

TULLIP
A Projected Thesaurus Universalis Libri Lithographici Illustrati
Persorum

Ulrich Marzolph

Göttingen

Considering the large amount of illustrative data available from the Islamic world, the need for adequate tools for comparative research appears to be compelling. In reality, however, the vast majority of studies in Islamic art deal with specific items or topics, such as particular artists, individual manuscripts, or specific scenes. The lack of a general and comprehensive survey of Islamic iconography¹ is particularly significant for non-specialists dealing with Islamic art, such as historians of literature or folklorists. While these specialists by virtue of their professional interest demonstrate a distinct expertise for the textual backdrop of a given illustration,² the illustration's iconographical significance in a wider context would be beyond their apprehension. In consequence, specialists in literature often remain ignorant of significant iconographic aspects, while historians of Islamic art rarely display a profound knowledge of textual aspects relating to the illustrative material they deal with. The projected 'Union Catalogue of Illustrated Persian Lithographed Books,' *Thesaurus Universalis Libri Lithographici Illustrati Persorum* (TULLIP), aims to contribute to closing this gap between the disciplines.

At present, TULLIP is no more than a bulb waiting for adequate conditions to sprout and develop into a full-fledged project. While these conditions are being explored, I would like to profit from the opportunity to present TULLIP's general agenda for further discussion. TULLIP constitutes a follow-up to my earlier study

1 Highly useful surveys of specific topics include M.V. Fontana, *Iconografia dell'Ahl al-Bayt: Immagini di arte persiana dal XII al XX secolo* (Naples 1994); J. Gierlichs, *Mittelalterliche Tierreliefs in Anatolien und Nordmesopotamien: Untersuchungen zur figürlichen Baudekoration der Seldschuken, Artuqiden und ihrer Nachfolger bis ins 15. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen 1996), and, most recently, E. Sims, B.I. Marshak and E.J. Grube, *Peerless Images: Persian Painting and Its Sources* (New Haven, London 2002). The latter work contains a detailed presentation of 'the primary themes of Iranian imagery' (91–330).

2 See, e.g., O. Grabar and C. Robinson (eds), *Islamic Art and Literature* (Princeton 2001).

Narrative Illustration in Persian Lithographed Books.³ While that study serves as an introduction to a previously unexplored field, it remains my conviction that the genre of illustrated Persian lithographed books is particularly suited for a comprehensive survey of iconographical features: the genre is fairly limited and, hence, surveyable; its imagery is not as complex as that of Persian miniature painting and, hence, more readily available for deciphering and categorizing; large amounts of data are more easily accessible than for any other category of Islamic art; and, finally, the natural way in which text and illustration are combined allows communication between the various disciplines concerned. The present sketch of TULLIP will outline the following points:

The subject: What exactly are illustrated Persian lithographed books?

The scope: Why a *thesaurus universalis*, an international union catalogue of these items?

The bibliographical component: Where and how to acquire the relevant data?

The methodological component: What should TULLIP be expected to document?

The result: How should TULLIP be developed in order to offer optimum conditions for its users?

The Subject

What exactly are illustrated Persian lithographed books?⁴ The history of the printed book in Iran is a comparatively recent one.⁵ Besides short-lived experiments in the pre-modern era, the art of printing as a continuous practice was introduced to Iran only in the Qajar period.

3 U. Marzolph, *Narrative Illustration in Persian Lithographed Books* (Leiden 2001).

4 For a detailed discussion of the subject see U. Marzolph, 'Zur frühen Druckgeschichte in Iran (1817–c.1900). 1: Gedruckte Handschrift/Early Printing History in Iran (1817– c. 1900). 1: Printed Manuscript.' in E. Hanebutt-Benz, D. Glass, and G. Roper (eds), *Sprachen des Nahen Ostens und die Druckrevolution: Eine interkulturelle Begegnung/Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution: A Cross-Cultural Encounter* (Westhofen 2002), 249–68 (text), 271–2 (footnotes), 511–17 (description of exhibits), 538–9 (bibliography), and plates 112–21.

5 The most comprehensive survey of this field remains O. P. Scheglova, *Iranskaya litografirovannaya kniga* (Moscow 1979); see also Sh. Bâbâzâde, *Târikh-e châp dar Irân* (Teheran 1378/1999); Marzolph, *Narrative Illustration*, 12–21.

- The first ever book printed in Iran was produced in movable type. It is a collection of *fatwas* relating to the Russian-Persian war, published in 1233/1817.
- The first book printed in Iran by way of the lithographic technique⁶ is a copy of the Koran published in Tabriz, dated either 1248/1832, or 1250/1834.
- The first illustrated lithographic book produced in Iran is a copy of Maktabi's *Leili va Majnun* published in 1259/1843. Illustrating lithographic books became a current practice in Iran as of 1263/1847.
- Shortly after the year 1270/1854, printing in movable type ceased altogether. For about two decades, all books published in Iran were produced by way of lithographic printing.
- Even though printing in movable type was taken up again in 1290/1874, lithographed books continued to be produced in large numbers. Gradually, printing in movable type won the upper hand, and lithographic production started to dwindle. The last items of the genre were published around the middle of the twentieth century.

TULLIP is to consider books in the Persian language printed in Iran by way of lithography roughly in the century between 1850 and 1950. One reason for the lasting prevalence of lithography in Iran, besides its aesthetic attraction, was its capacity to combine text and illustration in a comparatively inexpensive way. In consequence, hundreds of illustrated lithographed books were produced in Iran, above all in the areas of classical, religious, and narrative literature. At a later stage, and increasingly towards the latter half of the Qajar period, other genres of lithographed books also contain illustrations, such as travel literature, works of history, medicine, chemistry, astronomy, religious dogmatics or military education, besides translations of European novels and the emerging genre of the Persian schoolbook.⁷ Eventually, the illustrations in all of these books will have to be taken into account. As a starting

6 A. Senefelder, *The Invention of Lithography*, translated from the original German by J.W. Muller (Pittsburgh 1998); W. Weber, *A History of Lithography* (New York, Toronto, London 1966); D. Porzio (ed.), *Lithography: 200 Years of Art, History & Technique*, translated from the Italian by G. Culverwell (Secaucus, NJ 1982).

7 For illustrated schoolbooks see particularly M.H. Mohammadi and Z. Qâ'eni, *Târikh-e adabiyât-e kudakân-e Irân*, vols. 1-4 (Teheran 1380/2001).

point, research will be restricted to the archive of more than 10,000 individual illustrations that has served as the basis for my monograph study.⁸

The Scope

The most important rationale for proposing a thesaurus universalis, an international union catalogue, derives from the lack of reliable bibliographical documentation.⁹ In addition, it relates to the fact that no single library or national conglomerate of libraries holds sufficient quantities of relevant books. Libraries in Iran at first sight would appear to contain promising holdings, yet at second sight prove to be highly problematic. Various reasons account for this evaluation. First, books in Iran were meant to be used. In consequence, many of the books preserved in Iranian libraries are torn and tattered, often missing the first and last pages, and often being in a moderate state of preservation. Second, public libraries are a comparatively recent phenomenon in Iran. Still today, some of the best stocked libraries are held by individuals who eventually might or might not donate their possession (as *vaqf*) to a public or semi-public institution. Hence, neither the Iranian National Library nor any other institution in Iran can be expected to hold but a fragment of the total number of books actually produced. Third, in Iran the awareness of the cultural importance of Qajar book production has only been growing over the past two decades. Up until the restrictions imposed after the revolution of 1978–9, Qajar books were sold and exported in considerable numbers. Meanwhile, most public libraries have stacked their holdings of historical book production in separate sections with limited access. A research trip in the summer of 2002 to important libraries in the five major Iranian cities of Teheran, Shiraz, Esfahan, Mashhad, and Tabriz showed that most libraries pragmatically regard the date 1320, corresponding more or less to 1900, as dividing historical from modern book production. Some of the larger institutions, such as the Teheran National Library and the Library of Congress or the Mashhad Central Library of the Sanctuary have made the bibliographical documentation of their complete holdings, including historical books, accessible by way of online databases in Persian.

8 For the archive's scope see Marzolph, *Narrative Illustration*, 230–69.

9 The data on lithographed books in the *Fehrest-e ketâbhâ-ye châpi-ye fârsi az âghâz tâ âkhar-e sâl-e 1345 [1966]*, *bar-asâs-e fehrest-e Khân-Bâbâ Moshâr va fâhâres-e Anjoman-e ketâb*, ed. E. Yâr-Shâter, vols 1–3 (Teheran 1352/1973), even though the work remains an admirable and generally useful bibliographical tool, are spurious and unreliable.

In contrast, many of the provincial libraries with limited resources, while shelving their historical books separately, have not even been able to start proper cataloguing.

Outside Iran, a number of major libraries in European and North American cities are known to possess substantial collections of Persian lithographed books rivalling Iranian holdings in respect to both rarity and quality of preservation. No survey of 'the Persian book' can afford to disregard these holdings, above all those in Saint Petersburg,¹⁰ London,¹¹ Cambridge, Paris, and Berlin. Accordingly, my previous research has taken into consideration the holdings of some 35 libraries in 13 countries, situated above all in Asia and Europe. Future research ought to take into account the holdings of North American libraries (Harvard, Princeton, New York Public Library, University of California at Los Angeles, and others), in addition to those in the Indian subcontinent¹² as well as in the Caucasian and Central Asian republics, such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Tajikistan. As a point of specific interest, the available documentation shows that European scholars often regarded Persian historical book production as collectables. Hence, some of the best preserved items are contained in private collections. It might not come as a surprise that several smaller libraries, such as those in the German cities of Frankfurt, Cologne,¹³ Halle, or Gotha, whose holdings partly derive from private collections, variously hold extremely rare items that would escape the researcher's attention if those libraries were disregarded. Given this situation, TULLIP will have to rely on a truly international cooperation in order to arrive at a next to complete assessment of Persian lithographic book production.

The Bibliographical Component

In order to acquire the relevant data, the proposed theoretical agenda necessitates human and technical resources in dimensions difficult to realize. Human resources include the preparation of surveys relating to holdings in Iran and its neighbouring Asian countries, Europe, and North America. Particular attention will have to be given

10 O.P. Shcheglova, *Katalog litografirovannykh knig na persidskom yazyke v sobranii Leningradskogo otdeleniya Instituta vostokovedeniya AN SSR*, vols 1-2 (Moscow 1975); ed., *Katalog litografirovannykh knig na persidskom yazyke v sobranii vostochnogo otdela nauchnoi biblioteki im. A. M. Gorkogo Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* (Moscow 1989).

11 E. Edwards, *A Catalogue of the Persian Printed Books in the British Museum* (London 1922).

12 'Â. Noushâhi, *Fehrest-e ketâbhâ-ye fârsi-ye châp-e sangi va kam-yâb-e Ketâbkhâne-ye Ganj-bakhsh* (Islamabad 1350/1971).

13 K. Amir-Arjomand, *Katalog der Bibliothek des schiitischen Schrifttums im Orientalischen Seminar der Universität zu Köln*, ed. A. Falaturi, vols 1-6 (Munich, New York, London, Paris 1996).

to private holdings in Iran, some of which are as rich in terms of holdings as they are difficult to assess. Preparing such a survey will have to rely on a team of researchers from various countries, each contributing with their national expertise. Confining any such survey to the major international libraries containing Persian holdings would be a fatal decision, as any library, and particularly the smaller ones, can reasonably be argued to hold unique items. Technical documentation of the holdings would best be achieved by way of microfilm, as this technique is available in the majority of libraries worldwide. It should be noted, however, that even the Teheran National Library acquired its microfilm equipment as recent as less than ten years ago, and the first items I received from that library in the early 1990s were still prepared as photocopies. Some libraries, particularly the Caucasian and Middle Asian ones, might not command the necessary technical equipment, hence requiring the availability of mobile equipment. Once the relevant items have been documented, they should be made accessible in international data formats, preferably those facilitating their compatibility in various kinds of presentation.

The Methodological Component

In the long run, TULLIP is expected to document a large number of Persian lithographed books containing illustrations of any kind. The data are to be collected in three stages: First, work will be confined to the presently available set of about 10,000 illustrations. Second, new data from Iran should be collected; and third, data from other Asian, European, and North American libraries are to be added. Special care in documentation is to be given to the relation of text and illustration, a relationship that has previously often been neglected. Even though the printed texts of the lithographic period show a lesser degree of variation than manuscript texts, a certain amount of variation cannot be excluded. This evaluation also applies to the position of illustrations within a given text. As illustrations in some of the larger sized books, such as the *Shâhnâme*, fill a whole page from top to bottom, documenting the related text will mean to include at least the preceding and following page or pages. Moreover, the identification of specific scenes will often not be possible without a detailed knowledge of the full text of a given book. As the majority of texts printed in lithographed editions in the Qajar period is not available in modern editions, let alone

critical ones, the documentation should not only comprise a given book's illustrations but rather its complete text. In general terms, the systematic documentation and analysis of the illustrations will have to comprise both their iconographical assessment in terms of generic description and detailed catch-word analysis as well as their relation to a specific passage of an individual text.

The Result

In order to offer optimum conditions for its users, it goes without saying that TULLIP is to be developed as a multi-dimensional database, preferably available by way of internet. In addition to basic bibliographical documentation and identification of the illustrations, special care is to be devoted to supplying structured information that in the long run might serve as a basic constituent for a general assessment of Islamic iconography. Various major published systems employed in international iconographical research might serve as a basis for the development of an individual structure of iconographical description, while taking into account the particular requirements of the Islamic data.

A major source of inspiration for the creation of the required database will be the ICONCLASS system as developed by Dutch art historian Henri van de Waal.¹⁴ ICONCLASS is an iconographic classification system, essentially devised to supply ready-made descriptions for works of art, whether two-dimensional illustrations or emblematic imagery or three-dimensional sculptures. ICONCLASS works with a strict hierarchical order, starting with ten major categories labelled with the numbers 0 thru 9: (0) Abstract, Non-representational Art; (1) Religion and Magic; (2) Nature; (3) Human Being, Man in General; (4) Society, Civilization, Culture; (5) Abstract Ideas and Concepts; (6) History; (7) Bible; (8) Literature; (9) Classical Mythology and Ancient History. Already this outline shows the system's obvious rootedness in Western culture. Data from the Persian and Islamic context will rarely fit into categories (0) thru (6), virtually none into category (7), and the overwhelming majority into categories (8) and (9). This situation suggests that in order to use ICONCLASS for the classification of illustrations in Persian lithographed books one would have to expand the main categories of literature and mythology whilst

¹⁴ Besides the information available by way of internet (<http://iconclass.let.ruu.nl>) see, e.g., R. van Straten, *Iconography, Indexing, Iconclass: A Handbook* (Leiden 1994).

diminishing the less important ones. In the context of Qajar lithographed books, literature implies the three categories of classical literature, particularly mystical, religious, pedagogical or otherwise instructive literature; religious literature, above all the works relating to the genre of *maqâtil* or *rouze-khvâni*, i.e. works treating the martyrdom of Hosein b. 'Ali at Karbala that is of pivotal importance for the definition of the Shiite creed; and works of a narrative, fictional, or otherwise primarily entertaining character.

The second published system of iconographical identification to serve as a source of inspiration for TULLIP is François Garnier's *Thesaurus iconographique*.¹⁵ This system has originally been developed with the practical purpose of cataloguing works of art in French museums, and has since been applied to tens of thousands of items. Garnier's system is much more detailed and, apparently, less predisposed than ICONCLASS. Moreover, it allows classification on various levels that are classed in the two large groups of *thèmes* ('general subjects') and *sujets* ('specific subjects'). Levels range from (1) general specifics of representation, (2) nature, (3) the human body and natural environment to (16) geographical (17) biblical, (18) mythological, (19) historical subjects. As a particularly interesting point, Garnier's system also takes into account implicit aspects of representation, such as (21) *courant de pensée* ('intellectual background') and (22) *périodisation* ('imagery depicting certain periods').

Other systems whose experience might prove useful for developing TULLIP's system of iconographical classification include the Princeton *Index of Christian Art* or the *Marburger Inventarisations-, Dokumentations- und Administrations-System (MIDAS)*.¹⁶ At any rate, whatever the source of inspiration, TULLIP will have to develop its own system specifically adjusted to its purpose. Beyond the factual description of a given illustration, additional data will have to position the illustrations both diachronically and synchronically, the latter category supplying links to identical illustrations both in editions of the same work of literature as well as in other works. In addition, a detailed analysis of components such as background, gestures, and

15 F. Garnier, *Thesaurus iconographique: système descriptif de représentations* (Paris 1984).

16 L. Heusinger, *Marburger Informations-, Dokumentations- und Administrations-System (MIDAS)*, 4th edn (Marburg 2000).

material culture will enable a multi-dimensional comparison of these aspects across different works as well as editions of the same work.

The only internet presentation at least partly aiming at a similar goal known to me to date is the *Shahnama Project*, parts of which are available on an internet site published by Princeton University,¹⁷ while a major project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board of the British Academy under the supervision of Charles Melville (Cambridge) and Robert Hillenbrand (Edinburgh) is ongoing.¹⁸ The Princeton website contains the documentation of all illustrations in five *Shâhnâme* manuscripts located in Princeton libraries, plus a survey of the dispersed leaves of the so-called Great Mongol (formerly 'Demotte') *Shâhnâme*.¹⁹ Viewing includes thumbnail surveys, identification of scenes, and related text passages from the English translation (Warner). The complete list of illustrated episodes in the various *Shâhnâmes* worldwide, an amended version of the list originally compiled by Edward Davis and Jill Norgren,²⁰ provides an extremely useful starting point for the general iconographical identification of *Shâhnâme* episodes in lithographed editions.²¹ Similar listings have been published for two other major works of Persian literature, the poet Nezâmi's *Khamse*²² and the corpus of fables commonly known as *Kalila va Dimna*.²³ Similar comparative corpora have already been prepared by the present author for other works frequently published in lithographed editions, such as the Persian translation of the *Arabian Nights* (*Hezâr va yek shab*), the seventeenth century collection of proverbs, Mohammad-'Ali Hablerudi's *Jâme' al-tamsil*, or the most popular work of *rouze-khvâni*-literature, Jouhari's *Tufân al-bokâ'*.

By surveying a limited range of illustrated books, TULLIP will succeed in supplying basic data for a general survey of Islamic iconography. As the analyzed genre is both highly specific and chronologically late, these data will have to be

17 <http://humanitas.princeton.edu/shahnama/>

18 <http://www.oriental.cam.ac.uk/shah>

19 O. Grabar and Sh. Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shahnama* (Chicago, London 1980).

20 E. Davis and J. Norgren, *A Preliminary Index of Shahnameh Illustrations* (Ann Arbor 1969).

21 See U. Marzolph, 'Illustrated Persian Lithographed Editions of the Shâhnâme,' in *Edebiyât* (in print); id., *Images of Power: Illustrated Persian Lithographed Editions of the Shâhnâme* (Teheran in print).

22 L.N. Dodkhudoeva, *Poemy Nezami v srednevekovoi minyaturnoi zhivopisi* (Moscow 1985).

23 E.J. Grube, 'Prolegomena for a corpus publication of illustrated Kalilah wa Dimna Manuscripts', *Islamic Art* 4 (1990/91), 301-481; see also U. Marzolph, 'The Lithographed Kalilah. Illustrations to Tales from the Anvâr-i Suhaylî and Kalila va Dimnah Tradition in Lithographed Editions of the Qājār Period', *Islamic Art* (in print).

developed and adjusted in order to fit the broader context. One of the numerous questions that TULLIP might help to answer is concerned with the relationship between lithographic illustration and popular iconography. When considering book production in the Near and Middle East, one has to keep in mind that books do not only contain printed words. In largely illiterate societies such as nineteenth century Iran, the illustrations included in lithographed books might even have conveyed stronger and more lasting impressions than the printed word, similar to the impact exercised by illustrations in other popular media, such as tile-work, stucco-work, glass painting or picture carpets.