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**Mohamad Reza Ghiasian. *Lives of the Prophets: The Illustrations to Hafiz-i Abru's "Assembly of Chronicles"***

**Yuka Kadoi**

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**Electronic version**

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/49589>

DOI: [10.4000/abstractairanica.49589](https://doi.org/10.4000/abstractairanica.49589)

ISSN: 1961-960X

**Publisher:**

CNRS (UMR 7528 Mondes iraniens et indiens), Éditions de l'IFRI

**Electronic reference**

Yuka Kadoi, "Mohamad Reza Ghiasian. *Lives of the Prophets: The Illustrations to Hafiz-i Abru's "Assembly of Chronicles"*", *Abstracta Iranica* [Online], Volume 40-41 | 2019, document 11, Online since 30 October 2019, connection on 31 August 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/49589> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/abstractairanica.49589>

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# Mohamad Reza Ghiasian. *Lives of the Prophets: The Illustrations to Hafiz-i Abru's "Assembly of Chronicles"*

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## REFERENCES

Mohamad Reza Ghiasian. *Lives of the Prophets: The Illustrations to Hafiz-i Abru's "Assembly of Chronicles"*. Leiden: Brill, 2018. 343p., 48 ill., 8 tables, ISBN: 9789004377226

- 1 This book is the sixteenth volume of an interdisciplinary series in Persian studies, *Studies in Persian Cultural History*, published by Brill since 2011. Based on the author's doctoral dissertation, *Lives of the Prophets: The Illustrations to Hafiz-i Abru's "Assembly of Chronicles"* intends to re-examine two extant copies of the *Majma' al-Tawarikh* produced for the Timurid ruler Shahrukh (r. 1405-1447). The first manuscript is kept in the Topkapı Palace Library in Istanbul, whereas the second manuscript is dispersed across different collections worldwide. The reappraisal of these manuscripts was long overdue: they were the subject of research in the 1960s, when Oriental manuscript studies remained in their infancy.
- 2 This book consists of the following main four chapters: The Political and Cultural Setting; Book Production under Shahrukh; *Majma' al-Tawarikh* and Its Surviving Illustrated Copies; and Stylistic Analysis. The chapters are followed by a catalogue of the illustrations of the Prophets and several appendixes, such as: 1) Translation of the Illustrated Episodes of the Lives of the Prophets Based on Hazine 1653; 2) Headings and Illustrations in Hazine 1653; 3) Location of Paintings so far Identified as Later Additions in the Dispersed Manuscript (Second Style); and 4) Location of Paintings so far Identified as Later Additions in the Dispersed Manuscript (Third Style). Chapter, catalogue and appendix summaries are also found in pages 3-5.

- 3 Art-historical jargons, namely “Second Style” and “Third Style”, require some explanations: the illustrations of the dispersed (second) manuscript fall into the following three groups. The first style is the established “historical style” of Shahrukh. The second style is slightly different from the first style, but in terms of general pictorial treatment, both styles are related to each other. The third style is characterised by the use of lighter colour schemes. As the author convincingly argues, the illustrations of the second and third styles are later additions to the manuscript and do not belong to Shahrukh’s scriptorium. An adapted version of the section of the later additions to the manuscript (pp. 89-96, see also appendixes 3 and 4) has appeared in *Iranian Studies* in 2015 (“The ‘historical style’ of painting for Shahrukh and its revival in the dispersed manuscript of *Majma’ al-Tawarikh*”, *Iranian Studies*, 48, no. 6 [2015], pp. 871-903).
  - 4 Through a detailed reading of both text and image, *Lives of the Prophets: The Illustrations to Hafiz-i Abru’s “Assembly of Chronicles”* sets the standard for the codicologically-driven study of Persian illustrated manuscripts. The re-appraisal of the two extant copies of the *Majma’ al-Tawarikh* by applying an up-to-date codicological methodology serves to provide a better understanding of Hafiz-i Abru’s contributions to rewriting earlier history, as well as to identify the existence of a previously unrecognised copy of the *Jami’ al-Tawarikh* of Rashid al-Din. Above all, the highlight of this study from the art-historical point of view is to track down the illustrations of the dispersed manuscript that were painted over the text before its dispersal in the early twentieth century.
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