

**CHINESE LANDSCAPE IN “THE COURT OF GAYUMERTH” AND ITS COMPARISON
WITH “DWELLING IN THE QINGBIAN MOUNTAINS (1366)”**

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Abstract

The Chinese landscape style appeared in the Persian miniature from Il-khanid times after Mongol invasion and became a part of Persian miniature even in Safavid Period painting as in Court of Gayumerth shows the appearance of Chinese painting elements. Chinese Landscape painting known as shanshui style appeared in 5th century in Chinese art but remained popular even in Mongol Yuan and Ming dynasty. Dwelling in Qingbian Mountains (1366) have the elements of traditional Chinese landscape shanshui style that dominated by high mountains and rivers and have Daoist influence that explains these paintings have some intellectual reason and are not there just for a pleasure. These both elements are not only the part of Chinese paintings but also appeared in the Persian paintings as in Court of Gayumerth. The current study relates the elements of shanshui style in both paintings and Daoist concept. In the end by comparing the work it can be deduced that Persian painters have uses the traditional Chinese motifs and elements that have Chinese religious influences but did not alter traditional Persian conceptions.

Keywords: Chinese, Landscape, Paintings, Yuan, Safavid.

Introduction

The Persian miniature and art of book receives great influence from China when Mongol conquers China during the 13th century and Persia also became under the control of Mongol during the Il- Ikhanid¹ times (Tadjvidi, 1992). Mongols rule in China continued in 14th century under Yuan dynasty and even in Persia it continued in 15th century under Timurid

During Ikhanids the state was connected with Europe and China and have complex administration and have legacy that was the combination of Muslims, Iranian and Mongol elements combined (Biran, 2016). Both countries Iran and China were linked through Silk route that played an important role in the development of artistic connections especially in painting and pottery. Painting was a way to portray legends, dynasties, royal stories, myth, hunting and war scenes, ritual events and book decorations. Either for spiritual or worldly purposes these paintings were added in books. Chinese painting influenced Iranian paintings and appeared in Iranian books under Mongol rules. From Yuan Song period the influence entered on the paintings of Mongol II-Khanids especially for the depiction of natural scenes like mountains and trees, valleys and forest. Such Landscape elements that entered in the II-Khanid manuscripts was new trend in Islamic paintings that was highly inspired by the Chinese landscape paintings (Berlekamp, et al., 2015). Due to cultural transmission landscape painting appeared during Mongols but this tradition continued even in Timurid Period in Persia and Yuan dynasty to Ming dynasty in China. Īl-Khānid and Yuan² era had a long-lasting influence on Islamic art (Akbarnia, 2007). The Safavid Period painting also depicts the Chinese landscape style. However, cultural transmission occurred in landscape painting not in same way. This is historic type research and aim of this research is to explore to elements that are used in both artworks that either in Persian painting these elements have Chinese religious influence or not? This can be observed in The Court of Gayumerth from Shahnama Thamasp (1525-35) (Figure a) while comparing its landscape with earlier century Chinese painting the Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains (1366) painted by Wang Meng in Yuan dynasty (Figure b).

The Couth of Gayumerth

The Court of Gayumerth³ from Shahanamah Thamasap⁴ is the illustrated manuscript by Sultan Muhmmad that was painted in the Safavid Period (1525-35) Sultan Muhammad brought together the visionary power of Turkeman painting, so admired by Shah Ismail, and the psychological nuances and fineness associated with Bihzad, whose style was favored by Prince Tahmasp. The manuscript shows the fusion of the styles of the schools of Herat and the painters of Tabriz⁵. This painting explains the mythical story and beginning of Persia and story of its first human and King as well as beginning of world civilization, discovery of fire and wars against the first demon.

Analysis of The Court of Gayumerth

From Reuben Levy's translation, the description of this court is that it's high in the mountains and surrounded by wealth. Both men and animals all gathered to pay honor to king. The whole arrangement of figures is set in open landscape. Although at glance the painting seems Iranian composition but the Chinese elements that entered in Persian miniature from 14th century onwards are present. Such as knobby trees, Chinese clouds, animals, figures and mountains, water. These are all elements of traditional Chinese shanshu⁶ style painting and this shan shu painting style from 5th century to onwards remained popular even it appeared in the Soan and Yuan dynasties. In shanshui Style Mountains are associated with cosmic order and durability, and almost each mountain has its mountain god. The human forms are smaller in size than nature when these humans are placed in these landscapes. Such arrangement of figures according to power is placed on mountains is shown in Court of Gayumerth as king and his sons on cliff too. From Il-khanid era, Chinese landscape scrolls inspired Persian painters. Mountains play huge role in Chinese landscape art due to the Daoist influence. (Shaw 1988: 190)⁷ Daoists believe that nature is a compound arrangement of flows of energy and human being as main natural creature and can be seen as energy circuit and their energy flow increases by putting them on mainly high.⁸ The mountains were seen as high energy level places. That is why when Daoism became religion in Chinese these mountains were seen as sacred. Gayumerth who is blessed with divine power is also shown on High Mountain in Persian miniature too. Like a drop pendent shape the first king is shown in the center above from all on a peak of mountain as a main central figure with leopard skin dress, courtiers, who are gathered around at the base of the painting. Beside the King on the cliff is his son, Siyamak. He is seated on right side, and grandson Hushang is standing on left side. The arrangement of this composition shows the chain of father and his succession explaining the inherent tragedy of the tale. The angel Surush informed Gayumerth that the Black Div would murder Siyamak that explains since from beginning of human forces of good contend with forces of evil, inaugurating a struggle without end. ShanShui art explains in Gadamer views that a work of art is an event of truth and artworks have some rational content. They are not just for pleasure purpose or to merely invoke subjective feelings (Guignon 2003: 38)⁹. Chinese shan shui landscape paintings are based on ancient Chinese Taoism¹⁰, and to a lesser degree, to Confucianism (McMahon, 2003). It has Buddhist & Daoists philosophy¹¹. However since from Il-khanid period Persia have interaction with China but mostly scholars agree that despite of two cultural identities the Il-khanid and Yuan

had a long-lasting impact on Islamic art (Kadoi, 2009). Gadamer also (1996: 112) believes that the artwork is always bound to its community from which it is connected.

Analysis of The *Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains*

Yuan dynasty 14th century painting *Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains*¹² also show shanshu style landscape by Wang Meng who is inspired by Daoist.¹³ Cosimo Zene tries to argue that Wang Meng's artwork style of Daoist art are not connected with modern thought that stress on aesthetic consciousness and that treats a work of art as an object which is only there for the appreciation of a subject. Fong stresses that shan shui style goes beyond representation such artworks project the very essence of reality because of their intense psychological absorption (Fong 1992: 61).

According to Francois Jullian Chinese literati painters conveyed meaning in their artworks and among there four literati Yuan masters Wang Meng is one of them and famous tradition of shanshui is in Wang Meng artworks. As *Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountain* seems aesthetically pleasing landscape but shan shui art functioned in speaking of Daoist art and this shan shu type painting was during the military unrest during Mongols in Yuan dynasty and artist recalls his past living in harmony with nature. So this is not just beautiful landscape but embedded in time it was painted and expresses a truth about the world in which it was created. However in Max Loehr views these complicated landscape and mountains shapes that are present in Wang Meng painting are the actual representation of the place the artist want to live (Loehr 1959: 150)¹⁴ and artist has beautifully portray his landscape. But it's not just representation this landscape explains the time and truth about the world when it was painted. The Shanshui landscapes of mountains and streams are essential features of this particular style of art. Miranda Shaw also believes that that Chinese landscape represents Daoist concept and theme of nature in Daoism contains a search for naturalness, freedom, and harmony with nature along with physical isolation in the mountains (Shaw 1988: 190)¹⁵

Water is more admired than mountain in Daoism as a source of life as all life merges from water¹⁶. Daoist believe that water teaches to live life and embrace natural flow of things rather fighting. As water mold itself on the rock so teach to fit in the surrounding. Wang Mang Painting have elements that are foundational in Daoism and figure in the painting are hardly any space as hiker in bottom right corner and man mediating in hut are not easy to find in painting. The high landscape with mountains is dominating in Shanshui landscape and Daoist concept that human is simply a part of nature rather conqueror. As stated in Zhuangzi

¹⁷ Daoist consider both animals and human as inhabitant of land with same rights as both are natural creatures. They beliefs that humans are supposed to fit in the nature instead of manipulating the world according to the interest that' explains the way building is integrated in the mountains that explains to live in harmony with nature. This is probably one of the reasons that Wang Meng resists political and military conflict with the Mongols and chooses instead to live in seclusion in the mountains where he can live in harmony with nature.

Comparison of both Paintings

Interestingly this painting Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains with mirror image depicts more or less impression of the Court of Gayumerth miniature painting composition. (Figure b.c) Daoist concept in shanshu style landscape arrangement even in Court of Gayumerth is more or less explains that the Wang Meng painting composition must be the source of inspiration for the artist Sultan Muhamad. However the inspiration must be visual arrangements of elements with already existing Chinese motifs. It's not based on religious concept of Chinese landscape because at first, Mongol rulers were Buddhists.¹⁸ Later in 1293 AD¹⁹ the idol worship was ended that was spread by Mongols in Iran and domination of Buddhist and Shamanist ended and Islam spreads (Seddigh, 1963). In Later Mongol Period²⁰ connection with Iran and China helps in the production of new artistic concepts that results from a dynamic relations between the art development and facing to new cultural identities due to the result of Daoists and Buddhists. So, in this religious atmosphere, more attention was given to landscapes artwork. In the late 13th and early 14th century, the nature elements like plants and trees and Chinese style landscapes appeared in Iran during Mongol era.

The trees from the scene invite the viewer into the calm and stable center. This is a technique that is highly appropriate to illustrate a story. Clouds, water and rocks appeared solid, liquid, and immaterial all at the same time. The closer you look, the more you see extraordinary details hidden among the coral-like cliffs. However mostly Prunus²¹ tree is more twisted and turn and stylize in Court of Gayumerth. As large number of people involved in making the Persian manuscript miniature has varying style. Depending on the lead artist, the pages were more influenced by Asian or European styles. Asian influences can be heavily seen in the miniature from the similarities in facial features.

One thing to be observed here is that in Chinese landscape the sky is flat without Chinese cloud tai as in Wang Meng Painting. Normally Chinese cloud is along with dragon and on pots or boxes²², however here more stylization and merge of Pots painted elements by the

Persian artist. In Safavid time little change in clouds with more curls and more clustered so more curly clouds appeared in Court of Gayumerth.

Human figures are according to Daoist philosophy almost invisible in the Wang painting but here in Court of Gayumerth the domination of King human is visible that explains its Persian theme not Chinese religious influence. Birds and animals are also another feature that appeared in Court of Gayumerth but not in Wang painting. Many naturalistically rendered Chinese paintings of flowers and birds painted in the Sung period were copied by Persian artists and although these were not mainly developed in Timurid Persia, but became popular during the Safavid and remained in favor till the 19th centuries. The original Chinese mythological and symbolic connection with animals were, mostly unknown to Persian artist and they occasionally adapted such images to myths familiar in their own cultural heritage. Many species of animal also appeared such as lion, leopard, monkeys, deer's etc. in Court of Gayumerth. The composition and format of the Persian miniature received strong influence from Chinese paintings²³ and can be observed in these paintings but artist alter that trees grow beyond the frame

Another difference is that in this miniature the sky is golden and the page has a sprinkled gold leaf background just like arabesque design with border and within which have minute detail in opaque watercolor instead of ink on paper and this use of golden is traditional influence Since from Abbasid every dynasty artist used molten gold sprinkle on paper to give yellow shine or marble like effect or dyed blue for artistry with beautifully decorated border.

Although the Chinese writing appeared in the Wang Painting but format of writing upper and lower sections is same but here in miniature nasta'liq script was used.

Conclusion:

Chinese landscape painting Shanshui style has a vast history that not only appeared in the Chinese scrolls but in Persian miniature also. This can be observed in the Court of Gayumerth and Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains scroll by Wang Meng. Shanshui influenced by human presence in nature. Shanshu landscapes mountains and rivers are essential features of this particular style of art. These features not only appeared in Chinese painting but in Court of Gayumerth too. Shanshui style has Daoist concepts and that appeared in Wang Meng scroll but in Court of Gayumerth it's not of religious based. The format resembles in both artworks. As this Safavid miniature is the blend of traditional Chinese motifs and local Iranian and this blend appeared in Court of Gayumerth. Chinese Shanshui elements rivers

and mountains dominated that gave the impression that it has Daoist influence if compare but these Chinese elements are more stylized in Court of Gaymerth if compared with Wang Meng painting. In Shahshui that mountain is associated with cosmic order and each mountain has its mountain god mountains have high energy level. This arrangement is in Court of Gaymerth . However in daodist concept human is part of nature as in Wang Meng work figure is appeared smaller in size but Court of Gaymerth figures are dominated that show it has not any religious influence and the artwork is always bound to its community from which it is connected.



b



c

Figure a: Court of Gayumerth (b) Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains scroll by Wang Meng
(c) mirror or reverse image of scroll of Wang Meng

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- ¹ 13 century Iran was controlled by Īl-Khānids under the Mongols.
- ² The Yuan dynasty established by Kublai Khan and was the state of Mongol Empire (1271-1368). This dynasty later followed the Song and furthers the Ming dynasty (qixiang, 1982).
- ³ Folio of Shahnamah of Shah Thamasap. (its in ink, gold, and opaque watercolor on paper. Its sizes is 47 x 31.8 cm)
- ⁴ Shahnamah Thamasap/ Houghtan Shahnamah is one among the three. Shahnameh created by Firdousi Persian poet in 10th century and are collection of stories in form of verse that completed in 33 years.
- ⁵ whose style was more expressive and imaginative.
- ⁶ meaning mountain, and river
- ⁷ M. Shaw, Buddhist and Taoist Influences On Chinese Landscape Painting, Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 49, 1988, pp. 183–206.
- ⁸ this belief is also in feng shui which is modern practice and is evolved out of Daoism
- ⁹ C. Guignon, Meaning in the Work of Art: A Hermeneutic Perspective, Midwest Studies in Philosophy, Vol. 27, 2003, pp. 25–44
- ¹⁰ In Taosim humans are tiny specks in a vast cosmos while Neo-Confucianist writers believed that there are principles and patterns behind the natural and social phenomenon (Ebrey, 1996)
- ¹¹ (Sullivan 1979).
- ¹² Now in Shanghai Museum
- ¹³ Zene, Cosimo., Approaching Shan Shui Art through Gadamer SOAS, University of London, UK.
- ¹⁴ M. Loehr, >A Landscape Attributed to Wen Cheng-ming,< Artibus Asiae, Vol. 22, 1959, pp. 143–152.
- ¹⁵ M. Shaw, Buddhist and Taoist Influences On Chinese Landscape Painting,< Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 49, 1988, pp. 183–206.
- ¹⁶ H.-G. Moeller, The Philosophy of the Daodejing, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- ¹⁷ Daodejing and the Zhuangzi two classical books on Daoism
- ¹⁸ Hullaco and his wife was Buddhist. Later Hullaco son Abgha established II-Khanid dynasty (Eqbal Ashtiani, 2000)
- ¹⁹ Ghazan Khan became in power, and official religion became Islam (Godard, 1941).
- ²⁰ Uljaitu and Abu-Sai`d periods the strong commercial links developed in Iran with China (Gray, 1977)
- ²¹ Chinese influence that Appeared in 15th century Turkeman art
<https://www.metmuseum.org/pubs/bulletins/1/pdf/3258866.pdf.bannered.pdf>
- ²² <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2001.584a-c>
- ²³ 14th century the vertical format was introduced, perhaps influenced by Chinese scroll-paintings