

Projects in manuscript studies

***Orient-Digital* database and Islamic book art**

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Book art, including calligraphy, illuminations, and illustrations, embellishes the great manuscripts of the Islamic world and comprises one of the finest artistic traditions of humankind. The database *Orient-Digital* at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz (<<http://orient-digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/>>; see *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter* 6, 2013, 7–8) pays respect to this book culture: a unique art description module, conceived by the art historian Friederike Weis and the Arabists Thoralf Hanstein and Christoph Rauch, has been embedded in the database.

More than 8,200 art elements from 310 Persian, Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and Javanese manuscripts have been so far described and made accessible online. The great span of time covered—the illustrated manuscripts date from between the fourteenth and twentieth century—and the vast geographic scope—the Persian world, the Ottoman Empire, Southeast Asia—account for the great variety of forms and styles of book decoration. The database catalogues calligraphies whether collected in albums or transmitted as single leaves, Persian and Mongol miniatures in the renowned Diez albums from the fourteenth and fifteenth century, luxuriously illuminated and illustrated Persian manuscripts such as Firdawsī's *Šāhnāma*, Nizāmī's and Amīr Ḥusraw Dihlavī's *Ḥamsa*, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century miniatures from the Mughal India in the Ḡahangir album, al-Qazwīnī's cosmography *ʿAğāʾib al-maḥlūqāt wa ḡarāʾib al-mawḡūdāt*, devotional literature such as Muḥyī al-Dīn Lārī's *Futūḥ al-ḥaramayn* and al-Ġazūlī's *Dalāʾil al-ḥayrāt*, astronomical manuscripts with drawings of constellations, and Arabic grammar books with later added illustrations.

In the database, each book art element gets its own description (fig. 1). First, general data are provided: the shelfmark of the manuscript and the page on which the element is found; a short title in English and German; and a thumbnail image linked with the digital collections of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. Following the link, the user can view a high resolution photograph of the book art element (fig. 2)—and of the entire manuscript. A link to the


Classmark	Ms. or. fol. 359, f.451r
Catalogue no.	VOHD 16,1, 317
Short title	Bahrām Gūr kills those two lions guarding the crown
Link to image	Digitale Bibliothek der SBB 
Type	illustration → miniature
Sheet size	49 x 31,5 cm
Size with frame	36 x 22,4 cm
Date	drittes Viertel des 16. Jahrhunderts, ca. 1560-1570
Place of origin	wahrscheinlich Shiraz
Description	Unter den Augen seiner Männer erschlägt Bahrām Gūr nahe einem Fluss einen der beiden Löwen mit seinem Stierkopfstock, die die Krone bewachen. Der zweite Löwe beobachtet ihn dabei. Aus weiter Ferne beobachten weitere Männer das Geschehen hinter Felsen stehend. Goldener Himmel mit weißen vorbeiziehenden Wolken.
Motif	person → ruler person → hero animal → lion scenery → animal fight scenery → landscape/garden plant → tree scenery → heaven/clouds
Support material	Papier
Link to manuscript	Ms. or. fol. 359, Šāhnāma, Firdausī
Editor	Beez
Status	first input complete
Static URL	http://orient-digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/receive/SBBMSIllustration_illustration_00003246

Fig. 1. A book art entry in the *Orient-Digital* database.

metadata describing the parent manuscript is equally provided for a broader context.

For each element, physical description is provided (material; dimensions); the date and place of origin; transcription of the text(s) embedded into the art element; information on the kind of ink, and the state of preservation.

The core of the entry is constituted by the content and history of the art piece: a picture description and a multiple classification of motifs contextual-

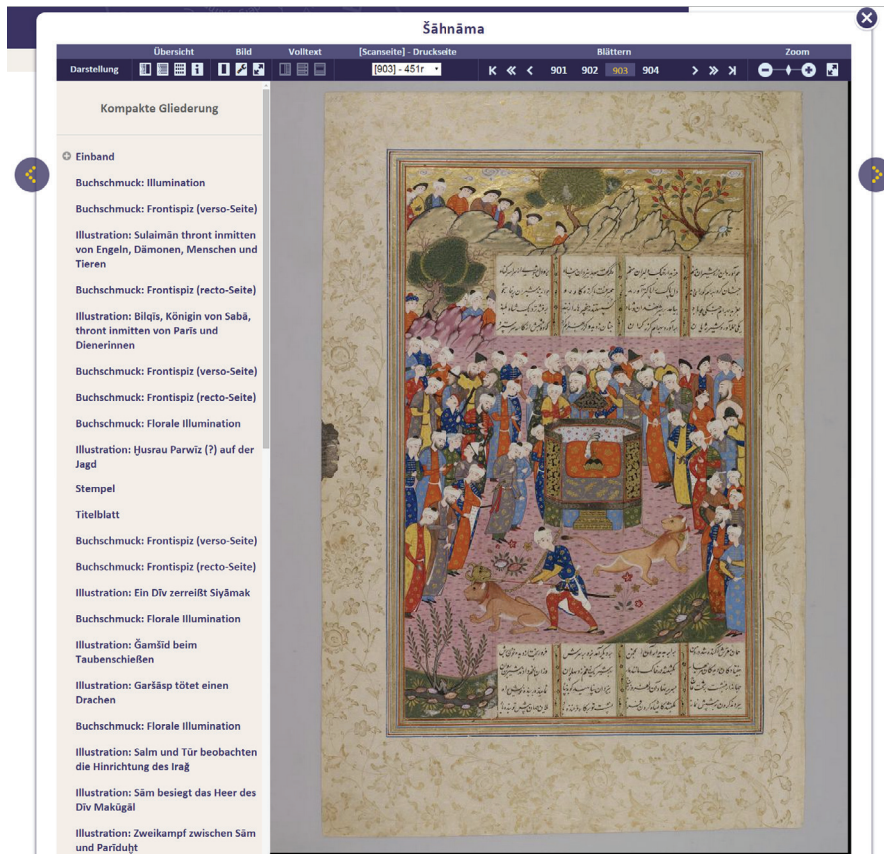


Fig. 2. A zoomable and downloadable representation of the book art element in the Digital Library, <http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN731527356&PHYSID=PHYS_0903>. For the parent entry of the entire manuscript see <http://orient-digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/receive/SBBMSBook_islam-hs_00002496>.

ize the book art element. Specific categories have been introduced by the database. Every book art element is first defined as illumination (here defined as a form of pictorial book art complementing texts, calligraphies and paintings, mostly with gilding), illustration (an image that has a clear connection to the text of the manuscript), non-illustrative image (that does not refer explicitly to a text, mostly a decorative motif), or calligraphy. Illustrations may be either miniatures (fully coloured) or line drawings (often monochromatic). The decorations are further classified according to the motifs represented; here, the categories include animal, fabulous creatures, plant, scenery, map, and

ornament. Information on reference literature and the exhibition history shed additional light on its reception.

Besides the usual search and PDF export possibilities, the users are given the opportunity to provide their input by sending remarks or error reports.

In cooperation with the Data Processing Centre of Leipzig University, the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin has developed an exemplary research tool presenting its Islamic book art in a comprehensive and clear manner.

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