

In the Name of the Illustrator of Universe Illustration of Events in Mongol Period Painting

Ahmad Jolaei

Faculty member and former Manager of Art Department in Boushehr University
Department of art and architecture, Dashtestan branch, Islamic Azad university, Dashtestan, Iran
Ahmad.jolaei@yahoo.com

Abstract: As it will be explained in the paper, event has various meaning in Persian language, such as happening, accidents... which is initiated when its primary conditions of factors are provided and as in each course, it is exclusive, its end and conclusion is not known. In another word, while the end has not come, the finishing point of the event could not be known; as, if two events have the same start and end, they will be repeated and predicted subject and accident. Now, if this phenomenon is selected by painter or imager as a subject for creating artistic piece, naturally its (subjective) aspect will have priority over other factors. Even in some instances as accidents happen with acceleration and most often without preparation of heart, that acceleration is evident for the end of work for some pieces of painter; a mode which is mostly specified to impression painters. On the other hand it differs in a painting piece when the painter is affected and under its passion conditions and pays particular attention to aesthetic element based on his taste and school of work. In another word, in picturing and painting, the subject of the work serves as the basis and foundation of the artist's image and all factors gather in serving the expression of subject. Nonetheless, in painting, the painter most often emphasizes on expressing the inner and concealed passion of human soul, of course in a beautiful shape and observing the principles of aesthetic. By searching in painting and imaging of Mongol period, while perceiving and receiving those events and subjects of painting, various divisions could be categorized: time division, location division or for work method...including the three major classes that is, 1. Mythological, epic events, 2. Events of the religious saints, prophets, kings and noblemen of their time, 3. Cultural, social events, ordinary people and folks. Those works have been created to serve a painting order, necessity and/or the taste of painters in the time spin and location domination (ruling territory) of Moguls. There are paintings that could have been read in texts, heard from witnesses or eyewitnesses by painters and imagers. This characteristics goes as far as there might be some samples which have been created in the limit of a mere news picture and as a supplement of a written paper or book illustration, a written that glances to a mythical, epic and/or historical context from social, political, cultural...window.

[Ahmad Jolaei. **In the Name of the Illustrator of Universe Illustration of Events in Mongol Period Painting.** *Academ Arena* 2018;10(7):100-107]. ISSN 1553-992X (print); ISSN 2158-771X (online). <http://www.sciencepub.net/academia>. 10. doi:[10.7537/marsaaj100718.10](https://doi.org/10.7537/marsaaj100718.10).

Keywords: Painting, event, Mongol, India, Iran, Subject

Introduction

Painting and imaging has a long history and it is said that it goes back to the cavemen time that left for us their painting on the cave walls and even handmade objects. Summarizing in physical shape, speed in picturing and covering new human needs pushed those pictures to the point of founding pictorial lines (hieroglyph) in human civilization, followed by primary writing and then its evolution era to the today conditions. The today information based on encoding and reading those texts led man to perceive and acquire knowledge and important findings about the life of different nations and tribes. Although writing different lines reveals relatively exact information, pictures and paintings; too, if encoded and/or even in the first view, provide highly valuable source for researchers in the research arena which in closer look show them to be much less complicated than written works for understanding and perceiving the subject. Those findings often include subjects such a

worshipping gods, method of ritual codes, removing routine needs and in general, individual and collective events; the necessity of conveying them to others is sensed. Events with celestial or ultra celestial grounds. By completion of letters, writing books and registry of events and in general, arrival into a historical stage, this issue found a new former as far as for better understanding of the aspects of written texts with less ornamental, painters started their cooperation and in some cases, one person undertook both the responsibility of the author and illustrator.

During Mongol period, illustration and painting entered into a new arena; expansion of Mongol's territory, new relations with Europe, cultural reserves for countries such as India, Iran, Egypt, Iraq...appearance of European missionaries, the merchants and the wealth and rich found by Mongols and their glory moved many artists and they were absorbed in those conditions. Lecturers, poems, painters and scientists...however, the subject of our

discussion does not include only the painters of that age who were active in centers such as Herat, Tabriz, Isfahan, Delhi...Naturally during that period, they created valuable works in nature, portrait, floral and bird, landscapes, views of monuments and building...However in this short paper, the purpose is mostly searching in paintings that attribute to an event and accident.



(Image: Soureh 105: The word فیل (elephant) - name of a Soureh in Koran- calligraphies on the image of an elephant)

Picture 1

This research plans to discuss the issue of event as an important motive in creating painting of Mongol period which had special importance and place. Now, let us elaborate the term event:

Event: Destiny, happening, accident, occurrence, incident, episode and expression of deed and act. (Ali Akbar Nafisi 1976: 1713)

Event: Happening, accident, incident (Mohammad Moein, 1985: 1696)

Incident: Accident, happened work, proceeded work, occurrence, procedure, event, issue. (Aliakbar Dehkhoda, 1998: 23091)

The three dimensions those events take, could be divided and classified in time or location terms; hence; from time perspective, the events focused by painters are divided into three major ranges; i.e., mythological – epic paintings, second, images of saints, prophets, kings and contemporary noblemen and third, the contemporary people of the painter and the common people or folks.

Myth is in fact a perspective that is formed around the core of specific subjects or characters in an era of human civilization. Myths often possessed a faith- strong belief dimensions and built the beliefs of people in their own era. The Mongol painters illustrated on them to fulfill an order or by their own selection and found their motifs from narrators and storytellers and in some instances the paintings of

previous painters. Mourning over Alexander's body (picture 2), mourning over Esfandiar's body (picture 3), flight of Phoenix over a city carrying a man in its claws (picture 4) and a picture that shows wounded and shot Rostam and Rakhsh- his steed (picture 5) are notable in this category.



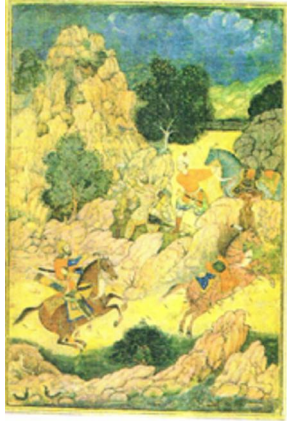
(Picture 2- mourning over Alexander's body)



(Picture 3- Mourning over the body of Esfandiar)

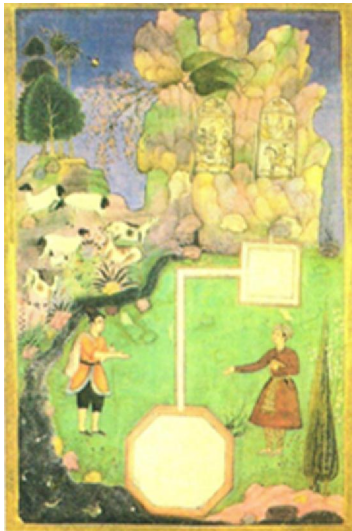


(Picture 4- Phoenix over the city, carrying a man in his claws)



(Picture 5- Rostam and his steed, Rakhsh, both wounded by arrows).

In epical and tale dimensions too, various books that contain Iranian and Indian tales have been the sources of painting in that era. In illustrating a stream of milk by Farhad for Shirin (picture 6), the passion of Farhad for Shirin and end of the task of digging mountain to direct the spring of milk (water) stream to Shirin's mansion are illustrated. It seems like a completed engineering project and the geographic shape of the work emphasizes on this meaning. Shirin and her companions are seen in the background and Khosrow and Farhad are talking.



(Picture 6- Building milk stream for Shirin by Farhad)

Painting scenes of prophets, religious saints, kings and rulers were usually created by painters who had witnessed those events; however, with respect to historical documents and the ideological aspects which existed in those who ordered those pictures and in the painters themselves, there are a great number of this type of works and it could be said that in the three

time categories, this part has the biggest share of those paintings.

There are even highly private pictures in this category. For example, Mohammad Shah Rangeleh who was addicted to fun ordered to picture him making love to eight women in his garden in a carriage. There are also some sad pictures (Shah Alam Aftab the Second) who was blind and a poet and painters illustrated him on the royal throne with same image.

Another picture shows Bahador Shah Mozafar, the last Mongol ruler as a thin figure prince sitting on a throne of gold; although, the lions that carry the royal seat look more like poodle dogs than lions (Annemarie Schimmel, 2007: 59).

The interesting point is the daily report, a semi newspaper as was in Qajar era, or the Vaghay Etefaghaye newspaper of Iran. The entire agenda of a meeting in the court would be written on a piece of paper on top of which, (the news of local court) could be seen next to the date. The documents found from Jaypour archives and other archives show various subjects which were noted down, ranging from several birth incidents, the gifts given to the ruler or his gifts to others, increase or decrease in fees, issuance or confirmation of the titles received to educational aids...are written in those papers. (Annemarie Schimmel 2007: 81).

Events such as rise of Mongol government that followed after the defeat of Qarazmshahyan and victory of Genghiz are noticeable in the paintings of this part. (Picture 7) illustrates the fled of Jalaeddin Qarazmshah from Genghiz's rage. It is written:

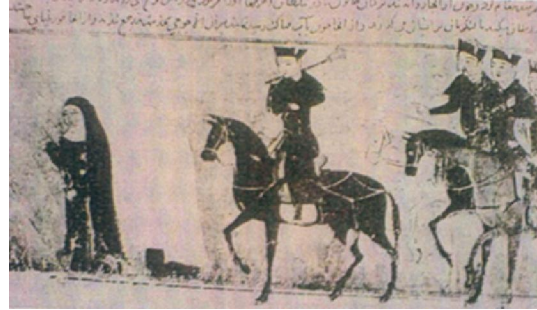


(Picture 7: Fled of Jalaeddin Qarazmshah from Genghiz on Indus River)

“In the attack, he returned and put his shield on his back. He took his flag and banner and lashed the horse and passed through river like a bolt and landed on the other side. He took the saddle off his horse and wiped his sword from water. Genghiz stayed puzzled. He pointed him to his sons and said: A father’s son must be like him... When Mongol troop saw him passing through the river moved to push into the river and pass it but Genghiz Khan did not let them. In Motamed Alieh History it is said that the Sultan (Jajaleddin) when ascertained that resilience was no more possible, drowned his wife, children and residents of Heram in water beforehand to save them from the insult of slavery and let his treasures sink in the water and after that, passed through the water and fled”.

Picture 8 shows the captivity of Qarazmshahyan family by Mongols. This picture illustrates the event like a news photograph in a book under order of Rashideddin Fazlollah, the famous vizier of Mongol Family (Jameol Tavarikh). What event and tragedy could be worthy of illustration than the captivity of Turkan Khatoun, the authoritarian ad powerful

woman of Qarazmshahi era, the mother of the king and a women who appointed generals, viziers..?



(Picture 8- Captivity of Qarazmshahyan Family by Mongols)

Picture number 9 illustrates the captivity of soldiers and the quality of their displacement as shown by painters. As it could be seen, the painter is not much concerned with the delicacy of painting and only covers the event.



Picture 9 Transfer of captives by the Mongols, a manuscript in Jameol Tavarikh of Rashideddin Fazlollah



Picture 10- Princes in Timur’s royal court

Next picture (picture 10) illustrates princes in Timur’s royal court. The presence of Mongol Ilkhanan in the picture and people who were present in the initial gathering was so important that in subsequent years, even kings tried to add their picture to this complex in any possible way. In another word, this picture somehow gave legitimacy to the ruling of people who were present there and was a tool to prove the blood kinship to Shah. The registry of the visiting moment and that event urged many to grow the demand of being in that scene.

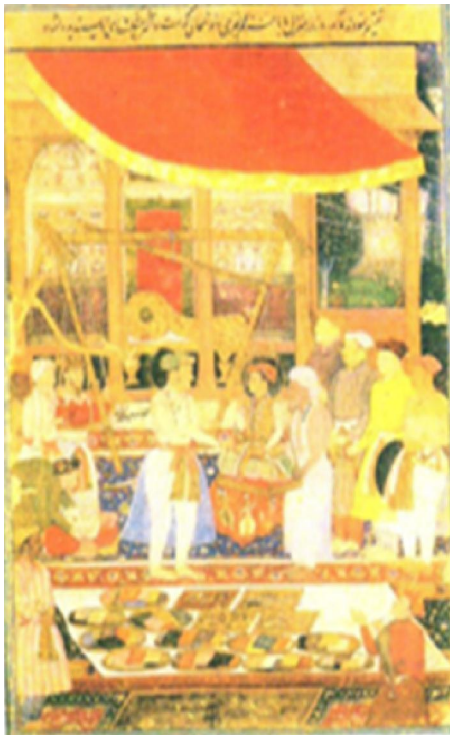
In a painting sample of a feast called “Princes in Timur’s Court” which is now kept in Britain Museum, although a large part of the picture is ruined, the size of picture is more than one square meter. The picture illustrates a ruler in Central Asian costume, sitting in

the corridor of a garden and accepts visitors and audiences. The servants are standing in the background and the court noblemen and significant figures are sitting in the two sides of the ruler. The lower part of the picture which is missing was perhaps a pool with water fall, dancers and musicians. Other pictures of Mongol figures were added afterwards, including Akbar, Jahangir, Prince Khorram (later known as Shah Jahan) and the sitting noblemen are recognized as grandchildren and sons of Timur Lang (Timur the Cripple). Therefore, there is no doubt that the next Mongols added their picture to the painting one after each other as they believed it showed their family tree. (M.G. Rodgers, 2003: 54)

There are a number of portraits of people and royal court authorities in different gestures from that period and if they are thoroughly examined, it could be seen that they; too, were illustrated for a subject or due to some incident. For example, picture 11 shows Jahangir Shah, Abdolrahim, the great Khan and other noblemen of the court. This phrase is visible on top of the picture:

“The whole day passed in our home with joy and pleasure and most of his gifts were approved.”

The picture shows weighing one of Jahangir Shah’s son for the ceremony of recovery from an illness.



Picture 11- Weighing Prince Khorram with gold and silver

The same tradition still exists in which, an oath is taken to give coins to the patient equal to his weight after his recovery, or give equal weight of food to the poor and give presents to the recovered patient for the appreciation of health. Two pieces of clothes (bed tilt) in red color are hung and a red shade and a wrapped bed as shown in the picture perhaps symbolizes the measles illness 9as it was a custom in south Iran that sick children were kept in red bed and almost away from others to the end of disease), showing that the prince is saved and now he could be sitting to be weighed with bags of cash and coins.

Some texts reveal the Mongol’s opinion on magician healers as:

Akbar turned his ill son, Homayoun in his bed three times to have the disease of the crown price come to him. Little later, he (Akbar) was sick and passed away while his son recovered. Parviz, son of Jahangir; too, did the same ceremony one hundred years later in 1621. (Annemarie Schimmel, 2007: 173).

There are pictures of the religious great men and their miracles too. Picture 12 illustrates the drowning scene of Prince Nouroldahr who was miraculously saved from sea and the illustrator believed the event as one of the miracles of Ilea the prophet. As the picture shows, the prophet walks easily on the water without slight touch of water on his feet. The aura around his head reveals his rank and place.



Picture 12- Saving Prince Nouroldahr from drowning in the sea by Ilea the prophet.

Picture 13 illustrates Jonas being swallowed by the fish. The painter illustrates the moment of the event. Jonas, naked, is ready to be swallowed by the fish. The cherubim angle is present in the scene to help him in this event and important moment.



Picture 13: Jonas being swallowed by the fish



Picture 14: Destroying the mausoleum of Imam Hossein in Kerbela by the order of Abbasi Khalif

Among other events that are illustrated in Mongol painting, one may note the demolishing of Seyedol Shohada (Imam Hossein) mausoleum by Motevakil of Abbasi, as shown in picture 14.

Of course, the writings in the pictures have some notes on Tiflis incident, the people of Egypt and their captivity too. In particular, the picture shows Davood of Motazeli school of thought who first made Motevakil enraged and later, after taking ten thousand

Dirham from him, the seat of judge was assigned to Yahya Ben Akssam. Motevakil respect Ahmad ben Hanbal great deal and like his brother, father and uncle, Mamun tried to improve Etezalieh religious thought.

Another subject which was interesting for Mongol painters was ordinary people. Individuals who are busy with their routine jobs and activities and are selected as subjects of painting by order or at the selection of painter. The following picture shows a man who is being attacked by a lion. Picture 15. The story of this picture is as follows:



Picture 15: Lion attack to a horseman

Oein Mosavar in the margin of a picture drawn from the scene of lion attack to a young boy says:

On Monday, Eid Ramadan Almobarak, year 1082, a ruler who was tribe chief of Bukhara sent a lion and a rhinoceros for his Majesty, Shah Soleiman as a gift. In the gate of the court, the lion suddenly leaped in the gate of the court and attacked a grosser boy in 15 or 16 years of his old and bit half of his face. The boy died instantly. We heard that but we did not see it and the incident are recorded likewise. In that year, a great snow had fallen all Shaban month to the eighth day of Shaval and people were tired of removing snow. The price of most items had risen. Wood for fire was four Shahi for six kilograms and straw was six copper coins for six kilograms and still both are scarce. The cold was so harsh. May God help us. (Roein Pakbaz, 2010: 124).

In another picture (number 16) the camel herdsmen and their lives are the main theme of the Mongol artist. This picture shows shepherd job that included keeping and breeding camel, weaving and knitting camel hair or wool. However, camels fight

was an interesting scene and one of the activities that Mongol kings liked.

“The rulers, as they usually hold elephants fight with enthusiasm, arrange camels fight too. The miniatures of Abdolsamad the painter illustrate old and young camels tied in fights with foams on their mouth and straighten hairs on their head. They have colorful embroidery fabric around their humps and each of the two servants is keeping his camel with a thin rope which is tied to the front legs of the animal. It is in fact the saddest image of such a fight as we know in Mongol territory.” (Annemarie Schimmel, 2007: 261).



Picture 16: Camels and camel driver

Enayat Khan's picture who appears as a young and pleasant looking man in one of the miniatures of Mongol period damaged himself by opium addiction; however, instead of considering this damaged figure as a warning, finds the dying man's figure so attractive that orders his artists to illustrate his portrait.

“Today, we were informed of the news of the decease of Enayat Khan. He was one of my most trusted men. As he was opium addict and in some cases he would drink wine. Gradually he drove mad of



Picture 17- Seize of Baghdad by Holaku
Picture 18- Funeral of Ghazan Khan of Mongol

At the end, the painters and their colleagues who had equal job were chosen as the theme and subject of

drinking. As his body was weak and he used to drink more than he could bear; he got diarrhea and fainted twice or three times fainted in that condition. I ordered my physician, Rokneh, to prescribe him some medicine, but regardless of his procedures, they did not help him....As it was an irregular case, I ordered the painter to pain his image. Truly I found him changed so amazingly...Jahangir reminded the patient to remember God and as he was complaining about poverty, discharged him with 2000 Rupees. Apparently he had spent all his wealth for opium. The day after he died. It seems two painters have illustrated that event.

The painting in Badline Library of Oxford is a sad painting of a man sleeping in his bed. The other painting in Boston Museum of Fine Arts is the colored picture of a similar scene that shows the dying man in an olive color bed on a red pillow...” (Annemarie Schimmel, 2007: 234 and 235).

The Mongol era painters used to attend in open and public spaces and were present in incidents that covered large number of people and would use their arts to record those events and episodes. Pictures 17 and 18 are examples of that attitude. As Jahangoshay Joveini (book) shows, two great events of Mongol's attack to Baghdad, its seize and capture are illustrated. The emphasis on the event and subject could be well seen in this illustration. Even the proportion of objects is not observed in picturing while those painters were much skillful than what they showed. In picture number 18, the details of the event such as banner, the corpse, mourning women with uncovered heads, the leading woman in mourning group and men who are mourning (tapping their breasts) emphasizes on the incident of Khan's death which are focused by the painter.



painting. There are many pictures that have illustrated those painters in presenting their works to the

noblemen and kings or working in their workshops. Following picture (number 19) shows two great Mongol era painters; Dolat and Abdolrahim Anbarin Qalam, in discussing and working in a workshop. The meeting of the two characters who were considered as the great names of painting in Mongol era and their collaboration in royal library complex was an event which has been illustrated at the end of the book and as its finishing part.



Picture 19- Meeting of Abdolrahim Anbarin Ghalam and Dolat in painting workshop

Conclusion

As mentioned before, painters in Mongol era showed special attention to the original of the event and accident in their paintings. Those works are usually taken from an extraordinary occurrence in the process of ordinary and routine way of life which suddenly changed significantly. In another word, a new event paused a current affair and led to the emergence of a new event.

Those events and accidents might happen in various arenas such as mythical- epical characters and the painter usually created those works by reviewing

documents, texts or recalling what he heard. Another important subject which attracted most painters of Mongol era, one may note the social and personal life of princes and noblemen who were either contemporary of painter's time or were before him.

The religious figures and prophets were subjects of orders for painting due to the religious and spiritual values embedded in their character.

At the end, creating pieces from ordinary people and surrounding individuals' lives re-emphasizes on painter's attention to the subject, event and an occurrence.

In addition, events that might never happen again were subjects of painting. Some pictures go so far that the illustration inside the page and the texts written there complete each other exactly like a news photo in a newspaper that focuses on a subject. This characteristics in most painting works of Mongol era is worthy of study and further research.

References

1. Eghbal Ashtiani Abbas (2008), History of Mongol, Tehran, Negah Publication.
2. Pakbaz, Roein (2010), Iranian Painting (from past to present) Tehran, Zarrin and Simin Publication.
3. Dekhoda, Aliakbar (1998), Dekhoda Lexicon (15th Vol. Tehran, University of Tehran Press.
4. David Morgan (2011), Mongols, translated by Abbas Mokhber, Tehran, Nashr Markaz Publication.
5. Joveini Aladdin Ata Malek Bahaeddin Mohammad (14th Century AD), Jahangoshay Joveyni's History, corrected by Allameh Ghazvini, Leyden Publishing, by Mohammad Ramezani (1958) Kolaleh Khavar, Tehran.
6. Rodgers M.G (2003), Era of Painting, translated by Jamileh Hashemzadeh, Tehran, Dolatmand Publication.
7. Rashideddin Fazlollah Hamadani (1977), Jameol Tavarikh, collected by Ahmad Atash, Tehran, Donyaye Ketab Publication.
8. Schimmel Annemarie (2007), The Empire of the Great Moguls, translated by Faramarz Najd Samiei, Tehran, Amirkabir Publication.
9. Moein, Mohammad (1985), Farsi Lexicon, 2nd Vol. Tehran, Amirkabir Publication.
10. Nafisi, Aliakbar (1976), Nafisi Lexicon, 3rd Vol. Tehran