
TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

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EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE ON A PERSIAN MINIATURE: A REPLICIA OR A REMAKE? (R. SAVERY, M. AND E. SADELER, 'ALĪ QULĪ B. MUḤAMMAD AND L. T. GIUZAL'IAN)

The heading of this article mentions the names of five people whose names happened to turn up on my working desk at a very opportune time. I am referring to the article of Leon Tigranovich Giuzal'ian (1901—1994) of one of the State Hermitage exhibits [1], which I read, not because I had to, but out of curiosity during a smoke break. I had a collection of articles (with this one included) under my roof on a different occasion (on account of the article of B. I. Marshak).

Before one reads the following material, he, who is deeply interested in Muslim miniatures, must first read (or reread) the article of L. T. Giuzal'ian in its entirety. It is significant because of its detailed analysis of the oriental miniature, which is unusual and even extreme in its own way on account of its form — it is a replica (in as far as the author of the article believes) of an European original, completely foreign to it in its mood. What does an oriental copyist do, when he takes up a Western European picture, so foreign to his tastes? What does he accept, and what does he reject? Which part of the traditional Muslim miniature is left behind on a piece of paper once a copyist is finished with his work? The author does not ask any such questions. However, thanks to his efficient comparison of the replica with the original, he yields much material for answering questions. In general, up to this day the article is still fascinating because the author found an example of the head-on collision of two art schools — Middle Eastern and Western European, examined it in detail. The position of the author fits very well into this contrasting plot. Being an expert in Iranian studies in particular and in Muslim art at large, he conducts his research, in my humble opinion, from Eurocentristic position, thus unwillingly reinforcing the contrast of the emerging picture and elevating the particular case to the level of the principle issue, awareness of which is only beginning to take shape.

In spite of the careful (and correct) title of the article, in the article itself the author does not write about the *picture* of the western landscape, but rather of the *replica* of the engraving with the same image. This is what it says under the miniature reproduction: “The miniature of ‘Alī Qulī... , copied from the western landscape” [2]. In the beginning the article states:

...the landscape on the miniature is obviously western. One involuntarily supposes that this is one of the instances of copying Western European paintings in the East, mainly engravings, which was widely spread in India and Iran in the 17th century [3].

The copying is spoken about repeatedly, in fact it is referred to over and over again in the course of the entire article. In spite of this absolutely defined purpose of the author, he lingers on rather great details speaking of *departures of the copy from the original*:

The poorest job the artist did in conveying the original image was his portrayal of structures, the strictly perspective view of which he misrepresented, whereas the brickwork looks more like masonry in his piece. He misrepresented the bridge as well... [4].

Discrepancies are even greater at the forefront of the landscape. On the right, the miniature portrays a mound with a tall stump and a wild boar moving towards the river, both of which are completely missing in the engraving... [5].

Human figure in the chord of the corner arch of the central building is insufficiently visible on the engraving, and the same can be said about the horseman approaching the arch. In the miniature, though, it is quite the contrary — the two are the main characters since they are significantly scaled up... [6].

The overall number of exposed discrepancies as well as their essence seems not to make it possible for us to speak of *replicating* the European original. “In its motif...”, it is “a remake”, “a revision” of the original; at best — “a poor replica”; this is the conclusion arrived to when one compares the two landscapes. The author, however, never reproaches the miniaturist for his inaccurate copying. His reproach is directed only at poor artistic and pictorial merits of the miniature:

With its artistic and pictorial merits the miniature is inferior to many contemporary oriental replicas and imitations to European pieces. As a rule, even if these replicas and imitations did not meet requirements of paintings and graphics in Europe, they at least did meet requirements set for oriental miniatures and, first of all, requirements for mastery of executing the miniature properly. Our miniature is lacking even that [7].

Without disputing any of the items of the article of L. T. Giuzal'ian, I would like to compare the two landscapes, published by him, differently: the miniature of ‘Alī Qulī, dated by the artist himself 1059/1649 (*plate 1*) [8], and the engraving made off from the landscape of R. Savery, published by M. and E. Sadeler (*fig. 1*).

The article says that the original is nearly twice as large as the replica [9]. However, I am more interested in their format (that is the relation of the larger parameter in size to the lesser). This is a completely different artefact description. It turns out that the miniature and engraving in question are *of various formats*. In and of itself, it already means that the replica and its original cannot be identical. Apparently, it is not about the decrease of the replica in size (photographic decrease of the original does not cancel the notion of “replica”); it is about the fact that the miniature, based on its different format, could not have fit all the elements boasted by the original, without preliminarily altering correlations and proportional correspondences. In this case, for instance, the format capacities of the replica (i. e. the miniature) left behind the line of the original (i. e. the engraving) of 1.25×21.5 cm in size (22 cm²) horizontally, or 15.1×1.37 cm (20.7 cm²) vertically. Both of these areas are “dead” for replicating. In order to keep all details of the original intact, the ones that did not fit into miniature format, the artist had to *distort proportions of the original drawing*. If we are to compare the original and the copy (*plate 1* and *fig. 1*) now, we will see that this is exactly what took place in reality. As a result of this so-called “compression”, the landscape swelled in the miniature and crept up on the audience. It is very unlikely that such effect can be referred to as a *replica*.

If the mentioned “compression” of the R. Savery's landscape had been done with the help of a computer program, we would have nothing to talk about. But it was executed by a 17th-century artist. Therefore, having taken a look at both piece of art, now we can say with a clear conscience: here we are dealing with a *revision* of a realistic European landscape into a typical Near Eastern miniature.

It is rather difficult to pinpoint the exact notion of “a typical Near eastern miniature”. Forty years ago it was said thus:

It has been over one hundred years since European science has been acquainted with the oriental miniature. A significant part of rather broad literature, devoted to miniatures, is of purely descriptive and informational nature (information about newly opened monuments, collection catalogues or those of exhibitions). Individual authors attempt to portray the evolution of the art and single out local schools and / or trends, but unfortunately it is hard to do so for the lack of trustworthy sources... [10].

By 1995 the situation virtually remained the same, and a different researcher shares his opinion on the matter:

...the art of the oriental miniature, which astonished the European world in the early 20th century and was covered in numerous various works, is “a sealed book” up to this day, even for specialists. This attractive area of oriental literature (sic! — *V. P.*), which at first sight seems to be rather simple and understandable, turns out to be paradoxically “closed” for scientific research. And if the situation with collecting empirical material is more or less successful, then the keeping of miniature compositions is still a puzzle in many respects [11].

These two quotations are enough to identify the exposition of the given article for those, who do not regularly follow literature on the subject matter. It's only now that the situation seems to be changing. M. D. Nazarli suggested a new approach to studying miniatures [12], within the framework of which one may also examine the European landscape in the form of miniature from the Hermitage. He managed to superimpose drawing indicators on the complex and multi-element miniature “The Offering of Gifts from India to *Khusraw*” [13], which convincingly reveal the geometric course of all structures in the miniature and their proportional relations to one another. Here is a part of his own explanation of this phenomenon:

First of all, it needs to be noted that the miniature is arranged in a very strict manner with the help of a pair of compasses and a ruler. At the very foundation of its “hidden” design there is an equilateral hexagon, inscribed into a circle, which logically develops into dodecagon, icositetrahedron, etc. The composition was arranged by means of connecting various dots of this figure, which allowed the artist, in turn, to create a system of proportional relations in this miniature (see figs. 5, 6). Absolutely all details of the miniature are harmoniously related to one another (see fig. 7). More so, the same pattern was followed to arrange figures of humans and animals. Thus, for instance, the figure of *shāh* is thoroughly arranged with the help of the system of proportions, acquired as a result of tracing up the equilateral dodecagon, inscribed into a circle; its diameter (*should be*: radius — *V. P.*) equals the width of the *shāh*'s figure (see fig. 8)... [14].



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

The landscape, which our article is devoted to, is much simpler than the miniature analyzed by M. D. Nazarli. But we may detect a measuring bar in it as well as distance counting and proportions between sizes. These coincidences are extremely important for the support of the course laid by the M. D. Nazarli's article. He, using contemporary analytical methods, took apart the complex structure of the miniature, where "the horses, people have mixed up in a heap"; and visually showed [15] how everything in it harmonizes with one another in accordance with the rules of Euclidian geometry, and yet he did not quite explain the artistic process from the intent to its embodiment in this harmony (as opposed to its analysis). He admits it:

The basis for the description *is not so much the logic* of reconstructed sequence of *creating the composition*, as much as it is the *logic of its research* (italics is mine — V. P.) [16].

It is rather probable that plot compositions are actually the distinctive features of the oriental (Islamic) miniature; compositions that were "digitized" by miniaturists in accordance with all rules, compositions that are so effectively portrayed by M. D. Nazarli, and which, by the way, were repeatedly described by me in relation to *other objects* of artistic design of the Arabographic manuscripts [17]. Now some of these rules may be shown on a much simpler example than that of Nazarli.

Let us note certain coordinates on the miniature from the Hermitage (fig. 2), which was enclosed into a rectangular frame, size 4:3. Dot No. 1 on the left edge of the façade of the large building divides the *width* (length) of the frame L into two unequal segments, which nevertheless are proportionally commensurable. To the left of the dot, the distance to the edge of the frame is $\frac{4}{9}L$, and to the right — $\frac{5}{9}L$. The same dot divides the *height* of the frame (H) also into commensurable segments — $\frac{2}{9}$ upwards off it and $\frac{7}{9}$ downwards. The back edge of the large building is marked with dot No. 2 with the characteristics for its height as those of dot No. 1. Horizontally, though, the back edge of the building divides the *width* of the frame into quarters: $\frac{3}{4}L$ — to the left of the edge and $\frac{1}{4}L$ — to the right.

In the same manner many more elements of the Persian miniature may be "digitized". Let us note the most significant ones. Dot No. 3 marks the back edge of the extensions to the large house. To the left of it there is $\frac{4}{5}L$, and to the right — $\frac{1}{5}L$, upwards — $\frac{5}{9}H$, and downwards — $\frac{4}{9}H$. And finally, for entertainment's sake, we may add that the boar (tail not taken into consideration) is $\frac{1}{5}L$ in length, and — $\frac{1}{6}H$ in height, and the rock in the foreground, which reads in Arabic and Persian "Drawing of contemptible 'Alī Qulī the son of Muḥammad, 1059" [18], is $\frac{1}{5}L \times \frac{1}{9}H$ in maximum range, as though showing a researcher the modules employed by the miniaturist for manipulating.

It must be noted that my effort at studying the European engraving in the same manner by means of proportional methods did not yield any results. The European artist seems to have been drawing by employing "a good

eye" technique — by looking intently at what he saw on location, outdoor. The Persian artist, on the other hand, transferred this landscape into a different artistic language, which we are not yet familiar with. And in the process of "transposing" from one language to another, just as is usually the case with literary translations, when one looks for substitutes for foreign idioms and set phrases, which lack in translator's language, local idiosyncrasies need to be introduced. In his article L. T. Giuzal'ian points out that there are quite a few of them in the "reading" of the Persian miniaturist.

If my arguments for another artistic language of the Persian miniaturist are accepted as reasonable, then another question cited in the title of the article needs to be answered. Evidently, the miniature ought not to be considered a literal *replica* of the engraving. In fact, L. T. Giuzal'ian did not really consider it a replica *per se* — he referred to it by different names. However, in his day and age, Iranists were wrapped up in studying masterpieces of the Persian miniature painting at large, and as such nobody thought of classifying peripheral artefacts. The time is coming, though, even for artefacts of lower qualities than masterpieces are. The word "replica" must gain a terminological meaning, as opposed to a literary (primarily *figurative*) one. It's either precise and single-valued — as in photographic accuracy of a master, or a replica as a broad notion for various kinds of resemblances (copying), each of which will possibly be given its own specific term and notion. The word *re-make* has been widely borrowed in Russian language, and it, I believe, is rather fitting for the technical term of the miniature, published by L. T. Giuzal'ian.

The idea that this is a *re-make*, i. e. virtually an adaptation of the European original, takes us back to the remark made by L. T. Giuzal'ian saying that the technical craftsmanship of the miniaturist in the given artefact sharply contrasts with the high level of the craftsmanship of the era at large. I'll risk suggesting that this miniature is nothing more than an educational exercise in composition "digitization", which, as it seems now, was an indispensable element of miniatures. To devise a good or "smart" digitized composition is a huge endeavour [19]. And to adjust an undigitized (i. e. foreign, European) subject matter to look like a digitized one is only "half the work". Nevertheless, it is great training for one's eye and hand. Based on general phrases employed by Iranists [20], the copying of European engravings and paintings by Persian miniaturists is not uncommon, which therefore provides enough material to test that, which was said. My assumption will apparently remain intact until the turn of studying miniatures of this class is given to specialists.

By the way, attracting the format criterion to the analysis allows us to start the conversation "on identifying the location where the landscape was copied from". L. T. Giuzal'ian concluded his article with the following words on the subject matter:

Unfortunately, neither the name of the artist nor the formula of his signature [on the miniature] furthers the solving of this question. Purely Iranian in their origin, in

terms of the timeframe in question one could come across them on the territory of Iran as well as on territories of Muslim provinces of India. Thus, the question of the homeland of the landscape still remains unsettled [21].

The format of the miniature is perfectly *canonical* (1.333 — i. e. 4:3). If it's not a blind chance game, then, perhaps, as we were repeatedly convinced [22], it is

a *metrological* localization of the 'Alī Qulī's miniature. Indeed, one of *Iranian* cubits makes it possible to convert the dimensions of this miniature (and a number of its details) into historical local units of length — certainly with mandatory *canonical nominal values*. Such conversion points to Iran and rejects India as alternative. I will cite the corresponding computations in a special piece of work on the topic of metrological localization of Arabic and Arabographic manuscripts.

Notes:

1. L. T. Giuzal'ian, "Vostochnaia miniatiura, izobrazhaischaia zapadnyĭ peizazh" ("The oriental miniature, portraying the Western landscape"), *Sredniaia Aziia i Iran* (Leningrad, 1972), pp. 163—9.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 164
3. *Ibid.*, p. 163, with a reference to T. V. Grek, "Indiĭskie miniatiury" ("Indian miniatures"), *Al'bom indiĭskikh i persidskikh miniatiur XVI—XVIII vv.* (Moscow, 1962), pp. 16—43 and A. A. Ivanov, "Persidskie miniatiury" ("Persian miniatures"), *ibid.*, pp. 44—59.
4. Giuzal'ian, *op. cit.*, pp. 163—4.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
8. That is, 20 years after the death of Egidius and during the life of Marco Sadeler (both lived and worked in the *Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation*).
9. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
10. N. V. D'iakonova, "Buharskiĭ spisok 'Gulistana' Sa'di iz sobraniia Gosudarstvennoĭ Publichnoĭ biblioteki im. M. E. Saltykova-Schedrina" ("Bukhara list of 'Gulistān' of Sa'dī from the collection of the M. Saltykov-Schedrin State Public Library"), *Sredniaia Aziia i Iran*, p. 144
11. M. D. Nazarli, "Bytie 'carstvennogo dukha' v sefevidskoi zhivopisi" ("Lifestyle of 'the Regal Spirit' in the Šafawid painting"), *Ėstetika bytiia i ėstetika teksta v kul'turakh srednevekovogo Vostoka* (Moscow, 1995), p. 146; cf. idem, "Sekrety 'skrytogo uzora'. Khudozhnik-tvorec" ("Secrets of 'hidden ornament'. Artist the creator"), *Dva mira vostochnoi miniatiury. Problemy pragmaticheskoi interpretacii sefevidskoi zhivopisi* (Moscow, 2006), pp. 137—9.
12. *Ibid.*, idem, "Bytie 'carstvennogo dukha'..."
13. From the manuscript *Shāh-nāme* of Firdawsī in the collection of A. Houghton (USA); see *ibid.*, p. 159, fig. 2 (the original) and pp. 170—6, figs. 5—10 (sketches of the original or its parts on geometric net).
14. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
15. Nazarli, "Sekrety 'skrytogo uzora'...", figs. 18—30.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
17. Val. V. Polosin, "K opisaniiu arabskikh illiuminovannykh rukopiseĭ" ("For the description of Arabic illuminated manuscripts"), *Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie* III (St. Petersburg, 1993), pp. 153—67; idem, "All is number? An unknown numerical component in the design of medieval Arabic manuscripts", *Manuscripta Orientalia* V/1 (1999), pp. 7—11; idem, "Fragment kuficheskogo Korana iz Aziatskogo muzeia i istoricheskie predaniia o vazire-kalligrafe Ibn Mukle" ("A fragment of *kūfī* Qur'ān from Asiatic Museum and historical legends of calligraphist *wazīr* Ibn Muqla"), *Pis'mennye pamiatniki Vostoka* 1(8) (2008), pp. 80—99; idem, "Gigantskiĭ 'Koran Baĭsungura' v svete novykh dannyykh i predpolozhenii" ("The gigantic 'Qur'ān of Bāy-sunghur' in light of new data and suppositions"), *ibid.* 2(9) (2008), pp. 34—51; idem, "K interpretacii arabskikh tekstov na serebrianom persidskom talismane iz Ėrmitazha" ("For the interpretation of Arabic texts on the silver Persian amulet from the Hermitage"), *ibid.* 1(14) (2011), pp. 111—30.
18. For the Persian text of this inscription and its translation see Giuzal'ian, *op. cit.*, p. 163.
19. See a graphic demonstration of one in Nazarli, "Bytie 'carstvennogo dukha'..."; idem, "Skrytyĭ ornament' sovershennogo cheloveka: tronnye sceny v rannesefevidskikh miniatiurakh" ("'Hidden ornament' of a perfect man: throne scenes of the early Šafawid miniatures"), *Islamskaia filosofiia i filosofskoe islamovedenie: perspektivy razvitiia* (Moscow, 2012), pp. 121—8, figs. 1—15b.
20. I. V. Rapoport, "Monokhromnaia keramika Irana XVI—XVII vv. s rel'efnymi izobrazheniiami. O sviazi keramiki s miniatiurnoi zhivopis'iu" ("Monochromatic ceramics of Iran of the 16th—18th centuries with embossed images. Of relation of ceramics with the miniature painting"), *Sredniaia Aziia i Iran*, p. 156 and footnote 10; Giuzal'ian, *op. cit.*, p. 163.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
22. Polosin, "Fragment kuficheskogo Korana..."; idem, "Gigantskiĭ 'Koran Baĭsungura'..."; idem, "K interpretacii...".

Illustrations

Front cover:

Plate 1. ‘Alī Qulī b. Muḥammad. *European Landscape*. Paper, 9.0×12.0 cm. Persia, 1059/1649. The State Hermitage, St. Petersburg, inv. No. VP-950. Courtesy of the Museum. Photo by Iu. A. Molodkovec, V. S. Terebenin, L. G. Heyfec.

Inside the text:

Fig. 1. The engraving made off of the landscape of R. Savery, published by M. and E. Sadeler. *Tyrolean Landscape*. 15.1×21.5 cm (the analysis of the reproduction published by L. T. Giuzal'ian shows that the sizes cited are not quite correct and require further checking). Holland, beginning of the 17th century. The State Hermitage, St. Petersburg, inv. No. 1441.31. Courtesy of the Museum. Photo by Iu. A. Molodkovec, V. S. Terebenin, L. G. Heyfec.

Fig. 2. Cf. plate 1: seven reference points of the composition mentioned in the article.

