

ZAGORKA JANC

MINIATURES IN ISLAMIC ASTROLOGIC MANUSCRIPT  
OF ORIENTAL INSTITUTE IN SARAJEVO\*

Of a large number of Islamic manuscripts that are currently kept in Yugoslav collections, there is a small number of those that are illustrated with miniatures. One of such rare manuscripts is a fragment of the astrological manuscripts with miniatures, kept in the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo under the number 150/52.<sup>1</sup> From this document, only 22 sheets, dimensions of which being 26 × 17 cm, were preserved, very damaged and partly roughly restored. The text was written in Arabic and Turkish, (neshi), in red and black ink and blue, green and dark-brown tempera. Nine miniatures with pictures of zodiac signs and texts talking about destinies of people who were born under that sign, and which are preserved in this manuscript were done in tempera over the whole page and represent only a small number of those that this manuscript must have had. Judging by the way of representing some zodiac signs and their position in relation to the Sun and other planets, the manuscript must have had about 36 miniatures. Each miniature was followed by one page of verses about virtues of a man who is born under specific zodiac sign. This part of the text was written in horizontal lines, in black and red ink alternatively, except the title, which was written in blue, green and brown tempera. Laterally, in small square fields, there is a diagonally written text, written in blue, dark-red and green tempera. It is hard to retrace the sequence of images on these miniatures, now that there are only nine miniatures left, but it certainly did not reduce their artistic value.

On the basis of comparative research, it can be concluded that the astrological manuscript of the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo belongs to the series of astrological manuscripts created under the influence of Mesopotamian schools of the Arabic Iraq from the time of the Mongolian rule in these

---

\* See: "Minijature u islamskom astrološkom spisu Orijentalnog instituta u Sarajevu". In: *POF VI-VII/1956-57*, Sarajevo, 1958, pp. 139-145.

<sup>1</sup> The manuscript is catalogued by the author in *Katalog izložbe. Islamski rukopisi u jugoslovenskim kolekcijama* [The Exhibition Catalogue, Islamic Manuscripts in Yugoslav Collections], under no. 2 – Beograd, 1956. I express my gratitude to Dr Hazim Šabanović, scientific associate of the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo, for his help in regard to interpretation of the text accompanying miniatures. [Note: Unfortunately, this manuscript was burnt down on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1992 at the very beginning of aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina].

regions. The Mongolian culture did not have a crucial artistic influence in the countries of Persia and Iraq,<sup>2</sup> but it left its imprint in the way of dressing and in weapons, which also can be seen in our manuscript. Beside the basic influence of the Mesopotamian schools, which is reflected in the entire artistic treatment, in the placement of figures and the way of representing personifications of individual planets, there is an obvious influence of the Buddhistic art of India, which can be seen in use of gold for marking the lion's eyes, which is to represent symbolically the flames burning from the demon's eyes in Buddhistic art.<sup>3</sup>

Miniatures in our manuscript extend to the whole page and they are incorporated into an elongated rectangle. In the upper part of the composition there is a zodiac sign with sun and a personification of a corresponding planet, and in the lower part, in small rectangular frames there are also images of planets: Mars as a Mongolian warrior with a helmet and a sword across his shoulder; Saturn as a dark-skinned man, half-naked in short drawers and an axe across the shoulder; Mercury with a turban on his head and a pen in his hand, holding in front of him a scroll with text; Venus as a richly dressed woman playing lute and finally – Jupiter, as a dignified and calm man sitting with his legs crossed and his arms in wide sleeves resting on his belly.

All these miniatures were made almost graphically, without shading. The figures were given in semi-profile, seldom in profile, while movements are without liveliness, calm and well balanced. Body positions, movements and facial expressions of individual persons are schematically repeated in one or two variants. All male figures have the same short beards with long thin moustaches. All that is subordinated to certain canon that gives a specific appearance to all manuscripts of this type on the Old East.

The perspective is built by dividing the composition into two segments. Neither the depth of the space nor the volume of figures and the vegetation are felt in the composition. The plants are very close to their naturalistic shape, which is common in Persian and Arabic manuscripts of the Mongolian school from XII and XIV century. Their distribution and place are not in logical connection with the contents of the composition but they were mostly used to fill up the space and maybe only to unite the composition formally.

The images of animals are most commonly given partly stylized and superficially, never in movement, sometimes reposing.

The way all the figures are dressed is rather monotonous. The female and male figures are dressed in classical Mongolian costume, consisting of a simple dress with long sleeves and a round neckline, front buttoned and belted low around the waist. There is a round flower-shaped catch on the belt. While sitting with legs crossed, the dress is unbuttoned on the bottom and lining in

<sup>2</sup> Armenag Sakisian, "La reliure de la Perse Occidentale sous les Mongols au XIV<sup>e</sup> et au debut du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Ars islamica*, 1934, I, volume 1, 19.

<sup>3</sup> E. Blochet, *Les enluminures des manuscrits orientaux – turcs, arabes, persans – de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris, 1926, 73.

another color can be seen. The clothes appear in two versions: buttoned up to neck and unbuttoned almost down to the waist (picture 1). On two miniatures, Mercury has a shawe put on his shoulder, which falls across his chest in vertical folds. The exception from this, almost uniform clothes, is the clothes of Saturn, who is dressed only in drawers that reach his knees and which, on some pictures, resemble a drapery wrapped around thighs.

Shoes are shown only on Jupiter in the zodiac sign of Venus, where he has low pointed black shoes.

All heads are covered with turbans or caps, so that the hairstyles are not seen, except on Saturn who has short gray hair. Jupiter and Mercury regularly wear white turbans; Mars has his head covered with a chain helmet reaching his shoulders; Venus wears a sort of a crown, which is found on female figures (angels) in the Turkish manuscript on Mohammed's apocalypse from 1436.<sup>4</sup> The figures marking some zodiac signs are given with several types of caps (picture 2).

In terms of contents, totally unconnected with the composition (Sagittarius, sheet 16 century), at the beginning of the background there is a small foldable chair covered with a blue drapery. This is probably a bookstand that is usually covered with textile (picture 3).

The weapons that we can find on miniatures of our manuscript are neither specially diverse nor interesting. In the zodiac sign of Sagittarius, there is a Mongolian bow (sheet 16 century); a quiver with an arrow in the second variant of the same sign (sheet 17 century); a Mongolian sword in all picture of Mars, which we find in the Persian manuscript of the History of Mongols by Rashid ad-Din from the time of about 1310;<sup>5</sup> an axe on a thin elongated shaft carried by Saturn across his shoulder, which can be seen in hands of slaves following their masters in hunting, in numerous Persian and Arabic manuscripts from XIII to XVI century, and finally, a sort of a sickle with an elongated shaft, with which Jupiter cuts a branch on the miniature with the zodiac sign of Venus (sheet 22 century). Such a sickle is found in the manuscript of the Parisian National Library no. 5036 dating back from about 1437 in hands of Hercules, which would, chronologically certainly, correspond to our manuscript<sup>6</sup> (pictures 4 and 5).

Of all the musical instruments, there is a lute with the narrow part bent downwards, played by Venus (picture 6). Exceptionally, on the miniature representing the zodiac sign of Venus, she plays on two different instruments. On the top of the composition, represented as the main zodiac sign, Venus plays a long pipe, and downwards, in the frieze of planets, in her hands, she holds a circle that could represent a tambourine.

The ornamentation is limited to the simplest geometry and to a motif created by interweaving of two parallel bands, and which is characteristic for

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. table XXXVI.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. table XXVII.

<sup>6</sup> Quot. table XXXIX.



carpets of the Timurid period in XIV and XV century<sup>7</sup> (picture 7). These ornaments, composed in narrow bands are positioned on the frame of the arcade that almost regularly closes the upper part of the composition, on the rectangular carpets set on by some figures and on a big yellow cushion Jupiter is reclined on, in the picture of the zodiac sign of Sagittarius (sheet 17 century).

The miniatures in this manuscript were done in tempera and gold on white paper base. Colors are calm and controlled in spite of a richness of hues. Some work with gold has developed cracks and the gold is worn out. All colors were much damaged so we can presume that they had poor base or the fixer was not of a good quality. It was done without shading, and drapery folds and shapes of the body that can be discerned under the clothes were only crosshatched. Actually, the whole procedure was reduced to the surface drawing and purely graphic solutions that we often find in the eastern painting. A slight departure from this principle is the work on faces, the incarnation of which is light- and dark-pink with red shades on cheeks and around eyes.

Paints used for miniatures of this manuscript were: blue, yellow, ocher, purple, olive-green, light-green, red, white, light-brown, black and gold.

On the basis of the aforementioned, we can conclude that the manuscript of the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo was created under the influence of the Mesopotamian manuscripts of Arabic Iraq from the period of the Mongolian power. Beside this basic influence of the Mesopotamian schools, in this manuscript we can find the Mongolian influence that is reflected in the dress and in the weapons, as well as certain elements of Buddhist art of India.

On the basis of comparative research and according to the analysis of the ornamentation, clothes, weapons and other elements of the material culture, this manuscript can be dated back to XV century.

\*

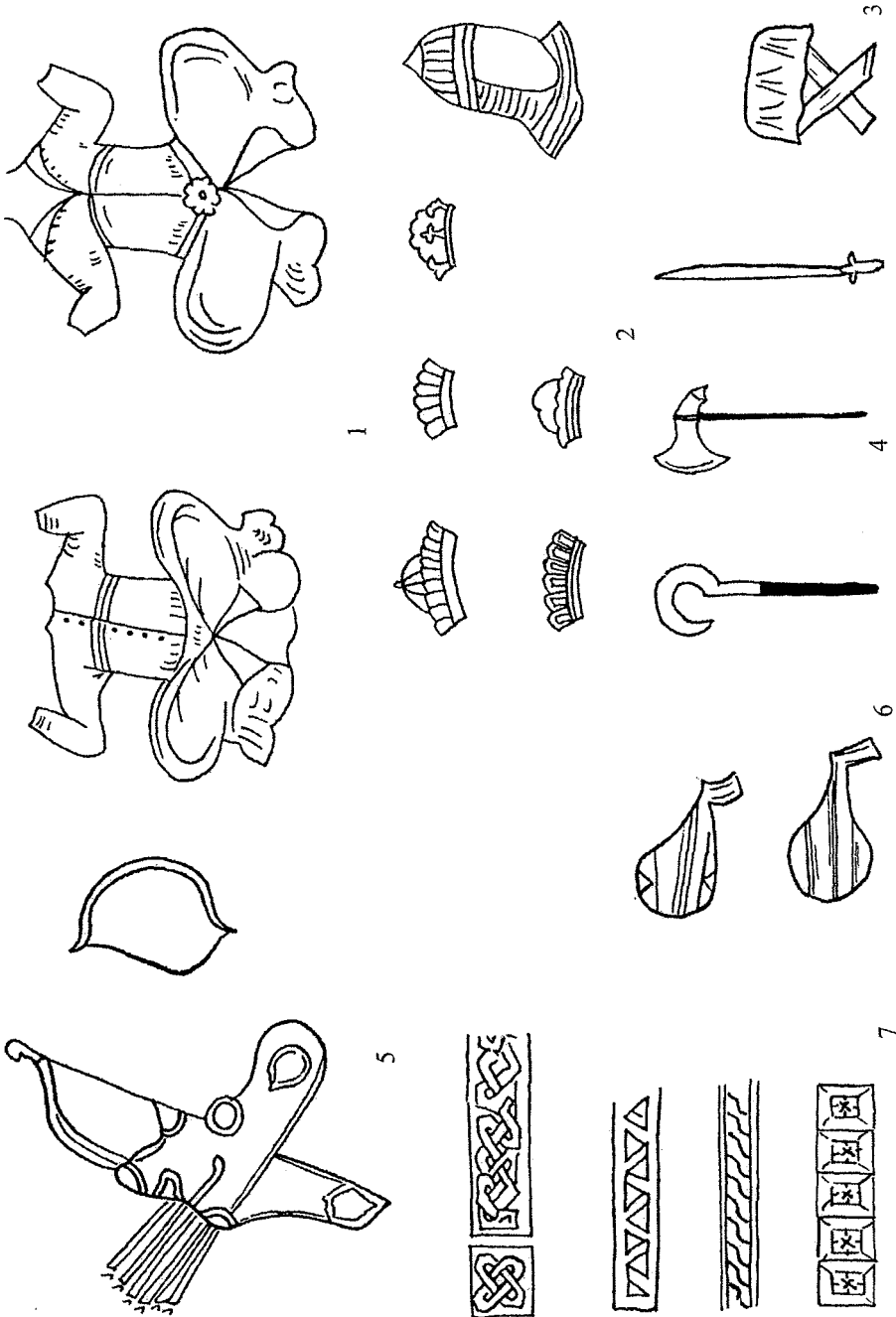
As it has already been said, in the fragment of this manuscript, only nine miniatures were preserved, that run from the fourteenth to twenty second left according to the new paging.

Description of miniatures:

*Sheet 14:* The sun in the sign of Sagittarius in opposition to Saturn. In the upper part of the composition under the arcade closing it, there is the sun – seated figure holding his aureole around his head with both hands. In the foreground, there is Saturn with an axe lifted above his head, riding a goat. The space among the figures is filled with short blue lines marking grass and bushes of yellow, ocher and purple flowers.

Downward, in a row of rectangular frames there are pictures of planets. From left to right: Mars, Saturn, Venus, Jupiter and Mercury.

<sup>7</sup> Amy Briggs, "Timurid carpets", *Ars islamica*, XCMXL, 32, picture 70.



*Sheet 15:* The sun in the sign of Gemini in opposition to Mars and Mercury. The main part of the composition is located under a big arch decorated with ornaments. In the foreground, there are Gemini and Mercury with a scroll in his hand and inkstand in front of him. In the background, at the top of the composition, there is Mars with a sword across his shoulder, kneeling on one knee. The space among the figures is like on the previous sheet, like on other miniatures, filled with luxuriant vegetation. Downward, in rectangular frames, there are planets lined up in the following sequence: Saturn, Mars, Venus, Jupiter and Mercury.

*Sheet 16:* The sun in the sign of Sagittarius (centaur) in opposition to Jupiter and Mercury. The upper part of the composition, without the standard closing arch, is taken up by Sagittarius and Jupiter in the foreground and Mercury on the left side of the background. Sagittarius is given as a centaur with his tail shaped as a stylized palm between his legs, with the discharged bow facing Jupiter. Mercury with his standard attributes, inkstand and unfolded scroll, is sitting on a white drapery with his legs tucked under.

Beside the vegetation, which, like in the other miniatures fills up the space between the figures, there are also birds (pigeons?) sitting on tops of leaves in the crown of the tree, in the upper right corner. In the middle of the composition there are low bookstand covered with a blue drapery.

Downward, in the frieze, the planets are lined up in the following sequence: Mars, Saturn, Mercury, Venus and Jupiter.

*Sheet 17:* The sun in the sign of Sagittarius (quiver with arrows) in opposition to Jupiter and Moon. The main composition is without a closing arch. In the foreground, there is a quiver with arrows as a symbol of Sagittarius and Jupiter sitting with his legs crossed, reclining on a big yellow cushion. In the upper left corner, there is a figure holding the moon in front of him, at a head level. Downward, from left to right, the following planets are lined up: Mars, Saturn, Mercury, Venus and Jupiter (Table I).

*Sheet 18:* The sun in the sign of Capricorn in opposition to Saturn and Mars. Almost whole main composition is, from the upper side, framed with an interwoven broad band. In the foreground, there is a Capricorn held on a leash by Saturn. Saturn is, on this picture exceptionally the dressed in an olive-green costume and wears a turban on his head. His attribute, an axe, is carried across his shoulder, as usual. In the background, there is Mars in golden-yellow costume with a helmet on his head and a sword across his right shoulder. In his left hand, at a head level, he holds a round dish projecting flame. Downward, in the row of the planets, there are: Mars, Saturn, Venus, Jupiter and Mercury (Table II).

*Sheet 19:* The sun in the sign of Leo in opposition to Saturn. In the foreground, there is a figure riding a lion and which represents the sun; around the head it has a big golden aureole and holds it with both hands. In the background there is Saturn. In the lower row the planets are lined up in the following sequence: Mars, Mercury, Saturn, Venus and Jupiter.



Tab. 11





القول على المولد بالاسد الشمس تاني وجه من نظر الشتركي

ح	●	ح
ز	●	ز
ر	●	ر
س	●	س
د	●	د
ر	●	ر
ز	●	ز
ح	●	ح
ز	●	ز
ر	●	ر
س	●	س
د	●	د

تالستب الحكام من نرس المولد كذا الورد كور الورد اللعن المولد  
 المرفقة مفزون الحامين خمس الصوت صم الحان في القبا  
 لا يفر من احد سويل  
 لا يفر من احد سويل  
 لا يفر من احد سويل



*Sheet 20:* The sun in the sign of Leo in opposition to Jupiter. In the foreground, there is Leo lying facing the sun. On the left side of the background, there is Jupiter, also looking at the sun. Downward, the planets are lined up in the following sequence: Mars, Mercury, Saturn, Venus and Jupiter (Table III).

*Sheet 21:* The sun in the sign of Leo in opposition to Mars. In the foreground, there is Leo walking. In the background, under an arcade, on a rectangular blue carpet there is a personification of the sun – a figure in a long ochre dress and Mars in the same, only purple costume, girded with a broad band, frontally knotted. Downward, the planets are lined up in the following sequence: Mars, Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Saturn.

*Sheet 22:* The picture that is given on this sheet, is not clear in terms of its contents nor it is sufficiently explained by the text following it. In the foreground of the composition, there is Jupiter in a long blue dress with a sickle on a long shaft, cutting a branch. On his feet he has black low shoes. Upward under the arcade closing the composition, Venus is sitting in a long ochre dress, with a crown on her head and playing pipe. Downward, in the frieze, the planets are lined up in the following sequence: Saturn, Mars, Jupiter, Venus and Mercury.

\*

At the end, it is necessary to emphasize that the text accompanying individual miniatures does not sufficiently explain their contents, so the given interpretations are not always done in accordance with the aforementioned text.

EDITORIAL NOTE: As the author of this work has taken into consideration artistic miniatures only, it is necessary to give a more complete description of the codex itself.

The name of the work was written on the first sheet of the codex in a quadrangular decorative ornamentation (in golden, dark blue and white tempera), with red Indian ink: (sic) مجموعہ مبارک (blessed collection). Clear traces, however, indicate that the original title (in white tempera) was correctly written, مجموع مبارک. Accordingly, the spelling error (disagreement in gender) is certainly on the part of the transcriber. Below that, in a round ornament, there is a sub-title in the same handwriting containing a short contents of the work: (sic) و احكام البروج و غير ذلك نفعه الله من ملكه امين: "there are some annals of messengers and laws of the constellation and other – may the Lord help the one who possesses it – Amen!".

The name of the author of this codex is not emphasized in the preserved fragments nor it can be found out in some other way. C. Brockelmann, in his *History of Arabic Literature*, mentions an extensive historic work (294 sheet) written by A Ibn al-'Amid (died in Damascus in 672/1273) titled المجموع المبارك (GAL, Supl. I, 59; G. Flügel, Kat. II, no. 884), but our manuscript does not have anything to do with that work, but rather represents fragments of some astrological work that Brockelmann does not mention. Only one part of this codex has been preserved, only 22 sheets without the original page order. These preserved fragments were subsequently paged, with pencil. When the paging was completed, the codex had at least 149 pages, because that number was written on one page. However, only 43 pages have been preserved, not calculating the cover page, specifically: 1-27, 50, 51, 54-57, 66-69, 106, 107, 146-149.

That paging is obviously wrong, for example, the page 3 must be linked with the page 16 (poem).

On the second page of the first sheet (page 1) under the title: (sic) والخلفا (sic) شيء من تواريخ الانبياء (something from the history of messengers and caliphs) he gives certain Biblical figures about time periods from Adam until Muhammad. Continuity is cut here, because detailed sheets are missing. Judging by this page, this chapter is very short. Pages 2-3 and 16-19 contain a poem in Arabic, to the glory of Muhammad under the title that is understood from the end of the poem (page 19): قصيدة المباركة, The beginning of the poem is missing.

The basic astrological part of the work is much more important. It is interesting that the textual part before the miniatures, as mentioned before, was written alternatively in Arabic and Turkish, while texts of miniatures was written only in Arabic. One chapter in Arabic was devoted to fortune telling and it interprets certain phenomena and events related to the moon entering zodiac constellations (الرجز والغال الواقع بحسب حلول القمر في البروج الاثني عشر) and it states: door creaking = forthcoming trip; buzzing in ears = voice; crow cackling = forgiveness; fear = joy; turning off light = worry after joy; ring slipping off = illness etc. It is followed by a chapter, in Turkish, about astrological interpretation of cause and phenomenon of rainbow in relation to position and phases of moon.

At the end, there are nine sheets with miniatures on one side, and on the other side, there are, regularly, twelve verses foretelling characteristics of a person born under a related zodiac sign e.g. 1) his life and body... 2) his fortune, acquiring, earning etc. In all the tables, verses are lined up in the same sequence, formulations are identical, only names of constellations are changed (always two) and, understandably, different position requires a different foretelling. We are not familiar with the method of work with those tables and how many tables there were, because the key text, needed for its explanation, is missing.

It can only be concluded that the work was, for a long time, practically used as an astrological manual because all marginalia (next to the miniatures), specifically: 2-10 and 16-23 as well as one empty page of the codex (page 11) are densely covered with excerpts from some astrological work about charms, fortune telling and foreseeing. These supplements also cover three inserted sheets (other paper) i.e. pages 12-15 and 24-25 as well as the inner page of the back binding. So, it can be said that on the margins and inserted sheets, there is another astrological work, i.e. its excerpts about charms and fortune telling, obviously as a supplement to the basic work with artistic miniatures. The glossing has been done ignorantly, with totally poor handwriting. It seems that the same hand has made additional vocalization of Arabic texts of the codex, albeit totally incorrectly. (A. H.)

MINIJATURE U ISLAMSKOM ASTROLOŠKOM SPISU  
ORIJENTALNOG INSTITUTA U SARAJEVU

SAŽETAK

Na Orientalnom institutu u Sarajevu, u zbirci br. 150/52, može se vidjeti jedan dio astroloških bilješki iz 15. stoljeća. Rukopis ima 22 lista (formata 26 × 17 cm). Tekst je napisan na arapskom, i djelimično na turskom. Listovi od 14 do 20 sadrže minijature sa ilustracijama horoskopskih znakova i popratni komentar.

Rukopis je jedan iz serije koja datira iz vremena mongolske vladavine. Osim toga, rukopis pokazuje i utjecaj mongolske odjeće i oružja, kao i tragove nekih elemenata preuzetih iz indijske budističke umjetnosti.

MINIATURES IN ISLAMIC ASTROLOGIC MANUSCRIPT OF  
ORIENTAL INSTITUTE IN SARAJEVO

SUMMARY

At the Oriental Institute of Sarajevo, in the collection No 150/52, may be seen part of an astrological record dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The manuscript has 22 sheets (format 26 × 17 cm). The text is written in Arabic, and partly in Turkish. The sheets 14 to 20 of the text contain miniatures with illustrations of the signs of the zodiac and a topical accompanying commentary.

The manuscript is one of a series that originated in the times of Mongol rule in those parts. Besides this main influence the manuscript shows the influence of Mongolian costume and weapons, as well as traces of some elements taken from the Indian Buddhist art.