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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Typology of Extraordinary Creatures in the Miniatures of Shahrokhi's (Mir Heydar) Miraj Nameh

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Abstract: Muslims believe Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), riding an extraordinary creature, started his spiritual Night Journey known as Miraj (Ascension of Muhammad (PBUH) to heaven). Detailed description of this miraculous event is presented in many textbooks called 'Miraj Nameh'. One most well known example is Shahrokhi's, composed in Herat School and is kept in National Paris Library. Extraordinary and supernatural creatures are illustrated in some miniatures in this book which are specified with particular and strange appearances. This article aims to study various aspects of wonderful creatures in Mir Heydar's manuscript of Miraj Nameh based on the appearance and application. The manuscript is a unique collection of thaumaturgic illustrations depicted to describe the fantastic locations like heaven, hell, purgatory and weird creatures whom Prophet Muhammad PBUH visited in his Ascension. As various studies and conclusions demonstrate, illustrated creatures can be divided into some distinct groups based on appearance, body formation, and visual characteristics as: 'animal human' and 'human- animal' combinations, 'Giants', 'multi body organs', 'animal or human- plant' combination, and 'human- half' combination. The origin of the weird locations and creatures presented in the textbook should be searched in mythological culture and fictions. Applied research methodology is descriptive. Data gathering method is library information one.

Keywords: Prophet Muhammad; Miraj Nameh; Mir Heydar; Shahrokhi's Miraj Nameh; Extraordinary Creatures.

Introduction

Ascension of Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH) to heaven (Miraj) has been frequently discussed by Muslim scholars, thinkers, and researchers. Miraj is not only referred to in Holy Quran, but also many religious scholars and narrators like Avicenna (Miraj Nameh), Shaikh Koleyni (Al-Rozat-men-Al-Kafi), Muhammad-Baqer Majlesi (Bihar-Al-Anwar (Seas of Light), Muhammad Hossein Tabatabaei (Tafsir Al-Mizan interpretation Qur'anic Exegesis), Muhammad Hussein-Ibn-khalafe Tabrizi (Borhan-Ghate) mentioned its narrations and represented different interpretations and details of its story. In addition, some precious books on its artistic imaginary aspects like Miraj Nameh, "a miraculous journey of Muhammad ^(PBUH)" by Marie Rose Seguy and some other essays are referenced, as "The Mystical Symbols in the Images of the Hell of the Mir Heydar Miraj Name" or "The mystical symbols in the paradise images of Mir Heydar's *Miraj Nameh* (Based on Qur'anic, verses and Islamic thoughts)" by Mehdi Mohammadzadeh and others, and "Analysis of the Use of Color in Miraj Nameh (Mir haydar) Based on the Position of Color in Quran",

Njafabadi and Fanaei; "Eastern Narration of Mir Haider's Ascension Letter" by Naghmeh Kharazian and other, etc. This article has been specifically devoted to the study of using mythological creatures in Mir Heydar's book. Muslims believe Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH) riding a supernatural animal-like creature accompanied by Gabriel started his mysterious Night Journey. A brief sketch of this journey is recounted in Sura 17th of the Quran, Al-Isra: 'glory to Him who carried his servant by night from the sacred mosque, whose precinct we pleased, that me might show him of our signs! Surely He is the hearing, the seeing'. It is narrated that Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH) suddenly heard Gabriel saying: 'O Muhammad, stand up, accompany us, we'll have a long journey'. Gabriel brings forth a space traveling steep named Buraq. Muhammad ^(PBUH) started his splendiferous journey from Ume Hani house or Masji'd Al-Haram to Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem riding Buraq (Majlesi, 1984: 22).

Problem: In the story of the ascension of Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH), various

extraordinary creatures are described, each of which has special characteristics. According to Islamic traditions and texts, what species of imaginary creatures are depicted in the illustration of Shahrokhi's *Miraj Nameh* manuscripts?

Research Methodology: In this study, an imaginary creature is selected as an example and then examined and compared with some examples that have already existed in the history of art. Therefore, the research method is descriptive and somewhat comparative.

Shahrokhi's *Miraj Nameh*

This miraculous journey has inspired many to illustrate it in several manuscripts and books called 'Miraj Nameh'. Some related books to Miraj are depicted with some miniatures in which the illustrator aims to demonstrate every Ascension steps and narrated stories. One of the most admirable Miraj Nameh books is Shahrokhi's manuscript created in Herat school and illustrated by Mir Heydar, a prominent miniaturist. This book is kept in

National library of Paris. It was created during the summit of flourishing Iranian miniatures in ateliers of Herat. The handwritten manuscript is illustrated with 61 Persian miniatures depicting different stages of the spiritual Night Journey of Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH) from the heaven to the hell.

'The text book, written in Eastern Turkish language, was composed in Herat (838 AH/1436), as final page in the manuscript signed. In this glorious manuscript written in a Turkish format, deep sky blue (blue violet) is flaunting more than other color and many miniatures are ornamented with small gold pieces. Its motif has made illustrations to some extent monotonous. The glory and magnificence are clearly evident in those scenes illustrated with small color pieces especially in glorification of those depicted for Gabriel passing Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH) from the heaven to the hell. Turkish was Shahrokh and other Timurids' language, therefore this manuscript is considered one of Turkish masterpieces; but its painting style is exactly the one was illustrated in Iranian paintings and was followed by Turkish painters with the same details' (Gray, 1988: 76).

The main question revealed here is: what species of supernatural creatures and specific appearance are illustrated in Mir Heydar's *Miraj Nameh*? Various weird and wonderful creatures and some strange places are described in details in this story. In these miniatures, some texts are to explain supernatural species depicted in different parts of the book. Most creatures are representatives of traditions and culture in artworks, so it seems they affected the miniaturist to illustrate

the recurrent traditions and myths in his book. In addition, a symbolic concept carried by these creatures can be found in some ancient traditional and cultural textbooks.

Thirteen miniatures are selected to study in this article. The main focus of selecting is on those paintings carrying supernatural species to study their appearance and their application in Mir Heydar's *Miraj Nameh*.



Fig. 1. Prophet Muhammad^(PBUH) and Gabriel, Mir Heydar's *Miraj Nameh*, Herat, 9th A.H./15th A.C, Richelieu Department, National Library of Paris (www.bnf.fr).

Before beginning the topic of extraordinary creatures in connection with iconography, a brief explanation is given, although it is not the subject of this article.

According to Britannica "Iconography, the science of identification, description, classification, and interpretation of symbols, themes, and subject matter in the visual arts. The term can also refer to the artist's use of this imagery in a particular work" (www.britannica.com/art/iconography).

The words "iconology" and "iconography" are often confused, and they have never been given definitions accepted by all iconographers and iconologists. Panofsky 1955 (cited under General Overviews) defines "iconography" as the study of subject matter in the visual arts and "iconology" as an attempt to analyze the significance of that subject matter within the culture that produced it" (Tylor, 2020). In the following, the fabulous creatures described and depicted in this version of the Miraj Nameh are discussed.

Buraq

Buraq is one of the most extraordinary creatures depicted in Miraj story. As it is

narrated from Muhammad^(PBUH) in some text books, when the holy Prophet was in Mecca, one night Gabriel appeared and said: 'O Muhammad, stand up. Prophet Muhammad^(PBUH) said I stood up and went to the door, suddenly I saw Gabriel, Michael, and Israfil. Gabriel brought me a steed named Buraq and said "get on", I got on Buraq and went out of Mecca' (Tabatabaei, 1974:19). 'From Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir, it is narrated that whenever Buraq wanted to get down a mountain, its hands and legs became shorter, whenever it wanted to climb, its legs and hands became longer' (Koleini, 2006: 376).

In many texts and traditions, Buraq is absolutely described as a horse with definitions like thunder bolt Buraq, a metaphorical expression for a running horse like beast; Jam Buraq (Salomon), a metaphorical expression for a wind carrying Salomon; Fourth Sphere Buraq, a metaphorical expression for sun; and moral Buraq which means speedster (Yahaghi, 1996: 122). Various Persian poems mentioned Buraq and its related narrations.

Holy Qur'an does not mention this creature but different narratives of Muslim scholars through adding some other details endowed it

its current form. Berti says: 'Ibn Ushagh described the thaumaturgic speed prophet Muhammad ascended from the Earth to the sky. He demonstrates Buraq as an animal with winged legs. In *An anthology of Hadiths*, Tabari mentions Buraq as a horse. Some iconographies explained it as a white colored magical creature with a mule body and a pretty faced woman with long ears, bushy manes, and decorated saddle and harnessed with glorious stones and metals' (Berti, 2000: 127).

Buraq is depicted with a woman face in many illustrations. 'Animal-woman'

combination is a favorable theme with an old history in traditions and mythology of many nations especially in Oriental folk beliefs. This combination can be found in many other examples. For example, an Indian artwork illustrates a Kamadhenu or 'cow-woman' whose similarity to Buraq is astonishing, in which a woman-like head ornamented with some jewelry and a crown on its head is on an animal body same as many illustrated images depicting Buraq (Fig. 3).



Fig. 2. Prophet Muhammad^{PBUH} Ridding Buraq, Miraj Nameh, Mir Heydar.



Fig. 3. Kamadhenu, a 'Cow-Woman', Pata Painting Related to Pori, India (Mode, 1977: 87).

Many different depictions of Buraq is presented: black and white, bigger than a donkey but smaller than a mule, human-like face, horse like head, camel-like neck, lion-like chest, camel-like back, cow-like legs, elephant-like legs and tail, with a saddle on its back made up of a pearl, a ruby step. Many texts declare that Buraq has a stretched body bigger than an ass and smaller than a mule with bushy manes and white colored skin. It owns the best hue among the animals. In some texts it is referred as a horse (Majlesi, 1984: 291).

Some narrations imply that 'Buraq has had a humanlike face and it understood whatever it heard. Two small wings on it's thighs and other

specific characteristics like ears, legs, tail, hooves, frenum, and step are also specified' (Majlesi, 1984: 290). According to different visual descriptions of Buraq in various narrations and paintings, it is a four- foot animal having a human- like head. In most miniatures, a short neck is attached to an animal body to avoid depicting upper parts of human body. Buraq is not always depicted with two wings. In some instances it has no wings although it is able to fly. However, this creature is similar to some primary creatures belonging to pre- Islam period and is categorized into 'animal- human' group.

Angels and Malaikah

In different Miraj narrations, angels are referred variously. They were visited with different epistemological and hierarchical levels in Prophet Muhammad ^{PBUH} Miraj as celestial beings who were out of human understanding and are frequently referred in Holy Quran. 'In addition to introducing tangible and visual creatures and endowments, Holy Quran has named many other god-created creatures whose understanding is out of our common senses. One group of these creatures is Malaikah (Angel). As they are not conceivable through the senses, their nature and their appearance is not known and no clear illustrations can be provided' (Rajali Tehrani, 1998: 19).

In ancient Iranian languages, angels are called with different terms like Soroush, Malak, and Hatif (Yahaghi, 1996: 222). Angels are invisible and gentle beings described in almost all religions. In Judaism, angels act as intermediate between God and material world. Angels are numerous referred to in Bible;

they are part of celestial heaven of God and are the servants who are responsible to fulfill God's orders on the Earth. In Judaist-Christian cultures, angel means messenger of God, but there are some other terms pointing essentially to their nature like Godhead, Godsons, God servants, guardians, and the pure. They own elevated and spiritual placement. They are endowed with different names like pure spirits, celestial army, the other world guests, and alive creatures. In Jude book, they are called Dawn stars, too. In various verses of Christian holy book, angels are known as God's chariots (Burnham, 1998: 99). Malaikah, or angels in Quran, are humanity guardians who are entrusted to record whatever human beings perform on the Earth, although 'He writes down the works which they have sent on before them' (Yassyn, 12). In Sunni narrations, it is pointed 'they are made up of light same as Iblis (Satan) and all demons and Djins made up of fire, holy Quran does not mention what the angels are created from. It is a secret just God knows (Burnham, 1998: 119).



Fig. 4. Gabriel (Winged Angle) Leaving Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH), fol. 36.

Sometimes angels changed to appear like some specific human beings. Whatever the quality is, the new face is someone else. Most angels revealed like a man with a halo and an awesome pleasant appearance. ‘Bodies endowed angels were distinctively different from their nature. They never eat or drink like angels met Abraham or angels who were to appear Prophet Lot, and Gabriel who changed like of *Diyyah Kalbi*, a handsome disciple of

Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH) (Nophel, 1990: 142-143).

Another specific characteristic endowed the angels is wing, depicted in many pictures. Many narrations and verses pointed the angels having wings- three, four, and many. Holy Quran points: ‘praise to God, the maker of the heavens and of Earth who employed the Angels as envoys with pair wings, two, three, and four. He added his creatures what He will, Truly God hath power for all things (Fathir, 35).

Many texts have applied some forms of metaphor and metonymy. One such text is on angel wings in which movements of angels' wings imply the steps of ascension and descension. 'Ascension means moving upward while descension means downward movement and using wings as implication for upward and downward movement is considerable. Having wings does not refer to having corporal wings. Endowing two, three, four wings implicitly represents being more powerful in ascending movement. The number of wings implies having higher status. This manner is also followed when depicting human beings as winged beings' (Rajali Tehrani, 1998: 82-83).

Generally speaking, wing refers to the birds and the word bird implies pigeon. The earliest known pictures of the spirit showed depicting pigeon-like wings which is also mentioned in Zabur, Holy book. Having wing means being able for leaving the Earth to ascend the heaven. This understanding of wing which is also represented in Platonic doctrine is applied by Christian scholars. Therefore, wing generally reveals ascending movement beyond current condition of human beings' lives. Having wings is a specific characteristic for elevating to

the higher divinity levels and induces ascending to deity territories (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 2000: 58-59).

In his book, Qazvini calls angels the heaven residents. 'Malak (Angel), an extended essence in life, represents wisdom, and oration, purification from any darkness, lust, animosity, and wrath, praying in his eating, sanctification is his drinking. For angels, God remembering is the friend, and God worship is the extreme happiness. God created them differently and He knows their status. He is to preach peace around the world. No one will understand the angels except through the prophets' (Qazvini, 1970: 45). Religious scholars and philosopher name four angels venerated with elevated status as angel chairmen. They are Israphel, Michael, Israel, and Gabriel who are explicitly venerated in various texts as archangels (Rajali Tehrani, 1998: 101).

Gabriel is an angel described differently in various sources. 'In Hebrew, he was first represented as God's man or God's power. In Eastern cultures, he is presented not only as God's messenger, but also as Death angel, and fire and thunder Prince' (Yahaghi, 1996: 281).

In Islam he is known as Holy spirit, keeper of holiness, peacock of paradise, warring angel, keeper of God revelation, honest spirit, and sanctified spirit (Qazvini, 1970: 87). Gabriel is

a Malik venerated as 'prophet's father' who revealed Divine injunctions. He is venerated as 'Holy spirit' whenever he is smelt life will be eternal.

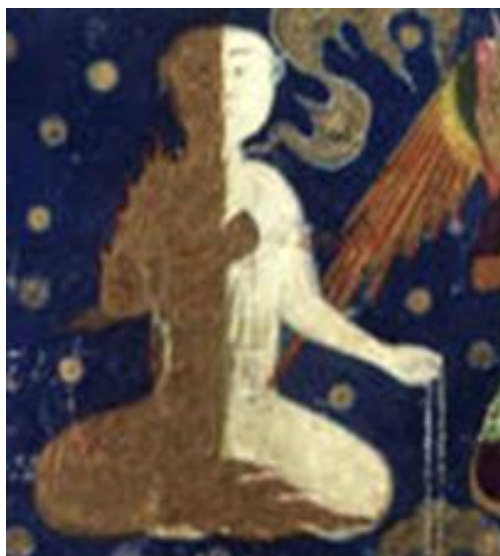


Fig. 5. Prophet Muhammad^(PBUH) and 'Snow and Fire Angel'.

‘Sidrat Al-Muntaha is his place- a large enigmatic tree or cedar tree marking the end of seventh heaven. Every palace in Paradise is constructed on a branch of the Lot tree’ (Hamedani, 1997: 13-14). According to Muslim beliefs Gabriel revealed to Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH) as a human being. Some texts claim he was just heard. In Miraj, he accompanied Muhammad just up to the seventh heaven. He was not permitted to enter the highest level of the heavens as he was not equipped with soul of God (Yahaqi, 1996: 282). ‘Ka’ab Al-Akhbar’ in his angelological manuscript *Ajaib-Al-Makhluqat* (wonders of creations) described Gabriel with six wings on each wing one hundred more ones (Qazvini, 1970: 11). Along with Gabriel, some other winged angels are depicted in Mir Heydar's text. One miniature depicts Gabriel with a giant figure. In addition to colorful wings and exact details of the feathers demonstrating specific and extraordinary form, his figure here shows his higher status in comparison to the others. Giant- like figure is another criteria representing higher status.

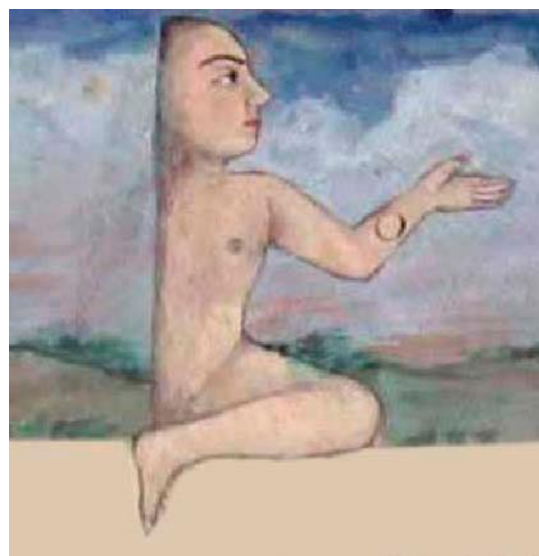


Fig. 6. Nasnas, Persian manuscript of Qazvini's *Ajaib-AlMakhluqat*, India, 945 AH, Astan Qods Razavi Library, Mashhad, Iran.



Fig. 7. Shaq, Qazvini's *Ajaib-Al-Makhluqat*, Persian Manuscript, No 28026, Astan Qods Razavi Library, Mashhad, Iran.

Snow-Fire Angel

Not all angels have wings. Some narrations represent angels wingless. In Miraj, a 'half-snow and half-fire Angel' is illustrated (Fig. 5). Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH) explains: 'I've met an angel among the others who was created so strange. Half of his body was fire and the other half was ice. Fire did not interfere ice and the ice did not interfere the fire. Holy is God who diminished warmness of the fire and does not let the fire to melt the ice and maintained the coldness of ice and does not let it to put the fire out. God who makes the fire and the snow so compatible and establishes friendship among his servants. I asked Gabriel, who is he? He answered he is the most philanthropic of all angels to pious residents of the Earth, since the day he was created he is frequently praying them' (www.Aviny.com).

'Half-snow and half- fire Angle' is created as a creature in two equal halves, but being in two halves is not a new concept. Different texts and folklore have pointed half human beings. Two noticeable examples are Nasnas (Fig. 6) and Shaq (Fig. 7). 'Nasnas or people Demon is a half human being, having half a head, half a body, one arm, one leg by which it hops with

much agility. It talks in Arabic (Khalaf Tabrizi, 2014: 2114). In *Ajaieb Nameh*, 'wonders of creation', Nasnas is described as a kind of Demon worn with lots of hair with long deadly teeth. It is named as people's Demon (Hamedani, 1997: 221). According to the different folklore, Nasnas is a Demon-like creature whose face is half of a human face. It has long teeth. It is an earthy creature living in China and far- fetched regions of the world. Some believes it live in the east while some claim it is living in the West. Abdullah Saeed ibn-Kasir ibn-Afir narrated from his father Yaghub ibn Najim who narrated from Harith Tamimi, "I went to visit Hashr (Resurrections) commander. We talked about Nasnas. He asked me to entrap one. In dawn, I visited one with a hairy chin, something breast like on his chest with legs similar to human beings" (Masudi, 1986: 573-574).

In folklore, 'Nasnas is known as "half-rider or half-being" (Yahaqi, 1996: 818). *Burges* refers to *Lein's* 'Arabian Night Entertainment' book, and declares 'Nasnas is from Shikk breed. It is a monster having just one side of human body. He explains Nasnas is half human creature owning half head, half body,

one leg, and one arm by which he hops with agility. It lives in jungles and deserts of Yemen and Hazarmauet. It is able to speak, too' (Burgess, 2001: 190). *Shaq* is a creature depicted same as *Nasnas* in many narrations. Sometimes it is mistaken with *Nasnas*. In wonders of creation, it is categorized in Demon and *Djin* group. *Shaq* is a demon in half face and is created by mating of a human and

Nasnas. It is often seen in roads (Qazvini, 1970: 384). Half creatures are frequently mentioned in folklore and their mating would be lead to the creation of creatures with extraordinary and unique characteristics which can be whether contrary or complementary. In some cultures, internal contradictions cause continuing life cycle like Yang and Yin in China.



Fig. 8. Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH) and Celestial Rooster, fol.11.

Rooster Angel and Giants

Another extraordinary creature whom the Holy Prophet visited during his *Night Journey* is an angel looked like a huge rooster which can be categorized among Giants. Prophet

Muhammad ^{PBUH} narrated: 'Among strange God creatures, I observed a rooster whose wings were stretched upwardly all over the seventh heaven and its head was in God's realm. It was an angel created as God wished. I

heard it says, “all praise is to Allah whom you could not know except where is whatever dignity and greatness you own as He is the most dignified. The rooster had two spread wings passing the East and the west. In sunrise, it opened its wings and praised God”, the holiest is the God, the most elevated and the most merciful, the most gracious, he ever

living, the self substituting. When it started praising, all Earth roosters started praising, splashed their wings and started singing, when it stopped, the roosters stopped either”. It had white and sparse small feathers whose whiteness was the most splendid ever seen, it's greatness was the same (www.aviny.com).



Fig. 9. Prophet Muhammad^(PBUH) and Adam, fol.9V.

In some miniatures, Prophet (and some angels) are illustrated much bigger than the

others and they seem like Giants. In fact it may be due to their location in a closer view. It may

also imply their higher status and their importance (figs. 8-9). Multi-headed angels Prophet Muhammad^{PBUH} in Miraj encountered some other supernatural creatures; angles with one body but many heads. Multiplicity of body organs is a popular theme with specific conception in Eastern civilizations especially in India. It is frequently discussed in different texts. This belief in India is basically founded on the notion of multiplicity of God's and goddess. This categorization based on the multiple body organs specifies particular abilities and power for each. Categorizing capabilities and applications of gods and goddess has induced multiplicity and increasing the number of gods and goddess. Weird multi-organ creatures and godheads are revealed in form of specific and corporal (bodily) characteristics (Fig. 12).

Indians replaced organs with the power of gods. Through the replacement, they are endowed specific power. Therefore, multiplicity of organs not only emphasizes on gods' capabilities, but also empowers faith among the believers. In mythological Indian culture, there are many multi-organ creatures multi-headed, multi-eyes, multi-trunks, and

etc. Every body organ carries a specific meaning. For instance, a god with three head demonstrates three aspects of his power and glory. Head is the central body part responsible for thinking and ordering powers. Multiplicity of eyes accompanied being far from making mistakes and more concentration on the world. Ear multiplicity transfers the idea of better understanding of God-revealed lessons. Thousand eyes *Varna*, thousand ears *Mitra*, three faced *Agony*, and three eyes *Shiva* are some examples of multi-organ gods embodying extraordinary and spiritual power concept. Pluralism demonstrates concentrating power in a specific location and makes the plurality of organs in ancient stories as a unique feature. Indian specifically has paid much more attention to this notion and frequently has been applying it.

Joseph Campbell says: 'there is an allegory ascribed to Aristophanes. It represents primary human creatures who had twice bigger body size than common people. They had four legs and four hands in their backs and their sides which endowed them a circular body form.



Fig. 10. Prophet Muhammad^(PBUH) and Multi-Headed Angel, fol.19.

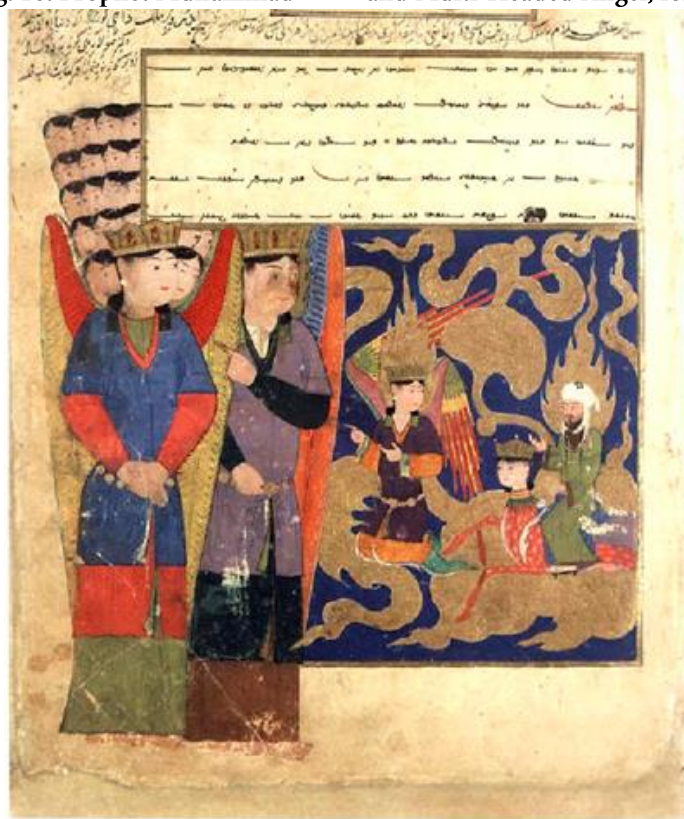


Fig. 11. Prophet Muhammad^(PBUH) and Multi-Headed Angel, Mir-Heydar's Miraj Nameh, fol.32.

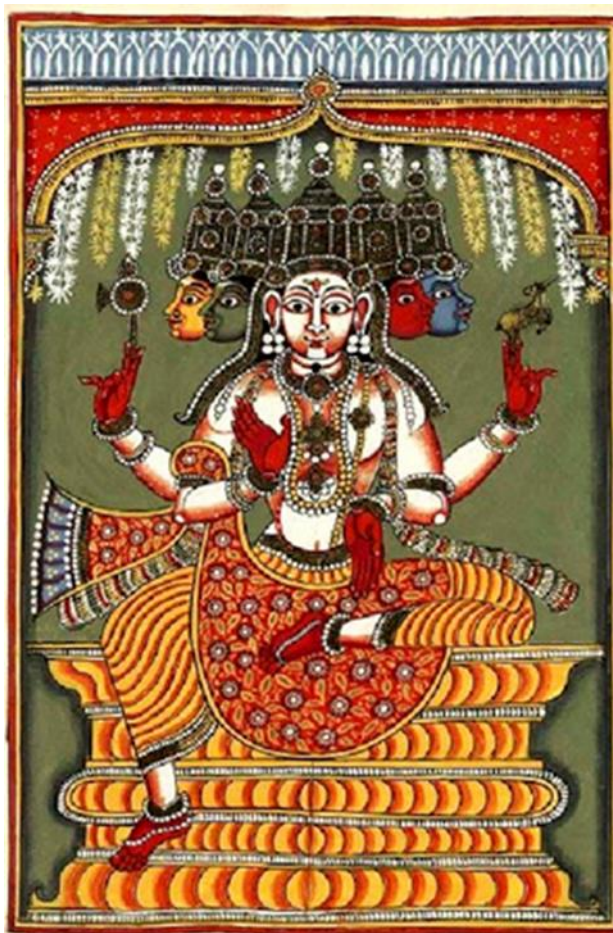


Fig. 12. Panshanana God (Five Headed God), 'Indian God Album', Southern Andrapradesh, ca.1720-1730, National Library of Paris (expositions.bnf.fr).

They owned a head with two faces, and two genital organs. Zeus and Apollo were always afraid of their extraordinary power. They were such similar that they appeared like two halves of an apple (Campbell, 2004: 4). Through introducing 'one who turned into two', Plato announced that primary human beings intimidated gods. They were afraid of being attacked by them and also their access to gods' territories. The induced fear can be sought into

the god's knowledge of multiplicity and abilities of primitives' bodies which gifted them such multiplied and enforced power. What made gods anxious was the existence of added organs in primitives' bodies. It means their increased abilities were due to their extra heads, hands, and legs. As soon as gods felt being endangered, they made them into two pieces to prevent extra accumulation of organs on a single body (Tony et al., 2005: 36).



Fig. 13. Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH) and Four-Headed Angel, fol.32V.

Four headed angels (*Arsh Carriers*)

Four headed angels who are called 'Arsh carriers' can be categorized among multi-headed angels. *Arsh Carriers* are the most venerated and the most brilliant to the God.

Malaikah sought their adjoining and venerated them frequently (Rajali Tehrani, 1998: 126). *Arsh* is the most superior to all creations. Some interpreters announced that *Arsh* is actually a term represents the glory and majesty of God. *Arsh Carriers* are four angles, who are accompanied with four other angles in Apocalypse (Seguy, 2007: 17).



Fig.14 Brahma, Born from a Lotus Emerging from the Naval of Vishnu. He is a Four Headed God. Each of his Heads Points to Four Geographical Directions. (www.parrikar.com)

The angle who is like human being prays for human beings, the angle like the bull (Thor) prays for animals, the one looks like vulture prays for the birds, and the one looks like lion prays for the beasts (Qazvini, 1970: 54). *Arsh Carriers* in miniatures of Mir Heydar's *Miraj Nameh* are depicted as a single angel having

four heads including human being, lion, angel, and cow heads. According to Islamic belief, this symbolic figure reminds prophet Ezekiel who lived near of Chuber River, in Babylon, along with four creatures with human, lion, cow, and angel faces. These images are the symbols of four main constellations of Zodiac (Seguy, 2007: 30).

On the right side of the image, Prophet Muhammad ^{PBUH} riding Buraq and Gabriel, standing with colorful wings are looking at an angel endowed thousands of wings who jumps into the Black Sea and moves his wings. Every drop falling down of his wings is turned into an angel. Next to that angel, a four-headed Angel is talking. This illustration of *Arsh Carriers* is different from the previously depicted one on the above image. Four angels with four separate heads are turned into an angle with four heads without any wings. Various multi-organ creatures are demonstrated in Indian culture and beliefs. An image with four heads directed to four geographical directions like *Arsh Carriers* illustrates *Brahma*, whose images are depicted astonishingly in Indian paintings, sculptures, and embossments (fig. 14).



Fig. 15. Prophet Muhammad^(PBUH) Near the Zaqqum Tree, fol.53V.



Fig. 16. Illustrated Version of Waq Waq Tree, 790 A.H/1388 AC, National Library of Paris (www.bnf.fr).

Zaqqum Tree

Multiplicity of heads is applied not only for the angels but also for a tree in the hell which was described in prophet Muhammad's visit from the hell as a tree on its branches many heads were hanged. This dreadful and poisonous tree is referred in Holy Quran in the ranks (Safat, 62-68): Verily, we have made it for a subject of discord to the wicked. It is a tree which cometh up from the button of hell; its fruit is as it were the heads of Satan's; the damned shall surely eat of it and fill their bodies with it.

In the middle of the fire, a really dense and massive tree known as Zaqqum has occupied a place farther than 500 years. Its thorns have spear like shape, its fruit are demons, lions, scorpions, and awfully fearful creatures' heads. Under the tree, the Hell residents are tortured by demons in a way that their tongues are cut and then their tongues grow again (Seguy, 2007: 18).

A wonderful image of the tree is depicted in a page of Herat school Miraj Nameh (fig. 15). In depicting animal heads, this tree is much similar to those in Waq Waq tree which flourishes in the mornings and withers in the evenings. Some named the tree after the

jungles in which it grows. It is narrated that it's fruits are human beings and animals' heads. It can talk, too. (Khalaf Tabrizi, 2014: 2249) In Dehkhoda Farsi dictionary, *Waq Waq* is explained as a tree growing in India, so strange, flourishing in the morning and languishing in the evening (Dehkhoda, 1994: 287). Shams Al-din Abu Abdullah Muhammad Abu talib Ansari Sufi Damesqi in 'selected species in sea and Earth' declared *Waq Waq* is an Island in backward environment of *Istiphion* circle near the sea bank entering there from the China Sea. Tabrizi announced *Waq Waq* is not named after a tree whose fruits look like human skull or dog's barking voice. In fact, it is called *Waq Waq* as this wired tree is named by people. So far, various ideas are given on naming this tree.

Phyllis Ackerman says: '*Waq Waq* tree which has less antiquity than the other forms has been given greater importance in 7th century A.H. This tree with its outward scattered branches in form of animal or human being heads on it's branches is created from intermingling of a celestial tree and a beast tree based on the given concept (Pop & Ackermann, 2009: 1017-1088). Demons, the hell guardians' Terminological study of

Demon word demonstrates that it is called *Daeva* in Avestan language and *Deva* in ancient Indian. Common people know *Daeva* a fictitious creature with an extremely odd body and disagreed characteristics. It is not from *Djin* ancestry but it belongs to an independent creature category with a hilarious voice, big and igneous eyes, and long and shabby hair.

In Moein Farsi dictionary, '*Daeva* is described as an imaginary creature, tall, robust, sturdy, ugly, and terrific with two horns like bull's ones and a tail. They are thought to be from Satan generation (Moein, 2005: 1132).

Daeva in *Shahnameh* is a creature born by Satan and sometimes is referred as Satan. Specific visual characteristics and particular capabilities of *Daeva* make it a gruff, truculent, hostile, nimble, astute, and mighty creature that has his own territory and an organized army. In spite of his different natural appearance, it is endowed with the ability to turn into a human, an animal, and whatever he wishes. For example a *Daeva* who seduced *Kavous* in form of a pleasant orator in *Shahnameh*. Also, *Div-e-sepid* (white *Daeva*) who made a powerful champion like Rostam to

undertake his Seven Labors to free his sovereign, and *Akvan Daeva* who turned into a zebra (Rastegar Fasaei, 2004: 27).

In Iranian mythology, *Daeva* is described with many human-like and beast-like features. In some specific eras, *Daeva* has been turned into a part of folk beliefs and it was considered a real creature. *Daeva* has a widespread popularity as a mythological character around the world both as a white and as a black character. At Miraj night, Prophet Muhammad ^{PBUH} visited wrongdoers while being tortured and their torturers and guardians. The guardians' appearances resemble *Daeva* and those who illustrated as villain in Iranian miniatures especially in *Shahnameh*. In religious-epical books, *Daeva* is identified with a villain character.

One of the most prominent examples is *Khavaran Nama* in which real and legendary events of Ali Ibn Abitalib are presented. It was written by Ibn Hessam Khusfi in 830 A.H. It is the most important very well composed and imitated work of Ferdowsi's masterpiece. *Daeva* appearance in illustrations of this book,

illustrated by 'Farhad' (signed and dated in the same hand between 881 and 892 A.D.), closely looked like the one illustrated in earlier paintings. It can stand at the same level with illustrated miniatures of Hell scenes in Mir Heydar's *Miraj Nameh* (Fig. 19).



Fig. 17. Torturing Slanderers in the Hell, fol.57.



Fig. 18. Torturing false Pious or false Holy People in the Hell, fol.57V.



Fig. 19. Ali ibn Abitalib and Malik in a Strange Place, Khavaran Nameh, 892 A.H. (Khusfi, 2002: 45).

Depicted Daevas in some pictorial and literary artworks could be explained as: Daevas with human body, round horns, beast-like ears, black body and hooves, red eyes, thick lips, one or two twisted horns next to the ears, mustache getting out of ears edge, and feet with long nails, squamous body, and long beard.

It seems that one of the reasons for illustrating this book is to influence the reader and create a sense of fear and hope in the other

world. Thus, the depiction of the mythical creatures mentioned in the Miraj Nameh and the spaces in which they were placed was much more tangible than the text and was especially understandable for people.

The species created for the described creatures have a historical-artistic background and can be found in Iran, India or other civilizations. The representation of heaven and hell in the iconography of Mir Heydars's Miraj

Nameh can be considered a rare example of their representation in Iranian painting.










One of the most important aspects of this book is the illustration of heaven and hell and extraordinary creatures, which perhaps is similar to that seen in Western paintings, and in the illustrated works of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, that narration of heaven and hell is expressed in another presentation, iconology and belief.

Conclusion

Various extraordinary and supernatural creatures and locations are delineated in Miraj and some illustrated versions are appended. Shahrokhi's illustrated Miraj Namh or Mir Heydar's Miraj Nameh, if we overlook its uniqueness, is a rare masterpiece of illustrations of astonishing and marvelous places like heaven, hell, and purgatory, and extraordinary creatures that the prophet Muhammad visited in his spiritual Night Journey. Extravagantly Imaginary depicted

creatures in Miraj Nameh can be categorized into different groups: 'animal-human' combination; which means a creature walking on four legs with obvious beast like characteristics like Buraq (winged in some cases); 'human-animal' combination, creatures with dominant human appearance walking on two legs like Daeva and Angels; 'Giants': rooster ,giant Prophet and angels; 'multi-organ angels': multi-headed angels, 'animal or human – plant' combination: Zaqquq tree, "half- human" like Shaq or 'half snow -half fire angels'. All these weird creatures and locations are to complement supernatural and extraordinary elements and to make the stories and narrations more effective to the believers. The illustrative origin of these creatures and locations can be sought in mythological and fictional stories and culture of our ancestors in books like Ajaib Nameh, Travelers' travelogue, and geographers' writings which are written specifically in Islamic era.

Table1. Fabulous creatures in Mir Heydar's Miraj Nameh

Four headed Angel	Snow and Fire Angel	Buraq
		
Zaqqum Tree	Multiple headed angel	Giant Rooster Angel
		
Giant Angel	Deava	Demon
		

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گونه‌شناسی موجودات افسانه‌ای در نگاره‌های معراج‌نامه شاه‌رخ، میرحیدر

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چکیده: معراج‌نامه شاه‌رخ از نسخه‌های کم‌نظیر متعلق به مکتب هرات است که در کتابخانه ملی پاریس در فرانسه نگهداری می‌شود. در میان نگاره‌های این نسخه، موجودات خارق‌العاده‌ای تصویر شده‌اند که هر کدام دارای شمایی خاص هستند. معراج‌نامه شاه‌رخ یا میرحیدر مجموعه‌ای از نگاره‌های خارق‌العاده‌ای است که مکان‌هایی همچون بهشت، جهنم، برزخ و موجودات عجیب و شگفت‌انگیزی که رسول مکرم (ص) در معراج با آنها دیدار داشته را تصویرسازی کرده است. سؤال اصلی این است که از منظر شمایل‌نگاری چه گونه‌هایی از موجودات شگفت‌انگیز و خارق‌العاده در نسخه معراج‌نامه میرحیدر تصویر شده‌اند؟ براساس بررسی و نتیجه‌گیری به‌دست آمده، می‌توان از منظر گونه‌شناسی، شمایل و خصوصیات ظاهری این موجودات را به چند گروه تقسیم‌بندی کرد: «حیوان-انسان»، «انسان-حیوان»، «حیوان یا انسان-گیاه»، «انسان نیمه یا شق»، غول پیکران و متکثرالاعضایان. سرچشمه این موجودات عجیب را باید در فرهنگ اسطوره‌ای و ادبیات داستانی گذشتگان باز جست. هدف این مقاله بررسی شمایل‌های مختلف موجودات شگفت‌انگیز نسخه معراج‌نامه میرحیدر از وجه گونه‌شناسی و کاربردی است. روش تحقیق توصیفی و تا حدودی تحلیلی است.

واژه‌های کلیدی: حضرت محمد (ص)، معراج‌نامه شاه‌رخ، میرحیدر، گونه‌شناسی، موجودات تخیلی.