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Original Research Article

An Examination of the Tradition of Model Re-creation in Iranian-Islamic Painting Based on the Miniatures of “The Kneeling Youth”

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Abstract

Problem statement: In the Iranian-Islamic painting tradition, re-creating the masterpieces of renowned masters was a widespread practice that enabled the transmission of style and the continuity of artistic schools. Among the most remarkable examples is the archetype “The Kneeling Youth,” which artists have recreated creatively from the Safavid period to the present. This study explores how such recreations of canonical works can be understood within the tradition of model re-creation in Iranian-Islamic painting.

Research objective: This research aims to investigate the re-created versions of the archetype “The Kneeling Youth” and to analyse their position within the tradition of model re-creation in Iranian-Islamic painting. The ultimate goal is to uncover the aesthetic, pedagogical, and conceptual reasons underlying this sustained artistic practice.

Research method: The study employs a descriptive-analytical approach. Re-created versions of the archetype are identified, documented, and examined through stylistic and thematic comparisons. Data are collected through documentary and library-based sources.

Conclusion: The examination of “The Kneeling Youth” miniatures demonstrates that model re-creation in the Iranian-Islamic painting tradition, contrary to interpretations derived from modern Western art theory, was not a mere mechanical repetition of earlier works. Instead, it represented a creative, dialogical, and pedagogical process involving continuous interaction between the artist, the master, and the artistic tradition. These re-creations functioned as dynamic vehicles for reinterpretation and renewal, facilitating the transmission of visual styles, aesthetic values, and symbolic meanings. While maintaining the essential compositional framework, each version introduced subtle innovations in colour, design, and ornamentation, reflecting the artist’s creativity and intellectual engagement with inherited forms. This tradition emphasises the role of artistic workshops as centres of education, experimentation, and the refinement of creative expression within Iranian-Islamic art.

Keywords: *Art, Iranian-Islamic Painting, Tradition of model re-creation, Isfahan School, “Kneeling Youth” Miniatures.*

Introduction and Problem Statement

Ritual The creative reworking of established models in Iranian art, especially in miniature painting, constitutes one of the most significant artistic phenomena,

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sustaining visual and technical continuity while simultaneously enabling innovation and stylistic diversity. Understanding the position of model re-creation in Iranian-Islamic art is impossible without considering its historical, cultural, and social contexts.

In Iranian-Islamic art, model re-creation has never meant mere “objectification” or “mechanical reproduction”; rather, it has generally been regarded as a deliberate, creative, and purposeful process. Therefore, the concept of model re-creation in miniature painting, which is governed by conventions and hierarchies distinct from those of Western art, differs somewhat from the notion articulated by Genette, and by no means corresponds to Fredric Jameson’s (1992, 64 & 65) theories concerning imitation in art. According to Jameson, the disappearance of the individual subject and its formal consequence, the growing inaccessibility of personal style, has produced the nearly universal practice that may be called imitation. Even Jameson’s reference to the Platonic concept of imitation, or what the French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre termed the increasing dominance of the “neo,” does not apply to the phenomenon of model re-creation in Iranian art. Historically, the tradition of model re-creation in Iranian art became particularly prominent during the Timurid and Safavid periods.

Painting held an exalted status during the Safavid era. The structure and methods of miniature painting in this period were indebted to earlier traditions, particularly to the artistic style of the Timurids (Naghieh & Amani, 2025, 84). The principal function of model re-creation during these periods was not only to preserve artistic styles and transmit skills from one generation to another but also to serve as a pedagogical method. Young artists, to master the intricate techniques of miniature painting, from figure drawing and composition to colouring and ornamentation, were initially required to reproduce the works of their masters. In this educational process, Model re-creation functioned as an exercise and a form of practice in the “visual language” of their predecessors, preparing the artist to manifest his individuality and creativity later. Within this framework, one may refer to the activities of artistic ateliers in the Timurid and Safavid courts, where apprentices first cultivated their skills by re-creating the works of masters such as Kamal al-Din Behzad or Reza Abbasi. Reproduction at this stage was considered an “artistic exercise,” but gradually evolved into independent artworks. This practice was not limited to apprentices; prominent artists sometimes imitated their predecessors.

Artists such as Kamal al-Din Behzad and Reza Abbasi produced works that can be considered creative model re-creations of earlier masters’ paintings. For example, in Reza Abbasi’s miniature *Majnun, the Dog, and Two Travellers*, one can observe Behzad’s influence in composition and characterisation (ShahKolahi & Afhami, 2022, 15). These model re-creations contributed to preserving and transmitting stylistic details and served as pedagogical resources and educational tools.

Model re-creation was not limited to technical purposes alone. In didactic texts and *futuwwat-nāme*hs (books of chivalric ethics), explicit recommendations exist to observe art etiquette and emulate one’s masters (Bavandian & Farhangdoust, 2022, 130 & 136). Thus, model re-creation was an artistic act and an ethical practice, a form of respect toward the master and the artistic tradition. Through model re-creation, the artist demonstrated a profound understanding of the legacy of the past and, through mastery of it, could proceed to create new works. In this sense, model re-creation represented a “transitional stage” in the artist’s professional journey. Although some critics have regarded model re-creation as a sign of stagnation or lack of creativity, historical evidence shows that in Iranian miniature painting, it has always been accompanied by innovation.

The creative adaptation of earlier works dates back to the pre-Islamic era. In the Achaemenid bas-reliefs of Persepolis, traces of artistic traditions from Mesopotamia and even Egypt can be discerned. While remaining faithful to the main elements of the reference work, the artist often introduced variations in details, colouration, facial expressions, or even composition, producing new and distinct creations. This approach demonstrates that model re-creation in Iranian art is more closely aligned with the concept of “creative re-creation” than with that of mere “imitation or repetition.” Miniature painting, by its very nature, was never intended to represent nature in a purely mimetic sense (Sheikhi & Gharaei, 2016, 4; Mehryar et al., 2021, 52). Model re-creation within the artistic schools of Iran, especially within the Isfahan School, played a significant role in consolidating their visual and cultural identities. Through the reproduction of exemplary works, aesthetic elements and compositional

methods distinctive to each school were transmitted to later generations, while simultaneously honouring the original creator. This principle applies to most artistic genres, particularly literature and architecture (Karami & Hejazi, 2016, 87). The repeated model re-creation of an artwork underscored its importance and value within the collective artistic memory.

Moreover, model re-creation often responded to market demand and patronage. During and after the Safavid period, with the relative emancipation of miniature painting from manuscript illumination and the rise of single-sheet paintings, the demand of courtly and non-courtly patrons for re-created versions of renowned works led to an increase in creative model re-creation (Fazel & Chitsazian, 2012, 41). Certain masterpieces' visual and aesthetic features were also among the reasons for their frequent re-creation. For instance, some works attracted attention due to their distinctive characteristics. In this regard, one can point to Western artworks, which, due to their use of perspective, inspired Eastern artists, such as Mohammad Zaman during the Safavid, Zand, and Qajar periods, to engage in model re-creation (Kord Noghani & Salmani, 2020, 149). Likewise, the influence of Chinese art on Iranian art can also be noted (Bahranipour, 2011, 13–20). A similar phenomenon occurred in reverse when Western artists drew inspiration from the handicrafts of the Eastern cultural sphere.

Therefore, in Iranian-Islamic miniature painting, model re-creation was not a sign of weakness or lack of creativity, but rather a multifunctional tool for education, continuity of tradition, creative development, and affirmation of the value and status of the original work. In other words, model re-creation in Iranian miniature painting was a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon. On one hand, it functioned as an educational, ethical, and technical practice, serving as the foundation for the growth of great artists; on the other hand, it was a means for the preservation of visual traditions, the consolidation of cultural identity, and the stimulation of individual creativity. Furthermore, as a social and economic tool, imitation also addressed market demands and audiences' tastes. On the intercultural level, model

re-creation provided a framework for artistic interaction and exchange between Iranian-Islamic art and the arts of other civilisations. Thus, model re-creation should not be regarded as a sign of weakness or lack of creativity, but rather as a dynamic, creative, and generative tradition that has enriched Iranian-Islamic miniature painting and sustained its continuity throughout history.

Research Question

The central research question of this study is: How can the model re-creations of prominent and exemplary works within the Iranian-Islamic miniature tradition be understood, interpreted, and analysed, and what meanings and functions do they possess within their historical, artistic, and cultural contexts?

The fundamental inquiry is whether these model re-creations should be regarded merely as reproductions of earlier works or as creative processes that, through reinterpretation and re-creation, have contributed to the continuity and transmission of artistic styles and concepts. Furthermore, the study seeks to determine at what level these model re-creations operate regarding function, status, and meaning. Are they to be seen as expressions of reverence for tradition and artistic heritage, or should they be understood as pedagogical tools for training apprentices and practising miniature techniques within artistic workshops?

Another critical question is whether, despite their formal similarities, model re-creations have provided a foundation for innovation and the emergence of new stylistic approaches. From this perspective, the main objective of the research is not limited to identifying instances of model re-creation but rather to elucidating the aesthetic mechanisms, pedagogical functions, and cultural-historical implications of this practice within the broader context of the Iranian miniature tradition.

Literature Review

No independent study has been written on the tradition of model re-creation in Iranian miniature painting; however, several scholarly works have addressed this subject implicitly. Among them is the article "The influence of relations of Chinese Ming dynasty

with Persian miniature Timurid dynasty on Heart School of painting” by Ali Bahranipour (2011), which demonstrates how the use of colours and designs in Herat miniatures reflects the influence and adaptation of Chinese painting traditions by Timurid artists.

Jafari Dehkordi & Izadi Dehkordi (2019), in their article “Symbolism of footprints in the history of Orient with an emphasis on the image of footprint in Falname Tahmasebi”, argue that the composition of this miniature was inspired by Buddhist prototypes, though reinterpreted through the use of Islamic symbols.

Fazl Vaziri and Mohammadi (2024), in “The Theme and Pictorial Role of Elderly Women in Iranian Miniature Painting,” show that the depiction of elderly women in Iranian miniatures was not merely a repetitive motif but gradually evolved into a specific and referential archetype that artists from different historical periods repeatedly revisited and re-created. This visual theme, both in content and form, became established and enduring within the Iranian miniature tradition.

Aghaie (2022), in his article “Authorship and individuality in Isfahan Painting School,” employing a sociological approach, demonstrates that authorship in this school of painting initially referred more to compilation and completion than to creative invention. However, with the rise of artistic patronage and the decline of production monopolies, conditions emerged for individual creativity and the emergence of the painter as an “author” in distinctive stylistic works.

In reviewing the existing literature, although none of these studies directly examine the tradition of model re-creation in miniature painting, the available evidence indicates that this tradition has persisted throughout the history of Iranian painting. Various works and styles have continually influenced one another. Therefore, the present study seeks to contribute significantly by systematically identifying, analysing, and synthesising this enduring artistic tradition, offering an integrated perspective on the practice of model re-creation within Iranian miniature art.

Research Method

The data collection method of this study is based on comprehensive documentary and library research approaches. In the initial stage, theoretical data and

previous research were gathered through written sources, including relevant books and scholarly articles, to establish the study’s theoretical foundation. Subsequently, artworks and objects preserved in museums and collections were examined as tangible and exemplary data, ensuring that all aspects of the research were considered.

Multiple model re-created versions of the miniature known as “Kneeling Youth” were identified and compiled in this process. The similarities and differences among these model-recreated versions were thoroughly examined using comparative stylistic and contextual analysis. The data obtained from the description of the visual characteristics of each version were then analysed in light of the theoretical discussions, ensuring a comprehensive and in-depth understanding.

This comparison was conducted from the perspective of visual elements, such as line, colour, composition, and decorative details, and also from conceptual and thematic viewpoints to reveal different artists’ creativity. Ultimately, this methodological approach made it possible to determine the position of the model re-created versions within the Iranian–Islamic miniature tradition and to accurately evaluate the significance of the “Kneeling Youth” miniatures in transmitting and sustaining artistic styles and techniques.

Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical foundations of this research are based on two main domains: general theories of imitation in philosophy and aesthetics, and the position of model re-creation within the tradition of Persian miniature painting. Examining these domains provides a conceptual framework that situates the analysis of the so-called “Kneeling Youth” miniatures within a theoretical context and enables the evaluation of their place in the history of Iranian–Islamic painting.

• The theory of imitation in Western philosophy and aesthetics

The concept of imitation (Mimesis), meaning representation or adaptation, is one of the oldest notions in philosophy and aesthetics. In ancient Greek texts, the term carried philosophical, psychological, and moral implications. For instance, in *The Republic*, Plato

considered imitation a second-order representation: the sensible world reflects the world of Forms, and art reflects that sensible world. Thus, through imitation, art becomes twice removed from the truth, once from the realm of Forms, and once from the visible world (Foshay, 2009, 1–16). Plato expressed ethical and psychological concerns about the effects of art, which he regarded as an imitation of imitation. In *The Republic*, arts that reproduce negative realities or unforgivable emotions are seen as corrupting the mind and the soul. Because of his ideas about the nature of art and the artist, Plato is not a favoured philosopher among artists; as Friedrich Nietzsche described, Plato was “the greatest enemy of art that Europe has ever known” (Grethlein, 2020, 157).

The notion of art as imitation today seems indefensible. However, just as art as imitation appears indefensible, the concept of art as pure creation is equally so. Both perspectives lead to the same conclusion: the inevitable separation of art from truth and the world. This is why justifying the concept of artistic knowledge remains difficult. The solution is acknowledging that the relationship between artistic creation and artistic imitation is not oppositional; creation and imitation coexist within art (Pitari, 2021, 18).

In contrast to Plato, in his *Poetics*, Aristotle presented imitation not as an inferior act but as the essence of art, a means of re-creation and understanding reality. For Aristotle, mimesis was not merely an aesthetic act but also a natural and fundamental method of learning and cognition. Human beings, driven by imitative instincts, are inclined toward imitation from childhood, and this inclination leads to both comprehension and pleasure derived from representation. According to Aristotle, artistic representation may re-create “possible” or “probable” realities, not necessarily precise external realities, but those that offer deeper insights into human conditions and existential matters.

A key component of Aristotle’s aesthetic philosophy is the concept of catharsis, the purification or release of emotions such as pity and fear in the audience of a tragedy. For Aristotle, through imitation of actions and characters in particular circumstances, tragedy produces both emotional and cognitive effects on the viewer; this

impact is not merely emotional but also epistemological (Schaper, 1968, 131–143).

These two contrasting approaches laid the theoretical foundations for later debates about the value and function of imitation in the history of Western thought. Through these perspectives, questions arose about the limits of artistic creativity in reproduction and the relationship between authenticity and imitation within aesthetic theory. In contemporary art research, alongside the notion of imitation, we encounter the concept of authenticity, a multifaceted term with diverse interpretations. Authenticity is sometimes defined as a creative and interpretive process; in other words, even an imitative work may embody elements of creativity. Hence, an artist who engages in imitation is not merely a copyist but makes creative choices in the act of model re-creation, including selections of colour, composition, decorative details, proportions, and occasionally the omission or addition of visual elements. This aspect underscores the potential for re-creations of artistic value, rather than mere replication (Fawcett, 1997, 20–25). Walter Benjamin’s (2018, 1235–1246) essay “The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction” is one of the most influential theories referenced in contemporary discussions of artistic reproduction and authenticity. Benjamin argues that mechanical reproduction allows for greater dissemination of art and accessibility to broader audiences; however, this very accessibility diminishes the original aura of the work. The viewer’s relationship with the original artwork, its spatial and temporal experience (the sense of seeing the authentic work, its physical presence, or its display context), constitutes a significant part of its authenticity.

Recent studies in the psychology and evaluation of art show that authentic artworks generally receive higher ratings from viewers in terms of “appeal,” “artistic credibility,” and “aesthetic emotion,” especially when viewers are aware that the work is original or comes from the artist’s own workshop. However, other studies reveal that when a reproduction is of high quality, the difference in audience evaluation between the original and the reproduction decreases. The aesthetic experience of the reproduction can be comparable to that of the

original, provided that the audience is informed about its authenticity (Specker et al., 2023, 294).

• Model re-creation in the Iranian artistic tradition

Within the traditional context of Persian miniature painting, model re-creation was not only an accepted practice but also an educational and workshop necessity. Apprentices in royal and non-royal ateliers developed their technical skills, such as portrait drawing, composition, and colour application, by studying and re-creating their masters' works. This process, while facilitating the transmission of techniques and the consolidation of stylistic characteristics across different schools, also provided a foundation for the continuity of visual traditions. Importantly, model re-creation in this historical context was not a passive act of reproduction but an integral component of the pedagogical and aesthetic system of miniature painting, often inspiring the emergence of new artistic variations.

• Analysis of the “Kneeling Youth” Miniatures

Stylistic studies, which focus on examining artworks' formal and structural elements, are essential for analysing model-recreated miniature versions. By concentrating on features such as line, colour, bodily proportions, decorative details, and execution techniques, the shared characteristics among similar works can be revealed. This comparative approach, placing different versions side by side, allows for assessing the degree of creativity exhibited by various artists. This approach can be applied not only at the formal level but also at the content and conceptual levels, enabling an understanding of how imitative works relate to different periods' historical and cultural developments. It's an interdisciplinary approach that combines art history, cultural studies, and historical

analysis. Therefore, any analysis of model-recreated versions would be incomplete without considering their stylistic and historical contexts.

Before delving into this analysis, three points must be noted. First, a common feature of all these miniatures is that labelling the depicted figures as male or female is inaccurate. A careful observation of the anatomy of the figures reveals that they are, in modern terminology, intersex or gender-neutral, possessing both incomplete male and female traits, and thus cannot be classified strictly as masculine or feminine. This challenges traditional gender classifications and adds a layer of complexity to the analysis. Sandra S. Williams (2025, 1-292) has extensively studied gender representation in Persian miniature painting. Since the miniatures referred to as “Kneeling Youth” have sometimes been catalogued by museums as “Girl with a Fur Hat”, this study preserves that designation for consistency.

Second, the type of headgear and the hairstyle of the figures have roots in Chinese, Mongol, and Turkic traditions. For example, miniatures in the *Kalilah wa Dimnah* manuscript from the Al-Inju period (*Kalilah wa Dimnah* ibn al-Makārim Hasan) (Fig. 1), part of a Qing dynasty painting titled “Four Ceremonies of a Banquet” (Fig. 2), and depictions of Mongol and Central Asian peoples (Figs. 3, 4 & 5) show undeniable similarities in headgear and hairstyles with those in the “Kneeling Youth” miniatures (Sahafiasl, 2020a, 247).

Third, the kneeling posture of the figures is not just a bodily gesture, but a significant cultural and historical element. It resembles a familiar bodily gesture in traditional Mongolian and Central Asian dances (particularly Uzbek and Kazakh) (Fig. 6). Similar visual instances of this sitting style can also be observed



Fig. 1. Details from the miniatures in the *Kalilah wa Dimnah* manuscript of the Al-Inju period. Source: Sahafiasl, 2020a, 247.



Fig. 2. A portion of a painting from the Qing dynasty titled "Four Events of the Banquet in the Frontier Regions". Source: www.k.sina.cn.



Fig. 3. Images of the hairstyles of Central Asian peoples. Source: Sahafiasl, 2020b.



Fig. 4. Images of Mongol people wearing traditional Mongolian hats. Source: www.travelersuniverse.com.

in different versions of *Kitāb Šuwar al-Kawākib* by ‘Abd al-Rahman Šūfi, including the manuscript held in the British Library dated 1260–1280 CE (Fig. 7). Considering these three points, the following sections analyse the “Kneeling Youth” miniatures across different historical periods.

• **The miniature in the Hermitage Museum signed by Reza Abbasi**

Reza Abbasi, the most prominent painter of the Isfahan School who was clearly influenced by the style of Kamal al-Din Behzad, established a new paradigm in Safavid miniature painting through his focus on single-figure compositions, simplification of arrangements, and emphasis on human expressions. Among his works, the miniature “Girl with a Fur Hat” (Fig. 8) is a key piece that apprentices and subsequent generations of artists repeatedly used for model re-creation. The model re-created versions of this work serve as valuable documentation for studying the continuity and transformation within the Persian miniature tradition, offering insight into the balance between individual creativity and the preservation of collective stylistic traditions.

The “Girl with a Fur Hat” miniature was transferred in 1924 from the Stieglitz Central Museum of Applied Arts to the Hermitage Museum, currently held in the Iranian Art collection under registration number VP-705. The work measures approximately 14.8 × 8.4 cm and was created using Indian ink, watercolour, and gold on paper. According to the signature on the piece, it was completed in 1011 AH, corresponding to 1602–1603 CE. According to the museum catalogue, this miniature is considered the earliest dated work by Reza Abbasi and was initially made for an album. In the upper left corner, the artist’s signature is inscribed in black Indian ink: “Raqam-e Kamīneh Rezā Abbāsī 1011.”

Analyses conducted by the authors indicate that the composition of this miniature follows the golden ratio (Fig. 9). The application of geometric proportions and mathematical calculations has been a well-established practice in various arts, including architecture, architectural ornamentation, and miniature painting across Eastern civilisations, particularly in Iran (Behramian et al., 2016, 16–31). One of the seminal



Fig. 5. Images of Mongol people wearing traditional Mongolian hats. Source: (1). www.khural.mn, (2): www.toursmongolia.com, (3): www.bankhar.org.



Fig. 6. Images of Central Asian people performing traditional dances. Source: (1) & (2). www.piqsels.com, (3) & (4). www.balet.academic.ru.

documents on the use of geometry in Persian art, including miniature painting, is “Those geometric constructions which are necessary for craftsmen”, authored by Abu’l-Wafā Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Isma‘il ibn Al-Buzjani (1799, 23 & 24), a prominent mathematician and astronomer of the 4th century AH. In the preface of his work, Buzjani states that his aim in writing the thirteen-chapter treatise was to provide practical geometric calculations for artisans in a simplified form. Buzjani was among the first to link theoretical geometry with architecture and applied arts. The instructions in this treatise directly influenced many Islamic geometric patterns and decorative designs in Islamic architecture.

Thus, geometric proportions and mathematical calculations in miniature painting were not a coincidence but a deliberate, foundational element in composing artworks across different schools. In Eastern civilisations, particularly in Iranian art, the golden ratio is continuously extended from architecture and decorative elements to painting and book illustration. Notably, the golden ratio (ϕ) has historically been interpreted in connection with cosmic harmony and sacred aesthetics. Persian artists, whether architects or painters, adhered consciously to these principles, as such proportions allowed for visually balanced and harmonious compositions. Therefore, the presence of the golden ratio in this miniature is not merely a formal feature but a marker of its connection to a longstanding tradition in Iranian art, where mathematics and aesthetics work in tandem to produce visually and structurally harmonious works.

Furthermore, the use of these proportions in miniature painting also reflects the pedagogical and workshop practices of the era. In the ateliers of the Herat and Isfahan schools, geometric composition systems were vital tools for transmitting skills and maintaining stylistic continuity. Accordingly, the golden ratio in this miniature functions as an aesthetic element and a link connecting the piece to the theoretical and practical traditions of Persian art. From this perspective, one of the reasons for the repeated model re-creations of the “Kneeling Youth” miniatures lies in the visual appeal of their geometric proportions.



Fig. 7. Images from the book Şuvar al-Kawākib by 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Şūfī (1260–1280 CE). Source: www.qdl.qa.

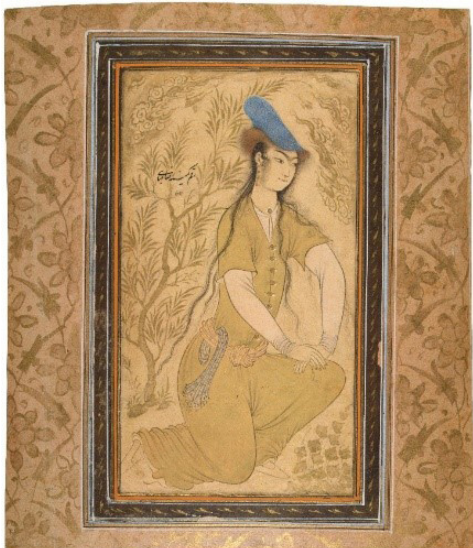


Fig. 8. The miniature "Girl with a Fur Hat" by Reza Abbasi. Source: www.hermitagemuseum.org.



Fig. 9. Golden proportions in the miniature "Girl with a Fur Hat" by Reza Abbasi. Source: Authors.

• **The miniature in the album known as Malik-i Deylemi**

Frederike Weis (2020, 93), in her article “How the Persian qalam caused the Chinese brush to break: The Bahram Mirza Album revisited”, argues that the earliest example of the Kneeling Youth image appears in an album compiled by Malik-i Deylemi for Amīr Ḥoseyn Beg in 1560 or 1561 (Fig. 10). Accordingly, if one accepts this claim, Reza Abbasi’s “Girl with a Fur Cap”, a significant work in its own right, can be considered a model re-creation of the miniature from the Malik-i Deylemi album.

However, this assertion is not entirely convincing when considering the visual and stylistic characteristics of the Kneeling Youth miniatures, which will be discussed in detail below. On the other hand, David J. Roxburgh (1998, 41 & 42) notes that what is today known as the Amīr Gheyb Beg album is not an original, cohesive Safavid album. Instead, it was extensively rebound in the late nineteenth century, combining two separate albums and several folios from other albums (such as the Amīr Ḥoseyn Beg and Bahrām Mīrzā albums) to make space for additional folios. This historical context is crucial for understanding the evolution of these artworks. Consequently, the Amīr Ghayb Beg album is a composite collection that took shape during the reign of Abdulhamid II in the Ottoman Empire. Based on this reasoning, Reza Abbasi’s work appears to predate the miniature in the Malik-i Deylemi album, which exhibits more features associated with Ottoman-influenced Safavid miniature painting.

• **Kneeling young woman, Rietberg Museum, attributed to Valijan**

This painting, titled Kneeling Young Woman, is currently held in the Rietberg Museum collection, with its creation estimated around 1570–1580 CE according to the museum’s website (Fig. 11). The work contains two inscriptions: one in the margin featuring verses by Saadi Shirazi, and another above the figure bearing the name “Valijan.” As is known, Valijan was an Iranian painter and illuminator, son of Qasem Tabrizi, who was originally from Tabriz. He studied under Siavash Bey from childhood and later migrated to the Ottoman



Fig. 10. Kneeling Youth, Mâlek Deylami Album
Source: Weis, 2020

domain as a teenager, where he pursued his artistic activities. Historical records indicate that Valijan was certainly active in the Ottoman lands by 988 AH/1580 CE, approximately 22–23 years before the creation of *Girl with a Fur Hat* by Reza Abbasi (Amirashed, 2019, 55). Considering the artist's signature and the fact that this painting represents a creative model re-creation similar to Reza Abbasi's work, as well as its stylistic characteristics that clearly reflect the Safavid school, it can be concluded that this work was likely produced in an Ottoman workshop under the influence of the Tabriz school, most probably by Valijan Tabrizi. The work closely resembles Reza Abbasi's *Girl with a Fur Hat* in terms of composition and overall structure. At the same time, differences are evident in visual details, including background motifs, colours, and the design and decoration of the clothing and hat.

• The miniature in the Metropolitan Museum of Art

This miniature, titled *Kneeling Youth*, is currently held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art collection, and its creation is estimated to date to the late sixteenth century. It is a work inspired by a miniature attributed to Sheikh Muhammad Naqqāsh and incorporates scattered verses from Hafez Shirazi (Fig. 12). Access to the

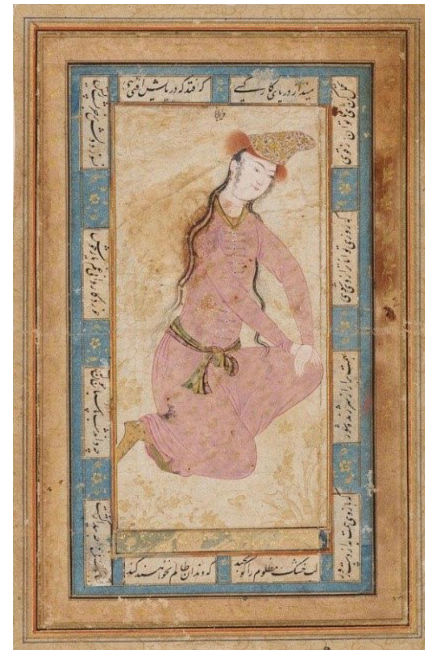


Fig. 11. Kneeling Young Woman, Rietberg Museum, attributed to Valijan.
Source: www.rietberg.ch.

miniature attributed to Sheikh Muhammad Naqqāsh was unavailable to the authors.

The artist exercised some degree of personal creativity in executing this work. In this miniature, the figure wears a gilded, decorated hat lined with fur and carries a small heart-shaped pouch hanging from the body, which differs slightly from other versions. By adding these distinctive details, the artist sought to move the work beyond mere reproduction and offer a fresh interpretation.

• The miniature in the Department of Islamic Art, Louvre Museum

This miniature, titled *Young Girl with a Fur Hat* and signed by Mohammad Ali Musavvar, was created in the second half of the 17th century (1650–1700) (Fig. 13). It is housed in the Louvre Museum within the Department of Islamic Art and is executed on gold-flecked paper using brown and black ink and watercolour, with a gilded border. The dimensions of the work are 7.1 × 4.5 cm. On the left side of the figure, the artist's signature in Nasta'liq script, Muhammad Ali Musawwir, is visible. It appears that the artist, inspired by Reza Abbasi's method of depicting figures and Sultan Muhammad's technique in rendering natural details, such as the rocks in the background, while altering the figure's posture and gaze toward the left, intended to present a different interpretation of this long-established model.



Fig. 12. Kneeling Youth, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Source: www.metmuseum.org.

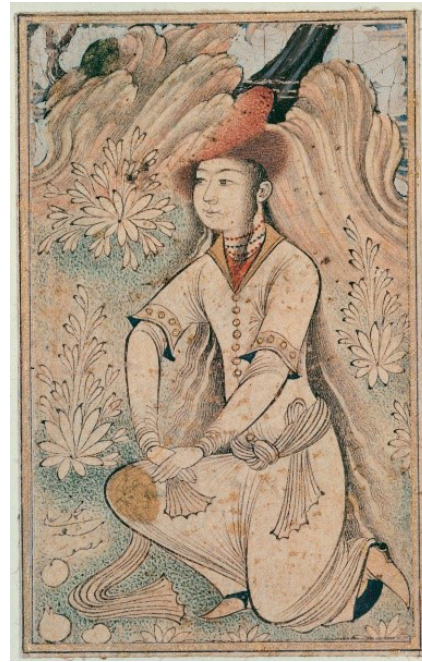


Fig. 13. Young girl with a fur hat, Department of Islamic Art, Louvre Museum.
Source: ww.collections.louvre.fr.

• The miniature in the Saint Louis Art Museum

This miniature, titled Young Kneeling Youth, belongs to the Isfahan School and was created during the Safavid period (Fig. 14). Executed with ink, opaque watercolour, and gold on paper, it is currently housed in the Islamic Art collection of the Saint Louis Art Museum. Its approximate dimensions are 19 × 10.8 cm, with the sheet measuring 36.4 × 23.8 cm. Given the presence of calligraphic elements signed by Dāvar Kiyā on the verso and accompanying sheets, and considering that Dāvar Kiyā al-Husayni was a little-known calligrapher of the 11th century AH (Bayani, 1966, 186), the date of this miniature can be estimated to be between 1591 and 1689 CE. The painter of the miniature is unknown. The figure's attire is drawn relatively simply, but the earring and the deep gaze are notable. The background features natural elements, including rocks, plants, shrubs, and Chinese-style clouds.

• The miniature in the Arabe 6076 Manuscript, Bibliothèque nationale de France

This miniature is one folio of a manuscript numbered Arabe 6076, held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. According to the library's official website, the approximate date of the manuscript is between 1501

and 1800 CE (Fig. 15). The inscription "Banu Shah bint Akbar Shah Hindi" indicates a connection to the Mughal court in India, possibly referring to the patron or the depicted subject. This miniature is highly comparable to the one in the Saint Louis Art Museum, particularly in decorative details and colour palette, and shows apparent stylistic affinities with mid-18th-century Ottoman miniatures.

• The miniature on the MutualArt Platform

This miniature, incorrectly titled A Youth in European Attire on the MutualArt website, is attributed to the 18th century and measures 30 × 22 cm (Fig. 16). Based on prior discussions in this study, the attire depicted in the miniature has no European origin but derives from Turkic and Mongol traditions. Further information regarding the album number, manuscript affiliation, artist, or precise creation date was inaccessible to the authors. Nevertheless, the details indicate that Reza Abbasi's Girl with a Fur Hat inspired this miniature.

• Two miniatures in Album No. H. 2158, Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul

These two miniatures are preserved in the folios of Album No. H. 2158 at the Topkapı Palace Museum (Fig. 17) is an artistic reproduction of Reza Abbasi's Girl with a Fur Hat, a hallmark of individual taste and

the focus on solitary subjects in the Isfahan School of painting. Although obtaining precise information about the artists and exact dates of these miniatures was impossible, the available data indicate that the album's folios were compiled in the 18th century within the Ottoman realm. Both miniatures are framed with borders containing Persian poetry, one featuring verses from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* and the other including scattered verses from Amirshahi Sabzevari's *Divan*.

• **Three Ottoman miniatures, Album No. B.408, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Istanbul**

These miniatures, located on folios 8b and 25b of Album No. B.408 (the so-called "Ahmed I Album"), are housed in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library (TSMK) and represent an Ottoman-style reproduction of the "Kneeling Youth" miniatures (Fig. 18). The Ahmed I Album is a compilation of exquisite calligraphy and miniatures with various themes, assembled by Qalandar Pasha (d. 1616 CE) for Sultan Ahmed I (reign: 1603–1617). These miniatures, which are clearly Ottoman reproductions of Safavid-period models, lack the detailed references of their sources and were intended primarily to appeal visually to an Ottoman audience. Accordingly, patrons of Ottoman albums often preferred to compile them using a combination of Safavid, Ottoman, and sometimes Indian miniatures (Collaço, 2021). In two miniatures of the Ahmed I Album, spandrels were used to indicate space and to separate image elements from the suspended background. In contrast, another miniature simultaneously employs spandrels with motifs of cloud bands, floral elements, and a green surface suggesting the ground.

• **Persian miniatures of the Contemporary Period**

These miniatures are all creative reinterpretations of the "Kneeling Youth" miniatures, particularly the "Girl with a Fur Hat" by Reza Abbasi (Fig. 19). Since the Reza Abbasi version was more widely recognised among Iranians, most of these reproductions were modelled after his work. Although commercial intent has played a significant role in their creation, the differences from historical miniatures distinguish



Fig. 14. Kneeling youth, Saint Louis Art Museum.
Source: www.slam.org.

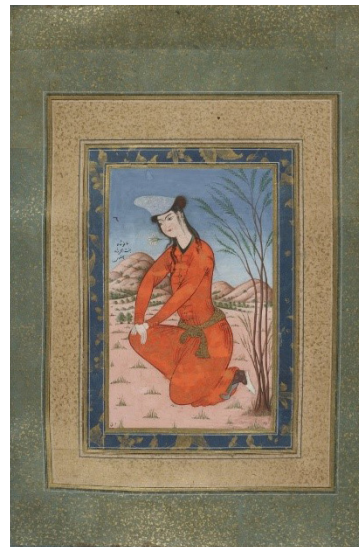


Fig. 15. Kneeling Princess, Bibliothèque nationale de France.
Source: www.gallica.bnf.fr.

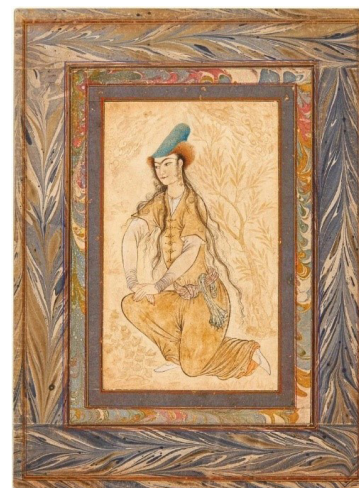


Fig. 16. Kneeling youth, MutualArt International Platform
Source: www.mutualart.com.

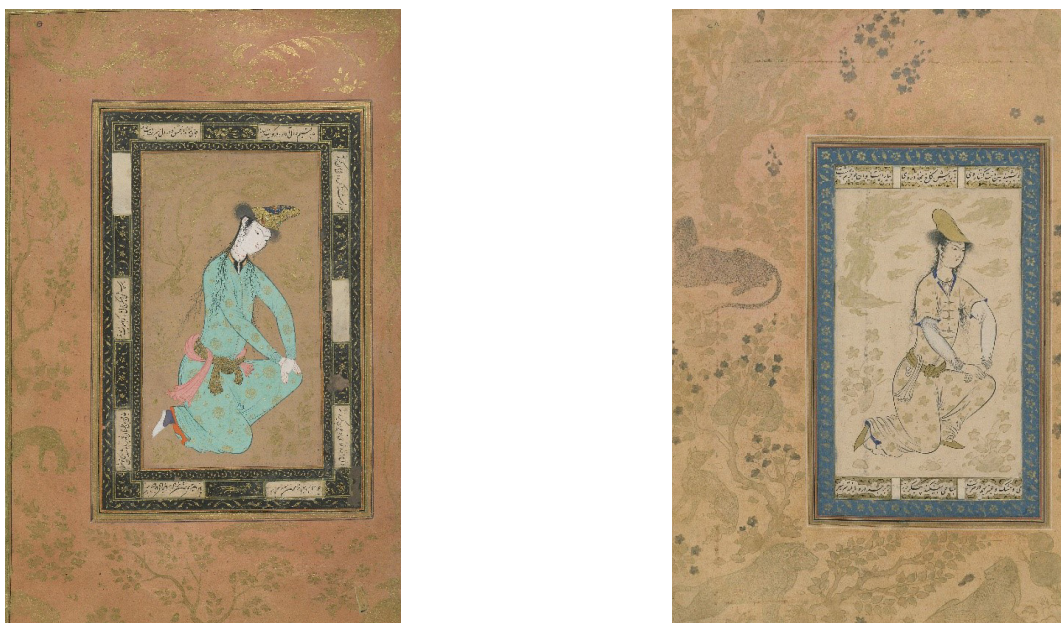


Fig. 17. Miniatures from Album No. H. 2158, Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul. Source: Ayhan, 2018.



Fig. 18. Three Ottoman miniatures, Album No. B.408, Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Istanbul. Source: Baydar, 2017

them from earlier works. Notable features include variations in the colour palette and substantial changes in the hairstyle of the figures. While the depicted characters remain anatomically intersex, as in historical examples, facial features are often rendered with more feminine traits.

Conclusion

The detailed examination and analysis of the miniatures known as “Kneeling Youth” reveal that the concept of model re-creation in the tradition of Persian miniature painting, unlike the standard interpretations of imitation in modern Western art theories, was not a blind or mechanical reproduction of earlier works. Instead, it represented a complex, intersubjective,

and creative process between the artist, the master, and the artistic tradition. Within this framework, the recreated versions functioned as final products and vehicles for re-reading, re-creating, and reinterpreting visual and conceptual elements. This process ensured the continuity and transmission of styles, schools, and aesthetic principles from one generation to the next.

In the studied examples, each recreated work, while preserving the essential structure and recognisable archetype of the “Kneeling Youth”, through subtle changes in composition, colour, and ornamentation, became a document of the artist’s creative engagement and dynamic dialogue with the preceding artistic tradition. Thus, model re-creation within the Persian–Islamic miniature tradition functioned as both an educational and artistic system, allowing students not only to master technical skills but also to engage with deeper aesthetic and cultural concepts.

Imitative reproductions not only reinforced the identity and authority of the Isfahan and Tabriz schools but also underscored the pivotal role of artistic workshops as centres of instruction, practice, and technical refinement. From this perspective, each recreated miniature embodies implicit educational and cultural meanings, mirroring its time’s social, economic, and artistic dynamics. These reflections encompass the relationships between master and



Fig. 19. Six contemporary miniatures depicting the theme of the Kneeling Youth. Source: (1), www.civa.ir, (2), www.joharianart.com, (3), www.encrypted-tbn2.gstatic.com, (4), www.lilit.ir, (5), www.artmajeur.com, (6).

pupil, the artist and the patron or audience, and the broader connection between art and societal values.

The recreated versions of the “Kneeling Youth” also demonstrate that while their visual framework shares similarities with Mongol and Central Asian traditions, their meaning and function within the Iranian–Islamic intellectual context can be interpreted as a form of “Adab-e Huzur” (the etiquette of presence or reverent awareness). This characteristic aligns with the concept of “ideal beauty” (*jamāl-e mesālī*) in Persian art, emphasising the de-gendering of imagery as a path toward transcendent and universal beauty. Such an approach reflects the Persian worldview’s emphasis on the harmony between aesthetics and metaphysical vision in the creative process.

Furthermore, including these Persian works within Ottoman albums (*muraqqa’*s) signifies the cultural transmission and aesthetic reinterpretation of the Isfahan School within the Ottoman realm. Beyond their visual appeal, these miniatures carry specific cultural, historical, and pedagogical messages, demonstrating that Persian miniature painting operated as a medium of stylistic and semantic transmission beyond geographical boundaries.

The high frequency of such reproductions points not merely to their formal attractiveness but to a broader semantic system within Persian miniature tradition, one that integrates beauty, the artist–viewer relationship, dedication to teaching, and the preservation of aesthetic foundations of various schools into a coherent visual structure. Therefore, in this tradition, model re-creation functioned as a pedagogical and technical practice and a

vital instrument for preserving, expanding, and regenerating Persian miniature schools’ aesthetic and cultural identity throughout history.

Interest of Conflict No of Declaration

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest in conducting this research.

Endnotes

1. The golden spiral is a special type of logarithmic spiral in which the growth factor is defined such that the radius of the spiral increases by the golden ratio (ϕ) after each 90-degree turn. Consequently, after a full 360-degree rotation, the radius becomes ϕ times larger. The name of this spiral is derived from its connection with golden rectangles, as it can be approximately inscribed within a sequence of golden rectangles. Part of the curve’s historical popularity in art stems from the fact that the spiral created by Albrecht Dürer in the sixteenth century was considered an approximation of the golden spiral and was used in artistic compositions (Waphare, 2021, 16).
2. Intersex refers to individuals who, biologically and at birth, do not fully conform to the conventional criteria of the binary sex system in aspects such as genitalia, hormones, or chromosomes. This variation may manifest so that a person’s primary sexual characteristics correspond to one sex. At the same time, secondary traits such as body and facial hair distribution, voice quality, fat distribution, skeletal structure, and muscle strength resemble those of the other sex (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, 3 & 4).
3. In the early tenth century AH (sixteenth century CE), following the Safavid–Ottoman conflicts, Sultan Selim I captured Tabriz and relocated many Safavid painters to Ottoman territories. Other artists like Shah-Qoli entered Ottoman service during the same century (Dinparast, 2011, 65).

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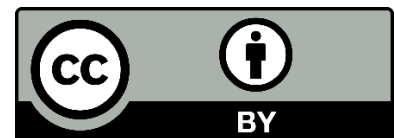
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