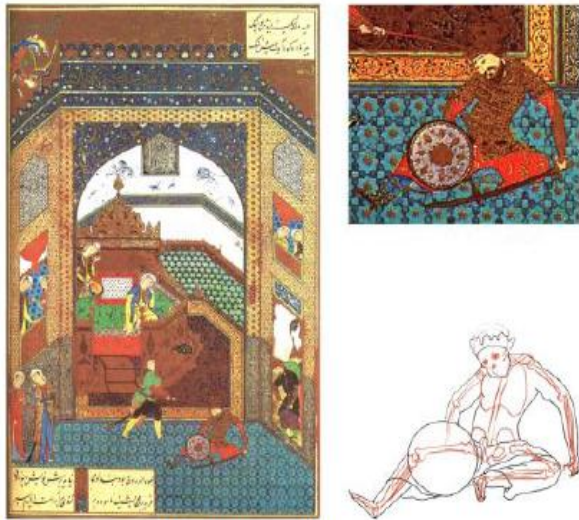


Figure 4: Fereydoun destroys Zahak. Tahmasb Shahnameh By Sultan Muhammad

Furthermore, thigh bone is too short (as already mentioned, it is the longest bone); it can be noticed that thigh bone and forearm bone are the same size in the schematic picture; however, forearm bone size is two-third of thigh bone size. Still another manipulation of physical proportions of human body by Sultan Muhammad is the length of shoulders which are way shorter than the universal standard. According to

the proportion standards in the majority of artistic academic methods, shoulder length has to be along as the head; nevertheless, the painter adjusted it and the shoulder length looks too short due to a decrease in size of the collarbone, the shoulder blade and their joints. Therefore, although the general proportion is observed, there are signs of delicate manipulations and exaggerations.

One of the outstanding masterpieces by Sultan Muhammad is "The Portrait of Shah Tahmasb Studying" which is considered as one the first works of monograph (muraqqa). Figure 5 shows this portrait along with the schematic view of bone structure. Obviously, the



Figure 5: The Portray of Shah Tahmasb Studying attributed to Sultan Muhammad

proportions become significantly more real-life compared with the previous painting discussed. Such a difference is caused by various factors including the importance of the subject, the type of artwork (monograph), the time gap between the two portraits, and the



more modern artistic experience gathered by the painter therein. The latter differs from the former in the following areas: a logical proportion between the thigh bone and other bones in terms of length and size, shoulder bone length, and the shape of rib cage; still some de-sizing can be seen in the hands disproportionate to the whole body size. A glance at other works of Sultan Muhammad and also his predecessors and successors, it can be revealed that such a painting is known as a visual custom in Persian traditional painting and it is not only characteristic of Sultan Muhammad. Similarly, facial features such as a round face, arched eyebrows, almond-eyes, small nose, mouth and lips display aesthetic values as old as two millennia. De-sizing hands and feet gradually was established as a definite principle among various schools of Persian painting. Anyway, "The Portrait of Shah Tahmasb Studying" is considered as one of the most proportionate pictures of human body in Sultan Muhammad's artworks.

The issue of "looks drawing" or designing one dominant dimension of a given personality can hugely affect painter's manipulation in the bodily proportions. As already mentioned, Sultan Muhammad is a kind of painter who is well-known to draw various

characters. Given the fact that he did not bind himself to the real world and was inclined to the fantasy world, it seems quite natural that he resorted to such alterations and manipulations in order to draw out ideal characters. Nevertheless, the more one delves into Sultan Muhammad's portraits, the more one understands that he took a balanced approach to manipulations and exaggerations, even though he was interested in the fantasy meta-world and fantasy looks. It should be noted that whenever Sultan Muhammad and most of his contemporary painters tried to draw the prominent characters, they adopted a personal exaggerated and dynamic attitude owing to the sensitivity of the work at hand. The notable example is the portrait of "Khosro" in "Khosro looking at Shirin bathing", in Khamseh Nezami. (Figure 6)

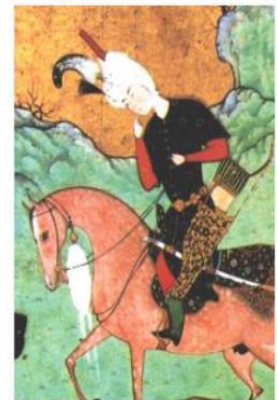
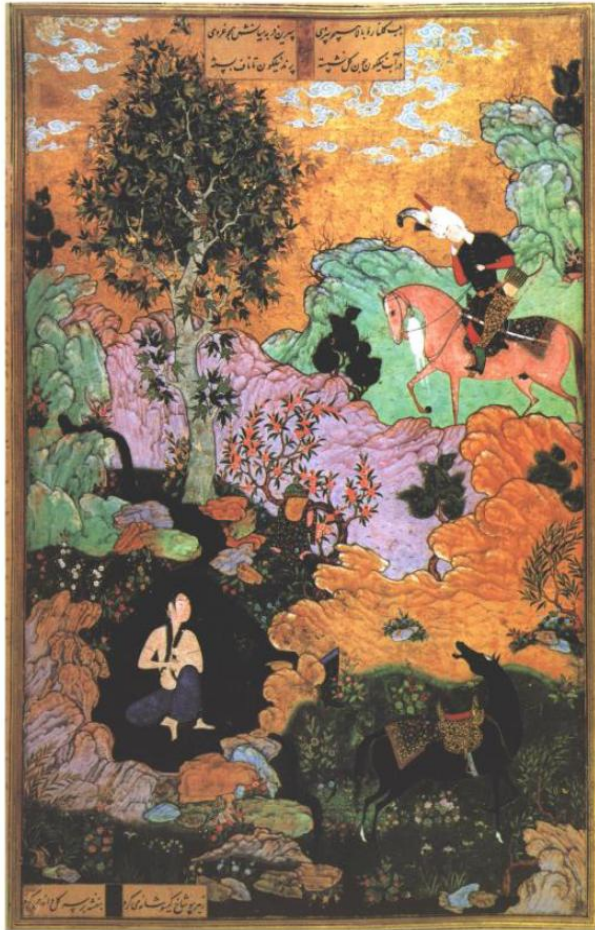


Figure 6: Khosro looking at Shirin bathing  
Tahmasbi Shahname  
Attributed to Sultan Muhammad



In the above painting, Khosro's body is drawn with all the well-known traditional exaggerations and de-sizing which were discussed in the previous paintings. Here, the painter strengthened such manipulations as he tried to place much more emphasis and significance to Khosro's character. For instance, his hand is outrageously disproportionate to his upper trunk. According to the schematic view of his bone structure, the thigh bone size is logically proportionate, yet the shin bone is way too small in size. Similarly, the forearm bone is smaller than

normal size. Two other examples of Sultan Muhammad's exaggerated paintings are given below. The first one is figure 7 which illustrates Zahak with snakes on his shoulder in one of Tahmasb Shahnameh paintings.



Figure 7: Kaveh tears up Zahak's Roll.  
Tahmasb Shahnameh  
By Sultan Muhammad

As can be seen in the schematic view of his bone structure, some

disproportions are noteworthy, including excessive smallness of hands and feet, shortness of shoulders and shin bone which were also observed in the previous instances; yet they are much more apparent here. In addition, the way he is sitting is distinct.

Another exaggerated portraits of Sultan" Muhammad is "Qumarth Kingship" or "Wearing Panther Hide" in Tahmasb Shahnameh (figure 8). It displays an abrupt overexpression and deconstruction in figurative drawing. His body is so thin and narrow that rib cage and shoulder blade and collar bone are as short as one-third of the normal size. Hands and shins are drawn so small and delicate that it is hard to believe that feet belong to the same figure. Such paintings is quite unique in Sultan Muhammad's works given the fact that thin figure are rare in his works.

The above discussions about Sultan Muhammad's paintings lead us to some results about the aesthetics of his portraits. Anyway, his paintings belong to the hall of fame of Second Tabriz Era. Given that the art policies of Royal Library was based upon the fact that each artists' paintings should contain visual unity and technical integrity,



Figure 8: Qumarth Kingship  
Tahmasb Shahnameh  
By Sultan Muhammad

Sultan Muhammad's works cannot be analyzed as a modernist painter who holds a characteristic method of expression to illustrate his technical creativity independent of any mainstream style of painting (and sometimes contrary to it). Like Behzad, Agha Mirak, Mir Mosavar, and others, Sultan Muhammad faced some restrictions to express personal exaggerations quite freely; still such restriction perhaps made his outstanding artwork worth discussing. It is hard to achieve to create distinguishable and ingenious masterpieces against restrictions and compulsory principles.

Lyrical atmosphere overshadows all the significant features of Sultan Muhammad's portraits (including the

proportion). It has a lot in common with the fantasy world since a type of alteration in the physical world is visible in both; for example, in themes which are harsh in the real world (e.g. war) a type of ease and mildness is seen. The injured bodies fall on the ground so gracefully that they seem to be prepared for the Hereafter, implying no sorrow to the viewer. It is obviously found in Persian literature, especially in Ferdowsi Shahnameh, Nezami Khamseh, Hafez Divan, Saadi Bustan and Golestan, Molavi Masnavi Manavi, etc. There is no hopelessness and tragedy ending in the lyrical world of Alam Mithal. Having been affected by this Persian lyrical world, Sultan Muhammad strived to illustrate beauty and delicacy. All his exaggerations and manipulations stem from this emotion and it can be claimed that he is a successful artist who could achieve his goals.

### Sultan Muhammad's Innovations in Fantasy Portraits

In Persian Painting, “fantasy” has always been an undeniable and important element. Artists resort to that in order to illustrate Alam Mithal where real-world rules are all altered.

They reach visual unity in their graphic style by practice, displaying it in a way that the viewer is not confused and feels an integrated fantastic atmosphere. Sultan Muhammad is one of the most visionary of Persian painters, his works being among the top artworks. In a general classification, his creativity and innovations in fantastic portraits and his way of displaying human beings in a meta-world is described as below.

**1-Diversity in composition and all types of arrangements of human body:** In some (or most of) artworks by Sultan Muhammad, human elements are arranged in a diversified composition. In some paintings, he arranges the human elements in a circular or Eslimi form. Sometimes, he arranges the human elements in an abnormal Eslimi, as can be seen in figure 9.

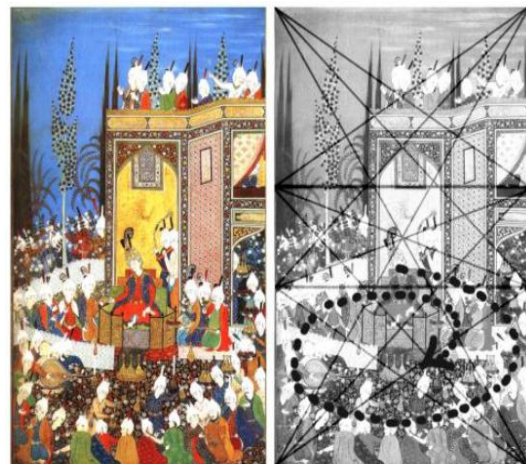


Figure 9: Eid Fitr, Cartier Divan Hafez  
By Sultan Muhammad

## ۲- An emphasis on humanoid creatures such as angel and beasts:

In this regard, he is considered as a follower of Master Muhammad Siah Qalam, the prominent painter of ۱۴<sup>th</sup> century. Figure ۱۰ is a comparison of his and Muhammad Siah Qalam's beasts. Their beasts are very similar in physical looks and both are tainted with Chinese painting and themes; however, on closer look some differences come up: Sultan Muhammad used them much more frequently than Siah Qalam did in his paintings. Sultan Muhammad strives to include these mystical creatures' postures in his paintings and made use of human movement to depict them, one difference being that beasts' movement is exaggerated, sarcastic, and mostly ostentatious, as though the painter predicted a certain type of gait for them.



Figure 10: A comparison between Sultan Muhammad and Muhammad Siah Qalam in painting beasts

Another difference is Sultan Muhammad's innovation in creating various types of beasts; for instance, in figure ۱۰, the beasts on the top left side of the picture has a larger head than the

beasts on the bottom right. They also differ in having a moustache and the size of eyes. One more difference is seen in the beasts on the bottom left side of the picture where there are four completely different beasts. The differences include the shape of horns, eyes, nose, and mouth. They are, however, similar in the rings and anklets on beasts' hands and feet, suggesting that Sultan Muhammad was directly influenced by Siah Qalam's style of characterization.

Sultan Muhammad had a high enthusiasm and dexterity in drawing angels. One of his greatest masterpieces showing his artistry in this regard is "Prophet Muhammad's Ascension" in Nezami Khamseh. (Figure ۱۱) It depicts a variety of angels flying. There are also various faces, being in full face, profile, and ۳/۴ view. Interestingly enough, he paid a special attention to the mechanism of flight and suspension of human body on air, indicating both his deep knowledge of the real-world facts and also his vivid imagination of an invisible meta-creature called "an angel" painted as a winged woman flying high into the Seven Heavens.



Figure 11: Prophet Muhammad's Ascension  
Nezami Khamseh  
By Sultan Muhammad

Another issue is angels' diversified way of flying: one flying vertically, one hovering, one squatting and saying prayers while flying on the air. In addition to beasts and angels, there are also other humanoid creatures in Sultan Muhammad's artworks, being depicted for example in "Divine and Worldly Inebriety" on the bottom left (figure ۱۲). There is no accurate information regarding such creatures but satanic creatures seem to be like genies, dancing and clapping. The most remarkable example is seen in "Divine and Worldly Inebriety" picture. "Sultan

Muhammad has realized Hafez's imagination; he painted the main elements on the top with pots and wine goblets. On the bottom, some old and young people are moving around with spiritual hats, drinking wine. The professionals are drunk staggering around and clapping, yet the younger ones are fallen down. One is lying down as if he is kissing the flute man...angels are also dancing on the belvedere, the whole world seems to be partying. (Ajand ۲۰۰۵:۱۶۲)

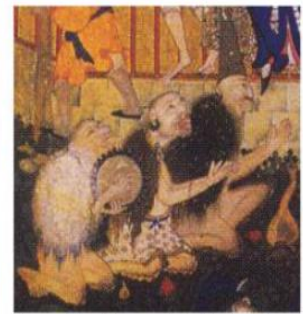
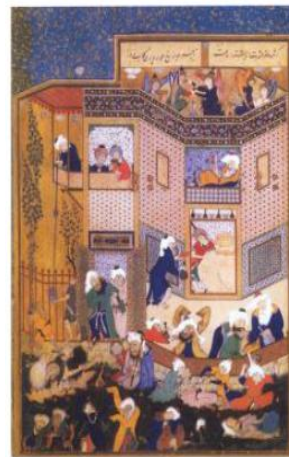


Figure 12: Divine and Worldly Inebriety  
Cartier Hafez Divan  
By Sultan Muhammad

**۳-Taking the dramatic and scenic positions of human elements into account:** This part includes aspects of symbolic movements design and motion picture. It can be claimed that Sultan Muhammad is the first (or one of the first) painters who officially took

account of this aspect of human characterization in Persian painting.

Returning to figure ١٢, one of the best examples related to our current discussion, Sultan Muhammad used every technique to accentuate his expression of a scene of worldly and divine inebriety, including sudden changes in the size of human elements, dancing style of some elements, and the abnormal position of some elements away from the picture framework.

Another painting by Sultan Muhammad, i.e. "Rostam asleep and Rakhsh struggling with a lion" (figure ١٣) is related to an incomplete version of Ferdowsi Shahnameh. Although it contains only one human element, it holds deep scenic and expressionist features. The way Rostam was depicted (being asleep) implies a position which is more than a normal sleep after hunting. Facial posture and the way his hands and legs are positioned radiate an athletic exhilaration so that the viewer can visualize him in hunting. (Furthermore, he is placed in the best point making it possible for the viewer to see all the elements across the picture)



Rostam asleep and Rakhsh  
struggling with a lion  
Part of Ferdowsi Shahnameh  
By Sultan Muhammad

**٤-Anthropomorphism to mountains and rocks and embodying them as human beings:** Of course, such innovation did not have its origin in Sultan Muhammad's artwork, yet he was the first one who extensively made use of this technique to create a fantastic creative atmosphere. On closer look at his paintings, a lot of rocks can be observed which are depicted as human being. (Figure ١٤)

Perhaps one of the most remarkable shared features between Alam Mithal in painting and fantasy in animation lies in anthropomorphism of rocks. At the same time as when Western artists strived to better understand and represent the nature and promote realistic painting techniques (١٥٣٠-٩٠),



Figure 14: Examples of anthropomorphism to rocks  
By Sultan Muhammad

On the other side of the globe in Persia, Sultan Muhammad was creating artwork which are origins of the fantasy and meta-world, beyond the real world --exactly what has been universally accredited in the modern arts such as animation.

In sum, it can be claimed that what we are looking for in animation as fantasy was indeed recorded in fixed frames replete with visual motion. Now the significant question is how can the above fixed frames which are full of life and motion be animated to be moved in another dimension (time)?

In the end, based on the linear analyses of the majority of human and humanoid bodies in Sultan

Muhammad's paintings, a general classification of such bodies can be provided:

### **A) Human and Humanoid Elements**

Statistically, approximately 10% of all the bodies in Sultan Muhammad's artworks consist of humanoid meta-creatures like beasts, angels, and genies; while approx. 80% are human beings.

### **B) Gender**

A low percentage of the bodies in his paintings are women, due to various reasons: the most important one is the fact that the majority of his works include war, conflicts, palace scenes, legends, and masculine themes in sum. If women are used at all, they hold passive roles and are onlookers and bystanders. Nevertheless, there is an exception; for instance, in "Khosro looking at Shirin bathing" is considered as the key character of the story and in turn, the key element on the painting.

### **C) Manipulation and Exaggeration in Realistic Proportions**

Sultan Muhammad is viewed as the most dynamic and most liberal of all Persian painters. He expresses himself much more than his contemporaries or predecessors and in many cases makes use of sarcastic expression with his



peculiar sense of humor reminding us of Muhammad Siah Qalam's artworks. However, on closer look at his paintings, he did not adopt such an approach in all of his works, sometimes following Harat School of Art. In other words, he diligently adhered to classic style; at the same time, he strived to free himself of predecessors' visual values. It should be noted, though, that his visual style is the result of two: Turkmen's palace painting style and Harat School of Art style, especially, Kamaledin Behzad. "Sultan Muhammad could tactfully make his own style aligned with Kamaledin Behzad's. Sultan Muhammad's artworks in Tahmasb Shahnameh are a combination of vivid colors of Tabriz Turkmen School's style and Harat School's logical structure; yet the two were not perfectly combined until ۱۵۱۶ AC." (Kenby ۱۹۹۹:۸۱) There are other factors influencing his works besides schools' and predecessors' style. As already mentioned, one is the fact that he was extremely dependent on the theme. It changed his perspective if he painted a war scene, or a sonnet by Hafez, or romantic lyrical scenes; perhaps it is the most compelling reason for his manipulations and exaggerations and adopting realistic/unrealistic approaches. For example, if "Divine

and Worldly's Inebriety" and "Eid Fitr" and the analyzed human bodies therein are compared, we may reach a more reasonable conclusion. As already said, the former is related to Hafez's sonnet and the latter is a party at Safavid's palace to celebrate Eid Fitr after the observation of Shaval's moon. In the former, although he tried to depict worldly and divine inebriety among humans and angels, he was able to characterize and personalize them and illustrate them in abnormal and exaggerated positions (given that they are drunk) like caricatures. He manifested truly artistic creativity and diversity: portraying some dancing drunken with caricature exaggeration—big heads, belly, and small hands and feet; while portraying some in genie's group clapping and dancing and even kissing the musician's feet. The way they are standing or sitting on the bottom of the painting is quite abnormal and meta-realistic. On the other hand, the elements on the top—where the painter tries to illustrate divine inebriety—are quite calm, genteel and elegant. In the latter, as the theme of the painting is religious, classic style is more stressed. Here, he aims to illustrate the pious king with all his attendants quite elegantly, who are all religiously exhilarated about Eid Fitr, which differs from the worldly

inebriety in the former. Thus, he makes a regular geometrical arrangement for human elements and makes use of the traditional snail-shaped composition from Harat School of Art. Sultan Muhammad's conscious attention to create a particular atmosphere and personalities and their motion based upon the story theme is noteworthy. In addition, the view he chooses for each element directly affects the exaggeration in drawing it, i.e. there is less manipulation in human elements with  $\frac{2}{3}$  view than the ones with full face, or profile. Portraits with profiles are drawn caricature-like with abnormally disproportions which are totally different from other facial views including  $\frac{2}{3}$  view.

Statistically, approx. 80% of his figures are in  $\frac{2}{3}$  view, 18% in profile, and only 2% are in full face. On closer look, you may notice that the alterations in proportions are so much that if a figure in  $\frac{2}{3}$  view were to be drawn in profile, it would become totally different.

The analyzed figures are classified into three categories: realistic, low-exaggeration, and caricature/deformed. Interestingly enough, the majority of his manipulations and exaggerations are done on male figures and female ones are preserved in realistic  $\frac{2}{3}$  view.

## **D) Inertia and Motion in Figures**

Not only did Sultan Muhammad's account of paintings theme affect the gender and the amount of exaggeration on figures, it also influences fixed or dynamic figures. Themes like war or dancing require dynamic figures, however, themes of silence and contemplation (e.g. Khosro looking at Shirin bathing) do not require dynamic figures, thus more contemplative and intrinsic gestures are taken.

## **E) Motion-based Figures**

Given that motion gestures is practical in cinema arts, especially in animation, Sultan Muhammad's figures can be investigated based on such gestures. It can help us better understand the role of characters in the story and ultimately in characters' motion.

A brief introduction about Sultan Muhammad's use of fantastic elements and his manipulations in the structure of human figure to create a fantastic atmosphere was provided. Obviously, anatomical alterations, such as hands and feet or lower to upper body disproportions, their motion might be different from human natural motion in real-life. Besides, the character and role of figures and the overall theme of the story affects their motion. It makes it complicated to create motion in a

timeless framework of a picture, being quite different from a timed animation. Motion requires particular conditions and its own technical issues. Even if a painter already visualizes all the animated frames of a certain figure, he does not necessarily paint a fixed frame of a motioned figure; he tries to depict a section of motion which best represents all. In the meantime, he tries to embed this figure in the theme of the story which is a fixed picture away from animation complexities.

Sultan Muhammad as a book painter supports this idea; for example, in “The old lady and Sultan Sanjar” he selected the best moment of the story and the best motions of the characters—which best represent the story—and depicted it as the outstanding element of the picture, while he takes her brave behavior into account, trying to approach Sultan Sanjar’s horse and complaining.

In this section, some illustrations are provided to better understand the abovementioned points. Motion is explained on some figures in Sultan Muhammad’s works.



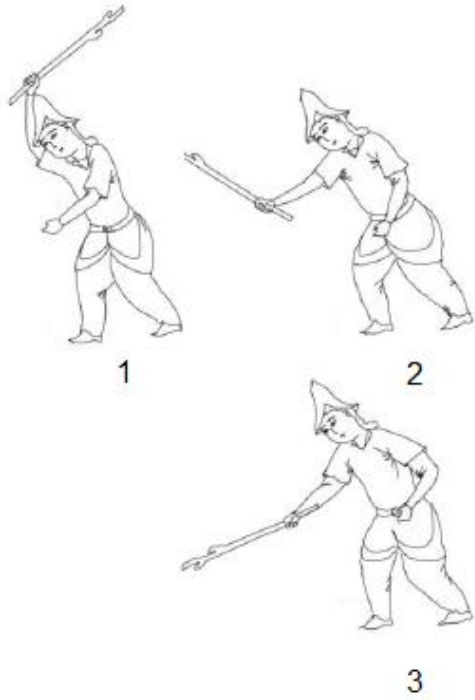


Figure 15: A motion analysis of a figure in Sultan Muhammad's painting

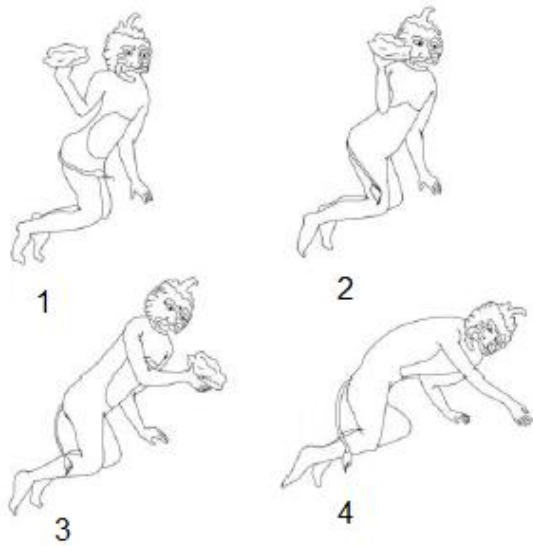


Figure 16: A motion analysis of a figure in Sultan Muhammad's painting

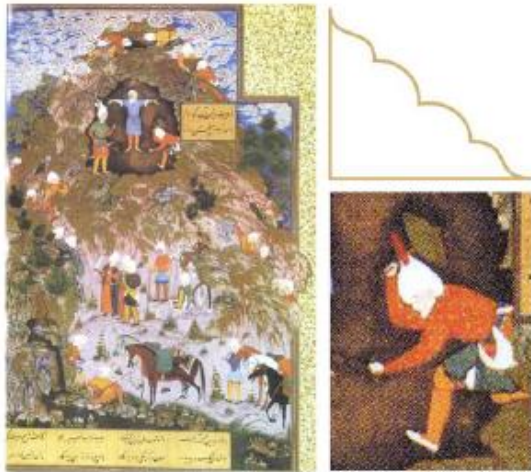


Figure 17: A motion analysis of a figure in Sultan Muhammad's painting

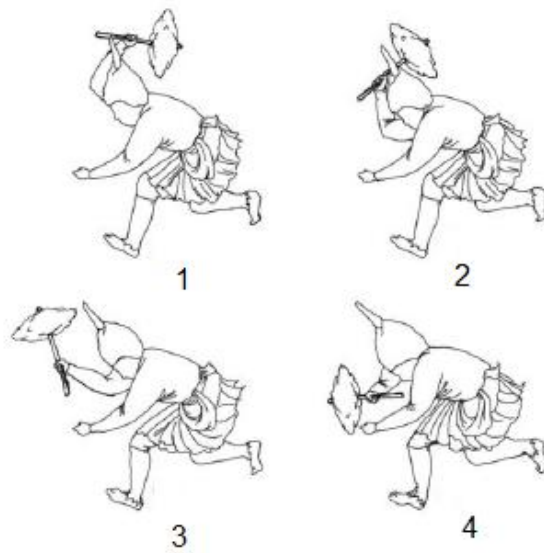
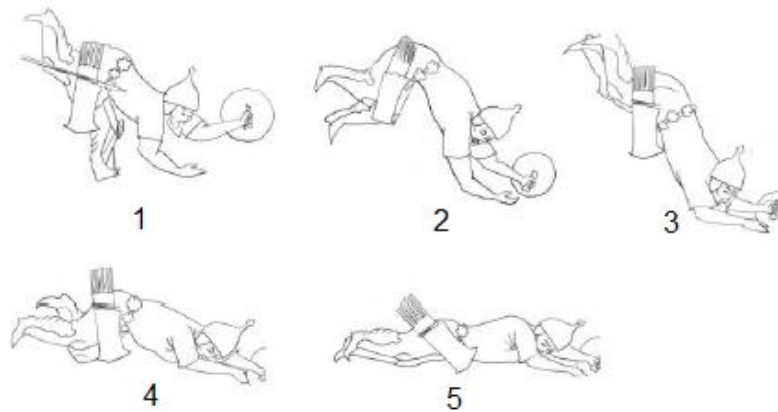


Figure 18: A motion analysis of a figure in Sultan Muhammad's painting



## Conclusion

Persian painting saw many rises and falls and changes across centuries; yet what stands out is that Persian visual tradition lingered on in the winding road of history and even evolved from time to time. After years of experience and mutual exchange with other artists from different nations, the golden ages of Persian painting came up in Second Tabriz School, having Sultan Muhammad as its best painter. Sultan Muhammad's values and innovations in creating a fantasy world and motion in his paintings were discussed in previous section. In sum, this paper produces the following results:

١-Sultan Muhammad was one of the most prominent painters of all time. His paintings in Tahmasb Shahnameh were a heritage of Second Tabriz School, yet in a while, he gradually approached the painting mainstreams in Safavid's palace. He had a particular innovation in his last artworks, especially in Hafez Divan, and introduced such great masterpieces that he became known as a unique painter in the world of art.

٢-Alam Mithal represents a heavenly world which due to its differences and similarities with the material world is a manifestation of the fantastic world. In

this world, there are material world rules are flouted; for instance, the visual error—owing to the perspective effect in the material world—cannot exist in the fantasy world and its paintings, or painter's imagination may conjure up a vision of yellow sky or green and pink rocks. Thus, these valuable graphic and semantic features of Persian painting art can create a fantasy world in animation.

٣-Persian painting holds a lot of motion albeit fixed, manifested in various forms: rhythm, contrast, abstract values, and sometimes objectively in human and animal figures. In Persian painting, both forms of motion are highly developed in Sultan Muhammad's artwork and it fires one's imagination to take account of the details in human and humanoid figures.

٤-Given the particular type of “stylization” in the anatomic structure of human figures—which are transformed into a graphic characteristic in Persian painting throughout history and reached its zenith in Sultan Muhammad's artwork—it can be concluded that it is expected that in animation the same summarization of human figure motion

is seen and all the unnecessary details are removed to make the motions as simplified as possible. On the one hand, the simplification technique, and on the other 2D scenes without perspective, cause motion so simple and with a different rhythm without 2D details and abrupt angle changes. It all results in a particular visual/motion expression which is noteworthy given the long history of Persian painting. Such expression can have a profound effect on its audience if presented along with related themes: this was the way taken up seriously by oriental artists to express their own native visual and cultural values with artistic creativity and introduce it to the whole world.

The production of an animation is a multi-layered process requiring various expertise. One important stage is characterization which has a huge effect on the visual style and graphic structure of the movie. It is much more emphasized in the modern animation which is character-based. In pre-production visual investigation by the designer, he delves into past visual sources. Far East artists struggled to present a type of visual expression which is a continuation of their past traditions, in addition to being modern. One such artist is Japanese renowned animator, Hayao Miyazaki, who tried diligently to create characters and

traditional atmosphere based upon religious beliefs and Japanese legend and produces brilliant animations, such as *Spirited Away*, *Princess Mononoke* made him and his Studio Ghibli famous in the world of cinema and animation. Iranian artists can also achieve such fame in animation by delving into the rich Persian culture and art. *Alam Mithal* and its realms can inspire fantastic atmosphere in animations. An investigation on the anatomical structure and motion of figures can facilitate characterization and it also can create an animation with a new expression. A background designer can make use of the composition of elements and various visual qualities. Even the simultaneity and multiple realms of Persian painting which make it possible to have several places and times at the same framework can be used in the new methods of animation development.



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