THE ANALYSIS OF COLOURS USED IN THE TAHMASBI
SHAHNAMEH FOR THE SECOND PERIOD OF TABRIZ SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT
Color and light are the main elements of Persian painting. These two elements are manifested as inner and outer entity of a single reality, which represents the grace of God in the universe.

Considering the verses from the Quran that "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth", allegorical and mysterious aspects of light and color have always been considered by Islamic philosophers, sages and mystics. Effects of Islamic philosophy and mysticism on the views of Muslim artist to the art and artistic practice display specific effects of color and light in the Iranian painting for inner observation of color and light through the paintings. Color in Iranian paintings has the light in itself and the light is reflected through colors. In Iranian miniature color is interpreted as light and the artist tries to represent the luminous universe by colors. Colors are pure and glittery. Golden, blue and green which are used with the same purity and they aren't combined or become more paled or more bold and they were put together. Sometimes they find a state of holiness which its effects still can be seen today. Considering the origins of color in ancient Iran and (prior to Islam), this study attempted to addresses the mysterious allegorical aspects and application of color in the masterpieces of the second school of Safavid Tabriz from the metaphysics viewpoint.

Keywords: Color, the second school of Tabriz, Iranian painting, Shahnameh Tahmasebi.

INTRODUCTION
In the early Safavid era, the favorable political, cultural and artistic conditions of Iran ruled by a single reign and support of artists by Shah Ismail as well as the incorporation of two artistic traditions of Herat and Tabriz provided an opportunity to form a new field of painting which was the pinnacle of evolution in Iranian painting called as Tabriz school. According to visual documents, Persian manuscript paintings, by the presence of bright colors and dramatically bright representations of night scenes, have always caused most researchers speak of a massive and pervasive light in most Iranian paintings. These paintings make the audience to ask about the origin and source of this light. Allah knows Himself as is the light of heaven and earth. Light and its compositions are noted 17 times in the Qur'an. In addition, the twenty-fourth chapter of the Qur'an is called 'Noor' (light). On a general approach to Islamic art, color is always addressed metaphysically; thus, human observes the duality of darkness and light as possibilities hidden in the eternal pattern. The world of colors is not free from conflict. The point is that the color itself originates from pure light, or in other words colorlessness. Light is the realm of absolute unit entity, "light of the heavens and the earth" where there is no individuality as it is difficult to recognize God due to its excessive brilliance.

Imam Mohammad Ghazali said: "The difficulty [in recognition] of God is brightness; it is so bright that hearts cannot understand it; nothing is brighter than the sun, which appears everything. However, if you do not set in the night like the sun, or you become popular because of shadows, you do not understand that there is a light on the ground. They only saw the white and green and other colors, and
they said there is no more; so, they knew the light is something but color and the light appears colors” (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 2001).

The Concept of Color in the Perspective of Islamic Scholars
In ritual ideology, human being highlights the nature of objects and do not perceive the reality of the object through its external effects; instead, human tries to perceive the inner self. This is an inward-looking approach. Perhaps, one of the most important components of this approach is represented by the Prophet (pbuh) that ‘reveal the nature of the objects and the reality of objects, not what is said in their face’. According to Najm al-Din Razi, colors are categorized in seven levels, each connected to a spiritual state. The first six levels including white, yellow, purple, green, blue and red lights represent the beauty, while the seven level which is represented by black light is the glory. This light, also called as the bright night, is the Allah's essence which, can be identified to the night because of its undifferentiated visual indeterminacy; as nothing can be recognized at night, there is no perception at this level of essence which is the exhaustion of phenomena.

Sacredness of Color in Ancient Iran
Vohu Manah is the god of wisdom in ancient Iranian thought. Intellect is a factor which discovers phenomena by its nature in the realm of human understanding. By wisdom or true knowledge, we put the dark curtain of existence aside and we come to light. By the similarity between the light and whiteness, we find that the white can be the color of Vohu Manah, the god of wisdom. Through ritual ideology, colors become sacred due to their relationship with the sacred realm. White becomes sacred due to its relation with wits and wits with Vohu Manah. Gold is sacred due to its relation to yellowness and yellowness to the sun. Phenomena like sun and Vohu Manah, whether gods of the heavens or immaterial gods, are worshiped by ancient humans. Any color related to these gods is sacred. Therefore, the realm of art which manifests this sacredness represents the presence of these sacred colors. Sometimes, the source of this sacredness is completely abstract (Bolkhari-Ghaihi, 2009).

Colors in Iran after Islam: Painting
In Iranian painting, color embraces light and light is reflected from the color. In Iranian art, colors are used by knowledge of both symbolic concepts of color and effects of words which pass the spirit by combining or coordinating colors. Colors are the essential part of Persian art and one of the components which require full attention to their symbolic meaning to understand the inner meaning of Iranian art (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 2001).

The pure resplendent colors of Persian paintings amaze man. The most notable distinction of Persian paintings and Chinese and Western masterpieces is the brightness of colors. Powders of gold and silver, lapis lazuli, emeralds and precious stones purify the body of Persian paintings, as they are a reflection of metaphysics. Because, color is the same light in the Persian painting and the artist tries to represent the luminous world of heavens by colors.

The dominant colors of Persian painting are green and blue along with red, yellow and like which express the elegance, beauty, excitement and fascination of another world (Khoshnazar & Rajabi, 2009). In addition, the extraordinary purity and elegance and harmony of colors which reflect light distinguish Iranian painting and Hindi and Chinese painting. In Persian paintings inspired by the imagination, light colors come first, since the artist tend to manifest the aesthetic principle which is an evidence of God; this is not possible except by light colors. On the other hand, this is the human spirit which satisfies the inner need for light source by relying color (Tajvidi, 1996).In symbolic use of seven colors, white, black and brown are synonymous with fall and rise and expansion, respectively. White is the ultimate integration of all colors, pure light color and a symbol of unity. Black is selfsecrecy, total covering of the Kaaba. Brown is the color of soil and the earthen a symbol of man. Red, yellow, green and blue are associated with fire, air, water and land, respectively, which are the four main elements of creation. The first two (red and yellow or fire and air) are active and two others (green and blue or water and land) are passive.
Thus, blue symbolizes the infinite sky and gold is the symbol of the soul. This blue along with gold refers to mercy which tends to manifest itself. Color in the painting is beyond the noncompliance of the narrator reality of the world (Bolkhari-Gahai, 2009).

In Seljukian paintings, the dominant color was madder lake. In this way, more than two-thirds of the background was painted by madder lake and images such as trees and birds were spread over the background in mauve, gold, olive green and purple colors. According to Lowry, colors used in Iranian painting at early seventh century A have been limited to five colors: light blue, purple, vermilion, pale yellow, and a grayish heavy golden. The Ilkhanate art, under the influence of Chinese painting, mostly used gray and dark and light brown. In this period, cold colors are replaced by warm colors; intense colors are so balanced that the eye does not stay in one place and circulates to all colorful parts. In the period, artists became more skilled in preparation of purer colors by more luster colors. At late eighth century AH, a higher quality blue was prepared and Venetian Ceruse was more applied (Goudarzi, 2005). However, painting with bright colors revived since the Timurid period in Herat and Shiraz. The Persian tradition of coloring was still common in Fars, because it was not completely under influence of Ilkhans. Heratian color was under influence of Ilkhanid Shiraz. In this school, the painter tended to use warm colors. Moreover, colors shifted from naturalistic to imaginary style. The yellow gold represented the radiation of pure world, and backgrounds were covered by azure sky as a symbol of heavens. In this period (Timurid), colors were used conceptually under influence of concepts like Sufism, mysticism. During this period, artists could develop a detailed plan and yet eye-catching subtle colors. In this school, accuracy and balance of colors reached to the degree of perfection. During ninth and tenth centuries AH, painters could reduce the contradiction and contrast of colors by reducing the painted area. During this period, various colors were used beautifully and proportionally in small geometric shapes, or parts divided on colorful backgrounds (Ibid: 212). Although the Timurid coloring and newly adopted methods apparently followed the same luxurious proportion, it described the real details of daily life. Works of this period contain the most decorated, royally colorful pictures representing the daily life of Iranian people (Johnson, 1989).

**Color in the Second School of Tabriz**

During the reign of Shah Tahmasp, the Turkmen and Herat painting styles were integrated, which led to the creation of paintings with amazing colors. Unique bright colors of paintings make a harmonious, diverse and brilliant festival of colors by their rational landscapes and harmonious compositions which represent the influence of Sufism during the reign of Shah Tahmasp. In the paintings, harmonious light colors provide a vibrant atmosphere. Tabriz painting builds a special system of beauty, in which the joyful glory of arrangement and abundance of extremely bright colors is common (Pakbaz, 2000). In Tabriz paintings, the bright diverse colors are applied on the whole picture, particularly for cloths of rulers. Colors are bright, replete, compelling, sensitive and peaceful. This school embodies the elements by elegance and beauty of colors. Harmoniously bright colors are another feature of this school. In the second school of Tabriz, all decorative elements are equally important. People, architectural decoration and natural landscapes are represented by intense brilliance to be joyful. In this school, colors are mysteriously free, intense, diverse, and magnificent. Artists are more satisfied with cliffs and mountain landscape than with other motifs. Colors are used brilliantly and purely. These bright colors are associated with the powerful rhythm and complex composition of Turkmen painting. Works of Sultan Muhammad in Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp are a combination of bright, joyful and vibrant colors of Turkmen school and complex structure of Herat school (Canby, 2003). Finally, the colors of Tabriz painting are different in Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasp era. During the reign of Shah Ismail, colors are bright, joyful and vibrant, the sky is golden, background is rich and bright green and bushes are bright green and yellow, where the effect of Turkmen style is evident. During the reign of Shah Tahmasp, on the other hand, a variety of colors is used; the sky is often golden or azure and sometimes blue. Often, golden and blue colors are often reflected on the edge of the hills and the clouds are often blue with white edges.

**Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp**

Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp is one of the most precious Iranian manuscripts containing very beautiful paintings. This valuable manuscript was presented to the Ottoman court for enthronement of
Sultan Selim II in mid tenth century AH (976 AH); but it was moved my steriously from Istanbul to the collection of Baron Edmond Rothschild in 1903. Paintings of this manuscript are gloriously decorated. This manuscripts contains sponge reefs in the form of human head, a carpet of flowers and plants throughout the land, meander streams, twisted clouds, singing birds. A number of artists use colors to express a particular concept. These paintings usually present heroes, kings or specific individuals by a certain garment in a special color. For example, Rustam’s horse has a pink-orange spots, which is common in all paintings.

**Keyumars’s Court: People Are Wearing Leopard Skin**

This painting was made by Sultan Muhammad. In this painting, Keyumars has a throne on top of the mountain. The king sits in the line of composition and Siamak sits at a lower level and higher than others do. In front of Siamak, Houshang, his son and the avenger of Black Daeva stands with respect. The sky is golden and decorated by clouds in the Chinese style.

As the golden color leads to the divine world in Islamic-Iranian paintings, the golden sky here represents the divine and heavenly environment. The colors used for garments reduce uniformity. Particularly, the position of people induces a sense of flames. Moreover, this color along with purple and blue ties a special sanctity to the work. This painting contains many bright and joyful colors. The dominant colors are dark green, light purple, azure, orange, golden, and pinkish yellow. Different spectra of colors are applied. Trees blossom; blossoms are white, pink and orange which are glorious in the golden heaven.

There is a small silver waterfall in the center, passing through the garden. Keyumars is wearing a brown leopard coat and a golden azure hat. Siamak is wearing a brown dress and a leopard garment. They are surrounded by courtiers with the pelisse-like clothes made of tiger skin or other animals. The overall atmosphere, as previously noted, is fantastic and supernatural.

![Image 1. Keyumars’s Court: People Are Wearing Leopard Skin](www.AKDN.ORG) Sadruddin Aga Khan collection, Geneva,
Sadeh Festival
Riding in the mountains, Houshang sees a tall black animal and throws a stone to kill him; the stone hits another stone and a spark is made; in this way, fire is discovered. Houshang celebrates his discovery by setting up a party. Sadeh Festival is represented by Sultan Muhammad. This painting contains abundant and very bright and joyful colors. Dominant colors are golden, dark and light green, pinkish yellow and orange, red, light and dark violet and azure. Different spectra of colors are applied. Blossoms are white, blue, yellow, pink and red which are manifested beautifully in the azure sky night. Houshang is wearing an orange dress and a blue and golden garment. His diadem is also blue and golden on which there is a black and white fairy. He is sitting on a cream and brown carpet. Safavid Sufi leaders are often called Sheikh Alsajadeh. In the top, there is a black monster hidden in purple, orange, and yellow cliffs.


Nightmare of Zahhak
This work is painted by Mir Mosavar, one of the students of Behzad. Painting illustrates the Moment Zahhak wakes up and the reaction of courtiers. Gold and silver are used for the painting. The dominant color is warm colors including yellow, azure blue, red, pink, dark and light green, brown and white. Courtiers are wearing fine clothing. Men have white turban with a red mark on their heads. Two women can be seen on both sides of Zahhak.

One of the women, possibly Arnavaz who is his wife, has a diadem on his head. He is wearing five layers of clothes: 1) light gray underwear, 2) dark blue shirt with a button collar, 3) green shirt with sleeves, 4) red cloak with golden ornaments and accessories, 5) white lace over his shoulders. In this work, Zahhak is old and anxious. There are two white snakes symmetrically on both sides of him. In this painting, the scene of the dark blue sky with a crescent moon between the two parts of the palace indicates an incident happened at night. All colors are so bright and clear, as if the story happened in the day, not in mid-night. Not even locally, the light on the face of the guards holding the torch and bright colors of his dress from head to toe can be discarded.
Image 3. Nightmare of Zahhak (Ajand, 1384: 146) Museum of Contemporary Art of Iran,

To enslave Zahhak on Mount Qaf
Fereydoun enslaved Zahhak in a dark cave on Mount Damavand. This painting is a work of Mir Sayyid Ali. Much of this painting contains colored cliffs. In this painting, the dominant colors are yellow and gray. The ground, mountains and cliffs are in purple in contrast with the blue sky and green trees. The figures are dressed in beautiful colors in contrast to the rocks and the ground. Enslaved Zahhak is wearing a blue garment with red shawl and orange pants. His clothes are harmonious to the yellowish brown. The dress of people seen in all corners of the painting is colored by warm colors and the dominant colors are red, orange, yellow, azure blue and green. The colors of horses are in dark and light contrast. The clouds are elaborately curling with bright gray and purple lines. Colors used in this painting are red, blue, dark and light green, golden and silver, yellow, cream and light blue. The composition of the painting has an important role. White color is used on the head and forehead of horses, flowers, hats, clothing, clouds, as well as hair and beard of Zahhak. Fereydoun is on top of the mountain on the right. He has a bull-headed mace in his hand. His shirt is green, light blue and orange. There are golden figures on his shirt. Green has its own meaning in both realms of mysticism and psychology. Green is the color of innocence, catharsis and purity. His shoes are yellow. Clothing, shields and harnesses are golden. There is a red mark on turbans.
Rakhsh Defeats the Lion

This painting is portrayed by Sultan Muhammad. Mixed plants and rocks, bright colors, powerful rhythms and complex compositions are all features of Turkmen painting. In this painting, naturalistic element is so dominant that the audience will not perceive the story at first glance if Sultan Mohammed did not present Rakhsh by red with pink-orange spots and green supplements around a golden-yellow lion. Live rocks in blue and light orange, red, yellow, orange and blue flowers and blossoms in different sizes, turbulent clouds in blue with white streaks are visible in the sky. Bushes and thick grasses cover the landscape by different greens. Rustam is lying on a colorful carpet with warm colors including red, orange, pink, yello and blue.
Ferdowsi Discusses Courtier Poets Sultan Mahmoud
This painting is attributed to Aqa Mirek. It shows the scene where Ferdowsi meets Ghazni poets. To complain the cruel ruler of Tus, Ferdowsi travels to Ghazni and meets three courtier poets outside the city. This meeting leads to the composition of Shahnameh in the order of Sultan Mahmoud. The painting presents a green garden full of trees, bushes and flowers and blossoms in red, white, blue, pink, orange and yellow. Even trees are covered by white blossoms. Ferdowsi stands alone in front of Ghazni poets on the left. He is wearing a blue robe. A cedar tree separates him from other poets. Blue represents peace, happiness and inner journey. The mountains and the sky are light blue. Cloths are yellow, dark and light blue, white, orange, brown and azure. Both warm and cold colors are used equally.


Ferdowsi Tests His Literary Taste against Sultan Muhammad of Ghazni
This unique masterpiece is the work of Mir Mosavar. In this painting, Ferdowsi is reading Shahnameh and Sultan Mahmoud is watching him on the throne. In this painting, the colors are diverse, harmonious and balanced. In total, colors tend to be warm and bright.

Red and cooked green are dominant in the painting. There is an interesting contrast between light and dark blue and green, and red and cooked green. The blue sky decorated with flowers, shrubs and plants is in conflict with its adjacent yellow sky. The building is manifested by orange and yellowish brown bricks and blue-green tiles. The blue-green pave is repeated in the exterior roof, which is a sign of balance and movement.

The carpet covering the hall is greenish with dark blue decorations. The carpet has a purple border with golden, blue and orange ornaments. Sultan Mahmoud is dressed in red with a bright green vest. Bending his neck, Ferdowsi is dress turquoise blue with orange scarf tied to his waist. The color of clothing for women, children and guards and the other bodies are admirably consistent and balanced. White turbans and scarves contribute to the strength of the composition.
As a Dragon, Fereydoun Tests His Children
This painting is attributed to Aqa Mirak. In general, the dominant colors are orange yellow, light violet red and golden. The sky is golden in contrast with the ground colored in gray and violet. The white and pink blossoms glow at the golden sky. A silver river passes the right side of the painting. The dragon is dark gray, possibly covered by silver. Its wings and golden flames as well as its red tongue fill the left hand of the painting. Princes are depicted on horseback by contrasting colors including brown, white and gray in orange yellow, light orange, green, yellow, white, dark blue and red cloths. The two princes, probably Salm and Tur, are wearing Ghezelbash hats with a black mark on them. There is a black and white feather on their turbans. Iraj, wearing a golden and azure blue diadem, attacks the dragon. Horses are blue, green and orange decorated with golden streaks. Trees are dark and light green; flowers are red, white, pink and blue.

Barbad the hidden Musician
This masterpiece is attributed to Mirza Ali. This painting shows Barbad playing among cypress. The scene is quite colorful and vibrant and colors are intensely glowing.
Chinese-style gray clouds disturb the blue sky. Trees and cypresses are painted by dark emerald green. Almost all the background is green. In this painting, colors are neither warm nor cold; all the colors are bright and joyful in surprising harmony with each other. The dominance of green enhances the brightness of other colors. Bright purple surrounds the green cliffs. Barbad is wearing an orange robe and white turban. Accompanies of Khosrow Parviz are dressed with transparent colors.

![Image 9](http://example.com/image9.jpg)

**Image 9.** As a Dragon, Fereydoun Tests His Children (Canby, 1377:111) Reza Abbasi Museum

**Tahmores Defeats Daeva**

The painting is attributed to Sultan Mohammed. This painting contains a unique variety of purple and pink for rocks, clothes and daeva. The dominant colors of bodies are red, purple and pink. The background is divided into two areas. The area in which Tahmores is fighting daeva is light blue with wavy margins of green, purple and light pink. The other area in which daeva is located is green. The flowers are white, red, blue and yellow. The figures are dressed in blue, red, purple and orange. There are black and red marks on white turban.

![Image 10](http://example.com/image10.jpg)

**Image 10.** Tahmores Defeats Daeva (www.britishmuseum.org) Great Britain Museums
CONCLUSION

Safavid Tabriz School witnessed the diversity, integrity and richness of color in the history of painting. In this school, color is highly pure and bright; in other words, colors embrace light and the light is reflected from the colors. By perusing the paintings of Tabriz school, it is evident that the colored lights are consistent with the feeling of seeing colored lights which were observed by mystics in their spiritual journey. The art of coloring was reborn in the works of artists such as Kamal al-Din Behzad, Sultan Muhammad and Mirek heravi. Red, brown and orange highlight the joy and beauty and gold and silver emphasize the artistic nature of paintings. The primary and secondary colors were not different for painters; they were not preferred over each other. The colors were used as pure as the colors driven from nature. Whenever the painter did not find his desired colors in the nature, he made them by combining other colors. The colors were put together in such a way that not only they added to brightness of each other, but also gave balance and harmony to the painting as a whole. The made colors were very light. The colors were not mixed together, but were put side by side. The colors had no certain extent, but their coordination, balance and diversity were interesting.

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