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Abstract

This article argues that our appreciation of biblical iconography should not be confined to that inspired by Jewish-Christian traditions but should also include the rich visual heritage clearly evident in Islamic traditions and cultures. One of the distinctive features of Islamic art in Safavid Persia is the exquisite iconographies of biblical figures. Under the influence of the vast Mongol empire, Islamicate biblical iconographies synthesized East Asian artistic motifs with folktales and writings of biblical progenitors drawn from Jewish-Christian traditions. Three East Asian artistic features are commonly found in Islamicate biblical iconographies, they are the Chinese dragon, the immortal realm and the flame nimbus. By tracing the use of each prominent East Asian artistic motif in two dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* (*The Book of Omens*) illustrations of Adam and Eve, and their later copies in the *Stories of the Prophets* (*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*), this article discusses how East Asian artistic motifs contribute to different interpretations of Islamicate portrayals of Adam and Eve in the early modern period.

An intriguing Islamicate¹ illustration in the mid-sixteenth century portrays a bright and delightful scene in Genesis 3. The expulsion takes place in a secluded garden filled with flowering plants. A number of angels hide behind a mountain range and in the golden sky to observe Adam and Eve on their way out of the Garden (*al-janna*). The angels are well-attired in colourful robes with their spectacular wings outspread. While Adam and Eve are depicted naked except for leafy loincloths, they are deemed sages as their heads are surrounded by flaming golden nimbi, artistic devices commonly found in Buddhist art to symbolize the energy emanating from the body of the Buddha. More interestingly still, unlike their sorrowful facial expressions commonly found in Christian traditions,²

¹ The term Islamicate is used to make a distinction between the primary texts, namely the Qur'an and the Hadith literature as Islamic, and literature inspired by Qur'anic literature or Muslim cultures as Islamicate. This term has been increasingly widespread after it was proposed by Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Vol. 1*, 3–4.

² Adam and Eve are often shown sad and regretful in the medieval Christian visual art. For instance, an illustration of the expulsion scene in the mid-thirteenth century *Crusader Bible* (M. 638, fol. 2r). Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://www.themorgan.org/collection/crusader-bible/3>); the thirteenth century mosaic depicting the expulsion scene in the Cathedral of the

the first couple looks at each other with slight smiles on their faces. They are riding two vividly depicted creatures, a mythical Chinese dragon with fire emanating from its body and a richly feathered peacock, respectively. The riding scene occupies the centre of this painting. On the right side, a courtier in the Safavid turban drives the first couple out of the garden with a long stick. While on the left, a grey-skinned figure named *Shaytan* (Satan / *Iblīs*) looks up at the couple with a finger pointing to his mouth. A serpent wrapped around his neck probably indicates his wickedness.



Figure 1: Adam and Eve Expelled from Paradise (from the *Fāl-Nāma*. Iran, Qazvin, Safavid period, mid-1550s– early 1560s).

While western religious art focused on three dimensional perspectives, emotions and the emphasis of shadow and light during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, Persian court artists in Safavid Persia skillfully blended artistic elements from east Asian religions and cultures into Islamic illustrations. This remarkable integration turned this illustration of Adam and Eve from the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* (*The Book of Omens*) into an extremely sophisticated and colourful whole. Islamic art scholars have long recognized the artistic relationship between Islamic Persia³ and East Asia.⁴ Berthold Laufer (1874–1934) is considered the first sinologist who surveyed the influences of East Asian cultures to Persia. Since his classical work, *Sino-Iranica; Chinese Contributions to the History of Civilization in Ancient Iran*, published in 1919,

scholarship in both Persian and East Asian art have experienced various stages of development. It began with a rapid expansion of both Persian and East Asian art scholarship in the 1930s, followed by the rise of studies in Persian paintings in the 1950s, and finally by scholarly interest in various media of Islamic art in the last few decades.⁵ While the influence of East Asian artistic motifs on Is-

Assumption, in Monreale, Sicily; an early fifteenth century fresco by Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel of the Church of Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence.

³ This article uses Persia to refer to a historical period before 1800s.

⁴ While the term Chinese has been widely adopted in Islamic art scholarship, the use of this term is misleading because not all artistic features originated from ancient China. This article uses a more inclusive term East Asia to indicate all artistic features from ancient China and its neighboring ancient civilizations, such as India and Persia.

⁵ Kadoi, *Islamic Chiniserie*, 3–4.

Islamic art has long been studied,⁶ key characteristics of each artistic element have not been clearly identified with the support of convincing visual and textual evidence.⁷ In her book, *Islamic Chinoiserie* (2009), Yuka Kadoi conducted a comprehensive survey to reassess the use of Chinese artistic themes in Persianate art in Mongol Persia. In her research, Kadoi outlined various East Asian artistic motifs in Persia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries under the impact of the Mongols. In particular, she discussed the use of each artistic theme through various media, namely metalwork, ceramics, fabrics, textiles and illustrated manuscripts. Kadoi provided convincing evidence to show how East Asian artistic motifs were adopted and adapted into the Mongol Persia in the thirteenth century, and discussed their long-term impact in Islamic art.

In fact, the use of East Asian artistic themes in Persian art continued to flourish during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.⁸ One distinctive feature of Islamic art in Safavid Persia is the exquisite illustrations of biblical figures. The most frequently illustrated biblical iconographies are from the *Fāl-Nāma* and the *Stories of the Prophets* (*Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*) genre. In Islamic art scholarship, however, only a handful scholars noticed the importance of biblical iconographies in the early twentieth century. Sir Thomas W. Arnold carried out the pioneering research focusing on the biblical narratives in Islamic art in his two publications, *The Old and New Testament in Muslim Religious Art* (1932) and *Painting in Islam* (1965).⁹ In his later work, Arnold highlighted the contributions of eastern Christian communities to the development of biblical iconographies in Islamic paintings. In 1981, Sarmat Okasha published *The Muslim Painter and the Divine*, in which he compared Christian and Islamic artistic characteristics and investigated the Persian cultural impact on illustrated manuscripts. A decade later, Na'ama Brosh and Rachel Milstein brought Sufi literature and poetry into the study of Islamicate biblical iconography in their publication *Biblical Stories in Islamic Painting* (1991). With the surge of interest in the study of reception history in biblical scholarship, scholars in religious studies began to incorporate textual evidence in their discussions of Islamicate biblical iconographies. In 1999, Rachel Milstein, Karin Rührdanz and Barbara Schmitz made another important contribution. Milstein *et al.* categorized Islamicate biblical iconographies according to themes from twenty-one completed *Qīṣaṣ* illustrated manuscripts in museums all over the world. In particular, they analyzed the painting styles based on the artistic motifs, social contexts, and their relationship between one another. In the last two decades, studies of Islamicate biblical iconographies be-

⁶ This article uses the terms motif(s), feature(s), device(s) and theme(s) interchangeably to indicate the key characteristics of artistic elements inspired from East Asia.

⁷ Kadoi, *Islamic Chinoiserie*, 2.

⁸ Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam*, x.

⁹ Brosh / Milstein, *Biblical Stories*, 10.

came more specific. In the case of Islamicate illustrations of Adam and Eve, for instance, Fatma Sinem Eryılmaz (2013) argued that Adam is portrayed in the *Anbiyānāma* (*The Book of Prophets*) not only as a heavenly figure but also a pre-Islamic Iranian king. According to Eryılmaz, the kingly portrayal of Adam in the court eulogist ‘Ārif’s *Shāhnāma* is to legitimate the image of king Süleyman (r. 1520–1566) as the last prophetic king who combined prophetic and political authority in human history.¹⁰ In a more recent article, Zohar Hadromi-Allouche (2017) compared the images of Eve in Islamic textual traditions and the portrayals of her in three *Fāl-Nāma* paintings. This article first surveys the textual depiction of Eve in Islamic narratives of the transgression in paradise. Then, it closely analyses the iconography and specific details of the portrayal of Eve in three dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* paintings. Hadromi-Allouche argued that the elevated image of Eve in the *Fāl-Nāma* illustration has not only made Eve a more complex and ambivalent character, but also completes her image in Islamic textual tradition.¹¹

While previous scholars have articulated the importance of East Asian artistic motifs in Islamicate biblical iconographies in the *Fāl-Nāma* and the *Qışaş* literature in Safavid Persia, the use of each East Asian artistic feature has not been examined systematically. The goal of the present study is twofold: first, I will discuss the use of East Asian artistic features since the Mongols. I will follow by identifying three broad artistic tropes that are commonly found in Islamicate biblical iconographies during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. They are the Chinese dragon, the mythical realm and the flaming nimbus. In the second part, I will focus on the use of these East Asian artistic devices in two dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* paintings, *Expulsion of Adam and Eve* and *Angels bow down before Adam and Eve*. Both illustrations represent the earliest extant artistic styles of two iconic scenes of the first couple. The use of East Asian artistic devices in the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* paintings, I argue, is not only to persuade augury seekers in the Safavid court to encourage emotional support for divine sovereignty, but also to transfer those religious emotions to support the political kingship of the Safavid dynasty in daily practices. I will also trace similar stylistic copies in some later *Qışaş* illustrations of Adam and Eve to show the changes of the use of East Asian artistic motifs in them.

1. Use of East Asian Artistic Devices since the Mongols

The vast Mongol Empire in the thirteenth and the fourteenth century nurtured an environment for an unprecedented exchange in religion, culture and art.¹² This

¹⁰ Eryılmaz, From Adam to Süleyman, 124–125 .

¹¹ Hadromi-Allouche, Images of the First Woman, 50.

¹² Komaroff, Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan, 62–73, 105–134.

unified political authority established a vibrant Islamic art industry, which marked an early phase for the continued flourishing artistic diffusion between East and West during the Timurid and the Safavid dynasties. The Yuan court, China's first foreign-led dynasty established by Kublai Khan, restricted the use of sun, moon, dragon, and tiger on decoration on silk and satin fabrics as soon as the Yuan dynasty was officially established.¹³ The five-clawed dragon, for instance, was designated for use by the Son of Heaven or Emperor, while the four-clawed dragon was used by the princes and nobles. The use of these Chinese artistic symbols on imperial garments, decorative silk and satin fabrics, royal porcelain, tombs, furniture, and paintings were more than just to serve decorative purposes; they were adopted to convey meanings of power and authority of an imperial dynasty. The Mongols' appreciation of Chinese art facilitated a significant amount of trade that brought not only commodities but also eastern artistic motifs westward.

The Mongol Empire's overall attitudes toward religious tolerance allowed various religious practices in Mongol Persia.¹⁴ Since the seventh Ilkhan Ghazan officially converted to Islam in 1295, the dynasty's adherence to Islam had been strengthened.¹⁵ Although there was a clear Muslim doctrine against making figural representations since the eighth century, attitudes towards iconographies have been varied throughout Islamic history and across time in various Islamic contexts.¹⁶ During the Ilkhanid dynasty (1256–1335), Tabriz (Persia) not only became the capital of the empire under the political reform of Ilkhan Ghazan, but it also turned into a major artistic and intellectual centre for its production of illustrated manuscripts, such as *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* (*The Book of the Benefits of Animals*), *Shāhnāme* (*The Book of Kings*), and *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* (*The Compendium of Chronicles*).¹⁷ The city's cosmopolitan nature allowed court artists to draw on various ideas and sources to create a highly innovative and sophisticated pictorial style. These richly detailed Islamic paintings usually combined teachings from the Qur'an with narratives from primeval history to later epic scenes in ancient Persian history. Persianate book art continued to flourish during the Timurid dynasty (1370–1507). Schools of miniature paintings were further developed and flourished not only in Tabriz, but also in Shiraz and Herāt. Court artists of a given locale eventually developed certain artistic conventions of their own schools. Small isolated artistic features from East Asia were adapted

¹³ Yang et al., Yuan Shi, 10.6.

¹⁴ Weatherford, J. Genghis Khan and the Quest for God, 177–178.

¹⁵ The Ilkhanid Empire adopted Islamic teachings as political tools to suppress voices of other religions. Melville / Nicola, *The Mongols' Middle East*, 107–129.

¹⁶ For instance, the visual representation of Prophet Muhammad have transformed from an early open to the later covered face. See Ali, *From the Literal to the Spiritual*, 1–24.

¹⁷ Blair, *Tabriz: International Entrepôt under the Mongols*, 321.

to reflect their locale aesthetic concerns.¹⁸ Persianate paintings exhibit diverse artistic elements, from Chinese landscape paintings, such as birds and flowering branches, to the mythical symbols to denote auspiciousness and heavenly blessings typical of Mongol clothing styles. This artistic style became popular during the Safavid dynasty (1501–1736).

Since the Safavid conversion of Persia to Shī'a Islam in the early sixteenth century, ritual cursing gradually became popular.¹⁹ In particular, during the reign of Shah Tahmasp I, ritual cursing became a more institutionalized practice through the appointment of 'Alī 'Abd al-'Alī al-Karakī (d.1534) as the shaykh al-islām (chief Imami jurist).²⁰ His anti-Sunni position strongly influenced religious practice in Persia. As a tool to intimidate and subjugate the Sunni faith, ritual cursing manuscripts produced in Persian and Turkic regions were expanded by illustrations. This is evidenced by the large-scale illustrated manuscripts from the *Fāl-Nāma*. *Fāl-Nāmā* is a divination manual based on the narratives in the Qur'an and early Islamic literature.²¹ Its illustrations were produced since the mid-fifteenth century to facilitate Safavid elites in their search for divine guidance. These illustrated texts are often presented through biblical figures —Adam and Eve, Moses, Joseph, Solomon, Mary, and Jesus— which represent the second largest theme in pictorial divination texts. Preachers, or augury-tellers, predicted the future for those who paid to hear. They told narratives based on these figures and on the good or bad omens behind those images. The seeker was prompted to perform ritual prayers and practices in daily life to safeguard their immediate future. These ritual cursing illustrations were often supported by royal patrons or were ordered directly by the king. While the *Fāl-Nāma* represent Islamicate painting styles destined for the royalty, biblical iconographies from the *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* (*Stories of the Prophets*) represent more non-royal artistic production destined for the ordinary population.²² One of the focuses of these illustrations is Islamic eschatology. The Prophet's ascension, notions of heaven and hell, the Day of the Doom and the Day of Resurrection were among the themes drawn from the Qur'an or other Islamic teachings to convey concepts of the otherworld.²³ Some of the narratives were drawn from biblical traditions while others were drawn from later Islamic teachings.²⁴

Since both *Fāl-nāma* and *Qīṣaṣ* illustrations exhibit strong artistic influences from East Asia, this article will highlight three prominent East Asian artistic mo-

¹⁸ Sugimura, *Chinese-Iranian Relations*, 458–460.

¹⁹ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, 223.

²⁰ Gruber, *Curse Signs*, 301, 307.

²¹ Farhad / Bağcı, *Falnama*, 98

²² Milstein, *Stories of the Prophets*, vii

²³ Gruber, *Curse Signs*, 301.

²⁴ Vicchio, *Biblical Figures in the Islamic Faith*, 147–148.

tifs that have been passed on since the Mongols and further developed in Islamicate biblical iconographies.

2. East Asian Artistic Features

2.1. Chinese Dragon

The Chinese representation of the dragon motif is one of the most prominent artistic devices in Persian visual art.²⁵ It is characterized by its long scaly wriggly body, a horned head with beards, a well-developed backbone ridge from which flames emerge, dorsal fins and four legs with clawed feet. In contrast to the malevolent image of a dragon in western mythology, the Chinese dragon is considered just and beneficent.²⁶ It provides life-giving rain, wealth and good fortune.²⁷ The dragon resonates with the roles of ancient Chinese emperors,²⁸ who ruled with the mandate of heaven to ensure cosmological, geophysical and spiritual energies in delicate harmony.²⁹ The Chinese script dragon, *long* 龍, is one of the earliest attested Chinese characters. It was found in the oracular bone script, which was written during the Shang Dynasty in the second millennium BCE,³⁰ and it was recorded mainly in divination writings.³¹ The earliest Shang bone script adopted the body parts of the celestial dragon in their pictographs (Fig. 2). The imagery of the celestial dragon played an important role in the agricultural, religious and political life of the ancient Chinese.³² The visual depiction of Chinese dragons can be traced from the development of Chinese script *long*, too:



Figure 2: Historical Development of Chinese Script Dragon.

²⁵ Rosenzweig, *Stalking the Persian Dragon*, 150.

²⁶ Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, 195.

²⁷ Eberhard, *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols*, 97–101.

²⁸ The earliest reference to adopt dragon as the main design on robes dates from the Tang dynasty (618–908 CE). During the reign of Empress Wu in 694, the court presented robes embroidered with patterns to officials above the third rank. Princes received robes with coiled dragons, or deer on them, recorded in Tang hui-yao 32.2. Cammann, *China's Dragon Robes*, 4

²⁹ Watt, *The World of Khubilai Khan*, 148–150.

³⁰ The Chinese character dragon corresponds to constellation formed by linking together stars from Virgo through Scorpius, its horn marked by Spica and its tail by Scorpius adapted from Feng, *Zhongguo zaoqi xingxiangtu yanjiu*, 112; Rawson, *Chinese Ornament*, 93.

³¹ Pankenier, *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China*, 40.

³² Tseng, *Picturing Heaven in Early China*, 247.

The earliest Chinese etymological dictionary, *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, published during the Han dynasty (ca. 200 CE), defines the dragon, thus:

chief of the scaly creatures, it is able to be darkly obscure or brightly manifest, able to be minuscule or huge, able to be short or long, at autumn equinox it conceals itself in the watery void, at spring equinox it climbs into the sky.³³

In Chinese visual art, dragons may also be deemed as a means of transportation to ride deities. In Daoism, the dragon image resembles the philosophical notion *Dao* 道 itself. *Dao* was a path to achieve a state of enlightenment so that one may attain longevity or even immortality.³⁴ The dragon was depicted as cosmic manifestation and symbolized an elusive force.³⁵ Daoist deities were often depicted riding dragons and tigers or being accompanied by them.³⁶ According to *Zhuangzi*, a sage of the fourth century BCE, the deity, *Shenren* 神人,

sucks the wind, drinks the dew, climbs up on the clouds and mist, rides a flying dragon, and wanders beyond four seas.³⁷

Images of deities riding dragons are pervasive in Chinese art history. A silk painting depicted a divine being mounting a dragon found as early as the mid-tenth century in a tomb during the late-Zhou dynasty, indicating already a human-beast relationship.³⁸ Later during the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE.), Daoist gods were often shown riding on dragons. A silk painting known as “Daoist Immortal Riding a Dragon” in the early thirteenth century shows a divine person riding on the back of a dragon, accompanied by other celestial beings.³⁹ The dragon here is depicted as a vehicle for a celestial official. This artistic representation depicts not only the Daoist correlative harmony between human, nature and cosmos, but also pronounces the magnificence of the imperial dynasty.⁴⁰

³³ *Shuowen Jiezi* (in Chinese): (<http://www.shuowen.org/view/7649>). Accessed November 15, 2020.

³⁴ The Chinese word *Dao*, in literal sense, suggests a path or a road. The meaning of *Dao* is extended to indicate approaches, methods, and principles. Moreover, the notion of *Dao* has been adopted in Chinese political and moral discourse since antiquity. See Liu, *Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy*, 1–3.

³⁵ Sullivan, M., *The Arts of China*, 195.

³⁶ Gu, *A Cultural History of the Chinese Language*, 93.

³⁷ Zhuangzi, *The Complete works of Zhuangzi*, 22.

³⁸ Zhang, *The History and Spirit of Chinese Art*, 35.

³⁹ *Daoist Immortal Riding a Dragon* (Wu Daozi), Chinese Southern Song Dynasty, early 1200s. Ink, colour, and gold on silk (23.1 x 77.2 cm). Museum of Fine Arts Boston 12.882. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://collections.mfa.org/objects/28124>).

⁴⁰ Another dragon riding motif of the same period: *An Immortal Riding a Dragon*, Chinese Southern Song dynasty, ca.1200. Leaf, ink and color on silk (40 x 37.5 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, 1971.110.2. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/9253>).

The combination of a band of flame and a dragon has emerged as a standard prototype in both the pictorial and the decorative arts during the Tang dynasty between the seventh and the tenth century. The lobed mirror with a dragon and clouds motif during the first half of the eighth century shows an image of flames emanating from the dragon's body,⁴¹ which indicate its supernatural aspects.⁴² This unique feature is primarily associated with the immortal soul. The adoption of the flame for the dragon thus resulted in enhancing the artistic value of this celestial being as a symbol of eternal authority, and eventually the image of dragon became a symbol of the Chinese emperor himself, while the phoenix became the symbol of an empress.⁴³ The complex ideology behind the Chinese dragon imagery was iconographically expressed in the embroidery in the emperor's robe, the *Longpao* 龍袍 "Dragon Robe." During the Mongol Yuan dynasty in China (1260–1368 CE), the Yuen court further specified the use of five-clawed dragons for its imperial costumes.⁴⁴ Moreover, the Twelve Symbols are other cosmological motifs that continued to be used for the imperial sacrificial robes.⁴⁵ They are the sun, the moon, mountain, dragon, flowery bird, a paired of Fú 福, which is a symbol of wellbeing, Fù 斧, an axe as a sacrificial weapon, two sacrificial cups, water weed, fire and grain.⁴⁶ The dragon robe was



Figure 3: The Dragon (from Al-Tannīn Qazwini. Iraq, Wasit, 1280).

made of silk, embroidered with the five-clawed dragon in very fine gold and silver threads, and embellished with these additional cosmological motifs.

In addition to the symbolic expansion, the Mongols extended the dragon imagery beyond the Chinese border. By the time the image of a flaming dragon was adopted in Persia, the Persian court artists began to incorporate new meanings to this mythi-

⁴¹ Lobed Mirror with a Dragon and Cloud Motifs, mid-Tang dynasty, China, first half of the eighth century. Freer and Sackler Galleries F1938.8. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://asia.si.edu/object/F1938.8/>).

⁴² Kadoi, *Islamic Chiniserie*, 155.

⁴³ Williams, *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism*, 139.

⁴⁴ The earliest occurrence of the two main dragons on chest and back with their bodies looping back over the shoulders of an imperial's robe is shown in a Yuan Dynasty portrait. Cammann, *China's Dragon Robes*, 177.

⁴⁵ The use of the Twelve Symbols for Imperial sacrificial robes can be traced to the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE).

⁴⁶ Cammann, *China's Dragon Robes*, 85–94.

cal creature.⁴⁷ This unique image of dragon appeared as early as the late thirteenth century in the Islamic art in Wasit, Iran, from an image found in Qazwini's 1280 manuscript of a beast called *al-tannīn* (*The Dragon*) (Fig. 3). A similar image is found later in Sultan Ahmad's Tusi manuscript (1388).⁴⁸ The dragons in both instances are represented in accordance with the standard typology of the "Chinese dragon" as it appeared within Islamic art.

The adaptation of this motif can be well elucidated in the illustrated manuscript *The Staff of Moses Devours the Sorcerers of Pharaoh* from the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* manuscript during the mid-sixteenth century.⁴⁹ This painting illustrates an episode shared both in the biblical (Exod 7:8–12) and the Qur'anic (Q 7: 103–122) scriptures. Pharaoh commands Moses to display a miracle, as a sign of God's favour, and God turns the staves of Aaron and Moses into serpents. In the Qur'anic version of the story, however, Moses performs a second miracle: his hand turns white, understood to be shining with divine light (Q 7: 108). The episode in this manuscript is rendered with exceptional pictorial verve and colouristic boldness. Moses' head is shown encircled by a flaming golden nimbus, he holds a dish with a human face and rays to exorcise the shamans, a red flaming dragon devours a shaman before him. The four dragons and the scrolled cloud motifs on the top of the painting follow the Chinese artistic motifs to enrich the image of celestial combat. The additional dragons, tigers, and shamans holding the snakes at the lower part of the painting amplify the fierceness of this battle scene. The dragons in different colours also suggest that the artistic motifs of the Chinese dragon have been diminished gradually in Islamicate art.

2.2. Mythical Realm

A number of ancient Chinese landscape paintings illustrate the sphere of celestial beings.⁵⁰ Overlapping misty mountainous landscape, convoluted clouds, mythical beasts, flowery gardens, gnarled trees, together with a few rustic huts, or a splendid pavilion are among the artistic devices commonly found in this mythical imagery. This notion can be well illustrated by a silk tapestry from the Northern Song dynasty (970–1127), *Immortals in a Mountain Pavilion*.⁵¹ The tapestry

⁴⁷ Kadoi, *Islamic Chinoiserie*, 205.

⁴⁸ Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam*, 77, 79.

⁴⁹ *The Staff of Moses Devours the Sorcerers of Pharaoh* from the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma*, Tabriz or Qazvin, ca. 1550s–1560s (59 x 44 cm). Bruschetti Collection, Genoa. Farhad / Bağci, *Falnama*, 102–103.

⁵⁰ A recent exhibit *Whereto Paradise: Picturing Mountains of Immortality in Chinese Art*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2018. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://theme.npm.edu.tw/exh107/WheretoParadise/en/index.html#main>).

⁵¹ *Immortals in a Mountain Pavilion*. Northern Song Dynasty, China (960–1127). Silk tapestry. National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2018. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://theme.npm.edu.tw/exh107/WheretoParadise/en/page-2.html#main> Sec. 1).

is weaved in blue, green, gold threads. The two-storeyed Chinese pavilion is positioned at the centre of the painting. It is hidden behind layered rocks that are filled with exotic flowers and fruit trees. The vibrant nature is enriched by various types of birds flying between the mountains and monkeys looking for food on the trees. The immortals in the pavilion are enjoying the scenery of the surrounding open landscape. Distant mountain peaks rise above convoluted clouds; phoenixes and white cranes fly freely in the sky. These features added a new sense of space and atmosphere that created a temporal illusion between a person's physical existence and spiritual experience in the nature. Persian court artists adapted these ancient Chinese landscape devices in Islamic illustrated manuscripts to illustrate the mythical aura in a narrative or a prophet's spiritual encounter with God. Among the richly detailed ancient Chinese artistic motifs adapted in Islamicate paintings, convoluted clouds and mountainous landscape occurred frequently Islamicate biblical illustrations.

2.2.1. Convoluted Cloud

Clouds are among the earliest tropes in Chinese art history. The Chinese word for cloud, *yún* 雲, is another early attested Chinese character found in the oracular "bone script" during the second millennium BCE.⁵² This early character was then borrowed to write a homophonous word *yún* "to say." According to *Shuōwen Jiezi* 說文解字, the radical sign "rain" was added to the top of the original writing to form a new unambiguous character for cloud.⁵³ The archaic form for "cloud" is written as 𠄎, for "thunder" as 𩇑 and for "to revolve" as 𠄎.⁵⁴ Convoluted, or scrolled-head cloud is evolved when clouds are combined with the rolling of thunder. Similar to the development of Chinese characters, the



Figure 4: Scrolled Cloud Pattern Painted on a Coffin (from *Han Tomb No. 1*. West Han, Mawangdui, Changsha, 206 BC–9 CE).

earliest extant use of cloud motifs was found on bronze vessels in the Shang and Zhou periods (ca. 1500 – 221 BCE).⁵⁵ The application of this theme was widely adopted from daily products, tributes to religious items such as silk textiles for monks, vessels and religious paintings.



Scrolled cloud patterns are employed not merely for decorative purposes, but also for their intrinsic significance, namely to emphasize immortality in both religious paintings

⁵² Norman, *Chinese*, 66.

⁵³ *Shuowen Jiezi*. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<http://www.shuowen.org/view/7538>).

⁵⁴ Williams, *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, 135.

⁵⁵ Xu, *Zhongguo yuwen zhuangshi*, 14.

and burial objects in royal tombs.⁵⁶ The scrolled pattern painted on a coffin found in a royal tomb from West Han (206 BCE – 9 CE) is an extant example to show an early use of cloud pattern to symbolize longevity and immortality. Similar to the representations of the dragon in Daoist thoughts, clouds symbolized vehicles for the immortals and for various images of heaven.⁵⁷ As cloud pattern is widely adopted in religious and secular paintings, its shapes and intrinsic meaning have been gradually developed as a convention. During the Tang Dynasty (618–906), the image of clouds was divided into two parts, “lobed head” , and scrolling stems .⁵⁸ The lobed-head clouds images resemble mushroom head shape called *lingzhi*, literally ganoderma, also regarded as “celestial grass” *xiancao* 仙草 because of its preciousness and high nutritious value, symbolizing immortality. By the thirteenth century, the lobed head pattern was further developed into a particular motif named *ruyi* 如意, literally “as one wishes.” *Ruyi* patterns were extensively used for the ornamental arts for several centuries.⁵⁹

The cloud motifs were often combined with images of mythical creatures such as dragons, phoenixes and *Qilin* 麒麟. As the head of all creatures depicted in both Daoist and Buddhist paintings, cloud-and-dragon motifs gradually became the central theme in Chinese art.⁶⁰ The popularity of the cloud-and-dragon motif can be explained in parallel with the development of imperial images during the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368). The Mongol Empire intentionally adopted these Chinese conventional motifs and associated it exclusively with the emperor. As the “son of heaven” who is also ruler of the whole universe, *Tianxia* 天下, the cloud-and-dragon motif provides a synoptic embodiment of Chinese cosmology to indicate the emperor’s supreme social and political status. The symbol of imperial power has been transmitted through the cloud-and-dragon motif, this strong visual image helped the Mongol Empire to stress their dominion throughout their territories.⁶¹ Accordingly, it is not surprising that the cloud-and-dragon motif assisted the Mongols to propagate its authority in Persia.

The dragon-cloud motif can be found in Islamicate biblical illustrations, too. The Noah’s Ark miniature from the Persian historian Hafiz-i Abru’s *Majma’ al-Tawārīkh* (*The Compendium of Chronicles*) manuscript in 1425 reflects this distinctive ancient Chinese artistic motif.⁶² This miniature is related to the episode

⁵⁶ Zhao, *Treasures in Silk*, 67–71.

⁵⁷ Laing, *Daoist Qi, Clouds and Mist in later Chinese painting*, 32–39.

⁵⁸ Kadoi, *Cloud Patterns*, 25.

⁵⁹ Watson, *The Arts of China 900–1620*, 168.

⁶⁰ Ekhtiar, *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art*, 224.

⁶¹ Kuehn, *The Dragon in Medieval East Christian and Islamic Art*, 212.

⁶² Noah’s Ark. Miniature from *Majma’ al-Tawārīkh* (*The Compendium of Chronicles*) Timurid Dynasty (c.1425), Herāt (42.3 x 36.2 cm). The David Collection, Copenhagen, Denmark, Inv.no.

narrated in the *Qışaş al-anbiyā*, in which Noah's fourth son, Canaan, was drowned during the deluge. Unlike other Noah's ark paintings in both Islamic and Christian traditions, the dragon-and-cloud motif is noticeable in this miniature. The Chinese dragon is depicted at the bow with a horned head, red tongue with beards and the tail stern of the ark. The dragon's head, its tail and the top part of the pole break through the frame. Not only does it emphasize the foreword procession of the ark under divine guidance, but it also signifies the mythical journey of the prophet and the royal status of the Noah. The classic form of scrolled-head clouds, mimicking the auspicious symbol of Chinese *ruyi*, "as one wishes," signifies the salvation of Noah and his family in this tragic deluge. Celestial power and protection reinforced by the dragon-cloud motif cover the top of the painting, mark a sharp contrast with the death and destruction imagery without divine protection at the bottom of the painting.

2.2.2. Chinese Mountainous Landscape

Chinese landscape features such as layered mountains, rock structures, gnarled trees and branches were found as early as in the Han period (206 BCE – 220 CE).⁶³ This artistic motif gradually became prominent during the Tang period between the seventh and the tenth centuries. Later during the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE), political setbacks led a new class of scholars-artists to poetry, calligraphy, and Chinese landscape paintings as modes of expression. A new style of painting that employed calligraphic brushwork for self-expression was added. Images of old gnarled tree branches, mountain rocks, and retirement retreats created by them became emblems of their character and spirit. These "mind landscape" elements were further enhanced in Chinese landscape paintings during the Yuan dynasty under the Mongol empire.⁶⁴ Painting was no longer about the description of the visible world, but a means of conveying the inner landscape of mind and spirit. Moving beyond realistic representation, artist-scholars adopted archaic style and permeated their paintings with their values associated with ancient artists, poets and thoughts. Hence, Chinese landscape paintings during this period embodied both the styles of earlier masters and the inner spirit of the artist. Wang Meng was one of the four major exponents of this painting style during the Mongol ruled Yuan Dynasty (1271–1389). He was revered by his individual expression in landscape paintings, and believed that Chinese landscape is the visible key to the invisible reality. In one of his masterpieces, *The Simple Retreat* (ca.1370), Wang created an imagery that captured

8/2005. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://www.davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/materials/miniatures/art/8-2005>).

⁶³ Soper, Early Chinese Landscape Painting, 144–145.

⁶⁴ *Mind Landscape of Xie Youyu* by Zhao Mengfu, Yuan Dynasty (c.1287), Y1984–13. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/32688>).

scholars in their retreats (Fig. 5). A Chinese courtyard is encircled by energized mountainous landscape. This visionary world creates a dynamic between the power of the enormous nature and the serenity of the dwelling. While the monumental rock structures created a physical likeness of the unpredictable terrain of the political power, the simplicity of the courtyard and the recluse embodies the desire of inner calmness of the scholars. The calligraphic energy is expressed in the mountainous landscape through the structures and the conifers.

Mountains were seen as a sacred component in Chinese art that echoed Daoist philosophy, in particular in Zhuangzi and various alchemical texts.⁶⁵ According to Daoist beliefs, mountains were the links between Heaven and Earth. They were also portrayed as inhabited by immortals, sages and various mythical



Figure 5: The Simple Retreat (the artist Wang Meng, ca. 1370).

beings. *Shenshan* 神山, the mythical mountains of gods, are places where one can encounter spirits, legendary animals, rare plants and fungi with alchemical properties, and unusual rock-formations. These mountains were considered to be auspicious because they contained an abundance of Chi, energies. According to Lao-tzu, a single unifying principle transforms into energies and becomes various species and forms of life such as mountains, clouds and animals. Mountains become a symbolic representation to express unity of life forces. Thus, human beings should maintain a close relationship with nature for optimal moral and physical health. Chinese emperors would go to five sacred mountains to offer sacrifices to the Daoist gods and to receive energies and the “Mandate from Heaven” that legitimate their reign.⁶⁶

The Chinese inspired mythical realm device is well preserved in a manuscript folio titled *Solomon and His Court*.⁶⁷ Currently held in the Harvard Art Museum, this unfinished illustration was produced in 1560 in Qazvin during the Safavid dynasty. As an embodiment of divine power and royal kingship, Solomon (*Sulaymān*) is often depicted as an ideal personification in Islamic traditions. He was endowed with God-given intelligence, with which he ruled over both the earthly and the celestial beings. Islamic illustrations often depict king Solomon

⁶⁵ Shaw, *Buddhist and Taoist influence on Chinese Landscape Painting*, 192.

⁶⁶ Perkins, *Encyclopedia of China*, 161–162.

⁶⁷ *Solomon and his Court*, ca. 1560, folio on a manuscript (20 x 12.5 cm), Qazvin, Safavid Period, 2011.540. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://hvard.art/o/217154>).

appeared in a mythical realm, whether he is enthroned in the Garden, or he is sitting with the Queen of Sheba (*Balqīs*). In this illustration, Solomon is sitting on a hexagonal throne in a flowery garden surrounded by courtiers and celestial beings. He is ordered by God to complete the building of the Temple. He gathers together the demons and spirits (*jinn*s) and the expert builders to carry out the task. Chinese landscape device delicately fills the background of the painting. Echoing to the Daoist philosophy, mountain range is portrayed in the middle of the painting, which indicates the link between the heaven and the earth. This artistic device creates temporal illusions between physical existence and mythical imagery with the presence of king Solomon occupying the centre of the painting. Other Chinese landscape features, namely layered mountains, gnarled trees and rock structures, are well illustrated in this painting, too. On the top of the painting, distant mountain peaks rise above convoluted clouds, mythical beasts such as a Chinese dragon, phoenix, and cranes flying over and between the mountain peaks. The use of these artistic features is reminiscent of the silk tapestry *Immortals in a Mountain Pavilion*. Both use the same artistic features to denote a mythical realm. Unlike ancient Chinese paintings using diluted, thin washes of colours to express the mindful landscape, Persian court artists prefer opaque colours to depict Solomon's heavenly vision, which project more a sense of reality. The mythical aura is nonetheless articulated through the application of these Chinese landscape features. In the lower part of the painting, the flowery garden is vibrant with life. Celestial beings namely angels, demons and spirits, Safavid courtiers and various types of animals are filling the harmonious scene. King Solomon, positioned at the centre of the painting, is seated crossed-leg posture with a flaming golden nimbus surrounded his head. This unique portrayal signifies both of his royalty and sanctity.

2.3. Flaming Nimbus

Unlike the round nimbus that is widely adopted in Christian religious art, the use of a flaming nimbus is more prevalent in Islamicate illustrations. Brosh and Milstein noticed the flaming golden nimbus as a prominent artistic device in Islamicate biblical iconographies.⁶⁸ In fact, a nimbus with flame surrounding the heads of deities had long been used as an artistic feature in eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism.⁶⁹ Buddhism had been introduced into Persia as early as the Sasanian period (224–651 CE) through trading with India. Early flaming

⁶⁸ Brosh / Milstein, *Biblical Stories*, 15.

⁶⁹ The flame nimbus is found in Daoist art, too. It was, however, an unconventional example showing the Daoist stele with Laojun 老君, the deified Laozi, dated 567 CE during the Northern Zhou Dynasty in China. *Small Daoist Stele Depicting Laojun in a Niche*. White marble, height 25–30 cm. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://asia.si.edu/object/FSC-S-48/>); See also Liu, *Origins of Daoist Iconography*, 31–64.

nimbus appeared in Persia around the sixth century as a decorating feature of an aureole behind a sacred personage.⁷⁰ Flames or spiky light beams emanated from the head and the shoulders of the Buddha, depicting the energy emanated from his body by means of meditation. This magical power became visible in the forms of a nimbus, signifying divinity and sanctity. An early Buddha sculpture in India from the Gupta period (3–6 CE) was surrounded by an almond-shaped aureole behind his whole body.⁷¹ This iconographic formula can be observed in some coins during the Sasanian Persia, too, which suggests an early encounter between Indian and Persian religious art elements. Early Buddhist art in China also showed that flame motif was used as a supplementary feature. It is evident in the Yungang Buddhist Grottoes during the Northern Wei Dynasty (Mid-5th–early 6th century CE),⁷² a religious project built under imperial auspices in China. Since the Mongol empire introduced Buddhism to Persia, this new religious and artistic element came along to the Islamic culture.⁷³ During the early Mongol period, Chinese artists were employed in Central Asia and the Near East to carry out mural artwork for the Buddhist monasteries.⁷⁴ Even after the demise of Buddhism in Persia, Buddhist iconographic style remained influential, though the themes were largely replaced by other poetical and mythical iconography.⁷⁵ The infusion of eastern religious flame motif gradually changed the Islamic art culture in Persia. The flaming nimbus had been adopted to replace the round halo to indicate sacred personage or immortal soul.

The early fourteenth century illustrated manuscript, *Kitāb Al-Āthār Al-Bāqiyah ‘an al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah* (*Chronology of Ancient Nations*), written by Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. 1050 CE), reflected the convergence between the eastern and western religious artistic conventions.⁷⁶ The artistic style of this manuscript was initially derived from Byzantine convention, a few years after an ambassador from the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II came to Persia in 1302. It was also the period when Christianity, particularly Nestorian Christianity, flourished in Persia. The convergence of both eastern and western religious and cultural artistic elements is reflected in two miniatures inspired by the biblical narratives found in the book. The first one is an illustration regarding a Persian narrative of creation. In this Persian creation story, the protagonists, Misha and Mishyana, were expelled from the paradise after Ahriman persuades them to eat fruits.

⁷⁰ An early adaption of the flame nimbus in Persia is the coin issued by the emperor Khosrow II (or Chosroes II), the last great king of the Sasanian Dynasty, reigning from 590 to 628 CE.

⁷¹ Compareti, *The Representation of Zoroastrian Divinities*, 149.

⁷² Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art*, 157, 187.

⁷³ Roxburgh, *Persian Drawings*, 52–54.

⁷⁴ Vaziri, *Buddhism in Iran* 2012, 114.

⁷⁵ Vaziri, *Buddhism in Iran*, 52–54

⁷⁶ University of Edinburgh, *Oriental Manuscripts*, f.48v. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/s/52cq96>).

Both, its painting style and the plot, closely resemble Christian traditions of Adam and Eve. This illustration depicted the scene when the couple were tempted by Ahriman to eat the fruit. The painting reflects a strong Byzantine artistic convention in portraying the characters with round nimbi surrounding them. Another iconographic scene, the Annunciation,⁷⁷ is from the illustrated manuscript *Mi'rājnāma (Book of Ascension)*, dated also to the early fourteenth century in Tabriz, Persia. In this painting, angel Gabriel is depicted with a flaming nimbus on his head, holding streamers instead of the scepter in his left hand. The unique image of nimbus surrounding the head of Gabriel reflects a convergence between the western round and the eastern flame shape nimbus. An evolution of the shape of nimbus can be observed in a later Islamic illustration depicting the Prophet sitting with Abrahamic prophets in Jerusalem (Topkapı Sarayı Museum H.2154, Folio 62r).⁷⁸ Dated between 1317 and 1330, the Prophet was surrounded by a round nimbus combined with the convoluted cloud patterns, the round nimbus is not found in the later Islamic paintings. The combination of the scrolled cloud pattern and the nimbus further enhanced the divine guidance to the Prophet, the sense of spiritual prosperity is fully revealed through the blending of these eastern and western artistic motifs. Yet the round shape nimbus was gradually superseded by the more popular flaming shape nimbus in Islamicate illustrations.

3. Adam and Eve in the *Fāl-Nāma* Illustrations

While the production of illustrated books began to flourish from the end of the thirteenth century, Adam and Eve appeared in Islamic visual art not before the early fifteenth century.⁷⁹ Broadly speaking, Islamic illustrations of Adam and Eve can be divided into two themes, namely the expulsion of Adam and Eve, and angels kneeling before Adam. In this part of discussion I will examine the use of the above-discussed East Asian artistic features in the two dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* paintings of Adam and Eve. A number of illustrations from the *Qışaṣ al-anbiyā'* manuscripts in the later decades display similar East Asian motifs; I will highlight the changes of use of these artistic features and painting styles in these paintings. While not every Islamicate Adam and Eve illustration style shows

⁷⁷ The Annunciation to Mary from *Kitāb Al-Āthār Al-Bāqiyah 'an Al-Qurūn Al-Khāliyah (Chronology of Ancient Nations)* by Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. 1050 CE), 1307, Tabriz, Persia. University of Edinburgh, Or.Ms.161, f.141v. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/s/5b716r>).

⁷⁸ Gruber, *Images of the Prophet Muhammad*, 37.

⁷⁹ *Angels Prostrating Before Adam*, produced in Hafiz-i Abru, Kulliyat, Heart (1415 CE), currently held in Topkapı Sarayı Museum, Istanbul (B. 282, fol. 16r), is the earliest extant Islamic painting of Islamicate iconography of Adam in Genesis.

prominent artistic features from East Asia, the painting style, *Angels bow down before newly created Adam*,⁸⁰ will not be included in the present discussion.

3.1. Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise

Based on the artistic features of the Chinese dragon discussed above, the iconographic details of the Islamic expulsion of Adam and Eve can be further divided into the Chinese dragon and the serpent motifs. The Islamic expulsion scene first appeared between the mid-1550s and early 1560s in the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* (Fig. 1). This painting shows Adam and Eve riding on the backs of spectacular mythical beasts, a dragon and a peacock respectively, on their way out of the garden. Two distinctive East Asian artistic features are immediately noticeable in this illustration, namely the Chinese dragon and the riding motifs. Both are unknown from any Islamic textual source of the expulsion episode.

Looking closely at the illustration, this colourful painting preserves the most detailed and vivid artistic features of the Chinese dragon. This celestial beast has a low horned head, long open jaws, sharp teeth and long beards. All these features accord closely with the typology of the Chinese dragon head. Moreover, it has a serpentine body with a scaly belly, four short legs with paws. The band of flame emanating from the dragon's body is another unique feature of the Chinese dragon, too. Additionally, the dragon in blue colour is typically found on Chinese blue and white porcelain since the Mongol ruled Yuan Dynasty.⁸¹ Previous studies showed varied interpretations of this mythical creature Adam was riding. Some read it as the Chinese dragon,⁸² while others understood it as a serpent.⁸³ The divergence of their interpretations is probably because of the source the scholar relied on. In the *Qışaş* narrative, Adam and Eve are punished together with a serpent and a peacock. Based on the interpretation of the *Qışaş*, one would have logically assumed that Adam was riding a serpent and Eve on a peacock, as both primordial creatures were mentioned in this narrative. However, it is unlikely the case in this illustration, as a serpent is also portrayed surrounding the neck of the gray-coloured Satan (*Shaytan / Iblīs*). Court artists in Qazvin during the mid-sixteenth century should have had a clear iconographical distinction between the Chinese dragon and the serpent. It is evidenced by another aforementioned illustrated manuscript, *Moses challenges Pharaoh's Sorcerers*. A number of Chinese dragons and serpents are portrayed in this

⁸⁰ For instance, two *Qışaş* illustrations found in the British Library (Or. 11837 fol. 9b) and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Persian 1150 fol. 8v).

⁸¹ During Yuan Dynasty, Chinese town Jingdezhen produced blue and white porcelain which later became the representation of porcelain. UNESCO Silk Roads Program-Chinese Porcelain. Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/chinese-porcelain>).

⁸² Sims / Marshak / Grube, *Peerless Images*, 296; Milstein, *Biblical Stories*, 28.

⁸³ Farhad / Bağci, *Falnama*, 98; Lowry / Nemanzee, *A Jeweler's Eye*, 128; Hadromi-Allouhe, *Images of the First Woman*, 43.

combat scene, which shows that both the Chinese dragons and the serpents are completely different creatures in terms of their artistic features and sizes.

While Adam and Eve are depicted naked except for their leafy loincloths, the smiles on the first couple's faces suggest their unwavering confidence in divine forgiveness and protection. Unlike Christian interpretations focusing on the sinful deeds and punishment of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, Islamic interpretations focus on their repentance and divine providence. According to the Qur'an, God commands the first couple and Satan to leave the garden, yet God comforts Adam and Eve with a promise that they will rise from the dead. This hopeful image echoes the content of adjoining text for the augury user:

O augury user, know that the exodus of Adam and Eve has appeared in your augury. This augury is at first very, very unfortunate, but be hopeful since it turns out well in the end.⁸⁴

In addition, angels in colourful robes accompanying the first couple on their way out of the garden show the first couple's elevated identities above the angels. Divine providence is abundantly exhibited through the flaming golden nimbi surrounding the heads of Adam and Eve and is further enhanced by their riding motifs. Adam, as a divine person, riding on a dragon is reminiscent of the ancient Chinese painting depicting a Daoist celestial deity riding on a dragon. This artistic motif has a long tradition and is prevalent in Daoist pictorial traditions. It is not surprising that this artistic feature would have been adapted to this illustration. In this regard, the Chinese dragon motif in the expulsion iconography probably functioned as the celestial vehicle for Adam.

While the imperial Chinese dragon is vividly portrayed in this expulsion illustration, the riding motif is neither found in any Islamic textual traditions nor the adjoining text of this painting. One still needs to ask why this artistic feature has been added in this spectacular expulsion painting? The distinctiveness of this artistic motif suggests that there is probably a more important didactic message rather than simply providing aesthetic pleasure to the viewer.⁸⁵ In this regard, I argue that the Chinese dragon motif has been adopted to display the imperial power and authority of the Safavid dynasty. The Chinese dragon image has long been used to represent an imperial power in the Persian art traditions.⁸⁶ Through the process of seeing,⁸⁷ an augury seeker from the royal court would have been

⁸⁴ Farhad / Bağci, *Falnama*, 262.

⁸⁵ Milstein, *Stories of the Prophets*, 5.

⁸⁶ This topic has been discussed in detail in the article by Rosenzweig, *Stalking the Persian Dragon*, 150–176.

⁸⁷ In one of his major works, *Sacred Gaze. Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice*, David Morgan uses the term *sacred gaze* to discuss seeing as a religious act. This religious act of seeing occurs between the viewer and an image, and within a given cultural and historical setting. To Morgan, visual analysis is important to religious studies, because the notion —belief does not exist in an abstract ideology or a realm of pure proclamation. Belief requires a medium

empowered by their hope not only for divine providence given to Adam and Eve, but also for the leadership of the Safavid dynasty. In other words, this benevolent and auspicious creature had been adopted to persuade the seeker, or a Safavid elite, to transfer their hope for divine protection to the powerful Safavid court or directly to the Shah Tahmasp I himself. The production of the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* illustrations can justify the possibility of this motivation, too. The dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* illustrations were created during the reign of the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp I (r. 1524–1576), the second Shah of the Safavid dynasty. During his reign, he has conducted two important projects —to move the Safavid capital from Tabriz to Qazvin between 1544 and 1556, and to intensify the Shiʿite religious policies. As the most celebrated patron of arts in the mid-sixteenth century, Shah Tahmasp I had not only practiced prognostication through images at his intimate gatherings,⁸⁸ his images had been portrayed in some *Fāl-Nāma* illustrations as a sage like character who was associated with special divine powers. In this regard, this iconography would have been another evidence to show the ambition of the Safavid Shah —to combine his kingly prophetic role in the primeval genealogy. In other words, the image of Shah Tahmasp I is embedded in the image of Adam, hence riding the Chinese dragon would have been symbolized Shah’s elevated status, namely his prophetic role as Adam, and his power to reign over cosmology and the dynasty on earth. It is also possible that the image of the Chinese dragon is an embodiment of Shah Tahmasp I, since the dragon image is an additional motif to this episode, the inclusion of the Chinese dragon in this iconography is to exhibit the continuation of the prophetic traditions, first established by Adam, and later to the earthly Safavid ruler guided by Shah Tahmasp I. Either account would have brought hope to the augury seeker and encouraged them to support the Safavid dynasty through their economic power or political influences in their daily practices.

Another distinctive feature of this *Fāl-Nāma* illustration is the positive attitude of Eve in the expulsion scene. Unlike the dragon riding motif, peacock riding is neither found in textual nor art traditions. This artistic feature was probably an inspiration by the Safavid court artist based on the dragon riding motif. Influenced by positive attitudes of Shiʿa Islam toward women characters, women were deemed learned, pious and charitable in the sixteenth century Persia.⁸⁹ The elevated image of women is reflected in the portrayal of Eve in the expulsion scene, too. Eve is deemed equal to Adam and both are showed riding on mythical creatures on their way out of the Garden. Both of their heads are sur-

in religious visual culture, and it happens in and through things and what people do with them. In this regard, visual arts can be viewed as powerful device to connect the human and the spiritual realm within a particular context. Morgan, *Sacred Gaze*, 3, 8–9

⁸⁸ Farhad / Bağci, *Falnama*, 49.

⁸⁹ Szuppe, *Status, Knowledge, and Politics: Women in Safavid Iran*, 140–169.

rounded by flaming golden nimbi, which also shows her equal prophetic image with Adam. Moreover, the image of Eve sitting next to Adam reminds us of the role of empress during the reign of Shah Tahmasp I, as the empress was often invited to consult on court issues.⁹⁰ In addition, the royal women were among the Shah Tahmasp's I close companions or considered as one of the audiences of the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* illustrations. Validating their knowledge and independence could have helped Shah Tahmasp I to gain political and economic powers of the Safavid Empire.

Two illustrations from the *Qīṣāṣ* manuscripts which appeared in the third quarter of the sixteenth century display similar artistic features. Their similarity in artistic styles suggest the popularity of the expulsion illustration of the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma*, they were widely reproduced with an adaption of individual artistic styles. Both illustrations are currently held at the Topkapı Sarayı Museum, Istanbul (H.1228, f.3b and H.1225, f.14b).⁹¹ While the Chinese dragon and the riding motifs are not found in the *Qīṣāṣ* manuscripts, they have been retained in these illustrations. In the former illustration (H.1228, f.3b), Adam and Eve are portrayed on their ways out of the Garden, Satan, dressed as a fallen angel is chased by the Safavid courtier in the heaven. Most of the East Asian artistic features from the *Fāl-Nāma* painting are preserved in this *Qīṣāṣ* painting. However, the artist deliberately divided the darkness from the light. The use of colour contrast probably is to highlight the power dynamic between the good and the evil in the celestial realm and on the earth. The Chinese dragon features are still identifiable, namely its serpentine body with four feet and claws, and the band of flames emanating from its body. However, the most distinctive features of the Chinese dragon head —its two horns, and long mustasche have been lost. Since no other serpent image is found in this painting, the artist could have understood this Chinese dragon motif as the serpent mentioned in the *Qīṣāṣ* narrative before it lost its legs. Nevertheless, the flaming nimbi on the heads of Adam and Eve, the riding motifs, and the more significant convoluted clouds patterns have been adopted to highlight the divine providence of the first couple. The latter illustration (H.1225, f.14b) seems to move further away from the earliest dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* painting. Other than the golden sky and the dragon and peacock riding motifs, other East Asian artistic motifs —the mythical realm illustrated by the mountainous landscape with gnarled trees, layered mountains and rock structure, and the flame nimbi surrounding the head of Adam and Eve have been lost. Similar to the *Fāl-Nāma* painting, the first couple is riding out of the Garden, they are chased by the Safavid courtier. The grey-skinned Satan, however, is portrayed as a fallen angel who is dressed in colour-

⁹⁰ Canby, *Hunt for Paradise: Court arts of Safavid Iran*, 17.

⁹¹ Milstein, *Biblical Stories*, 214.

ful robe. He is hiding behind the mountain to observe the expulsion scene with his finger pointing to his mouth. Interestingly, the features of the Chinese dragon head have been vividly preserved in this painting, and the band of flame surrounding its serpentine body is clearly identifiable. Like the other *Qışaş* illustration, no other serpent image is found in this painting, the artist probably has understood the Chinese dragon as the serpent. The similar portrait size between Satan and the first couple suggests that divine punishment is the theme of this painting.

Another two late-sixteenth century expulsion illustrations from the *Qışaş* manuscripts show Adam and Eve walking out of the Garden. One is from the British Library (add. 18576, fol. 11r),⁹² and another from the Topkapı Sarayı Museum (B. 250, fol. 36a).⁹³ The artistic features of Chinese dragon are well preserved in both paintings. While the composition of the British Library illustration (add. 18576, fol. 11r) is entirely different from the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* illustration, the Chinese dragon motifs, namely the long low head, two horns, mustache, the band of flames and the serpentine body follow closely to the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* illustration. Similar to the previous two *Qışaş* illustrations, the artist probably understood this mythical creature as the serpent in the *Qışaş* narrative. The fourth expulsion illustration from the Topkapı Sarayı Museum (B. 250, fol. 36a) is another example to show the artist's confusion between the Chinese dragon and the serpent image. This illustration shows the Chinese dragon, the serpent and the peacock in the expulsion scene. Since both the serpent and the peacock are mentioned in the *Qışaş* narrative, the artist should have known that the Chinese dragon image is an additional motif from the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* iconography, yet he has included it in his *Qışaş* expulsion iconography without having Adam riding it. The proximity of the Chinese dragon to the decorated pavilion probably suggest that this mythical creature is located inside the flowery Garden, while Adam and Eve are gone outside of it. Moreover, convoluted clouds, layered mountains and the gnarled branches in the painting also indicate the artist's knowledge of Chinese artistic features.

3.2. Angels Prostrating Before Adam and Eve

Angels prostrating before Adam is a unique episode in Islamic traditions. Eight verses in the Qur'an mention this scene.⁹⁴ God commanded all the angels to bow before him (Q 2:34, 17:61). All angels bowed except Satan, who claimed that he is superior to Adam because he was made from fire, whereas Adam was made from clay (Q 7:12). Hence, God expelled Satan from the paradise

⁹² British Library (add. 18576, fol. 11r) 35.5 x 23.5 cm. Accessed November 15, 2020 (http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_18576_fs001r).

⁹³ Milstein, *Biblical Prophets*, 28.

⁹⁴ Q 2:34, 7:11; 15:31–32; 17:61; 18:50; 20:116 and 38:75.

and condemned him to hell. The earliest extant illustration of this episode is from *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* (*The Annals of the Prophets and Kings*) by al-Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE).⁹⁵ It is one of the most important historical works of ancient Persia that incorporated primordial patriarchs into the Persian history. The illustration shows Adam standing on a royal throne, four crowned angels in colourful dresses prostrating themselves before him. The proportion of the figure of Satan is similar to the size of the enthroned Adam, this visual contrast articulates the power dynamics between the righteous and the wicked. Satan is depicted dark-skinned, shortened wings, exposed tail, clawed feet and half-naked. This impoverished image sharpens the contrast to the group of well-attired angels. This illustration, however, shows a very different artistic style with the later painting of the same theme in the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma*.



Figure 6: Adam and Eve Enthroned in Paradise (from the *Fāl-Nāma*, Iran, Qazvin, Safavid period, mid-1550s – early 1560s).

While Adam is the sole character mentioned in the Qur'an adored by the angels, the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* illustration portrays a remarkable scene that is not found in any literature in Islamic traditions —both Eve and Adam are enthroned in the Garden (Fig. 6). The enthroned couple occupied the centre of the painting. The inclusion of Eve in the portrayal is probably another evidence to show the more equal status of women in Shī'a Islam. The first couple are beautifully attired, their crowned heads are surrounded by flaming golden nimbi, the aforementioned artistic features inspired by Buddhist art symbolizing their sacred personage. In addition to their attire in fine materials, their royal image is reflected by their relaxed sitting poses on a hexagonal throne decorated with golden screens and fine curtain. Similar to the expulsion illustration in the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma*, the couple is served by a number of colourful attired angels, which indicate their elevated status above the angels. Some angels prostrate themselves before the first couple in the flowery Garden, while others serve the first couple with food or anoint them with flaming golden fire. The image of fire anointment indicates the abundance of divine blessings. On the upper part of the painting, the Chinese-inspired mythical mountain range separates the heavenly and the Garden scene. More interestingly, unlike the

expulsion illustration in the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma*, the couple is served by a number of colourful attired angels, which indicate their elevated status above the angels. Some angels prostrate themselves before the first couple in the flowery Garden, while others serve the first couple with food or anoint them with flaming golden fire. The image of fire anointment indicates the abundance of divine blessings. On the upper part of the painting, the Chinese-inspired mythical mountain range separates the heavenly and the Garden scene. More interestingly, unlike the

⁹⁵ Angels Prostrating Before Adam, Herāt, Persia (1413–1416). 19.5 x 27.2 cm. Topkapı Sarayı Museum, Istanbul (B. 282, fol. 16r). Sims / Marshak / Grube, *Peerless Images*, 263–264. See also the illustration in Wikimedia. Accessed November 15, 2020 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iblis#/media/File:Adam_and_the_Angels_watched_by_Iblis.jpg).

Chinese landscape painting depicting mountain peaks protruded from misty mountains, here, mountain peaks are stacking up to reach the golden sky, this two-dimensional painting technique probably indicates the unlimited horizon of the Garden.⁹⁶ The grey-skinned Satan and two angels are hiding behind the mountain range to observe this delightful angel prostration scene in the Garden.

In her study of the Chinese artistic motifs in Islamic illustrated manuscripts during the Mongol Persia, Kadoi studied forty illustrations in the Diez Albums dated from the late thirteenth centuries portraying the enthronement scene of the emperor and the empress. Eleven Diez miniatures show similar artistic features of the emperor couple.⁹⁷ According to Kadoi, all couples are beautifully attired with elaborate headdresses. They are seated on cushion-type thrones with high columnar legs and raised footstools. The interior settings, such as hexagonal thrones with raised footrest, segmented backrests of the thrones with flower-based decoration, and curtains are sometimes incorporated in the setting scenes to indicate their high positions in Mongol society. Kadoi argued that the royal couple iconographies in the Diez Albums were possibly inspired by a series of illustrations depicting Chinese emperors, as Mongol costumes that had been used as formal dress during the Mongol ruled Yuan Dynasty are incorporated in these illustrations.⁹⁸ Stylistically, the image of Adam and Eve wearing crowns and royal robes and sitting on the throne in the Garden is reminiscent of the enthronement scene of the emperor and empresses in the Diez Albums. Similar artistic features are found in the illustrations of Solomon and Bilqis enthronement, too. Since Eve is not mentioned in the enthronement scene in any Islamic literary sources, it is possible that the inclusion of Eve in this distinctive imperial portrait is to propagate the genealogies association between religious leaders and Safavid imperial families. Moreover, Eve is presented as the knowledgeable counterpart in this painting. This elevated status of Eve is in accord with the Shi'ite perspectives of women and the practice of Shah Tahmasp I himself.

Two later *Qiṣaṣ* illustrations show both Adam and Eve enthroned in the Garden, one is currently held in New York Public Library (Pers.MS.46, fol. 9a),⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Another two dimensional mountain peaks example, see a folio, *The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus*, from the *Fāl-Nāma*, 1550s, Qazvin (35.64.3). Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/449026>)

⁹⁷ Kadoi, *Islamic Chiniserie*, 182.

⁹⁸ Kadoi, *Islamic Chiniserie*, 183.

⁹⁹ Angels Prostrating before Adam and Eve. Qazvin, Persia, Safavid period (ca. 1580), thick cream paper (34.7 x 22.5 cm). New York Public Library, Spencer Collection (Pers.MS. 46, fol. 9a). Accessed November 15, 2020 (<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/8b6da8b4-a43d-fd6e-e040-e00a1806220a>).

and the other in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (1581 F.6 fol. 2v).¹⁰⁰ The major composition of these two *Qışaş* illustrations follow the illustration in the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma*, which suggest that they are later copies of the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* illustration. Having Eve sitting on the throne, the former illustration (Pers.MS. 46, fol. 9a), however, only shows Adam surrounding by the flaming golden nimbus. While Eve is not mentioned in this episode in the *Qışaş* manuscript, the artist seemed to have struggled to include her in the enthronement scene. The present iconography is probably a harmonization of the difference between the *Qışaş* description and the *Fāl-Nāma* portrait. Moreover, Satan is not found in this illustration. The blue convoluted cloud in the golden sky is nonetheless added to indicate divine providence in this enthronement scene. The latter illustration (1581 F.6 fol. 2v), follows closely to the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* illustration. Both heads of the first couple are surrounded by flaming golden nimbi. Satan is also included in the painting. Interestingly, his neck is depicted surrounded by a snake, the very same portrayal of him is found in the expulsion scene of the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma*. Furthermore, a few other late sixteenth-century *Qışaş* illustrations show similar artistic style, while only having Adam alone in the enthronement scene. Three of them are at the Topkapı Sarayı Museum (B 249, fol. 6b; H. 1226. fol. 8b and E.H. 1430 fol. 8a), and one at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (MS.Or.Suppl. Persian 1313 fol. 6v) The artists of these *Qışaş* manuscripts followed closely the textual reading without including Eve in these illustrations. These illustrations depict Adam sitting in a royal cross-legged position on a hexagonal throne with the flaming nimbus on his head. Both Adam and the angels are beautifully attired, some depict angels with helmet like head-dresses, which also symbolize their royal positions in the Persian court. The illustration (E.H. 1430 fol. 8a), however, shows Adam enthroned in the palace instead of the Garden, his kingly status is more articulated in this illustration.

4. Conclusion

This article has identified three prominent East Asian artistic features commonly found in Islamicate biblical iconographies during the early modern period. They are the Chinese dragon, the mythical realm and the flaming nimbus. The discussion of each artistic motif is supported by evidence found in other Islamicate iconographies. Then it examined the use of these East Asian artistic devices in two dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* iconographies of Adam and Eve, namely the *Expulsion of Adam and Eve* and *Angels bow down before Adam and Eve*. I have argued

¹⁰⁰ Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, (1581, F. 6. fol. 2v) (133 ×182 mm). Accessed November 15,2020 (<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8410893r/f23.item>).

that East Asian artistic features in both illustrations were intended to persuade augury seekers in the Safavid court to produce emotional support not only to divine sovereignty, but also to transfer their religious emotions to their support to political kingship of the Safavid dynasty in daily practices. This article has also showed the change of use of these motifs in later copies of *Qiṣaṣ* illustrations. Based on one's understanding on the use of East Asian artistic feature, early artists of the *Qiṣaṣ* illustrations have demonstrated their confusion in understanding whether the additional mythical creature in the expulsion scene of the dispersed *Fāl-Nāma* iconography is the Chinese dragon or the serpent, so as we do today. A study of each artistic feature systematically with the support of evidence can help us clarify this confusion. Lastly, East Asian artistic representations in Islamicate biblical iconographies of Adam and Eve not only enrich our theological understanding of Genesis 3 but they also offer an alternative interpretation from that found in Christian tradition. This article argues that our appreciation of biblical iconography should not be confined to that inspired by Jewish-Christian traditions but should also include the rich visual heritage clearly evident in Islamic traditions and cultures.

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