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Components of Rationalism in Miniatures of Shahnameh A Case Study of the Miniature of “Tahmina Comes into Rustam’s Chamber”

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Abstract

Problem statement: Reason is one of the key themes of Ferdowsi’s thought in “Shahnameh”. In his reason praising thought in addition to his individual and social tendencies he has also paid attention to the doctrines of Mazdaism and Islamic culture and praised reason in view of its various aspects whether in general rational sense or in the sense of reason as the source of wisdom. The stories of Shahnameh have been a suitable context for promotion of this theme, on the one hand, and on the other hand, in different eras they have served as one of the most important sources of motivation for formation of miniatures by the painters. One of these stories is that of “Tahmina Comes into Rustam’s Chamber” which has been portrayed under this same title in different painting schools. The central problem of the current essay is the depiction of the visual rendition of this key themes in this work.

Research objective: In this essay, we intend to study the theme of reason and express its types in the thought of Ferdowsi and how the miniaturist adopts certain visual measures to provide a pictorial expression of this theme in the miniature of “Tahmina Comes into Rustam’s Chamber”.

Research methodology: In the present essay, we have used the method of case study in order to first describe the miniature of “Tahmina Comes into Rustam’s Chamber” from formal point of view and then provide an analysis of the concepts hidden behind the visible elements centered around the theme of reason; to this end, the data have been gathered using two from written documents and through observation.

Conclusion: Reflection on the concepts hidden in the visual elements of the miniature of “Tahmina Comes into Rustam’s Chamber” shows that the miniaturist of this work has been familiar with the theme of reason under the influence of Ferdowsi and his efforts towards the expression and visual rendition of it in the process of designing and visualization of the miniature have all been informed by this very theme; thus, this miniature includes the reflection of reason in both form and content dimensions. Moreover, such issues as the spatial situation of the main characters, images and ornaments, color scheme and quantitative presence of number three have made the realization of this possible.

Keywords: Reason, Shahnameh, Components of Rationalism, Iranian Miniature, Tahmina and Rustam.

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Introduction and problem statement

Reason and ratiocination are fundamental concepts in the stories of *Shahnameh*. Ferdowsi in addition to his individual and social tendencies towards the development and promotion of this concept owes a debt to the ancient texts of Persia and religious sources. In Avestai, Pahlavi and Islamic texts, two types of primordial and acquired reasons are discussed along with two good and bad approaches. By the same token, Ferdowsi has noted reason and its importance depending on the requirements of the intellectual context in some stories including the story of Just Anooshiravan and the story of Rustam and Sohrab. Given the verses of *Shahnameh*, primordial reason is the best bounty of God which cannot be praised by everyone, it is human guide and the comfort in life and assists man in both worlds. The magnificence of reason in the thought of Ferdowsi is so great that after eulogy of God, he prefers to start the *Shahnameh* with verses in praise of reason and he decides to combine such a reason as a leitmotif in all stories of *Shahnameh* with such themes as revenge, forgiveness, symposium, valor, love and so forth. In addition to its philosophical and epic doctrines, *Shahnameh* due to its wonderful pictorial imagination in description of events since its very dawn has continuously caught the attention of many miniaturists in their artistic creations. Thus, some stories of *Shahnameh* sometimes in occasional and selective form like the anthology of Eskandar Sultan in Teymurid era and sometimes in the form of a complete complex like *Shahnameh* series of Baysonqor in Teymurid era and *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasb in Safavid era were visualized. Love stories of *Shahnameh* among a varied scope of braveries is of certain attraction. Through epic stories, Ferdowsi has sought to provide a sweet account of the love affairs of the brave heroes and men of battle like Rustam the visual renditions of which we can find in the miniature of "Tahmina Comes into Rustam's Chamber" as a part of the story of Rustam and Suhrab. This story is one of multidimensional stories of *Shahnameh* in which tragedy, love, rationalism and revenge are

combined. It is noteworthy that visual depiction of the love scene of the meeting of Tahmina and Rustam and its content similarity with the whole story are all based on the concept of reason. This is why in the time of seeing this miniature and our first evaluation of it, the following question comes into our mind: Whether miniaturist was thinking of the theme of rationalism in the time of portraying this story or not? If he was thinking, in which elements has he reflected the visual rendition of this key theme?

Theoretical foundations and research background

Theoretical framework of this essay has taken form based on the concept of reason, explanation of its types in the thought of Ferdowsi and the way it has become reflected in the story and miniatures of *Shahnameh*. It is based on this variable that we have chosen the miniature of "Tahmina Comes into Rustam's Chamber" which is a work that belongs to the Shiraz school of miniature in Teymurid era. We have studied it in view of its form and content and their nearness to the discussed concept. Numerous articles have been published of the story of "Tahmina Comes into Rustam's Chamber" in the fields of characters, marriage, rationalism and the like. Among others, one can refer to the following articles: (Mokhtariyan, 2007): "Who is Tahmina? A Study of Comparative Mythology"; (Ahmad Khatami, 2008): "A Study of Marital Rituals and Family Affairs in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*"; (Ruyani, 2015): "A Comparative Study of the Characters of Tahmina and Artmis"; (Vojdani, 2012): "Criticism of Reason in *Shahnameh*". However, there are fewer studies in the field of miniature and paintings: e.g. (Kurkian, 1998) who has spoken in "Gardens of Imagination" of the miniature of Rustam's meeting with Tahmina as well as its time and historical context. Center for Middle East Studies of Cambridge University in "Persian Painting: From Mongol Era to Qajars" in an entry has studied portraits and miniatures from various eras that have been devoted to the issue of the meeting of Tahmina and Rustam and summarized the features of

these miniatures in a comparative way in view of their combination. Moreover, on the website of Harvard Art Museums where this miniature is maintained, only some basic information regarding the work is provided. Most of the aforementioned studies have concentrated merely on visual form and combination of this miniature regardless of the content and themes hidden behind the visual elements taken from the very basis of the *Shahnameh*; as a result, an independent essay was required to be authored that would study these points in the miniature of “Tahmina Comes into Rustam’s Chamber” emphasizing a specific fundamental theme like reason.

Methodology

The current study has been conducted with the method of case study in order to provide a description and analysis of the miniature of “Tahmina Comes into Rustam’s Chamber”. Case study is one of the qualitative research methods and the focus of which is on deep study of a determinate sample of a phenomenon which is called case. Aiming at presentation of a thorough and exact description, it simultaneously provides a rich exposition of the intended phenomenon; an exposition that recreates the context and no matter how close is the interrelation of its themes, this interrelation is followed by the essential meanings and concepts that exist in the context at issue (Gal et al., 2011). For this reason, we will first provide a description of various types of reason in *Shahnameh*, and then by a description of the story and the miniature, an analysis will be made of the visual components of the miniature from the perspective of the promotion of the notion of rationalism based on a whole-to-part review which begins from the architecture and continues through plot, characters, color, beauties and the tool and furniture within the structure of the miniature. At the end, the outcome of rationalism which refers to the hidden presence of Suhrab in the miniature will be studied; it is noteworthy that in this procedure, a number of library sources have been used for enriching the discussions.

Theme of reason in Shahnameh

“In the Name of God the Creator of human soul and reason/ human thought cannot find any other description more sublime than this for God” (Ferdowsi, 2008, vol. 1, 1). As this latter verse suggests, Ferdowsi starts *Shahnameh* with a verse in praise of reason. He first praises the Lord God, and then continues to praise reason. The term “reason” is frequently used in *Shahnameh* insofar as in one of the stories of *Shahnameh*, i.e. “Story of Just Anoshiravan”, this word is repeated for 35 times. The reason which is praised by Ferdowsi does not exclusively refer to the faculty of cognition rather the features with which reason is described in *Shahnameh* turn reason to a supreme cosmic force. In fact, reason is a capacity that leads the creatures to knowledge of God and recognition of good and evil, and is undertaking the destiny of man in the whole gamut of the universe (Musavi & Khosrawi, 2010). This is why Ferdowsi allocates a high stature for reason in his own verses, and describes it as “the noblest creature of God which is in charge of the vital mission of guidance and assistance of humankind” (Vojdani, 2012, 46). “Reason is the best of whatever God has endowed upon you/ of course if you look fair it is reason that is praiseworthy” (Ferdowsi, 2008, vol. 1, 1). “The men who own crown and throne prefer to choose reason in the middle of two things (excess and negligence)” (Ibid, vol. 2, 1241).

It was the conditions of his age and the attention that he paid to the texts remained from the ancient Persian culture and civilization that led Ferdowsi to this key theme. Ferdowsi is the son of golden age of civilization, i.e. fourth and fifth centuries, which is better known as the century of “intellectual and cultural flourishing of Iran, the age of rationalism and free thinking” (Riyahi, 1996). *Shahnameh* has praised the reason, on the one hand, following the intellectual stream of its time specifically Islamic wisdom and episteme, and on the other hand, based on the inspiration that it received from the ancient Mazdaism, Avesta and Pahlavi texts. In Mazdaism, Ahura Mazda endows reason upon the humans out

of his nature (disposition): “O’ You Mazda! When you first created the religion at very dawn of the universe and out of his own nature you endowed us with reason” (Purdavud, 2005, 464), which is pure and good; otherwise, “the reason which is not the source of goodness should not be considered a reason at all” (Tafazzuli, 2006, 33). In Islamic teachings just like the doctrines of Mazdisna, the noble stature of reason is undeniable. God calls reason the most beloved creature of His own (Mohammadi Reyshahri, 1999) and describes it as good in the same way that the most reasonable and wise and righteous people are introduced as having God-wariness (Tamimi Amedi, 2001). Therefore, Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* as a valuable context has turned to the manifestation of combination of Islamic and Iranian culture due to which reason is a key word of *Shahnameh* and distinguishes Ferdowsi’s intellectual system from those of other poets of his time.

Types of reason in *Shahnameh*

In ancient Persian texts specifically Avestai and Pahlavi texts like *Minu-ye Kherad* (Idea of Reason), *Andarz-e Ushner-e Dana* (Advice of Wise Ushner), *Si Ruz-e Kuchak va Si Ruz-e Bozorg* (Thirty Small Days and Thirty Great Days) in Khordeh Avesta, two types of primordial and acquired reasons have been mentioned, “which in Pahlavi texts are referred to as instinctual and divine reasons, also *Asen Kherad* and *Kherad Koosheshi, Gooshan Surud Kherad*” (Reza’i & Khatami, 2016, 120). As it is mentioned in the text of “Advice of Wise Ushner” regarding these two types of reasons: “The Wise Master is quoted to have said that with the reason that is available to everyone out of his own nature, one is required to reach the reason that needs effort” (*Advice of Wise Ushner*, 1994, 49). According to the above texts, primordial (innate) reason is a bounty that has been endowed upon humankind by the Lord God while acquired reason requires to be reached through personal efforts and acquisition of knowledge and can enjoy different degrees. Ferdowsi in *Shahnameh* has alluded to both reasons and in the course of his own

stories, he has used the verb “endowing; giving” to speak of primordial reason and the verb “learning” to speak of the acquired reason. In Islamic and Mazdai texts reason has been explained also based on these two functions. In this description, good reason is a reason that is tended towards good actions and leads to sublimation. The reason that is interested in moral vices and has become stuck in evil, is introduced as the bad and vicious reason. In Islamic teachings if the praised reason becomes tainted by anger and vices it would turn to a mystical intelligence the desirable rationality of which turns to a profit-seeking rationality (Vojdani, 2012), which is referred to in religious doctrines as “wit and naughtiness” and it is an intelligence that lacks all value (Kulayni, 1993). “This is also why Ferdowsi pays equal attention to both aspects in his discussion of reason and states: your happiness and grievance and also what you have more and what you have less all are from the reason” (Ferdowsi, 2008, vol. 1, 1). The reason that causes happiness and sadness can be a symbol of two practical aspects of acquired reason. Instinctual reason due to its being a divine bounty enjoys a pure nature and away from all taints. As a result, it cannot entail any wrong or vicious things. Then, acquired reason depending on the intellectual source and the disposition of the one who owns the reason can either devote himself to good things or decorate himself by the vices. It is in this sense that Ferdowsi praises reason as the source of goodness: “never think that there is some phenomenon higher than reason because the reason is nobler than all goods” (Ferdowsi, 2008, vol. 2). When he speaks of having a bad reason he would attribute negative actions like deception to reason that spoil the good reason by carnal desires: “If carnal desires and whims dominate the reason, man becomes ensnared by the carnal soul” (Ferdowsi, 2008, vol. 1, 633).

Reason and content of the characters in story

Characters of *Shahnameh* are introduced to the audience based on the words that Ferdowsi has used in

description of their content. Personality features of the individuals in *Shahnameh* become uncovered based on the type of decisions they make and the actions they take when they confront certain events. Wisdom and reasonability is one of those features which are attributed by Ferdowsi to the characters who are righteous in the stories. As it was mentioned earlier, the story of Rustam and Suhrab is one of those stories in *Shahnameh* in which Ferdowsi has referred to reasonability and sapience as the distinguishing feature of the characters. Here before turning to the character we need first to provide a summary of the story:

The story of "Tahmina Comes into Rustam's Chamber" is a part of a long epic story entitled "Rustam and Sohrab" and at the same time is one of the love stories of epic literature that provides a contemplation-worthy combination of love and power. Love stories of epic books have their specific magnificence because in them the valor of the heroes and the tenderness of women are combined and thus the majesty of love becomes as clear as the magnificence of heroism in the battle ground (Safa, 1983). According to the words of Ferdowsi, in the story of "Tahmina Comes into Rustam's Chamber", Tahmina is introduced as the "Princess of Samangan" and from a "family as brave as lions and panthers" who had been long in love with Rustam upon hearing his stories and craved for meet him one day. The wish of Tahmina turned to reality when Rustam came to Turan land and after seeing a plain full of animals, hunts a zebra and after eating it falls into sleep. He does not know that some Turani horsemen have caught Rakhsh and are taking it with themselves. After waking up, Rustam does not find Rakhsh, and in search of his horse he heads to Samangan city. The King of Samangan receives Rustam with open arms and gives a chamber to Rustam in the palace as a guest and arranges a party. After the party, Rustam goes to his chamber drunk, and Tahmina enters Rustam's chamber burning in the fire of love, and asks Rustam to marry her and give her a child of his own race.

Rustam: He is the most renowned hero of *Shahnameh* who has attended the battle grounds and defeated

the enemy. Ferdowsi in his description of Rustam not only praises his valor and heroic actions rather his reasonability and sapience too and even in the toughest moments he speaks of Rustam as a rational and modest man. In the story of Kamoos Keshani, he describes Rustam in the following words:

"He is the gist of courage and heroism his sagacity and knowledge have their own origin in his existential value.

On land he is like an elephant and in the sea he is as powerful as a whale. He is a man of reason with an enlightened heart and noble stature"

(Ferdowsi, 2008, vol. 1, 487).

Rustam as a man of reason, undertakes numerous vital responsibilities and he fulfils every task with a good end. Among his rational actions one can refer to the defeat of Tur City, overcoming the anger of Keikhosrow, two reasonable conditions in making peace with the Turanis, deceiving Akvan the Ogre, conquering Sepand castle, freeing Keikavoos from the hands of Shah Hamavaran and so forth (Reza'i Dasht-Arzhane, 2013). He is a "righteous man who enters the ground of battle with the Satan of carnal soul with courage until he meets the Beloved" (Shabani, 2005, 609). In *Shahnameh*, self-discipline and observation of divine codes and avoidance of arrogance are outlined as the features of men of reason with which Rustam the Iranian epic hero is decorated. They are visible in the advice that Rustam offers to Shah Hamavaran so that he could overcome Keikavoos's sense of respite: "If I begin the war, they will turn agitated and wretched. This sense of respite and revenge should not harm you because there are numerous evil-minded enemies who do not spare any vicious action" (Ferdowsi, 2008, vol. 1, 230).

Of course, it needs to be noted that Ferdowsi in his words of Rustam has sought to depict the Persian Hero in more terrestrial and human terms instead of providing a picture of him that would turn him to a man from nowhere and inaccessible. This is why he combines his stories of Rustam's rational actions and thoughts with stories of Rustam's immature actions even if they are few (Reza'i Dasht-Arzhane, 2013).

Having said these, Rostam emerges as an example of Perfect and Fully Evolved man (Eslami Nodushan, 2002) in *Shahnameh*.

Tahmina: She is the wife of the greatest hero of national epic of Iran. It is not surprising that a man of reason like Rostam follows his own intelligence even in the emotional issues and selection of wife and does not focus on beauty issues and pays attention to the inner features like sapience and wisdom. Thus, when Rostam visits Tahmina, Ferdowsi describes her in the following words: “She had two bow-like eyebrows and long hair and cypress like height. She had a soul as pure as reason and a body as soft as the spirit as if she was not a terrestrial creature at all” (Ferdowsi, 2008, vol. 1, 247). In this verse, Ferdowsi “compares the softness of Tahmina’s body with spirit and also describes her soul as pure as the soul and says that Tahmina was a combination of spirit and reason who did not have any terrestrial nature. Her body was as soft as the spirit and her soul was as pure as the reason” (Rastgar Fasa’i, 1999, 94). When Rostam simultaneously found beauty and sapience in the existence of Tahmina, he fell in love with her, and married her.

In fact, Iranian hero finds Tahmina beautiful and reasonable. Ferdowsi believes that the reason is hidden in Tahmina’s soul. It is a girl of reason and chastity who has not met anyone outside the veil. For being hidden behind the veil, chastity and decency are among the features of womanhood in *Shahnameh* and women due to having decency have always been praised (Nasr Esfahani, 2000). Though Tahmina is from a foreign land and is not also a compatriot of Iranian hero, contrary to men, all foreign women – of course save Sudabeh – who marry Iranians enjoy high human features (Eslami Nodushan, 1984). This is also hidden in the womanly character of Tahmina and she shares “all these noble features and her picture is not overshadowed by whims and individuals” (Hariri, 1996, 27).

Description of miniature of “Tahmina Comes into Rustam’s Chamber”

The miniaturist in the miniature of “Tahmina Comes

into Rustam’s Chamber” has depicted the scene of arrival of Tahmina into the chamber of Rustam (Fig. 1); as Ferdowsi has opened his description of this scene with the following verse:

“When part of the night had gone already and the Morning Star appeared on sky; the whispering was heard and the door of Rustam’s chamber was slowly opened” (Ferdowsi, 2008, vol. 1, 247).

According to the opening verses, the miniaturist has also depicted the meeting place in the Rustam’s chamber and within the vertical rectangular framework. The chamber has been depicted as small architectural space and in closed form. In the thought of Iranians “if the chamber (bedroom) is small it belongs to the house lord and it is not decent to

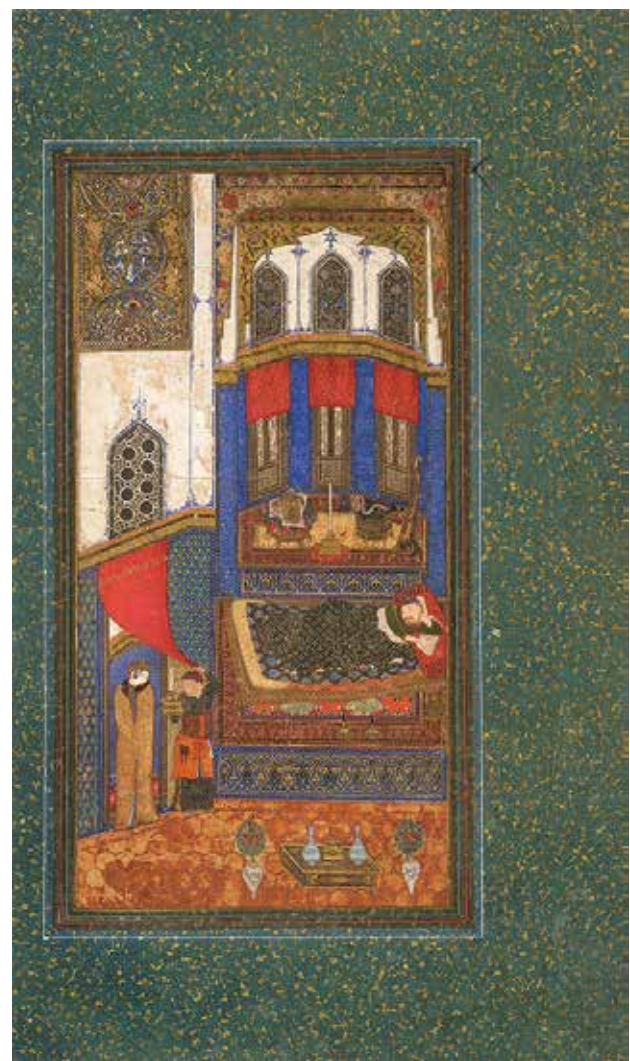


Fig. 1. Tahmina Comes into Rustam’s Chamber, 9th century AH, Shiraz School. Source: <http://harvardartmuseums.org>

let a stranger enter there” (Pirniya, 2013, 27). The magnificent space of the mansion is influenced by the miniatures of Jalayiris age and is allocated in three plans (Fig. 2). First plan is under the influence of Teymurid architecture in which “tiles are mostly six-edged” (Wilbert & Gombelg, 1995). The chamber is covered with brown hexagonal tiles and Tahmina the Princess of Samangan is depicted with a “oval-like face of Ale Mozaffar” (Azhand, 2008, 133) and “slim body of Jalayeris” (Conbi, 2002, 53).

The beloved Turani lady wears a brown cloth with very long sleeves and this type of cloth is itself a “reflection of the tradition of Middle Asia miniature” (Ferrie, 1995, 205). This also suggests that the

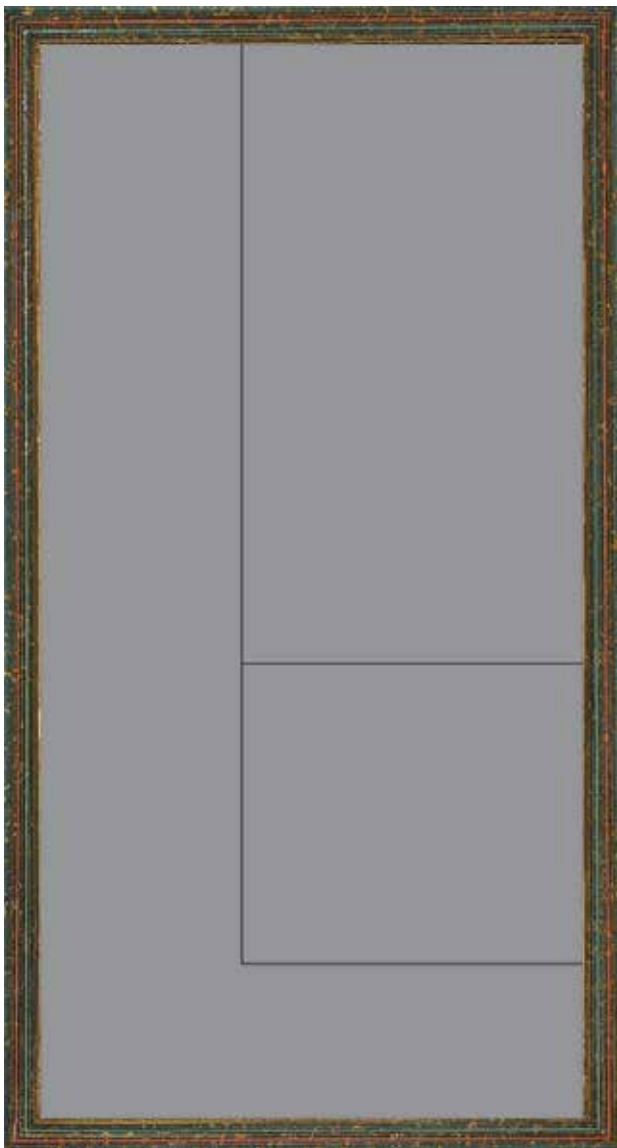


Fig. 2. Tripartite plan of miniature. Source: authors.

miniaturist has depicted “the characters of his own work with the tribal and local features and let them to wear the clothes of his own time and place” (Manzo, 2001, 68). In this plan, the company of the Princess is also present who first enters the chamber with a candle at his hand. He has been depicted with a carmine hat, green cloth and a striped red cloak. He carries two small dagger and knife which show that he is a guard and this is why he takes the lead with a candle at hand and opens the curtain for the entrance of the Princess.

In the second plan, Rustam is portrayed with green pajamas lying down on two-person bed, and is looking at Tahmina with wonder and admiration. In the third plan, a hexagonal wide and short niche is depicted which refers to the architectural structure of the short niches of those times that were supposed to be accessible to the people who were sitting (Pirniya, 2013). In the middle of niche, a candle holder with a long candle which attracts the viewer towards the three closed windows with red curtains and three alter-like frames.

Analysis of visual elements of miniature from the perspective of promotion of the theme of reason

In this part, we will study the described items from the content aspect the findings of which are shortly outlined in the Table 1.

Tahmina: The decency and sapience of Tahmina in the miniature have been respectively exemplified in the cloth she wore, her stand and spatial situation (Fig. 3). Chastity and decency of the Princess are seen in the dress with long sleeves and furry collar. Long dress not only covers Tahmina’s body rather her hands too. Furry collar refers to the royal images and positive aspects of the women from foreign lands (Mokhtariyan, 2007). It has also covered a part of Tahmina’s face as a sign of decency while she keeps her head down out of chastity. But one can say that Tahmina’s sapience lies in his spatial position; according to the miniature, Tahmina is exactly standing in the internal space of the chamber. To

Table 1. Visual components of the theme of Reason in miniature. Source: authors.

Form	Content
Spatial position of Tahmina in three situations and a royal clothes	Number three as a symbol of spirituality, secret and consciousness
Rustam's green clothes	Color of intellection, thinking and intellectual peace
Candle	Describer of sagacity, reason and intelligence
White background of the wall	Color of the world of reason
Geometrical images in the building	Regular structure and intellectual capacity of geometry
Image of snake on Rustam's quiver	Symbol of reason and the rational ones

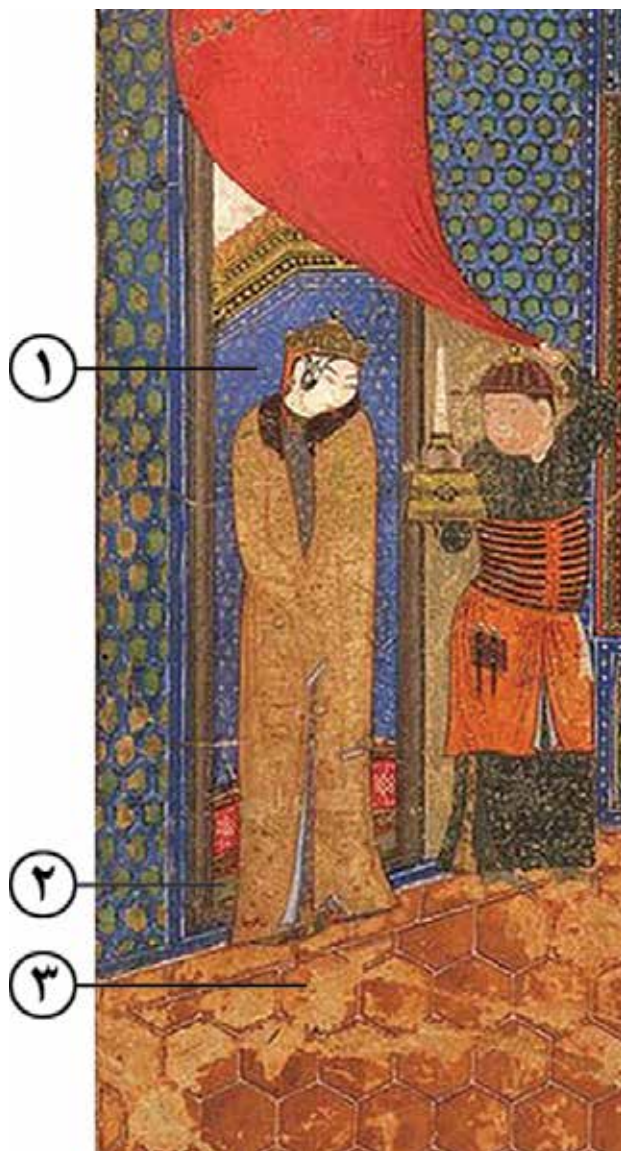


Fig. 3. Tahmina and Her Spatial Positions in the Miniature. Source: authors.

stand in this specific and purposeful position she has already passed through two spatial situations which respectively include the door's frame and the corridor behind her. These three spatial situations (inside the chamber, door's frame, corridor) and also the triple plan of the work, probably denote the semantical application of the number three. In myths, national texts, rituals and Persian literature, the number three is among the frequently used numbers, e.g. "it symbolizes spirituality and secret and consciousness" (Gorin et al., 2006, 164).

Rustam: Quality of reason and consciousness in this miniature is not limited to the character of Tahmina, rather Rustam does also have it along with valor and bravery; insofar as the reflection of this feature has become realized in the color of the clothes. It is noteworthy that "color is the most effective and prominent aspect of sensory pictures and visual descriptions of *Shahnameh*" (Zabeti Jahromi, 2008, 223). In *Shahnameh*, green is allocated for Rustam and when Hajir introduces Iranian heroes to Suhrab he describes Rustam's tent as green abode. In the present miniature, Rustam is depicted with green clothes (Fig. 4) which is "the color of reason, thought and intellectual peace" (Ayatollahi, 2009, 157).

Candle: Internal space of the chamber is lighted by two long candles one of which is at the hand of Tahmina's company and the other is over the head of Rustam in the middle of plan (Fig. 5). The presence

of candle in the miniature is derived from the single hemistiches of the first and third verses of the story which respectively refer to the darkness of night: “when part of the night had already gone”, and the candle at the hand of the company: “one was carrying a candle of musk at his hand”. On the other hand, semantic aspect of the candle due to the feature of lighting and eradication of darkness refers to its similarity with the force of reason and consciousness and “describes sagacity, reason and intelligence” (Qasemi, 2010, 35). In *Shahnameh*, Ferdowsi has also likened human reason to candle that leads us towards truth:

White background of the walls of chamber’s structure: Along with the partitions and internal ornaments of the mansion, we see white walls over the head of the characters stretching harmoniously alongside each other with alter like frames and blue surfaced tiles. In view of content in the “science of balance”¹, “color of world of reason is white” (Corbin, 2011, 212). We can almost generalize the content function of this color in present miniature to the descriptions of Ferdowsi of Rostam as a man of reason and Tahmina whom Ferdowsi describes as a sagacious woman and her “soul” is said to be the place of her reason (Fig. 6).

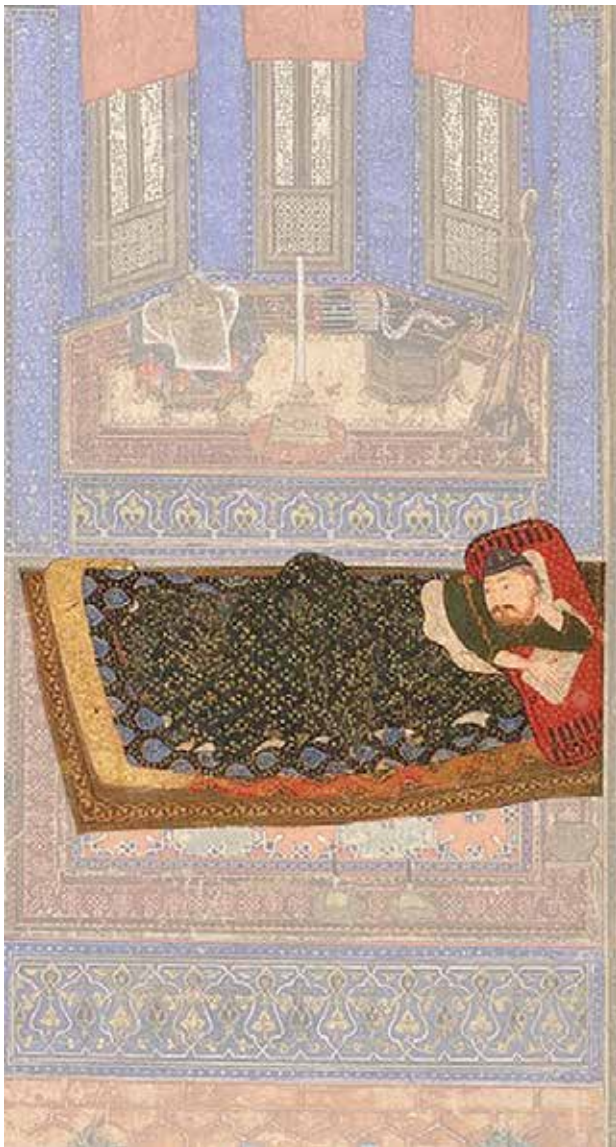


Fig. 4. Rostam’s green clothes. Source: authors.



Fig. 5. Two candle holders with long candles. Source: authors.

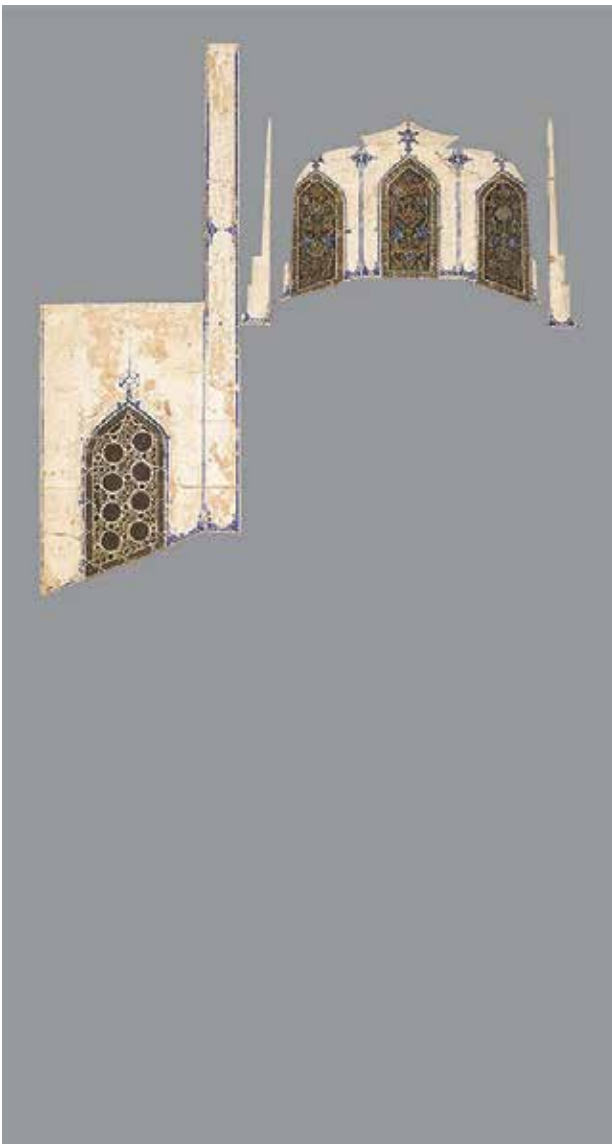


Fig. 6. White background of wall of chamber. Source: authors.

Geometrical Images: Among the ornamental images on the architectural structure of the miniature, one can refer to the geometrical images. Use of geometrical images as cover and ornament of buildings in Iranian miniature is frequent. In these harmonic images, “the ultimate end of geometry which is spiritual reason” (Najibuqflu, 2010, 259) is observed. In the present miniature, geometrical images have been used in the internal space of the chamber based on a regular structure in the form of hexagonal tiles that have covered the wall behind Tahmina and the floor of chamber and by its maximal reproduction throughout the miniature it has managed to emphasize the rational capability of geometry which is a fundamental affair

in Iranian-Islamic art and reinforce the promotion of the concept of reason in harmony with the content aspect of the miniature.

Image of snake: On the niche that is located in the internal space of chamber part of Rostam’s war tools can be found on two small tables. On one of the tables we can find Rostam’s quiver which is decorated with the image of a white snake (Fig. 7). Snake is among the animals which have been discussed in mythologies of nations in different forms and covers a wide scope of symbolic notions which in mythical texts can refer to such symbols as fertility, reason, power and intelligence (Yahaqqi, 2007). Also this reptile has been considered to be the “symbol of reason and the holder of reason” (Bahar, 2008, 283).

Outcome of rationalism in “Tahmina Comes into Rostam’s Chamber”

According to the story, Tahmina’s goal of visiting Rostam is the acquisition of the seed of heroism and valor and having a son from him; because race was an important issue in the early tribes as the factor of power transition (Mokhtariyan, 2007). Presence of Suhrab at the beginning and end of the story enjoys two different qualities. As we can see from the verses of the story, in the moment of meeting, Tahmina speaks of love the outcome of which will be a son from the race of an Iranian hero who is supposed to



Fig. 7. Image of snake on Rostam’s quiver. Source: authors.

be the main goal of this meeting. Thus, the quality of presence of Suhrab in the time of meeting is hidden and when Tahmina Comes into Rustam's Chamber, her wish turns to reality and Suhrab is born. Given the aforementioned issues, on the one hand, and given the method and expression style used by Ferdowsi in the current story and the fact that the story of "Tahmina Comes into Rustam's Chamber" is part of the general story of Rustam and Suhrab, on the other hand, we can almost state that whatever happens in this story is in some way influenced by Tahmina's wish which is the birth of Suhrab. Reflecting on this for a while and seeing the miniature from this perspective lead to the identification of those things that can probably denote the hidden presence of Suhrab in this miniature.

In line with the above discussions, when we turn to study the visual elements of the miniature with a quantitative approach and assay them in view of their number and repetition which have become manifested in some cases in the form of tripartite plans; presence of characters of Rustam, Tahmina and the company; three spatial positions of Tahmina; three candle holders, tables, alter like frames (Fig. 8), windows and curtains; tripartite movement of Arabesque chain (Fig. 9) and in this way they have composed visual triples (Fig. 10). Attention to number three reminds the audience to three main characters of the present story, i.e. Rustam, Tahmina and Suhrab and in this sense it can be related with the other notion of number three that "implies the word all" (Cooper, 2007, 25). Quality of presence of key characters in this miniature is also important; in our search for their identification, Rustam and Tahmina can be identified at the first glance but Suhrab enjoys a hidden presence and it seems that it is under the influence of the course of story and Tahmina's intention that the miniaturist has avoided portraying Suhrab and left his presence to be denoted in a symbolic manner by the presence of triple elements.

Conclusion

The theme of reason in *Shahnameh* owes its existence to the ancient texts and Islamic culture. According

to these doctrines, reason has been introduced in two primordial and acquired types with two good and bad functions. Drawing upon the philosophical doctrines, Ferdowsi in *Shahnameh* has used reason as the building block of his work. Dominant presence of the theme of reason in the literature of *Shahnameh* has caused that the action of the heroes of story to be always analyzed by the scholars of *Shahnameh* in view of the measure of reason. However, meanwhile, the quality of miniaturist's view of *Shahnameh*, the scale of his consciousness of the presence of the theme of reason in the story and the visual measures adopted by the miniaturist to portray this theme will be thought-provoking and the current essay has chosen the story and miniature for analysis that are known as "Tahmina Comes into Rustam's Chamber" in order to provide an answer to the above questions. Given



Fig. 8. Arabesque chain with three complicated and intertwined surfaces. Source: authors.



Fig. 9. Three alter like frames over the windows of the chamber. Source: authors.

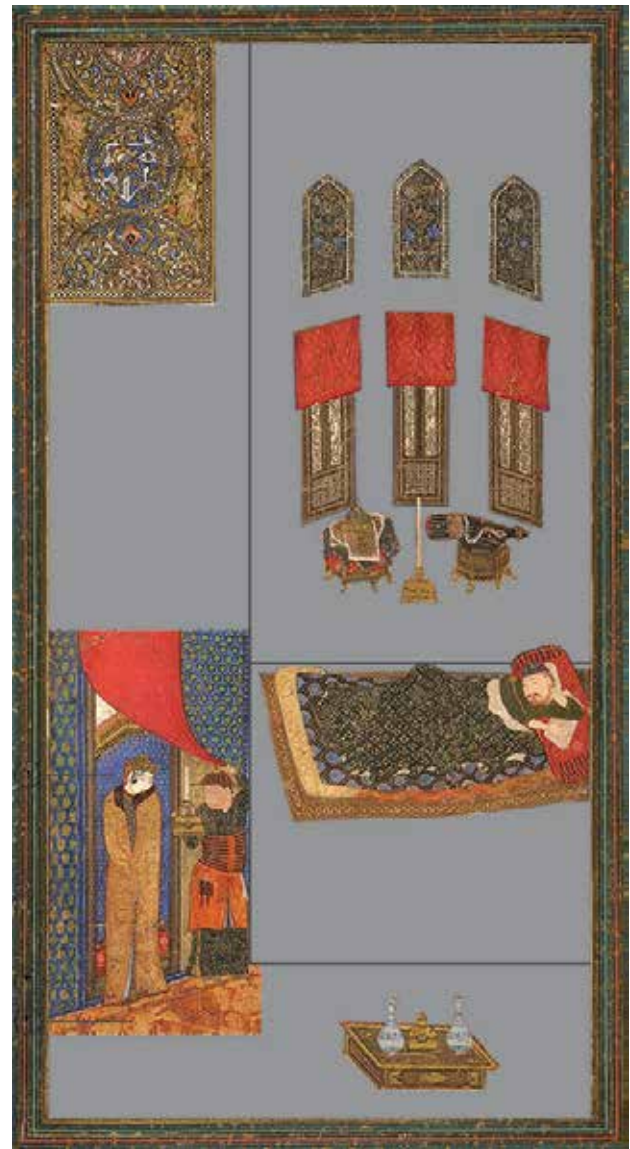


Fig. 10. Quantitative and qualitative domination of number three in triple elements of miniature. Source: authors.

the text of story, though Ferdowsi in his description of Rostam and Tahmina has considered both of them to have enjoyed reason, he uses two different explicit and implicit methods to express this. In *Shahnameh*, the character of Rostam has always been described as a man of reason away from greed and even in some verses where the green curtain of Rostam's chamber is noted a visual vision has been born; Tahmina's description is made by Rostam who describes her as a reasonable and pure hearted woman. However, what is important is the description that Tahmina offers of herself and expresses that I have killed my reason for love so as to join you because reason does not tolerate

love. What can be inferred from the surface meaning of this description is the irrationality of Tahmina in the moment. Nevertheless, upon deeper reflections we can understand Ferdowsi's prudence in choosing an alternative expression for reason. Acquired reason can have different types depending on various objectives and in this story and given the indications of Ferdowsi, Tahmina's political reason seems to be still dynamic; because she Comes into Rostam's chamber to have a son with Rostam who has a noble race and seed. Following these aforementioned features and their visual presence in the miniature depend on the scale of familiarity and understanding of the miniaturist,

on the one hand, and his skill and prudence, on the other hand. Our studies suggest that the miniaturist like every other person would have reached certain general and in some cases professional pieces of knowledge in the course of his relationship with his contemporary poets, literati and men of wisdom. Thus, whether consciously or unconsciously, the miniaturist would have promoted the key concept or concepts of the chosen text. The miniaturist of "Tahmina Comes into Rustam's Chamber" is not an exception to this too and according to our studies, we can claim that the miniaturist had been conscious of the theme of reason and paid attention to its visual aspect. We can almost say that in such cases as green clothes of Rustam, image of snake on his quiver, and the like, all refer to the reason and sapience of Rustam because the miniaturist is informed of his being a man of reason and has made the green color of Rustam's clothes in line with the visual description of Ferdowsi of him. Moreover, ornaments of the quiver could have included Arabesque images but a white snake is on Rustam's quiver that reminds us such notions as reason and consciousness. Tahmina and her sapience have been described resorting to the expression of Ferdowsi in a hidden fashion and in her spatial position that includes number three. Furthermore, one can claim that the applied and ornamental elements that have been used inside the chamber including the candles, geometrical images and the white wall in its content aspect have assisted the understanding of the notion of reason as complementary elements.

Endnotes

1. In Islamic mysticism, metaphysical and mystical foundation of correspondences is called science of balance (Corbin, 2011, 87).

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