

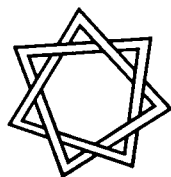
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PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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AN ARABIC COMPOSITE MANUSCRIPT OF TALES FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE ST. PETERSBURG BRANCH OF THE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

Among the few illustrated Arabic manuscripts in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies is one which contains the anonymous “Tale of King Kal’ād and his Vizier Shīmās” and a collection of fables entitled “Fables Told by Scholars” (call number A 448). The first tale (fols. 1b—56a) is part of the “Thousand and One Night”. The second collection (fols. 56b—74b) brings together fables of the legendary sage Luqmān. The works in the copy under discussion here can be described as half-folkloric or half-literary prose, the style of which is entirely in harmony with the numerous miniatures which adorn the manuscript. The old traditions of the Arab school of miniatures are only partially visible here. Nonetheless, the manuscript is of a certain interest, as it reflects a late period of the Arabic manuscripts miniature painting. The illustrations reveal the significant influence of the Turkish school of miniatures. This is not at all surprising, as the manuscript can be dated to the first half of the seventeenth century. Support for this is found in the owner’s inscription on fol. 1a with the name Būluş (Paul) and the date 1055/1645—46. Furthermore, this note appears to have been made shortly after the production of the copy.

Fol. 04a contains an annotation in French marked with the date 1843. The margins hold many pencilled-in notes in Russian, Latin and French. Fols. 1a and 001b display the seal of the library of the Teaching division of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For a certain time, the copy was in the collection of General P. P. Sukhtelen (1788—1833), who took part in the Russian-Turkish war of 1811 and afterwards headed the Caucasus corps Staff during the Russian-Persian war of 1828—1830. The manuscript was acquired by the Asiatic Museum (today the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies) in 1919.

In all the manuscript contains 04 + 74 + 004 fols. (17.5 × 12.0 cm). The paper is European and has yellowed substantially over time. The text was copied in black Indian ink. Headings, individual words, and dividers are in red ink. The writing is small calligraphic *naskh*.

The text is enclosed in a double border of thin red lines. The beginning of the manuscript is adorned with an *‘unwān* in gold and paint. The binding is made from nearly black leather and is pasted onto pasteboard. Both the manuscript

and binding are heavily worn, which points to intensive use, most likely by numerous readers. The manuscript has apparently already undergone old restoration; in any case, some of the folios are out of order, which could be the result of rebinding. One folio is missing entirely after fol. 47. The end of the “Tale of King Kal’ād and His Vizier Shīmās” is on fol. 50b. The beginning of the “Fables Told by Scholars” is on fol. 56b.

Although the “Tale of King Kal’ād” forms part of the well-known “Thousand and One Night”, the “Tale” also circulated independently. In the manuscript it is represented in full, with all inserted stories as they are cited by V. Chauvin, with the exception of the tale of King Solomon and his wives (Chauvin, No. 24). The text of the tale is presented in the copy as a single work without division into nights. The “Tale” closes with a short additional story not mentioned by Chauvin. The story runs that during a hunt, the hunter’s favourite falcon attacks a dove and kills it. Feeling pity for the dove, the hunter kills his falcon and is left with neither falcon nor dove. At the end of this story, not cited by Chauvin, we also learn of the punishment to which the main wife of the king was subjected — by his order, she was boiled alive in a copper.

The “Tale” is illustrated with many miniatures. They are uniform in style and usually occupy a third of the folio, frequently being framed by the text. Some of them deviate from the accepted canons of Muslim miniatures and display a faintly distinguishable tendency toward realism. We note here only one of them, representing the depiction of a hunt (see *Plate 1* on the back cover of the current issue). The hunter stands with his right hand on the butt of a musket which hangs behind his back; gripped by its paw, a black bird he has shot hangs head down from his left hand; and a very realistically depicted hunting dog with collar grasps in its teeth a cat it has dragged out of a burrow. All elements of the miniature are depicted in a very realistic manner, as though the scene were painted from life. The employing of colours is skilful as well — the hunter’s bright-red belt and equally bright-red pants fix the viewer’s attention on the figure of the hunter, as though underscoring the central importance of this figure in the scene. The landscape background is also worthy of notice. Although no plants are



Fig. 1

depicted, it conveys well the ambience of the hunt's rural desert location. We see only the outlines of a hilly area and the green background of the valley which spreads out beyond the hills. The indistinct, dim green colour, redolent of a desert atmosphere, blends into an equally indistinct white, and then blue, creating the surprising effect of an extended perspective. Even the figures of the hunter and the dog which stands next to him are presented in natural perspective. This contrasts with many other miniatures in the manuscript, which are carried out in the traditional style of book painting, a style which calls to mind above all Turkish examples as they are found in the illustrations to the books on the "marvels of the world".

The "Tale of King Kal'ād" is illustrated with the following miniatures:

1. "King Kal'ād addresses his slave", fol. 2a, 8.0×6.5 cm.
2. "King Kal'ād talks with his *wazīr* Shīmās", fol. 2b, 7.5×7.5 cm.
3. "A cat speaks to a rat which sits in a burrow", fol. 4a, 8.0×7.5 cm.
4. "A hunter stands with his hunting dog, which grips in its teeth a cat it has dragged out of its burrow", fol. 5b, 8.0×7.5 cm (see *Plate 1* on the back cover of the current issue).
5. "A prone hermit beats with a stick a hanging jar full of butter as the butter spills out on his head", fol. 7a, 7.0×7.0 cm.
6. "A crayfish converses with fish", fol. 9a, 7.0×6.5 cm.
7. "A snake which has crawled up on a tree devours the young of a crow", fol. 10a, 7.0×7.0 cm.
8. "A fox attempts to reach the heart of a wild ass which has been killed by an arrow", fol. 11b, 7.5×6.5 cm.
9. "A hermit complains to the sultan of his poverty", fol. 12b, 7.0×6.5 cm.
10. "A hawk sits in a tree while crows are deep in discussion of their own matters", fol. 13b, 7.0×6.5 cm.
11. "A snake-charmer empties his basket of snakes while his wife and children are seized by fear", fol. 14b, 7.0×6.0 cm.
12. "People busy with the construction of a house and the angel of death, watching them", fol. 18b, 7.0×6.0 cm.
13. "A merchant talks with a king who has committed an injustice", fol. 19b, 7.0×6.0 cm.
14. "A hunter admires an eagle which has fallen into a snare", fol. 23a, 7.0×6.0 cm.
15. "A hunter sits atop a lion which has sunk its teeth into his elbow", fol. 24b, 7.5×6.5 cm (see the front cover of the current issue).
16. "A dying king instructs his son, who weeps in grief", fol. 34a, 7.5×6.5 cm.
17. "The *wazīr* Shīmās talks with a cook", fol. 35b, 8.0×7.0 cm.
18. "The young king talks with Shīmās", fol. 36a, 5.5×7.5 cm.
19. "A drowning man holds a fish in his hand and a water-sprite speaks to the drowning man", fol. 37a, 7.5×5.0 cm.
20. "The king talks with his wife", fol. 38a, 7.5×7.0 cm.
21. "A young man who has climbed a nut tree shakes it and crows gather up the falling nuts", fol. 38b, 7.0×6.0 cm.
22. "The owner of a garden and his wife", fol. 40b (top), 7.0×4.0 cm.
23. "Robbers kill the owner of the garden", fol. 40b (bottom), 7.0×5.5 cm.
24. "Foxes gathered by a dead camel discuss the division of their catch", fol. 43a, 7.5×6.5 cm.
25. "Foxes which have come to a lion", fol. 44a, 7.5×5.0 cm.
26. "A thief demands of a shepherd that he provide meal to a lion which sits nearby on a hill", fol. 45b, 7.5×6.0 cm.
27. "The *wazīr* Shīmās kneels before the king", fol. 46b, 7.5×6.0 cm.

28. "The king holds a reception", fol. 47b (top), 7.5×6.0 cm.
29. "The king's servants kill Shīmās", fol. 47b (bottom), 7.5×5.0 cm.
30. "The son of Shīmās with his father's killers before the king", fol. 48b, 7.5×6.0 cm.
31. "A hunter kills his falcon with a bow", fol. 50a, 7.5×6.0 cm.
32. "A jackal devours a pheasant", fol. 51b, 7.5×5.5 cm.
33. "The king talks with two youths", fol. 52b, 7.5×6.0 cm.
34. "The king receives two youths in his palace", fol. 54b (top), 7.0×6.0 cm (see *fig. 1*).
35. "Shīmās' son writes a letter", fol. 54b (bottom), 7.0×4.5 cm (see *fig. 1*).
36. "The king asks advice of his wives", fol. 55a, 7.5×6.5 cm.
37. "Turtles and a pheasant", fol. 55b, 7.5×5.0 cm.
38. "The death of the king's main wife, who is punished by being boiled alive in a copper", fol. 56a (top), 7.0×7.0 cm.
39. "The king receives Shīmās' son and his [own] retainers", fol. 56a (bottom), 7.0×8.0 cm.

Many of the miniatures which adorn the "Tale of King Kal'ād" are in poor condition: the paint has flaked on many of them and some cannot be fully viewed because of pieces of paper which were pasted to the pages in the course of restoration.

One should note the exceptional density of miniatures in the tale. Despite the limited space available for miniatures on the page (17.5×12.0 cm), some pages contain two miniatures to aid plot movement (for example, miniatures on fols. 40b, 47b, 54b, and 56a). It is quite clear that the book's main function was to entertain, a purpose served by the abundance of illustrative material. The text gains from this a festive aura; its mere appearance is enough to raise one's spirits. This effect was most likely not the express intent of the artist, but his desire to illustrate as many episodes as possible despite the limited space at his disposal gives rise to this unexpected effect.

The second part of the collection contains the famed fables of Luqmān and is also richly illustrated, displaying 36 miniatures. The order of fables differs somewhat from what we find in Chauvin. Furthermore, in the 38th fable, a tiger replaces a wolf as the main character; and the 39th fable contains a reference to Abū'l-Faraj al-Mu'āfā ibn Zakarīyā' al-Nahrawānī. In all, 37 of 41 fables are represented in the copy. The collection closes with three additional fables from a different source. The first tells of an ass and a wolf. The ass, surprised by the wolf as it grazes, does not lose its senses; rather, it asks the predator to remove a poisonous splinter which has allegedly lodged itself in the ass' hoof. When the wolf agrees to do this, the ass strikes him with its hoof and flees for refuge.

The second additional fable tells of three friends — a lion, a wolf, and a fox. One day, the lion falls ill in the absence of the fox. Taking advantage of this, the wolf slanders the fox to the lion. In answer to the lion's question about the fox, the wolf says that while the lion is sick, the fox is living the good life. But the fox overhears the wolf's words and decides to take revenge. She tells the ailing lion that he can only cure himself by eating the wolf's testicles.

Finally, the third fable tells of a cock which sings in the morning while sitting in a tree and of a fox which decides to employ subterfuge to lure the cock to the ground. The fox does not succeed because the cock spots the ruse and employs its own ruse to bring ruin to the fox.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

The fables gathered in the collection are supplied with correct Eastern numeration in Indian numbers written in ink and with incorrect European numeration in pencil. The latter becomes confused after the eighteenth fable.

The miniatures which illustrate the contents of the fables are as abundant as in the first half of the collection. They appear to have been painted by the same artist, but are of less interest to the contemporary eye in their content. This does not mean that they were of less interest to those who made use of the manuscript when it was created, or later. As in the "Tale of King Kal'ād", miniatures are present on nearly every page. Unlike in the first part of the collection, where the miniatures are more diverse and thus display the artist's skills, the mere abundance of miniatures in the second part conveys a certain impression of fligid monotony. The text, copied in a lovely *naskh*, is lost against this backdrop of overwhelming colour and line.

The text of the fables contains the following miniatures:

1. "Lion and two bulls" (the folio and miniature are damaged), fol. 56b, 7.5×6.5 cm.
2. "The lion devours one of the two bulls", fol. 57a, 7.0×6.5 cm (see *Plate 3* on the back cover of the current issue).
3. "A bull pays a lion a visit" (the miniature is torn and partly pasted together in the lower left corner), fol. 57b, 7.5×6.5 cm.
4. "Lion with a rat on its back; a fox stands near the lion", fol. 58a, 7.0×6.0 cm.
5. "A fox at the entrance to the lion's den", fol. 58b, 7.0×7.5 cm.
6. "Man and lion before a painting", fol. 59a, 7.0×6.0 cm.
7. "A hunter kills a deer in the forest", fol. 59b, 7.5×7.0 cm.
8. "A gazelle at the bottom of a well and a fox standing by the well", fol. 60a, 7.5×8.5 cm.
9. "Gazelle in the mouth of a lion", fol. 60b, 7.0×7.0 cm.
10. "An ailing gazelle and guests who offer their condolences", fol. 61a, 7.0×6.0 cm.
11. "Rabbits ask foxes for help against hawks which sit on the branches of a pomegranate tree", fol. 61b, 7.5×8.5 cm.
12. "A rabbit vies with a tortoise", fol. 62a, 7.0×7.0 cm.
13. "A rabbit with its young and a lion with its cub", fol. 62b, 7.0×5.5 cm.
14. "Wolves drinking water at a pond", fol. 63a, 7.0×8.0 cm.
15. "A lion devours a piglet before a sleeping dog", fol. 63b, 7.0×7.0 cm.
16. "A blacksmith busily forges beside his assistant and a sleeping dog" (on the right), fol. 64a, 10.4×7.3 cm (see *fig. 2*).
17. "A blacksmith and his worker eat a meal while a nearby dog expectantly awaits food" (on the left), fol. 64a, 10.4×7.3 cm (see *fig. 2*).
18. "A dog in the water and a kite flying away with a piece of meat", fol. 64b, 7.0×7.0 cm.
19. "Hunters on horseback and a dog which runs before them, pursuing a tiger", fol. 65a, 7.5×8.0 cm (the miniature is torn and was pasted during restoration).
20. "A servant ejects a dog in the presence of other dogs, which observe the scene", fol. 65b, 7.0×7.0 cm (the miniature is torn and was pasted during restoration).
21. "A dog licks blood off a wounded rabbit", fol. 66a, 7.5×7.0 cm (see *Plate 2* on the back cover of the current issue).
22. "A ferret pays a hen a visit", fol. 66b, (top) 7.0×7.5 cm.
23. "A ferret carries a cock off a roof", fol. 67a, 7.5×7.0 cm.
24. "Hunters kill a goose", fol. 67b, 7.0×8.0 cm.
25. "A dove crashes into a plate", fol. 68a, 7.5×6.0 cm (see *fig. 3*).
26. "A midge sits on the back of a bull", fol. 68b, 7.0×8.0 cm.
27. "A white man and a black man in the snow", fol. 69a, 7.5×8.0 cm.
28. "A man makes an offering to an idol", fol. 69b, 7.0×8.0 cm.
29. "A man with three snakes", fol. 70a (top), 7.0×7.5 cm.
30. "A woodcutter and death", fol. 70a (bottom), 7.5×7.0 cm.
31. "A man carrying a sheep, a she-goat, and a pig on the back of a mule converses with the pig", fol. 70b, 7.5×6.5 cm.
32. "A man admonishes a drowning youth", fol. 71b, 7.5×8.0 cm.
33. "A youth and a scorpion", fol. 72a, 7.5×4.5 cm.
34. "An ass strikes a wolf with its hoof", fol. 73a, 7.0×7.5 cm.
35. "A lion attacks a wolf while a fox observes", fol. 74a, 7.0×9.0 cm.
36. "A cock sleeps in a tree, a dog sleeps beneath the tree, and a fox converses with the cock", fol. 74b, 7.0×7.5 cm.

The composite Arab manuscript under discussion here is of interest not only because of the numerous miniatures which distinguish it from other manuscripts which contain half-folkloric, half-literary texts. It attracts our attention also as an example of Arab book art. The special impression the book makes is aided by its decorative format and small size. It was clearly intended for intensive use by readers, and such use is indeed evident in the extremely worn condition of the manuscript. Unfortunately, the copy does not contain a colophon, so we know neither the name of the compiler nor the copyist, just as we do not know the name of the artist who illustrated the manuscript. It would be interesting to learn for whom the copy was intended, although it is obvious that the buyer was a rich man who could afford to fund the preparation of an extremely expensive manuscript. Any way, it is clear that among the prose compositions, which enjoyed popularity among seventeenth-century Arab readers, were works with well-known and instructive plots. The long-standing didactic tradition of Near Eastern literature continued to survive into modernity, supported by the interest of readers.

We also note that the current illustrated manuscript was created during the lifetime of the famed Arab artist Yūsuf al-Muṣawwir. As concerns our manuscript, we cannot assert with certainty that the miniatures here are his work, although some of them are close to the painting style of this famous miniaturist (see, e. g., *Plate 2* on the back cover). At any rate, the copy could have arisen in an Arab-Christian environment. One should note that his work in the seventeenth century appears to have renewed the former popularity of Arab miniature art in an age when the Arabs were already able to familiarise themselves with the print production not only of Europeans, but also of Christian subjects of the Ottoman state.

Illustrations

Front cover:

"A hunter sits atop a lion which has sunk its teeth into his elbow", miniature from MS A 448 in the holdings of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 24b, 7.5×6.5 cm.

Back cover:

- Plate 1.** “A hunter stands with his hunting dog which grips in its teeth a cat it has dragged out its burrow”, miniature from the same MS, fol. 5b, 8.0×7.5 cm.
Plate 2. “A dog licks blood off a wounded rabbit”, miniature from the same MS, fol. 66a, 7.5×7.0 cm.
Plate 3. “The lion devours one of the two bulls”, miniature from the same MS, fol. 57a, 7.0×6.5 cm.

Inside the text:

- Fig. 1.** “The king receives two youths in his palace”, fol. 54b (top), 7.0×6.0 cm and “Shīmās' son writes a letter”, miniatures from the same MS, fol. 54b (bottom), 7.0×4.5 cm.
Fig. 2. “A blacksmith busily forges beside his assistant and a sleeping dog”, fol. 64a (on the right) and “A blacksmith and his worker eat a meal while a nearby dog expectantly awaits food”, fol. 64a (on the left), a double miniature from the same MS, 10.4×7.3 cm
Fig. 3. “A dove crashes into a plate”, miniature from the same MS, fol. 68a, 7.5×6.0 cm.
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