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Satire in the Paintings of “Mohammad-e Siāh Qalam”

A considerable amount of scholarship has been produced on just over sixty paintings of humans and demons, many of which bear ascriptions to the unidentified artist Mohammad-e Siāh Qalam, and which are now mostly housed in albums H.2153 and H.2160 in the Topkapı Palace Library. Although methods of formal comparison have led to general agreement that the paintings can be dated to either the fourteenth century or the fifteenth, strikingly little attention has been paid to the question of what these images depict. This paper studies the paintings within the context of documentary, legal and literary material in Persian and Arabic, and identifies a set of common motifs shared between the Siāh Qalam paintings and a number of later images. While it has been supposed by several scholars that the paintings document life in a marginal geographical environment and faithfully reflect the practices of a syncretic culture, this paper suggests that they engage with a field of satirical ideas which were widespread in the Islamic world in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and which parodied common types of behavior that were deemed by some observers to be illicit or absurd.

Keywords: Mohammad-e Siāh Qalam; painting; Sufism; Qalandars; intoxicants; the demonic; Ibn Taymiyya; ‘Obeyd-e Zākāni

Introduction

Among the drawings, engravings, paintings, calligraphic samples and documents preserved in the Topkapı Palace Library’s albums H.2153 and H.2160, there is a group of some sixty-five paintings and preparatory sketches, which could be termed caricatures (Figures 1–5).¹ They are relatively large in format, measuring up to 26 × 35 cm, and their focus lies on the depiction of figures, who are almost invariably grotesque. Background details, such as a stream, a tree or a pestle and mortar, are only added when they are germane to the action. The paintings are executed in a restricted color palette, with highlights in gold, often on poor-quality paper, and depict two broad

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Figure 1. TSM H.2153 f.40b.



Source: Image courtesy Topkapı Palace Museum.

categories of subject matter: humans, generally in small groups, engaged in activities such as conversation, drinking, dancing, labor and the pasturing of their mounts; and demons, some of whom appear to ape the humans, but who also spirit them and their mounts away, and who in one notable instance dismember a horse. Many of these images bear attributions in a later hand to a single artist, “Mohammad-e Siāh Qalam” (Mohammad of the Black Pen), or depending on the scholar’s linguistic predilections, “Mehmed Siyah Kalem,” who is, bluntly, an unknown quantity, although the name is connected with another set of large, polychrome images in the same albums.²

The attribution of a single painter’s name to the images of humans and demons belies the evidence that, while an original group may have been executed within a short spell, paintings that reproduced their style and iconography continued to be created over a significantly longer period of time.³ Since the securely dated material in the two albums spans the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and a primary geographical range of modern-day Iraq to Uzbekistan, with additional material from Europe and China, a majority of scholars have dated the production of the scenes of humans and demons to either the fourteenth or the fifteenth centuries.⁴ Aspects of style, iconography and subject matter have drawn several researchers to the conclusion that the paintings were produced in an area where Islamic and non-Islamic cultures comingled.⁵ Commenting on the marked Chinoiserie style seen in a number of the images, some have argued that the paintings must have been produced

Figure 2. TSM H.2153 f.55a.



Source: Image courtesy Topkapı Palace Museum.

Figure 3. TSM H.2153 f.64b.



Source: Image courtesy Topkapı Palace Museum.

in a geographical area where the Islamic world meets China or Mongolia,⁶ a point superficially reinforced by the fact that the paper on which some of them were painted appears to have been sourced from Tibet or China.⁷ Others, perceiving the paintings to represent a recently Islamized, Turkic world, have attributed the paintings to the Qipchaq steppes or Transoxiana.⁸

On the other hand, several other writers on the subject have reasoned that since the style of the paintings can at best be described as Chinoiserie, and not “Chinese,” and because there is little material evidence that would connect the paintings with art in Inner Asia during the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries,⁹ there is nothing to preclude their production in greater Iran, in a center of artistic activity such as Herat or Tabriz.¹⁰ Concrete comparisons have been made between the corpus of Siāh Qalam paintings and iconographic elements of several illustrated manuscripts produced in western Iran and Iraq, including a demon depicted in the Bodleian *Kitāb al-bulhān* (Iraq, between 1382 and 1410),¹¹ nomads in the marginal drawings of the Freer *Divān* of Soltān Ahmad Jalāyer (western Iran or Iraq, late fourteenth or early fifteenth century),¹² two scenes from the Diez albums depicting princes with an elderly woman and a group of minstrels (datable to western Iran, mid-fourteenth century, on stylistic grounds),¹³ and the demons seen in the now dispersed *Shāhnāmeḥ* of Shāh Tahmāsp (Tabriz, early-to-mid sixteenth century).¹⁴ Further pointers to the history of the images’ reception are provided by a small number of related paintings

Figure 4. TSM H.2153 f.135a.



Source: Image courtesy Topkapı Palace Museum.

thought to have been produced in northern India or the Deccan, the latter in particular home to a large number of Iranian emigres.¹⁵

Scholars have paid considerable attention to formal comparison between the Siāh Qalam group and other images, with the aim of highlighting similarities that could narrow down places and a range of dates for their production. A conference dedicated to the corpus was held at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1980, yet its proceedings, while invaluable, did not permit a unifying conclusion.¹⁶ It is perhaps unsurprising, given the paintings' focus on figures and their lack of background detail, that less attention has been paid to context, be it historical, political, religious, literary or social, but the paintings should be studied with due concern for these issues, as implicit assumptions about the environment in which they were produced have underpinned most studies devoted to them, and have tended to inform the range of material surveyed for formal comparison.

This paper compares the paintings' representation of humans and demons with material in Persian and Arabic on the demonic nature of illicit behavior, arguing that while the Siāh Qalam paintings do not appear to illustrate a single text, they engage with a field of ideas which is partly parodic and partly moralistic, and which found expression in a number of documentary, legal and literary texts, and several other paintings. It does not claim that this approach will solve complex questions

Figure 5. TSM H.2160 f.10a.



Source: Image courtesy Topkapı Palace Museum.

concerning the circulation of artistic techniques and iconography, but it does argue that greater attention to the basic problem of what these images depict will help to address the issue of how they function as works of art and the topic of who may have acted as their initial audience. The debate about the location in which the paintings could have been produced has been predicated not only on their form but also on what they are thought to represent, meaning that there is a greater tendency for scholars who would argue that the paintings represent an un-Islamic or newly Islamized society to focus on formal comparisons with art from Inner Asia and China, while those who see the paintings within the ambit of Islamic culture have tended to argue for a West Asian provenance.¹⁷ In focusing on representations of illicit behavior, this paper also aims to demonstrate that ideas about the nature of Islamic culture and society are not necessarily more keenly debated in the historical heartlands of the Islamic world than at its margins.

When the *Siāh Qalam* paintings were first discussed in twentieth-century scholarship, they were generally attributed to the Qipchaq steppes or Central Asia on purely formal grounds.¹⁸ Since the 1950s, however, aspects of religious and social history have also informed the debate. The two primary motivating factors for ascribing the *Siāh Qalam* paintings to a Central or Inner Asian milieu have been the assumption that

their interest in the demonic derives from a non-Islamic environment, and the connected argument that the humans depicted in the paintings must represent a recently converted populace, which melded practices that have been described as shamanist, Buddhist or Manichaean, together with Islam.¹⁹ While certain aspects of style and iconography in the Siāh Qalam paintings may ultimately derive from non-Islamic contexts, it is harder to substantiate the argument that they were produced in a culture where Buddhism or Manichaeism formed part of the artists' or the intended viewers' lived experiences and identity.

The notion of direct links to Manichaean art or doctrine is problematic because Manichaeism had ceased to be a religious force in Inner Asia by the mid-eleventh century, roughly 300 years before the earliest widely accepted dating of the paintings, and its centers had moved to the littoral of the South China Sea.²⁰ Çağman's contention that the Siāh Qalam paintings both recall the story-telling traditions of Buddhism and Manichaeism and record the social environment in which such stories were performed is hard to prove, since the paintings neither appear to engage with aspects of Buddhist or Manichaean doctrine, nor display any great generic similarity with extant comparanda, such as the sketches and performance scrolls from early medieval Dunhuang that have been studied by Fraser.²¹ Although it is undeniable that a number of the Siāh Qalam paintings reflect iconographic elements found in Buddhist art, the hypothesis that the artists responsible for these paintings were exposed to art from East Asia through portable materials such as painting manuals, prints and copybooks represents an alternative to the notion that they were physically stationed mid-way between Iran and China.

Some initial remarks are also required about perceived links between the paintings and shamanism. It has been maintained that images such as H.2153 f.64b (Figure 3), a scene of dancing demons, reflect shamanistic practices of communicating with the supernatural.²² At the same time, scholars who have argued that the Siāh Qalam paintings must stem from Inner Asia have tended to assume that shamanism was understood as an analogue to Sufism in Turkic societies.²³ This thesis was once popular in the field of the history of religion, but it has been revised in recent years.²⁴ In the anthropological view, shamanism is often defined "as an applied spiritual technique for the resolution of various material and social problems rather than as a tool for abstract mysticism," and scholars such as Amitai-Preiss have emphasized the differing needs to which shamanism and Sufism cater.²⁵ In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, practices that could be construed as shamanic were carried out by Turkic peoples who considered themselves Muslim throughout the Middle East and Central Asia, and studies such as the one by Devin DeWeese, concerning processes of Islamization in the territories of the Golden Horde, have demonstrated that narratives describing seemingly shamanic figures, or actions with an ostensibly shamanic import, could be used to present Islamization "in terms both familiar and meaningful" to their intended audiences.²⁶

While it is therefore possible that some of the Siāh Qalam scenes depict forms of behavior that are supposed to be interpreted as shamanic, this would not necessarily place the paintings at the margin of the Islamic world, either in the geographical

location of their production or in the scope of the ideas they present. Furthermore, our interpretation of images such as H.2153 f.64b (Figure 3), the scene of dancing demons, depends on our understanding of their tenor. If the painting is indeed to be interpreted as a depiction of shamanistic practice, is its tone serious or satirical? Does it document devotional practices or satirize them?

Illicit Behavior and the Demonic: Legal, Literary and Visual Evidence

The notion that the paintings' depiction of demons reflects the influence of non-Islamic culture on the level of ideas is in need of qualification. Ideas about demons, most frequently termed *jinn*, *shayāṭīn* or *'afārīt* in Arabic, were central to mainstream Islamic culture in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, especially when it came to discussions of human ethics. In particular, jurists often emphasized the demonic nature of behavior that they considered to be illicit (*ḥarām*), either by likening those who transgressed to demons, or by describing the processes that led to illicit behavior as demonic possession. The close mental link between abnormal behavior and demonic possession is underscored by Arabic lexicography: the word *majnūn*, for example, generally translated as "unsound of mind or intellect," means "possessed by demons," and the related word *junūn* signifies both possession and the pursuance of evil acts.²⁷ Similarly, the noun *ghūl* connotes both a kind of desert demon or devil and "anything by reason of which the intellect departs."²⁸ *Shayṭān* can mean the Devil himself, a demon, or "any blameable faculty, or power [or propensity] of a man," with Lane giving the idiom *rakibabu shayṭānuhu*, lit. "his demon mastered him," to signify "he was, or became, angry."²⁹

Images of demonic possession were pursued with particular vigor in discussions of the consumption of the intoxicants wine (Ar. *khamr*, with the root meaning of "intoxicant") and *cannabis sativa* (Ar. *qannab hindī*) known by a plethora of names depending on how it was prepared and consumed, including *ḥashīsh* in Arabic and *hashish*, *bang* and *dugh-e vahdat* in Persian.³⁰ Descriptions of the cannabis plant as "the Devil's herb" (*ḥashīshat al-shayṭān*) appear to have been a trope in Arabic writing of the Mamluk period (1250–1517),³¹ while representations of frequent users of hashish liken them to demoniacs (*addā bi-him al-ḥāl ilā al-junūn*).³² Such mental images are of relevance for our discussion of the Siāh Qalam paintings, since several of them appear to treat the consumption of intoxicants.³³

Most obvious in this regard is H.2160 f.10a (Figure 5), which depicts three male figures eyeing a cannabis plant with a certain cupidity.³⁴ Beyhan Karamağaralı remarked that another painting depicts two men carrying pouches used to hold hashish (H.2153 f.38b—*IAI* fig.310).³⁵ Contrary to Karamağaralı's analysis, hashish does not appear to have been smoked prior to the Safavid period (1501–1736), but generally to have been roasted, ground, mixed with other ingredients and consumed as a kind of pill, or to have been roasted, filtered, adulterated with other ingredients and drunk.³⁶ For example, the often comic Cairene poet, *ḥadīth* man and

performer Ibn Sūdūn (d. 868/1464) describes sampling hashish, presumably in the form of a pill, out of a porcelain jar, before doing a sketch for his host.³⁷

A third Siāh Qalam image (H.2153 f.90a—LA1 fig.301) depicts a man consuming something from a vial, regarded with horror by the two figures who surround him. The man’s tongue can be clearly distinguished from the vial. While analyses of this painting have tended to focus on technical similarities with figural depiction in the visual culture of China, the men’s emaciated bodies also recall later depictions of drug users. For example, an image that is now in the British Museum (1940,0713,0.49, ascribed to the Punjab Hills, eighteenth century), depicts a gathering of *bhang* users (Figure 6). Among the figures shown is an emaciated man sitting on his haunches, who bears comparison with the figure to the right of H.2153 f.90a. The emaciation of the figure in the Pahari painting may stem from opium usage.³⁸ Several additional images depicting the emaciation caused by the excessive consumption of opium are well known to modern scholarship, including “The Dying ‘Enāyat Khān” (dated 1618, Bodleian, MS. Ouseley Add. 171 f.4b), depicting a Mughal courtier wasted by opium and alcohol addiction.

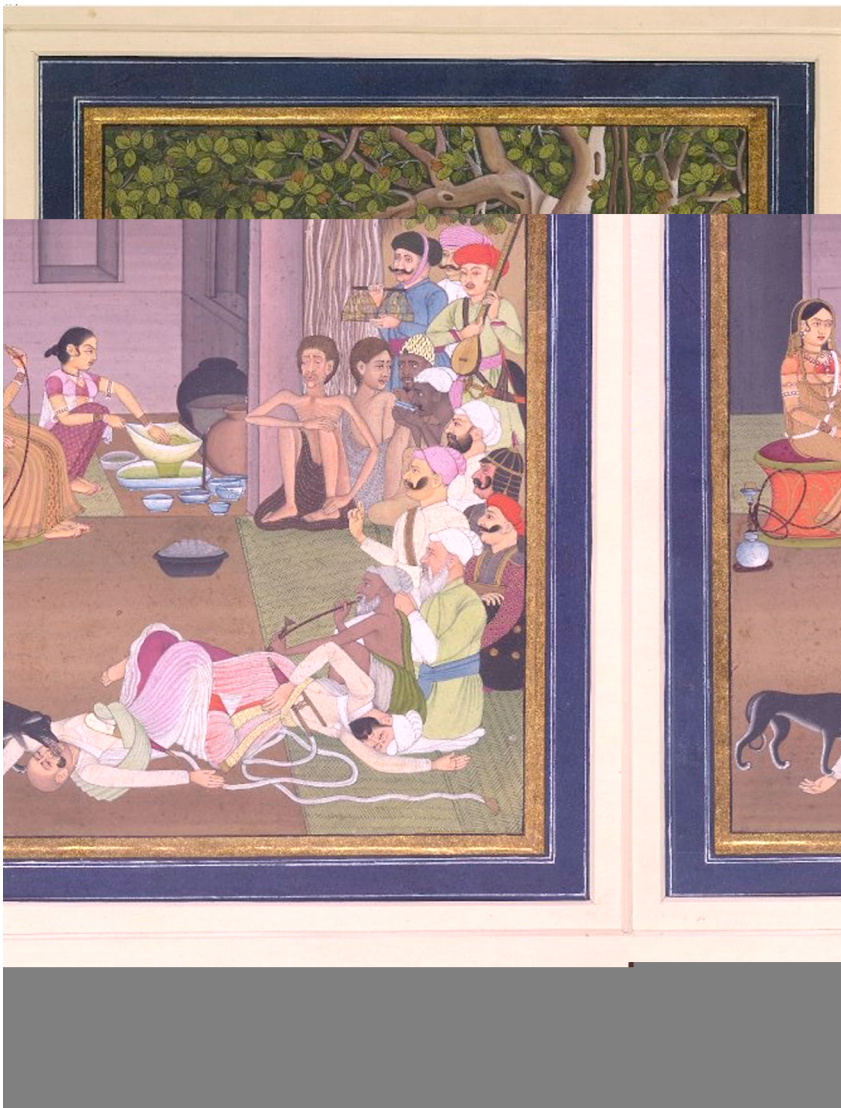
For jurists such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), the primary problem with the consumption of intoxicants was the user’s subsequent loss of reason (*al-‘aql*), and hence their vulnerability to malign forces. A passage from one of his fatwas is worth giving *in extenso*, as it highlights the connection made between the loss of reason and the demonic:

Should someone’s reason cease to function by an illicit cause, such as drinking wine or eating hashish, or if they should listen to melodious music until their reason disappears, or should someone make heretical devotions until demons (*ba’d al-shayāṭīn*) join them and alter their reason, or if they consume *banj* and it stops their reason, such people deserve reproach and punishment for the manner in which they have caused their reason to stop. Many of them attract the demonic state of being by doing whatever they like and dancing in an extroverted manner until their reason ceases, or by snorting and bellowing until the demonic state of being comes upon them. Many of them aspire to distraction until they become witless. All such people are of the devil’s party, and this a fact known about more than one of them.³⁹

Ibn Taymiyya’s representation of illicit behavior emphasizes several simple themes. Firstly, in the eyes of some legal authorities, a number of behaviors, including the consumption of intoxicants, dancing and either playing or listening to music, were directly linked to demonic possession because they were perceived to hinder rational thought.⁴⁰ It is possible that the Sufi practices of audition (*samā’*) and dance are Ibn Taymiyya’s express target. Secondly, in Ibn Taymiyya’s representation, the idea of demonic possession does not appear to be an extended metaphor, but rather the description of a process that was supposed to occur in the physical world.

Just as Ibn Taymiyya associates aspects of human behavior that he deemed illicit with the presence of demons, a number of the Siāh Qalam paintings develop parallels

Figure 6. “A Gathering of *Bhang* Users”.



Source: British Museum 1940,0713,0.49. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

between human and demonic actions. Thus several images depict people or demons either grinding substances or holding drinking vessels. One painting (H.2153 f.135a) (Figure 4) and another unfinished image (H.2153 f.70a—*LA1* fig.290) depict men with a pestle and mortar, while hand-operated querns are used by two

Figure 7. Metropolitan Museum 68.175.



Source: Image in the Public Domain.

demons in another painting in Siāh Qalam style, the Metropolitan Museum’s 68.175 (Figure 7). A further four “Siāh Qalam” images (H.2153 f.34b—*LA1* fig.248; H.2153 f.112a—*LA1* fig.278; H.2153 f.39b—*LA1* fig.209; Freer 37.25—*LA1* fig.210) depict demons with either metal or porcelain cups or vessels, and H.2153 f.29b (*LA1* fig.477) depicts a man with a cup. While it is true that any number of scenarios can be envisaged concerning what is being ground and what is being drunk in these images, the tropical association between demons and the consumption of intoxicants may lend support to the notion that the substances being prepared and consumed in the paintings are illicit. Contemporary textual discussions of the methods for preparing hashish relate that it was first ground, and that it could be drunk in liquid form.⁴¹

In addition to the Siāh Qalam paintings depicting humans and demons grinding substances and drinking, a number depict the two groups dancing (H.2153 f.64b—fig.3; H.2153 f.34b—*LA1* fig.304) playing music (H.2153 f.37b—*LA1* fig.311; H.2153 f.112r—*LA1* fig.278; Freer 37.25—*LA1* fig.210) or brawling (H.2153 f.165b—*LA1* fig.212; H.2153 f.109b—*LA1* fig.213; H.2153 f.31b—*LA1* fig.245; H.2153 f.37a—*LA1* fig.307; H.2153 f.37b—*LA1* fig.246), all behaviors characterized by some as immoral, and hence conducive to the presence of demons. It is possible that images such as H.2153 f.129b (*LA1* fig.249) and H.2153 f.101a (*LA1* fig.299), depicting demons carrying off men, engage with the idea of demonic possession that we have seen reflected in the work of Ibn Taymiyya.

The connection between illicit behavior and the demonic can be extended to other paintings in the *Siāh Qalam* group. The large handscroll depicting frenzied demons dismembering a white horse (H.2153 f.40b) can be compared with an image from India, of a much later date but relatively stable iconography, which makes aspects of the album painting explicit (Figures 1 and 8).⁴² Sold at Sotheby's New York in May 1982, the painting, given a provenance of nineteenth-century Kotah, depicts a horde of demons feasting. In the foreground, a troop of devils slaughter and dismember animals including a camel, a lion and two rabbits, just as the demons in the *Siāh Qalam* handscroll rip apart the horse. In the background of the Kotah image, one demon carries grapes, another holds a painted or glazed vessel and a third carries a metal cup, indicating the presence of wine. In the centre ground, two demons filter *bhang* into a basin through a muslin sheet, a porcelain vessel at their feet. To the left, *bhang* is being roasted in a cauldron by another couple of demons. In the background, the presence of a human figure with a baby, who is being carried by a demon, invites us to interpret the painting as an evocation of the "demonic" forces at play in the human consumption of intoxicants. Within the overlapping cultural contexts present in India, the image can be understood in different ways—as a satire, or perhaps as a devotional painting, since cannabis consumption is associated with Śiva and Śaivite practices⁴³—but either interpretation is based on the premise that demons and the demonic represent uncontrolled forces that flourish when reason sleeps. I would contend that, like the painting from Kotah, the *Siāh Qalam* handscroll also engages with ideas concerning the "demonic" nature of the use of intoxicants.⁴⁴

It is possible that another group of the *Siāh Qalam* paintings represent the experiences of consumers of intoxicants. So-called "red eye" (conjunctival injection), in which the blood vessels on the surface of the sclera dilate, is consistent with the presentation of cannabis consumers, a point that was picked up by a number of writers.⁴⁵ Ibn Sūdūn, again, has a *mawāliyā* poem on his experiences of taking a hashish pill.⁴⁶

بلعت يوم بندقا في لونها خضره
رايت بياض عيني صارت عليه حمره
وصرت عابر وخارج بيتنا ما أدره
ونا ما بقشع شي لا جوه ولا بره

Once I swallowed a green pill
And saw the whites of my eyes covered with red.
I walked through my house and out of it, unawares,
Sensing nothing, inside and outside.

"Red eye" (Pers. *chashm-e sorkh*) is also mentioned frequently in *Divān-e asrāri*, a collection of poems on hashish and its users written by Fattāhi Nishāpuri (d. 852/1448, also known as Toffāhi and Sibak).⁴⁷ To give one example from the many:⁴⁸

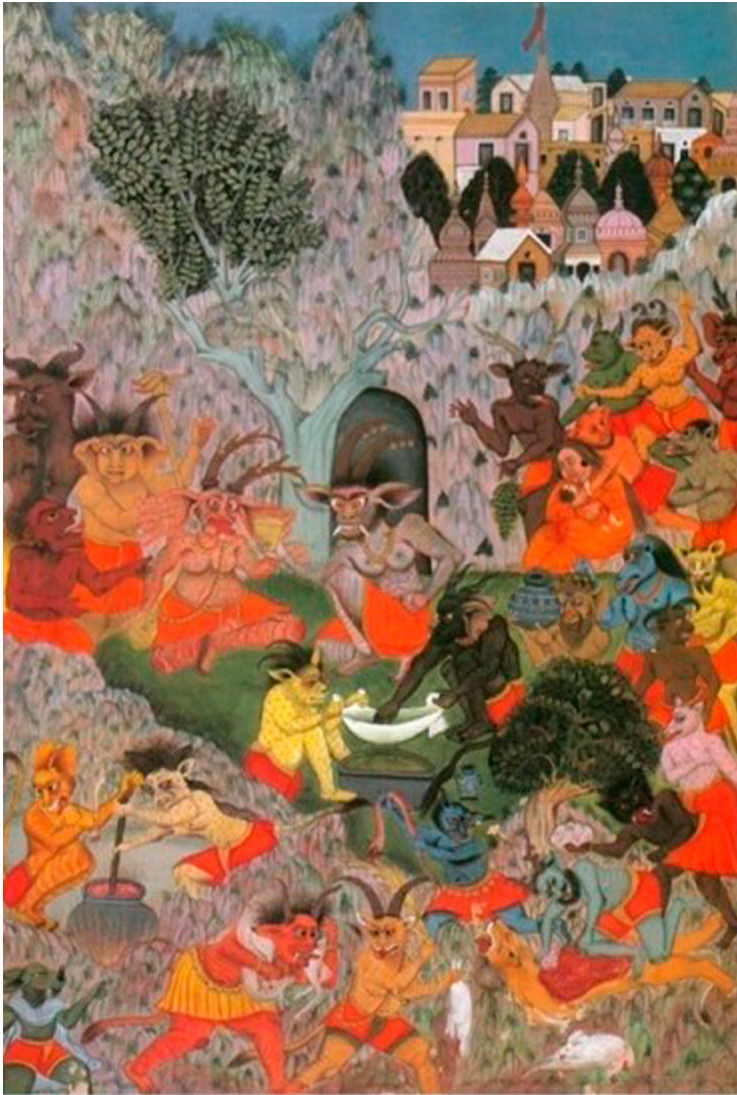
سرخی چشم و زر چهره نمودیم ز سبز / تا سیه روی شود هرکه درو غش باشد
 We have made the green [hashish] cause redness in eyes and paleness in faces
 So that whoever becomes stupefied on taking it is put to shame.

Conjunctival injection is evident in a number of Siāh Qalam paintings. In H.2153 f.64b, two demons with bloodshot eyes dance wildly (Figure 3). H.2153 f.27b depicts demons abusing a donkey, the bloodshot vessels on their eyeballs clearly visible (L11 fig.276). H.2153 f.39b shows one demon with conjunctival injection offering a kind of metal flask to another demon, the whites of whose eyes are clear, perhaps implying that the contents of the flask are responsible for creating red eye (L11 fig.209). An image formerly in the Vignier collection depicts a male and a female figure subduing a demon with bloodshot eyes (L11 fig.295).⁴⁹ Another Siāh Qalam painting depicts six traveling figures (H.2153 f.55a) (Figure 2). That the employment of the color red is not an aspect of style is to be concluded from the fact that the eyes of one of the figures are free from any red coloring. The eyes of the remaining five figures are all red, although in this case the color seems to be concentrated on and around their pupils. While the figure on the donkey stares ahead in a daze, two others look back at what would appear to be one man carrying another, their arms forming a confusing mass, in which it is difficult to distinguish their limbs. I would suggest that the mass of limbs may represent the men's confused perception, rather than being a technical mistake on the part of the artist.⁵⁰

Finally, there is a scene which has been conceived of by modern scholarship as representing an "encampment" (H.2153 f.8b—L11 fig.282). The painting depicts a bare patch of land, populated by grazing horses, scrapping dogs, five humans—one of whom is evidently wealthier than the other four—and clustered objects. Some of the objects, such as a saddle, a quiver and flasks, suggest that the group is away from home, and others, like the cauldron and basins, imply that the men have stopped in a rural location. The basins are piled with shapeless white forms. As with representations of objects in the other Siāh Qalam paintings, these shapeless white things can be envisaged in different ways. It has been suggested that they are bundles of fabric and that the men are washing them,⁵¹ yet while this is possible, the image displays distinct similarities with later Safavid and Mughal representations of "wine and *bang*" gatherings, held in open, rural spaces and attended by figures from a variety of backgrounds.⁵² Such scenes often include dervish figures alongside men of obvious wealth, and depict the process of filtering *bang* through muslin into large bowls, or the adulteration of *bang* with wine. In one such image (MFA Boston 14.649) a male figure in the center of the composition filters *bang* through a piece of cloth, grasping the folded cloth with two hands, holding it parallel to his chest, and wringing it over a basin (Figure 9). This is done in an identical manner by a figure in the top left of the Siāh Qalam composition who sits on his haunches.

This is not to argue that all the Siāh Qalam scenes of human activity are supposed to represent the preparation or consumption of intoxicants, and without further evidence such a standpoint cannot be justified in relation to a number of scenes depicting

Figure 8. “Demons feasting.” Kotah.



Source: Photograph Courtesy of Sotheby's Inc. © 1982.

people conversing (e.g. H.2153 f.38b—*LA1* fig.296; H.2153 f.52a—*LA1* fig.302; H.2153 f.128a—*LA1* fig.306) or those of people engaged in construction (e.g. H.2153 f.141b—*LA1* fig.308; H.2153 f.33a—*LA1* fig.255; possibly H.2153 f.38b—*LA1* fig.279). However, even in these scenes, comparisons between human and demonic behavior are still evident. For example, we may wonder why the human

Figure 9. MFA Boston 14.649. Francis Bartlett Donation of 1912 and Picture Fund.



Source: Photograph © 2017 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

craftsmen of H.2153 f.141b are given a parallel in a painting of two demons sawing a tree, which has been pasted onto the *a* side of the same folio (H.2153 f.141a—*LA1* fig.277). Further suggestive parallels include the image of two men who appear to

be fighting over a donkey (H.2160 f.14a—*IA1* fig.280) and the previously discussed painting of two demons doing the same (H.2153 f.27b—*IA1* fig.276).

I would therefore not go so far as to argue that the Siāh Qalam paintings are primarily concerned with the use of intoxicants, but I would suggest that most of the paintings depict a community, real or imagined, some of whose actions, including the consumption of intoxicants, were deemed by onlookers to be ripe for satire. In this regard it is worth noting, along with Robinson, that the word *siāh*, in addition to its primary meaning of “black,” has the secondary significance of “drunk”;⁵³ not only “drunk,” but “intoxicated to the point of being out of one’s mind” (*mast tāfeh az khud bi khabar*).⁵⁴ The word also means “sinful.” The name Mohammad-e Siāh Qalam may therefore point to an artist with the first name Mohammad, who specialized in the technique of pen-and-ink drawing known as *qalam siāhi*, but it can also be understood as a joke on the subject matter of the images that he, or those who painted in his manner, produced.⁵⁵

While a distinction should be made between the environment in which the Siāh Qalam paintings were produced and the new contexts created by the selection and arrangement of the images in albums H.2153 and H.2160, there is limited evidence that some of the paintings were understood by the albums’ compilers as engaging with ideas about illicit behavior. On H.2153 f.40b (Figure 1), for example, the scene of demons dismembering a horse is juxtaposed with quotations reflecting ideas and phrasing found in *ahādīth*: “Avoidance of the abode of deception is one of the marks of reason ... It is an attribute of honor to shun whatever disgraces you and to choose whatever is an ornament to you” (*inna min ‘alāmāt al-‘aql al-tajāfī ‘an dār al-ghurūr ... Min al-murū‘a ijtinābuk mā yashīnuk wa ikhtiyāruk mā yazīnuk*). On H.2153 f.64b (Figure 3), the image of demons engaged in dancing and audition is juxtaposed with the garbled text of a whispered prayer (*munājāh*), one of whose verses appeals to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib as the speaker’s refuge against “the temptation of the self and its accursed demon” (*min sharr ghayy nafsi wa shayṭānihā al-rajm*).

Targets of Satire: Moderate and Antinomian Sufis

If the Siāh Qalam paintings can be considered satirical, whom might they satirize? It is relatively difficult to create an objective history of intoxicant usage in the area of our enquiry during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, since the kinds of documentation that the historian would wish for are often absent, no longer extant, or unpublished. Nevertheless, a number of literary and documentary sources in Persian create a general impression that hashish and *bang* were associated in people’s imaginations with two contexts: that of courtly culture, and that of Sufism in both its “moderate” and antinomian incarnations.⁵⁶ Proverbs reflecting the stereotypical association between Sufis and hashish usage include: “The green leaf [i.e. hashish] is the dervish’s gift,” and Fattāhi’s *Divān-e asrāri* imagines hashish as the offspring of a founding father of the antinomian *Qalandariyyeh* movement, Jamāl al-Din Sāveji.⁵⁷

Continuities with literary representations of Sufism may be of relevance for the Siāh Qalam paintings. For example, in the *Ten-Chapter Epistle*, a collection of intentionally

subverted definitions by the often satirical poet and prose-writer 'Obeyd-e Zākāni (d. ca. 770/1370), *banj* is glossed as "what brings Sufis to ecstasy."⁵⁸ Other, suggestive definitions from the same work gloss the word *shaykh* (presumably in the sense of a Sufi *shaykh*) to mean "the Devil" (Eblis); the Devil's "deception" (*talbis*) to mean "the words that [the *shaykh*] speaks on the nature of the material world"; "temptation" (*al-vasvaseh*) to mean "what [the *shaykh*] says concerning the afterlife"; "the demons" (*al-sheyātīn*) to mean the *shaykh*'s followers.⁵⁹ 'Obeyd's representation is not the first of its kind. Over a century and a half earlier, the judge and preacher Abu Tāher Yahyā b. Tāher b. 'Osmān 'Owfi (active Transoxiana, late twelfth century) lamented in an edifying poem the pernicious influence of men of "Turkic, Byzantine and Indian manners" in Transoxiana, Sufis associated with the ideas of Bāyezid (Bestāmi) (d. 261/874 or 264/877–78), Shebli (d. 334/945) and Joneyd (d. 298/910) who, he claimed, had defiled the city's mosques and influenced lordly men to take up wine, *bang* and gambling with dice.⁶⁰

While an intentional stereotype, 'Obeyd's association between Sufis and illicit behavior may reflect trends in contemporary society. Evidence for this thesis is provided by an extant Jalāyerid decree (*farmān*), addressed to the administrative heads of the Safavid order at Ardabil.⁶¹ Written at the insistence of the head of the shrine, the decree, which was issued in 773/1372, orders the administrators to desist from harassing the local villagers and requisitioning their mounts, to stop extorting tax revenue that legally belonged to the state from the local tanners and butchers, and for them and their disciples (*moridān*) to refrain from introducing forbidden heresies (*bid'at*) into the area; prostitution and the consumption of wine are mentioned explicitly.

The accusation of illicit behavior is also leveled by some Sufis against others. In the voluminous hagiography of Safi al-Din Ardabili (d. 935/1334), *Safvat al-safā*, completed in 759/1358, Ebn Bazzāz (dates uncertain) introduces a number of *akhbār* about both "moderate" and antinomian Sufis in the Ardabil region, whose impropriety threw the pious conduct of Safi al-Din and his guide (*morsheb*), Sheykh Zāhed, into relief. One figure, Hasan-e Mankali, the deputy and regent of Bābi Ya'qubiān, is reported to have enjoyed using hashish and to have gathered together a group of *qalandars*, "unstable" men (*muleh*) and "similar kinds of people" into a band, whose authority was countered by that of Sheykh Zāhed.⁶²

Another narrative from *Safvat al-safā* takes place in a village called Puruniq, where a man by the name of Mohammad Razinān arrived out of the blue claiming to be a *shaykh*, enshrining his aura of spiritual authority among the villagers with the prophesy, later confirmed as true, that Soltān Mohammad (i.e. Öljeitü d. 716/1316) had died and Abu Sa'id had been made Ilkhan.⁶³ When the matter was brought to the attention of Safi al-Din, he described it as a demonic state of affairs (*in hālat-e sheytāni ast*), and told his followers to search under Mohammad Razinān's prayer-mat, where they would surely find a purse of hashish, since Razinān was an addict (*nik-khvār*). The people believed that Razinān was a miracle-worker (*sāheb-e karāmāt*) and did not wish to defy him, yet one evening a group gathered the courage to carry out Safi al-Din's instructions and found that he was correct. With

his reputation in tatters, Mohammad Razinān hot-footed it out of the village that night, never to be heard of again.

This literary and documentary evidence can be usefully compared with the Siāh Qalam paintings for several reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates that real-life events could provoke creative responses, which were on the one hand clearly art, but which on the other hand considered the potential of social change. The last narrative, concerning Mohammad Razinān, for example, has obviously literary aspects to it, intentionally or not recalling a *maqāma* by al-Hamadhānī, yet it forms part of a hagiographical text.⁶⁴ Secondly, the texts bring into sharper relief aspects of social history that have proved a sticking point for the study of the paintings. They demonstrate that “moderate” Sufis, antinomian Sufis such as *qalandars*, peasant farmers and craftsmen all interacted with one another out of necessity. Indeed, scholarship suggests that, particularly with the rise of the Sufi orders, craftsmen and farmers were often tied to Sufi institutions.⁶⁵ Such scholarship offers one way of bridging the gap between the findings of the researchers who have argued that the human figures represented in the Siāh Qalam paintings are craftsmen and farmers, and of those who have argued that they are “dervishes.”

As studies have highlighted previously, however, it is clear that not just one group is represented in the Siāh Qalam paintings. Several appear only once or twice: H.2153 f.106b depicts two men in the guise of Christian priests;⁶⁶ H.2153 f.37b (*L1* fig.311) and H.2153 f.129b (309) depict *qalandars*, recognizable as such from their lack of facial or body hair. These men can be distinguished from other kinds of dervishes, who dance, sit on their haunches, argue or converse. Çağman argues that such figures could also be slaves.⁶⁷ Manuals for the purchase of slaves such as al-‘Aynī’s *al-Qawl al-sadīd fī ikhtiyār al-imā’ wa l-‘abīd* (*A Guide Indispensable to Slaves Male and Female*) testify to the variety of peoples sold into slavery in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, including those from western Europe, Byzantium, India, Central Asia, North Africa, Ethiopia and the Red Sea littoral. Since al-‘Aynī discusses the nationalities that he perceived to make for productive members of the ‘*olamā*’, it is evident that non-Muslim slaves could be converted and integrated into religious life.⁶⁸

Aspects of dress also help in the identification of a number of figures represented in the paintings. In H.2153 f.38b (*L1* fig.310), for example, the two dervishes carrying hashish pouches are recognizable from their capes, made from leopard and tiger skins. These capes appear to be the so-called *pust-e takht*, defined by Dehkhodā as animal skins made from either sheepskin or the fur of lions, leopards and tigers, which dervishes use as a cover or carpet when sitting and sleeping, and which they wear on their backs as they travel.

While leopard and tiger fur clothing are often connected with royal authority, they also have a known association with the claimed spiritual authority of Sufis, as can be seen in a painting from the Bodleian *Majāles al-‘oshshāq*, (MS Ouseley Add. 24 f.79b) imagining the dervish followers of the poet Fakhr al-Din ‘Erāqī.⁶⁹ The painting depicts men either with the *pust-e takht* draped over one shoulder, or wearing more stylized leopard and tiger-fur trousers and wraps. One figure wears a hat made of white tiger fur. It is possible that, in certain contexts, hats of tiger or leopard fur are

used as a kind of shorthand in painting to designate Sufis as a general class. Such hats are seen in a painting from a manuscript of ‘Attār’s *Manteq al-Teyr* (Metropolitan Museum 63.210.44) a consciously Sufi text illustrated in this case in the institutionalized Sufi context of late Timurid Herat, and in the frontispiece to Soltān Hoseyn Beyqarā’s copy of the *Bostān* of Sa’di that is now in Cairo (Dār al-Kutub, MS Adab Fārisī 908, fols.1b–2a), again an image that represents a courtly environment in which Sufism was cultivated and institutionalized.⁷⁰ Certain textual representations, such as Fattāhi’s *Divān-e asrāri*, describe *pust-pushān* (lit. “fur-” or “skin-wearers”) among the classes of Sufis who consume hashish.⁷¹

If leopard and tiger fur clothing or hats can be understood as a shorthand designating Sufis, this may aid our identification of the figures in the Siāh Qalam paintings, since at least thirteen paintings depict people dressed in this manner.⁷² These include both the “dervish” type, otherwise clothed in very little and depicted sitting on the ground, figures engaged in construction (H.2153 f.141b—*LA1* fig.308), and the most common type depicted in the paintings, men wearing full-length outer coats and tall, bell-shaped hats (H.2153 f.141b—*LA1* fig.308; H.2153 f.92b—*LA1* fig.287; H.2160 f.52a—*LA1* fig.292; H.2153 f.105a—*LA1* fig.313). Tiger and leopard-fur hats are also seen in two of the larger, polychrome paintings in H.2153: the so-called “Procession” scene (H.2153 fols.3b–4a), and the scene of drunken figures transporting porcelain and metal vessels across a landscape (H.2153 f.130a). H.2153 f.37a (*LA1* fig.307) is one of the few Siāh Qalam paintings to depict demons dressed in the garb of the humans. The image depicts two demons, one of whom is clothed in a long, leopard-fur cloak, watching a fight between another two. All four wear the tall hats that are characteristic of the human figures. It is tempting to view this image as further evidence that the demonic figures in the paintings are intended to parody the human ones.

In general, the bell-shaped hats worn by many of the male figures in the paintings are close to those of several Sufi orders, without being sufficiently homogenous to pinpoint one order in particular.⁷³ Indeed, the hat worn by one male figure (H.2160 f.10a), ends in a flamboyant finial, suggesting, again, that the garb of these men is intended as a caricatured shorthand (Figure 5). This thesis is supported by a painting now in the Sackler Museum (S86.0061 f.101b), which has been dated to Tabriz ca. 1470, and which depicts a prince prostrating himself before a dervish.⁷⁴ The dervish wears the long outer garment and tall bell-shaped hat with finial seen on the Siāh Qalam figures and, like many of them, he carries a staff.

Despite suggestions to the contrary, it appears unlikely that the men in heavy outer coats and tall hats could be antinomian Sufis, such *qalandars* or *heydaris*, whose dress, hair and behavior are generally represented in texts and later images in a uniform way: *qalandars* are described as being shorn of all facial and bodily hair and dressed in a bare minimum of clothing, and, as already discussed, only a couple of Siāh Qalam paintings depict figures that correspond exactly to this type.⁷⁵ *Heydaris* lacked beards, cultivated long moustaches, and were infamous for wearing heavy iron rings, including on their genitalia, which they exposed.⁷⁶ It therefore appears less likely that any of the figures represented in the paintings could be *Heydaris*. The suggestion made by Rogers that

some of the men are Russian fur-traders is contradicted by Clavijo's representation of a delegation to the court of Teymur of Christian fur-traders from the area under the authority of the Golden Horde.⁷⁷ The men are described as being clad in tattered tabards of skins, and as wearing small hats attached by a cord to their chests, the overall effect making them look like "so many blacksmiths who had just left serving the forge."⁷⁸

If the most common figural type depicted in the Siāh Qalam paintings, the men wearing full-length outer coats and bell-shaped hats, can be considered to caricature "mainstream" Sufis, I would contend that the actions carried out by these figures largely correspond with a field of ideas that we have seen reflected in documentary evidence and satirical literature of the mid-to-late fourteenth century in particular. Despite the lack of background detail given in the Siāh Qalam scenes, the representation of different types of figures across the paintings builds up a compound picture of a social world. Again, the preceding evidence suggests that this picture is not inconsistent with social environments in the fourteenth century. Documents such as the *farmān* of Soltān Ahmad Jalāyer discussed above, for example, show that more organized forms of Sufism were enmeshed with communities of farmers and tradesmen. Scholars including Jürgen Paul have demonstrated how the rise of Sufi orders in Iran depended on economic coordination with peasants, and *Safvat al-safā'* suggests that Sufis were often involved in building projects and trade in the fourteenth century.⁷⁹

Viewing Contexts

For which kind of contexts may the Siāh Qalam paintings have been produced? The use of a scroll format for a number of the paintings does not necessarily indicate that they were created for recitals or performances, since it could represent a technical experiment with form. It is also possible that images which were initially consumed within performance contexts could have been repurposed and enjoyed within the context of the book, as the albums themselves demonstrate. Nevertheless, it is still tempting to think that some of the paintings may have been used originally either in the context of live theatre, where a speaker could have built a performance around them, or to entertain groups of viewers in the absence of a performer, on account of their large size, the single scene-like nature of each image, and factors such as highlighting in gold, which may have picked up candlelight.⁸⁰ As has been noted often, the physical wear and tear incurred by some of the paintings suggests that they were manhandled frequently.⁸¹

It has been argued on several occasions that the figures depicted in the Siāh Qalam paintings display similarities with the puppets of shadow theatre.⁸² The argument appears difficult to defend when the paintings are compared with the puppets from Damietta which were published by Paul Kahle, and which have shaped modern scholarship's understanding of the props used in shadow theatre.⁸³ Nor do the figures depicted in the paintings display any great similarity with extant puppets employed in Iranian *lo'beh-bāzi*.⁸⁴

That said, while there is no particular reason to assume that the Siāh Qalam paintings must be tied to texts, they do lend themselves to comparison with the structures and farcical themes of some shadow plays, performed texts, and connected genres of writing. For example, the sketches in Ibn Sūdūn's *Nuzha* that may have been performed take place in a single setting but introduce several sets of characters.⁸⁵ One sketch revolves around an oneiromancer and his customers in the first half, and around a young man high on hashish, who appears along with his family, in the second half.⁸⁶ Another bipartite sketch focuses on a wedding where the bride and groom have been fed intoxicating substances, and the bride's younger brother demands to be put in a wedding dress, before being attacked by the guests.⁸⁷ A third consists of an exchange of insults between a hunchback and a group of *zurafā* ("refined" men).⁸⁸ These sketches do not share an obvious plot with the paintings, but what they do have in common is a focus on the farcical interactions of small groups, which are often part of a larger set of circumstances. Just as the plots of the sketches can be structured by repetitive actions, like the interactions between the oneiromancer and each of his clients, so too elements recur from painting to painting. For example, several paintings depict groups of men traveling (H.2153 f.55a—fig.2; H.2153 f.124a—*LA1* fig.341; H.2153 f.38b—*LA1* fig.279), or figures with livestock (H.2153 f.27b—*LA1* fig.276; H.2160 f.14a—*LA1* fig.280; H.2153 f.23b—*LA1* fig.281; H.2153 f.113a—*LA1* fig.316; H.2153 f.38a—*LA1* fig.317), or paired figures in conversation (H.2153 f.29b—*LA1* fig.297; H.2153 f.106b—*LA1* fig.298; H.2153 f.52a—*LA1* fig.302).

Demons also appear to satirical effect in some texts that have been connected with performance culture by Shmuel Moreh.⁸⁹ For example, in al-Ma'arri's (d. 449/1058) *Risālat al-ghufrān*, Abū Hadrash, the jinni interviewed by the epistle's protagonist, shows up faults in human behavior by cataloguing his own misadventures on earth.⁹⁰ In the paintings, figures such as the demon depicted in H.2153 f.48a (*LA1* fig.244), who appears to be lecturing or haranguing the viewer, reinforce the impression of a satire on moral standards. If the paintings are to be connected to performance culture, then continuities with the themes and subject matter of plays and performed texts may be more significant than any formal similarities with extant puppets.

Limited documentation survives concerning satirical performance in Iran and the surrounding regions during the period of inquiry, but it is possible to infer that it was practiced. Ibn Dāniyāl (d. 710/1310), whose shadow play *'Ajīb wa gharīb* could be described as a satirical representation of street life, was a native of Mosul, leaving that city for Cairo at the age of nineteen.⁹¹ 'Obeyd-e Zākāni writes of buffoons (*maskharegān*) being invited to weddings and sessions of audition (*samā'*) in Mongol Iran.⁹² Whether the comedy of their performance derived from them parodying their audience, or performing a "set," is left unstated; by contrast it is clear that the *maskhara* in fifteenth-century Cairo consisted of the actor declaiming, while the audience surrounded him.⁹³ Alishir Navā'i's discussion of story-tellers in his *Mahbub al-qulub* suggests their presence in late fifteenth-century Herat.⁹⁴ There is also a significant amount of comic poetry which may have been performed in environments such

as informal gatherings (*majāles*). For example, Boshāq Shirāzi, a boon-companion of the Timurid governor of Shiraz, Eskandar Soltān (d. 818/1415), produced intentional travesties of the work of well-known poets, to humorous effect.⁹⁵

The notion that the Siāh Qalam paintings must have been produced entirely outside elite contexts, because they do not represent the ruling classes, may not be accurate.⁹⁶ Satire, parody and misbehavior have a long history as essential elements of courtly culture, including through the representation of the street, an issue of relevance given the interest of the Siāh Qalam paintings in representing life in open, or public, spaces. In a Persian-speaking context, ‘Obeyd-e Zākāni, a poet with court affiliations, satirized the bourgeoisie and the urban poor. In an Arabic-speaking context, *qaṣā’id sāsāniyya*, describing and parodying the life of beggars on the street in often lurid terms, were penned by al-Aḥnaf al-‘Ukbarī (active tenth century) and Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī (active tenth century) for the same courtly patron, al-Ṣāhib Ibn ‘Abbād (d. 385/995), and the model was taken up again by Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. c. 750/1349) in the fourteenth century to describe the lives of beggars and fraudulent Sufis.⁹⁷ In his *qaṣīda*, al-Ḥillī caricatures wandering tricksters who could be seen leading the people in their devotions at one time, and urging them to consume hashish and wine at another.⁹⁸

There is also evidence that the boundaries between royal elites and the street were more permeable than is sometimes supposed. The entry on hashish in al-Maqrīzī’s (d. 845/1441) *Khiṭāt*, for example, has a short but revealing passage on Soltān Ahmad Jalāyer:

Until the sultan of Baghdad, Aḥmad b. Uways, arrived in Cairo in his flight from Taymūr Lank in the year 795/1392–93, and his companions (*aṣḥābuhu*) made a public display of eating it [i.e. hashish], and the people (*al-nās*) pilloried them for it, found their behavior disgraceful and decried them. Then when he traveled from Cairo to Baghdad, left there a second time, and settled in Damascus for a while, the populace (*ahl*) of Damascus learned to make a display of consuming it (*al-tazāhur bihā*) from his companions.⁹⁹

Al-Maqrīzī’s comments are intriguing because they suggest that, in the case of Soltān Ahmad Jalāyer, there was a degree of interaction between the royal retinue and the broader public, in this case in both Cairo and Damascus. The passage calls into question the notion that the Siāh Qalam paintings cannot have been produced for a courtly audience on the grounds that they do not represent royal subjects, both because it suggests that there was a degree of interaction between the people who made up a court and the inhabitants of cities, and because it reminds us that rulers and courtiers themselves were not always (or perhaps even primarily) interested in the rarefied and the serious.¹⁰⁰ Further evidence for interaction between royal retinues and the urban poor is provided by the historian al-Ghiyāth al-Baghdādī, who reports that Soltān Ahmad Jalāyer constructed a lodge for Qalandars (*al-qalandarkhāna*) above the bank of the Tigris in Baghdad, and that this building was used for a marriage

by the royal *gholām* Bakhshā'esh in the year 813/1410.¹⁰¹ Since we can infer a degree of social interaction between courts and Sufi groups, and since the boundaries between courtly and popular culture may have been blurred at certain times, the paintings could be viewed less as an absolute condemnation of popular practices and more as a drier mockery of trends with which both courtiers and laymen would have been familiar.

Conclusion

Scholars once ascribed the Siāh Qalam paintings to the periphery of the Islamic world because the images were perceived to document a culture that was both socially and religiously marginal. This paper has suggested the inverse: that they satirize trends which were widespread in society, which some political and legal authorities attempted to control, and which were sufficiently stereotyped in their own time to be caricatured in contemporary prose and poetry. The interest of the paintings in life on the street places them by no means outside the scope of interests of courtly patrons, since evidence suggests both that courtiers interacted with the broader public, and that parodies of street life were a distinctive aspect of performed texts and theatre, particularly in medieval Arabic culture. One may speculate that certain dynasties, such as the Jalāyerids, who patronized cultural production in both Arabic and Persian, may have been more likely to support such works of art, but until more research is conducted on the culture of linguistically "mixed" environments like Jalāyerid Iraq, such a conclusion risks begging the question.

The Siāh Qalam paintings appear to be more a genre than the work of a single artist, and the history of their production, copying, broader dissemination and re-copying may reflect the collection, diffusion and use of an artistic corpus over a significant period of time. That said, satires of both mainstream and antinomian Sufis may have assumed a particular relevance when the social and political instability created by the Mongol invasions had begun to augment the popularity and visibility of dervish groups and their sheykhs. Increasingly close ties between states and Sufi organizations over the course of the fifteenth century would not necessarily have rendered the paintings unfunny to audiences, but they may have altered what about them was considered humorous. Hence the documentary and literary evidence may reinforce the arguments of a number of historians of art, to the effect that a central group of the paintings should be seen within the context of the late fourteenth century, and that Turkmen artists in the fifteenth century built on the corpus. I would suggest that greater sensitivity on the part of scholars to the questions of what was found amusing in late medieval culture, and why, will help to further unravel what these paintings are about, and to pinpoint the environments in which they may have been produced.

Notes

1. A condensed bibliography of studies on these paintings includes: Grube, Sims, and Carswell, *Islamic Art* 1, where a full list of secondary scholarship until 1980 is also provided; Haydaroğlu et al., *Ben*

- Mehmed Siyah Kalem*; Karamağaralı, *Muhammad Siyah Kalem'e atfedilen minyatürler*; İpşiroğlu, *Siâh Qalem*; Rogers, Review of *Siyah Qalem*; Rogers, "Siyah Qalam"; Cahill, "Some Alternative Sources"; O'Kane, "Siâh-Qalam"; O'Kane, "Siyah Kalam"; Gillard, "Siyah Qalam"; Çağman, "Glimpses"; Canby, "Siyâh Qalem"; Blair and Bloom, "Siyah Qalam"; Shatzman Steinhardt, "Siyah Kalem." A facsimile of albums H.2153 and H.2160 was reported to be forthcoming in late 2016, but at the time this paper was finalized in July 2017 it appeared to be as yet unpublished. Until a facsimile is produced, İpşiroğlu, *Siyah Qalem*, and Çağman, "Glimpses," provide the clearest color images of the paintings. As Grube et al. provide the most comprehensive catalogue of images, however, I have linked paintings not reproduced here to that work, using the abbreviation *LA1* fig.
2. For a survey of the "signatures" of Mohammad-e Siâh Qalam, see Grube, Sims, and Carswell, *Islamic Art* 1, fig.15. Scholars have taken different stances on the relationship between the polychrome paintings and the scenes of humans and demons. For example, while Rogers has argued that paintings such as the "Wedding" scroll (H.2153 ff.3b–4a) were produced before the scenes of humans and demons, Roxburgh and Çağman have suggested the reverse. See Rogers, "Review of *Siyah Qalem*," 173 and Roxburgh, *Turks*, 148–89; 252 (cat. nos. 216–18); 254 (cat. no. 219). H.2153 f.131b, the "Monastery" scene, contains a chronogram in verse which dates the painting to 810/1407–8. See White, "A Sign of the End Time."
 3. One such later image is the response to H.2153 f.65a attributed by Topsfield to the Deccan or Rajasthan, late seventeenth century. Topsfield, *Visions*, 114, cat. 46. See also Welch, *Gods*, 25–6, where the author argues that there is a connection between Aq-qoyunlu Tabriz, Golconda and Kotah in the circulation of some of the paintings, and Welch, "A Matter of Empathy," 94ff. Another painting was once in the collection of Henri Vignier, and was subsequently sold at Sotheby's New York in May 1982. See Grube, Sims, and Carswell, *Islamic Art* 1, fig.295, and Sotheby Parke Bernet Sale 4867Y, *Fine Oriental Miniatures, Manuscripts and Islamic Works of Art*, York Avenue Galleries, May 19, 1982, cat. no. 114. A third painting of Ottoman provenance, depicting a single demon, is dated 957/1550, and was sold through Christie's in 1996 (Sale 7297, July 25, 1996, lot 316). A number of "Siâh Qalam" images in albums H.2153 and H.2160 themselves were evidently produced some time after the initial group, such as H.2160 f.52a. See Grube, Sims, and Carswell, *Islamic Art* 1, fig.292. There is also the image now in the Freer Gallery of Art (37.25), generally recognized as an inversion of H.2153 f.112a, or vice versa. A hypothesis concerning this painting is offered in Çağman, "Glimpses," 155–6. For an approach to the use and copying of images in the Topkapı and Diez albums, see Tanındı, "Repetition of Illustrations."
 4. Various positions are summarized in Grube, "Problem of the Istanbul Album Paintings." A useful counter to the notion that material in the albums only reflects the "influence" of art from China is Necipoğlu's "Persianate Images."
 5. See, for example, İpşiroğlu, *Siyah Qalem*, 25; and Esin, "Siyah Qalam."
 6. İpşiroğlu, *Siâh Qalem*, 25; Esin, "Siâh Qalam"; Watson, "Chinese Style."
 7. Çağman, "Glimpses," 151, where it is also stated that the sampled paper was made using the floating mould technique. It should be noted that paper described as *Kbetâ'i*, conceivably meaning of (Northern) Chinese origin, is described in Soltân 'Ali Mashhadi's poem on calligraphy. See Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, 113. The floating mold technique is not an exclusively East Asian one, since it is mentioned by Ibn Bâdis, writing in North Africa. It was also employed by the Damascene artists who produced Teymur's giant Qur'an in Samarqand, as a means of creating larger sheets of paper. See Bloom, *Paper*, 67–8.
 8. The Qipchaq "thesis" was formulated by Anet in 1913, and was subsequently taken in a different direction by Togan. See Togan, "Topkapı Sarayında dört cönk." The Transoxanian "thesis" is developed in Çağman, "Glimpses."
 9. As far as I am aware, the sole piece of evidence from Xinjiang is a fragmentary pen and ink drawing of a demon, of questionable date. See Roxburgh, *Turks*, cat. no. 15. The horned, furry demons of the Siâh Qalam paintings bear closer comparison with the Persian illustrative tradition.
 10. Rogers, "Review of *Siyah Qalem*," 172–3.
 11. Carboni, *Il Kitâb*, 58; and Rogers "Review of *Siyah Qalem*," 173.

12. Rogers, "Review of *Siyah Qalem*," 173. The most recent study of the Freer *Divān* is Farhad, "The *Divān* of Sultan Ahmad," which studies the manuscript's marginal ink drawings within the context of the material in the Diez and Saray albums.
13. Rogers, "Review of *Siyah Qalem*," 173.
14. Gillard, "Siyah Qalam," 113.
15. Topsfield, *Visions*, 114, cat. 46; and Welch, *Gods*, 25–6. Further images occasionally emerge for sale at auction. For a general overview of migration between Iran and the Deccan, see Ansari, "Bahmanid Dynasty." For a specialized study of connections between the Turkmen and the Deccan, see Minorsky, "The Qara-qoyunlu."
16. The conference proceedings were published as Grube, Sims, and Carswell, *Islamic Art* 1
17. Compare Esin, "Siyah Qalam"; Çağman, "Glimpses"; Rogers, "Siyah Qalam."
18. See, for example, Sakisian, "Some Sino-Persian Monsters"; Anet, "Exhibition of Persian Miniatures," 16, Plate II, E.
19. See Esin, "Siyah Qalam"; Karamağaralı, "The Siyah Qalam Paintings"; Çağman, "Glimpses."
20. See Gulaćsi, *Medieval Manichaean Book Art*, 4; Lieu, "Manichaean Remains in Jinjiang," 62ff.
21. Çağman, "Glimpses," 153ff. See Fraser, *Performing*, 77ff. and chapter 5, "Performance: Orality and Visuality," 159–96. A slightly garbled reference to the Topkapı albums is provided in the discussion of design circulation: 126.
22. Esin, "Siyah Qalam," 97. See also Fehérvári and Denwood, "Metal and other Objects," 154–5.
23. Fehérvári and Denwood, "Metal and other Objects."
24. Fuad Köprülüzade was an important advocate of the thesis, expounded in his *Influence*, 8ff. For recent writing on the topic, see Amitai-Preiss, "Sufis and Shamans," in addition to DeWeese, *Islamization*. The lack of attention paid by historians of art to these developments in the field of historiography has impaired the study of the Siāh Qalam paintings to a considerable degree, even though J. M. Rogers warned of such methodological issues in 1990. See Rogers, "Siyah Qalam," 27.
25. Znamenski, *Shamanism* I: lii; Amitai-Preiss, "Sufis and Shamans."
26. DeWeese, *Islamization*, 243. For a comparable study focusing on recent religious practices, see Bellér-Han, "Making the Oil Fragrant."
27. Lane, *Lexicon, janna*.
28. *Ibid.*, *ghāla*.
29. *Ibid.*, *shatāna*.
30. The classic study of hashish is Rosenthal, *The Herb*, although this work is exclusively focused on texts in Arabic. The consumption of intoxicants in Safavid Iran is studied in Matthee, *The Pursuit*, while Ergin's "Rock Faces, Opium and Wine" discusses the consumption of intoxicants in (primarily) Timurid courtly culture. Information on the preparation of hashish is covered in Rosenthal, *The Herb*. See also Omidsalar, "Dūğ-e Waḥdat."
31. Marino, *Raconter*, II: 68, 71.
32. De Sacy, *Chrestomathie*, Arabic text I: 85; see also I: 86. French trans. I: 219; see also I:220.
33. Despite arguing that the Siāh Qalam paintings reflect an environment tinged with Buddhism and Shamanism, Emel Esin noted that a number of (Muslim) commentators compared the violent and the intoxicated to the *jinn*. See Esin, "Siyah Qalam," 99.
34. The identification of the cannabis plant is made, without further discussion, in Barry, *Figurative Art*, 159.
35. Karamağaralı, "The Siyah Qalam Paintings," 106.
36. For common and imagined methods of preparation, see Rosenthal, *The Herb*, 56–9.
37. Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh*, 17. See also Marino, *Raconter*, II: 38–9.
38. See the cases discussed in Mart, "Effects."
39. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 442.
40. For evidence of how legal opinions forbidding intoxicants and music were practically enforced on the street, in this case in a Hanafi context, see Dien, *Theory and Practice*, 43, 55, 99.
41. See Rosenthal, *The Herb*, 58.
42. The Kotah image is discussed in Habighorst et al., *Love for Pleasure*, 114.

43. See Kinsley, "Through the Looking Glass," 277.
44. The painting could also be interpreted as a satire on the man frenetically whipping a horse, who is depicted in H.2160 f.50b.
45. See Rosenthal, *The Herb*, 77. For the symptoms of cannabis intoxication, including conjunctival injection, see American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5*, 516.
46. Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh*, 18, 131.
47. See Fattāhi, *Divān-e asrāri*, 432, 438, 444, 445, 452, 453, 454, 458, 459, 461, 463, 465, 479.
48. Fattāhi, *Divān-e asrāri*, 445.
49. For a color reproduction, see Sotheby Parke Bernet Sale 4867Y, *Fine Oriental Miniatures, Manuscripts and Islamic Works of Art*, York Avenue Galleries, May 19, 1982, cat. no. 114.
50. The American Psychiatric Association notes distorted sensory perception among the symptoms of cannabis intoxication. See American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5*, 516.
51. See Roxburgh, *Turks*, cat. no. 100, pp. 157 and 403.
52. A number of these paintings and drawings have been studied in an organized fashion by Barbara Schmitz. See Schmitz, *Islamic and Indian Manuscripts*, 129. The bundles of fabric being wrung by the men in H.2153 f.8b can be compared with the bundle held by a female figure in H.2153 f.152a. Whatever the bundle depicted in H.2153 f.152a contains, it appears to be a cause of consternation for the male figure to the left of the composition, given his look of horror.
53. Grube, Sims, and Carswell et al., *Islamic Art* 1, 63.
54. Dehkhodā, "Ali Akhbar and Mohammad Mo'en."
55. There is, of course, a small number of images in a similar style, which are ascribed to the same artist but depict groups of people not seen in the other paintings. One such image is H.2160 f.84a, which represents a group of hunters with a dog. While the subject is unrelated to the main group, its tenor may not be. That the men and their dog hurry intently by while two leopards—presumably their quarry—gaze at them nonchalantly, suggests that this painting is again intended to be comical.
56. See, in particular, Shafī Kadkani, *Qalandariyyeh*, 340–44. For narratives relating the discovery of hashish to Qotb al-Din Heydar, founder of the Heydari Sufi movement, see Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 46.
57. Shafī Kadkani, *Qalandariyyeh*, 282, 430.
58. 'Obeyd-e Zākāni, *Collected Works*, 329. This example, and several others that follow here, are mentioned in Gronke, "La religion," 213.
59. 'Obeyd-e Zākāni, *Collected Works*, 327.
60. 'Owfi, *Lubāb*, 178–9.
61. BnF Supplément persan 1630. Text in Persian and Uyghur. The *farmān* is transcribed and studied in Qazvini, "Farmān"; and Qaemmaqami, "Farmān." See also Gronke, "La religion," 213.
62. Ebn Bazzāz, *Safvat al-safā*, 218.
63. Ebn Bazzāz, *Safvat al-safā*, 869–70.
64. The *maqāma* I have in mind is the *Mawsiliyya*, in which 'Īsā b. Hishām and al-Iskandarī defraud two sets of villagers before hightailing it out of the sticks.
65. See Paul, "Forming a Faction."
66. Gillard argues convincingly that these two figures recall Gothic images of Christian saints. Gillard, "Siyah Qalam," 106.
67. Çağman, "Glimpses," 152.
68. Al-'Aynī, *Al-Qawl al-sadīd*, 53.
69. For a reproduction, see Sims, *Peerless Images*, 260, no. 175.
70. For reproductions, see *Ibid.*, 252, no. 168; 118, no. 34.
71. Fattāhi, *Divān-e asrāri*, 431, 454. See also the chapter "Yek zajal-e qalandari," 142–5. In that context the skin belongs to a sheep. Such aspects of the dress of antinomian Sufis, as well as of condemnatory descriptions of their behavior, can be seen in texts extending over a large area and a significant period of time. For the case of nineteenth-century Xinjiang, for example, see Jarring, *Dervish and Qalandar*, 8–9.

72. These are: H.2153 f.38b (dervishes with pouches); H.2153 f.141b (construction); H.2153 f.37a (demons in Sufi clothing); H.2153 f.64a (a fight); H.2153 f.23b (the hat is worn by the child); H.2160 f.59a (a figure with a bowl); H.2160 f.32a (a figure with a hammer); H.2153 f.92b (three men); H.2160 f.52a (two men with a Catherine wheel); H.2153 f.27a (a sitting figure); H.2153 f.105a; H.2160 f.52b (a man and a woman with bells); H.2160 f.69b (figures with bells).
73. Compare the hats with those presented in Sālih el-İstanbulî, *Tarikat kıyafetleri*. The orders, of course, do not necessarily represent Sufi groups in Iran during the period of enquiry.
74. For a critical discussion connecting this painting with the patronage of Ya'qub Beg, see Lowry and Beach, *Annotated and Illustrated Checklist*, Checklist no. 237, 206–13, Reproduction p. 237. For a color reproduction, see Barry, *Figurative Art*, 277.
75. For textual descriptions, see Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 19–20.
76. *Ibid.*, 68.
77. Rogers, "Siyah Qalam," 33–4.
78. Clavijo, *Embassy*, 235.
79. See Paul, "Forming a Faction." For an account of Safi al-Din's involvement in a building project, see Ebn Bazzāz, *Safvat al-safā'*, 872. For a reference to a Sufi who had been a goldsmith, see *Ibid.*, 868
80. The argument that the paintings should be seen in the context of performance was partly formulated by İpşiroğlu: *Siyah Qalem*, 34.
81. Çağman, "Glimpses," 153.
82. The most recent proponent of this thesis is Çağman, "Glimpses," 152.
83. See Kahle, "Islamische Schattenspielfiguren I" and "Islamische Schattenspielfiguren II."
84. See Marr, "Koe-çto o Pehlevan kechele," Plate.
85. These sketches are discussed in Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh*, 36–8.
86. Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh*, Arabic text 158–62.
87. *Ibid.*, 76–9.
88. *Ibid.*, 155–8.
89. See Moreh, *Live Theatre*, 114ff.
90. The main narrative of al-Ma'arrî's *Risālat al-ghufrān* consists of interviews between the protagonist, Ibn al-Qāriḥ, and dead poets who inhabit Paradise and Hell. In addition to interviewing the jinni Abū Hadrash, Ibn al-Qāriḥ also encounters Satan and his followers. One of the text's primary concerns is a satirical investigation of heresy.
91. See Rowson, "Ibn Dāniyāl."
92. 'Obeyd-e Zākāni, *Collected Works*, 237.
93. See Moreh, *Live Theatre*, 109.
94. Navā'i, *Vozlyublennyyi serdets*, 38.
95. See Boshāq, *Divān-e Maulānā Boshāq*.
96. Çağman, "Glimpses," 155. While I cannot claim any detailed knowledge of inner Asian story-telling traditions, it appears to me that there are significant generic differences between representations of demons and the demonic in such narratives and the manner and function of their appearance in the Siāh Qalam paintings. For example, one narrative, concerning Idige and a sea-maiden, involves a cast of two protagonists, one human and one demonic, in a variety of locations, sometimes on land and sometimes underwater. The tone of the story is largely sincere and its purpose hagiographical (see DeWeese, *Islamization*, 428–9). The Siāh Qalam paintings, by contrast, feature a cast of tens, can each be read as an independent vignette treating an overall set of themes, and contain a great deal of wry humor.
97. For the *qaṣā'id sāsāniyya* see Bosworth, *Underworld*. Šafi al-Dīn al-Hillī purportedly wrote his for a friend. See Bosworth, *Underworld*, I: 140. The fragment by al-'Ukbarī, who was himself a beggar but who was patronized, alongside Abū Dulaf, by Al-Šāhib b. 'Abbād (d. 385/995), the great poetic patron of the Buyid age, is given in al-Tha'ālibī, *Yatīmat al-dahr* 3: 137. Comparison can also be broadened out to later texts such as al-Shirbīnī's (seventeenth century) *Hazz al-quḥūf*, which satirizes the language and behavior of people in rural Lower Egypt. Provincial Sufis, labeled by al-Shirbīnī as the *khawāmis*, or "fifths," receive a great deal attention in this text. Their impropriety

- is linked on several occasions to possession by the jinn or demonic intoxication (*al-sakrat al-shaytā-niyya*), and their way of being is likened to the way of the Devil (*ṭariq al-shaytān*).
98. Bosworth, *Underworld II*, 44–5 vv.10–11 (Arabic text); 295 vv.10–11 (English trans.).
 99. De Sacy, *Chrestomathie* Arabic text I: 86–7; French trans. I: 221. It may be objected that the word *nās* is meant here in the sense of *awlād al-nās*, the Mamluk military elite. As the term is used in the passage in parallel with *abl*, “the populace,” I have interpreted it in its non-technical sense of “the people.” Maqrīzī employs the anecdote concerning Soltān Ahmad Jalāyer in the context of a discussion of use of the drug by the urban poor (*al-fuqarā*), in order to explain why it was consumed by the people despite sporadic attempts to prohibit it.
 100. For more on the blurred boundaries between “elite” and “popular” culture in the case of Mamluk Egypt, see Shoshan, *Popular Culture*.
 101. Al-Ghiyāth al-Baghdādī, *Al-Taʾrikh al-ghiyāthī*, 93, 245. See also Shafīʿi Kadkani, *Qalandariyyeh*, 283–6; and Jawād et al., *Baghdād*, 61.

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