


Analysis of Kiyomarth's cover from the point of view of his mythical dignity in the Shahnameh of Paris 953 AH.

ISSN (P): 2980-7956
ISSN (E): 2821-2452

 10.22034/jivsa.2025.492368.1107

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Citation: Zamani. N. (2025), "Analysis of Kiyomarth's cover from the point of view of his mythical dignity in the Shahnameh of Paris 953 AH.", *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies of Visual Arts*, 2025, 3 (6), P. 219-222.

Received: 05 December 2024

Revised: 05 February 2025

Accepted: 07 April 2025

Published: 07 April 2025

Abstract

Kiyomarth is one of the legends of ancient Iran, whose status is shown in Ferdowsi as the first king. Although the story of the kingdom of Kiyomarth is short in the Shahnameh, but the mythological position of Kiyomarth has attracted the attention of painters for artistic rendering. Most of the artists in different schools of painting have designed him as wearing a leopard, as Ferdowsi said. Due to the clarity of the image, the picture of Kiyomarth court is a suitable example for research in the direction of Kiyomarth clothing. In the mentioned picture, Kiyomarth is sitting on a throne in the middle of a crowd and all of them are wearing leopard print. Now, the question is, what kind of dignified rank of people in the story of Kiyomarth does the cover of the figures of the court of Kiyomarth in the Shahnameh of Paris 953 A.H. show? It is assumed that the artist of the painting of the court of Kiyomarth in the Shahnameh of Paris in 953 A.H. used clothes to show the legendary dignity of Kiyomarth. The purpose of the present research is to investigate the form of clothing of the figures in the painting of Kiyomarth court in order to analyze the relationship of clothing with the mythological status of Kiyomarth. The current research is documentary-analytical and the method of collecting information is library. Research in the field of mythological clothing will be efficient in the studies of mythology and sociology. The results of the research acknowledge that the artist of the Safavid era used clothes as a symbol to show the existential dignity of Kiyomarth and his people.

Keywords: Mythology, Kiyomars, Safavid, Shahnameh 953 AH. Paris, Clothing.

1. Introduction

Civilizations have passed through a mythological era in their history, a period characterized by the presence of primordial creations. Jung (1938, p. 31) posits that the first human is a sacred creation, referring to him as the divine king and divine twin. As the first man separated from his divine origin and entered worldly life, he retained a divine principle that, through his life's evolution, transformed him into the father of a nation or civilization (Behdani, 2014, p. 45). Accordingly, Kiyomars is identified as the first man in Iranian mythology. According to the Avesta, Kiyomars was the first to heed the words and teachings of Ahura Mazda; he is the progenitor of the Iranian family and race, from whom Iran and the custom of worship originated (Ramadankiy and Mansoobasiri, 2009, p. 1). Kiyomars's status is established in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh as the first king. Kiyomars's persona has also been reflected in the art of painting. The illustrated 953 AH Paris Shahnameh is a work of Safavid painting, and its third illustration is titled *The Court of Kiyomars*. In this painting, Kiyomars is seated on a throne among a group of figures, all wearing leopard-print clothing. As research on clothing in myths can be valuable for mythological and sociological studies, this study aims to examine the forms of attire in the depiction of Kiyomars's court to explore the relationship between clothing and Kiyomars's mythological status. The author first provides a brief description of Kiyomars's character from a mythological perspective, then explains his story in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, and finally describes and analyzes the clothing in the 953 AH Paris Shahnameh's depiction of Kiyomars's court.

2. Literature Review

This research requires two categories of sources. The first pertains to the painting of

the Court of Kiyomars. A study by Majid Behdani titled "Kiumars Court: A Comparative Study of the Visual Elements of Seven Illustrations with a Single Theme" (2014) has been published. In this article, the author selected seven illustrated Shahnamehs from the 9th and 10th centuries AH from different schools, examined their visual characteristics, and briefly addressed the figures' clothing. However, the 953 AH Paris Shahnameh was not among the manuscripts studied. Furthermore, the author only described the form of the clothing and briefly compared it to the historical attire of the period, without analyzing it from the perspective of the figures' status. No upstream source focusing specifically on the depiction of Kiyomars in the 953 AH Paris Shahnameh was found. Among related articles, one may cite "Representation of Elements and Concepts of Being in the Court of Kiyomars in the Shahnameh of Tahmasbi" (Al-Ebrahim Dehkordi and Mousavi Lor, 2023, p. 7). These researchers aimed to discover the factors that create being and to examine symbols of the elements of being in the depiction. Their case study was the Tahmasbi Shahnameh, and they did not address the form of Kiyomars's clothing from the perspective of his mythical status. Other relevant works include the article "Kiomars of Golshah" (Madrasi, 2005), which provides information on the creation of Kiyomars through a study of ancient documents, and "Social Rereading of the Myth of Kiomars Based on the Cultural Field of Iran" (Dashtkhaki et al., 2019), which deals with the existential essence of Kiyomars. Additionally, "The Story of the Creation of Man from a Comparative Mythological Perspective" (Rasuli, 2014, p. 33) discusses the story of creation in Zoroastrianism and introduces Kiyomars as the prototype of man.

3. Research Methodology

This research is descriptive-analytical in nature, and the method of data collection is library-based. The image in question was first

described, and the figures were categorized. The clothing of each figure was then described and analyzed in two categories: headgear and garments, with attention to the form and design of the fabric. The human figures in the image fall into three categories:

- A. The figure of the King, or Kiyomars.
- B. The seated guest figures, who are idle.
- C. The servants, who are performing duties and are standing.

Three tables were designed to classify the people and their clothing, providing a summary of descriptive information. Considering the gender of Kiyomars and those around him, as well as the mythological setting of the story, attention was also paid to Anahita's clothing. Animal remains in the image were also examined.

4. Findings

The primary form of clothing for the figures in the Court of Kiyomars was identified. Kiyomars's attire is more complete than that of the other figures, consisting of an overgarment, a shirt, trousers, and a belt around the waist. The other figures are designed without trousers. It is noteworthy that the figure addressing Kiyomars has bare legs visible from the knees down, while the legs of other figures are concealed by the length of their overgarments, though their calves are sometimes visible. Apart from Kiyomars, the figure sitting at the bottom of the image also wears a shirt beneath his overgarment; the remaining figures are depicted without a shirt. A common feature among all the overgarments is the fur trim around the collar. The hats exhibit less variety than the clothing. All share the same basic shape, though some have fur lining the entire brim, others only the front, and two figures are shown without visible fur. The presence or absence of fur suggests that all hats are made of leather with a fur lining; on some, the entire fur-lined edge is turned outward, while on others, only the front edge is visible. In two cases, the fur remains hidden inside the hat.

Among these variations, the hat of the figure addressing Kiyomars has a slit. Given that the Paris manuscript was illustrated in 953 AH during the Safavid era, this hat may symbolize the twelve-gored *Tāj Haydarī* (Qizilbash hat).

The painting of the Court of Kiyomars is a single-plane composition that refers solely to the theme of Kiyomars's reign. Elements such as the rocky background, the stone throne, the gathering of animals among the human figures, and the skin garments represent Ferdowsi's descriptions of the social life in Kiyomars's era. The portrayal of Kiyomars with a beardless face, in contrast to the bearded man before him, evokes Kiyomars's youth, consistent with the ancient text: "Hormuzd created that form in the body of a tall fifteen-year-old youth, bright and clear" (Rasuli, 2013, p. 33). It is as if the artist was familiar with both the text of the Shahnameh and Zurvanite texts. The influence of narrative painting on manuscript illustration should not be overlooked.

Examining the depiction of the Court of Kiyomars in the Tahmaspi Shahnameh reveals a reflection of narrative painting. There was no significant differentiation in clothing between the social ranks in Kiyomars's court. Only the king wore a complete outfit of trousers, an overgarment, a shirt, a belt, and a hat, while the others wore an overgarment, a belt, and a hat. However, the seated figure at the bottom of the image also wore a shirt. It is noteworthy that the clothing of the figures in Kiyomars's court resembles the robe of the Barbarian of Rostam in the same manuscript. Furthermore, in the Aban Yasht of the Avesta, Anahita, the goddess of waters, is described as wearing a robe with long sleeves, tied under the chest, and a fur cloak over it (Grop, 1996, p. 752). Anahita, the water goddess, was closest to the epic heroes and responded positively to their requests (Omidasalar, 2013, p. 452). Therefore, Kiyomars and other accompanying figures, such as Rostam and Anahita, all wear fur garments. As previously stated, "In ancient times, there was no distinction between secular practice and sacred ritual; hence, there

was no non-religious realm. Everyone was spiritual, and nothing existed outside holiness” (Ziauddin Ishtakhaki and Pourkhalqichatodi, 2013, p. 237).

5. Conclusion

The depiction of the Court of Kiyomars in the 953 AH Shahnameh is a single-plane composition in which fourteen figures are dressed in head coverings and leather garments. In accordance with the Shahnameh text, the artist has depicted the setting with mountains, animals, and a crowd gathered before Kiyomars. Based on this study, the primary clothing of the figures is an overgarment of varying lengths with short sleeves and a waist belt. However, Kiyomars, seated on a stone throne, wears a long-sleeved shirt and short trousers in addition to the overgarment and belt. This mode of depiction signifies a more complete form of dress in terms of coverage. Apart from Kiyomars, another figure, seen from the back, wears a shirt with sleeves extending to the forearm beneath his overgarment. The figure standing before Kiyomars also has sleeves extending to the forearm, unlike the others. As noted, some figures are seated while others are engaged in work, indicating the different social classes present in Kiyomars's court: the king, his special attendants, his servants, and his guests.

The overgarment and hat are the main components of the figures' clothing. The servants, attendants, and guests all wear garments similar in form, though the length of the overgarment varies among individuals. The king, being of the highest rank, is depicted in more complete attire, which can be interpreted as an adaptation based on Kiyomars's spiritual status. But what is the significance of the differing sleeve lengths on the overgarment of the man before Kiyomars and the shirt of the man seated at the bottom? Based on the evidence from the clothing forms, the text of the Kiyomars story in the

Shahnameh, and narrative painting, it can be inferred that these two figures are Siamak and Hushang, respectively. Their distinction is derived from their status in the Shahnameh text and narrative tradition. Although Ferdowsi states that Kiyomars and his entourage wore leopard skins, the artist, respecting Kiyomars's status, has dressed him in complete attire to preserve and signify his high rank. The artist has also acknowledged the existential status of Siamak (the prince) and Hushang (the next king) by granting them distinct outfits appropriate to their status. The painting thus reveals the symbolic function of clothing in Safavid painting.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Authors' Contribution

This research was conducted solely by the author.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments

The author is grateful to all individuals who provided scientific consultation for this paper.