

**Research Article**

## **THE CRITIQUE OF THE "SUHRAB HITS RUSTAM ON THE GROUND" PAINTING SELECTED FORM SHAH TAHMASB'S SHAHNAMEH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The painting of "Suhrab hits Rustam on the ground" is the illustrated part of one of the most excited sections of *Shah Tahmasb's shahnameh* that is considered as one of the unique works in the world literature from the strangeness and sadness point of view. This work is among the biggest art masterpieces of humanity for all ages and represents association, peak of perfection, and harmonious of two painting traditions namely *Timurid Herat* and *Turkmen Tabriz* and shows development of Safavid painting from genesis to sophistication stage and after that. This paper aims at achieving new readings from the hidden values in the work with an approach of structural and aesthetic critique and determining representation factors of hidden values in it with how dependence and adoption of the painting to the literature. Therefore during critical procedure and based on the visual literacy in addition to introduction of *Shah Tahmasb's shahnameh* and analysis of the nature and characters describes, analyzes, and evaluates the painting. The results imply that in the painting illustration much sagacity and accuracy has been spent. Taking special attention to the Shahnameh's text and using special elements led to making relation with text. This issue through symbolization and using the symbols such as: skin caftan, a helmet like Whit Dave' head in the structure of using rules and traditions of Persian Paintings and also special selection of colors, composition, balance, accuracy in locating persons, view kind of animals, as well as metaphorical pun between battle of Rustam and Suhrab with struggle between the lion and male zebra with using the golden sky which is applied in line with sadness and tragic atmosphere of the painting all have acted as literary figures in the Persian Poem to give ability to the painter to transfer the depth of meaning in the best way. In these conditions, as poem is the illustrated music, the painting is also considered an illustrated poem and will lead the audience to another world.

**Keywords:** *Shah Tahmasb's Shahnameh, Painting of Hitting Rustam on the Ground, Structural and Aesthetic Critique*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Persian painting has always been in continuity with Persian literature so that, seemingly, both poet and painter have tried to illustrate ideally topic full swing. This will be possible by imagery, cadence, rhythm, and word weight in literature and in the painting will be achieved through embodiment with help of visual aspects, line and color, pure descriptions that poets and orators represent in the text will be materialized by painters. So the painting that was in the mind of poet and painter leads to addressed pleasure of meeting, understanding, and more perception. The Shah Tahmasb's shahnameh is one of several valuable illustrated manuscripts compiled according to the royal decree in the different historical periods that is well evidence for synchronizing literature with painting. In this rare collection that includes very prolific and beautiful paintings the greatest Safavid painters and their students had contributed. Including the most experienced painters are Mirmosavar, Soltan Mohammd, Aghamirak, Doustmohammd, Mirzaali, Mirseyedali, Mozaffarali, Abdolsamad, and dozens of other artists. One of the evidences that we are in following although brief is the painting of "Sohrab hits Rustam on the ground" which is from most controversial and attractive stories of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh that is well example of the human nihilism and insolvency against fate. In this story a tragedy occurs as a war between a father and a son without previous knowledge that at any given time becomes more and more complex by human and destiny has been illustrated in the Shah Tahmasb's shahnameh and has been shown creatively in Tabriz Doctrine<sup>2</sup> School as well. Choosing this work has been done according to absence of such painting

**Research Article**

with this content in other illustrated manuscripts of Shahnameh so that in addition to investigation and characterization of available values in hidden layers of the painting the relation between text and painting to be emphasized and painter’s benefit of the story and playing role of elements in this relation to be introduced. It should be noted that many cases in “investigation of the work” gained only through exploration and critical focus on the work and without using other resources and acceptability and usefulness of the work to the audiences were the goal and purpose.



**Figure 1: Suhrab hits Rutam on the ground (Painting Masterpieces of Iran, 2005)**

**Shah Tahmasbs' Shahnameh**

Among several illustrated manuscripts of Ferdowsi's shahnameh, no one can be compared with this version in terms of number of events, beauty, and gloriousness of the paintings point of view. This work has been started in Shah Ismail Safavi age and complemented by Shah Tahmasb's attention. It has been given as gift to Ottoman Sultan in second half of 10 AH century. In 1959 has been bought by Arthur Houghton and was for him for 30 years.

Start date: 928 AH, Doctrine: Tabriz2, Penmanship: hieroglyphics, Dimension: 32×47.5cm, Papers number: 380, Date of completion: 944 AH. Number of events: 258 which 78 events has been awarded to

**Research Article**

Metropolitan museum in New York, 61 events has been sold to collectors and museums, one bought by Reza Abbasi museum, and 118 events was returned to Iran in 1993 (Razmjou, 2005) (Table 1).

**Table 1: Characteristics of the Shahnameh of of Shah Tahmasb's paintings associated with Tabriz School 2**

Visual themes	Historic, heroic, mystical, feasting, religious (reliability), lyrical, hunting ground, fighting, single portraying
Composition	Covering areas with leafy plants
	The details of view, the cut of frame, the exit of part of the picture from it, spiral composition , the lack of focus on the main character, simultaneous handling of major and minor events, the lack of three-dimensional representation of painting, more complex structure of painting consisting of several levels, multi-dimensional establishing atmosphere, , the composition of linear inscriptions in the painting, limb amputantion by the cadre
States of bodies	Dress is coordinated with customs of Safavids, Ghezelbash helmets, bodies in different scattered states everywhere in the image, Bodies near to normal size, occasionally placing the bodies in a spiral combination, long turban.
Color of Paintings	Variety of color, and using cool and coordinated colors, as well as much implementation of golden color, sky is often golden , and sometimes lapis or blue, clouds are often blue with white edges.
Other items	The representation of princes' portrait such as women, interest in illustrations of faces, considering the court battle issues, establishing movement across the image, establishment of perception without the arabesque, working on the details of dress, interest in the depiction of everyday living environment and diversity in decorations and decorating the architectural motifs as well as decorating the architectural scenes with geometric and plant designs, spiral and sequential clouds , coral and sponge hills
Other effects	Tabriz, Herat, Byzantium (the way of working on clothing)

**Analysis of the Nature and Characters of Story**

Rustam and Sohrab story is the blessed story. The blessed story where well people of history found themselves into it. The nice people of mythological period, heroic period, historic period, and in general usual wells of all the time can be seen in this story and live with them in reality. The wells like Rustam and Suhrab. In this story, fate forced fighting a father and son such as Rustam and Suhrab like two arched- enemy. Suhrab who is a battled experienced hero initially dominates Rustam. Suhrab because of the youth and chivalry and respect to heroic faith accepted another battle against Rustam. (Alborz, 1990) According to Fallah (2002): Rustam is Zal and Roodabeh's child and Simurgh's cade. He is the strange amalgam of the celebrities of Kayani epoch, mythological world champion of Iran and representation of all Iranian dreams and having kinds of athletics arts with human natures of the noble and independent man. He is needles to others. The gained vale of him is not hereditary and achievable. For this reason he doesn't want to follow anyone. He is patriot and self-devoted. He says when I ride the Rakhsh it is as kingdom throne of mine and the ground is like my servant. As if Rustam wants to say every noble man that he is independent is his kingdom. (Every beggar is king in his home) and he is the servant of the God who is the creator of the universe, not other's servant. Rustam is monotheistic, a mixture of craft and simplicity, intelligence and bravery, sorrow and joy, the life loved and its pleasures and bond to name and shame until death. Life is valueless for him without fame and he should defend it though versus highest sacrifices. Rustam is not created by fiction of normal storytellers..... Another is Hajir with nice intent to preventing damage impose to Rustam from Suhrab and killing Zhendehrazm who send to Iran from Tahmineh to identification Suhrab by Rustam. Kavos who the young living at last moment depended on his volition caused the hatred had from Rustam and based on pre insidious refused from taking panacea.

### **Research Article**

Such than Iranian and Turan for the first time and without knowledge agreed together on an event that is Suhrab killing (Soear and Anvari, 1991). The sample of a completed and perfect human that world has not been able to make it yet. His spiritual and moral greatness is appropriate to gods of legends. His supremacy is not only in those amazing heroisms. He is unique in misery and among heroes of our legends no one can be found who be subject to the most terrible and ominous fate that mortal man on the earth can hold. The fate of a father who killed his young son, such painful and ominous fate only can be held by unique greatness of Rustam and with grief and sorrow but by patience and submission. Suhrab who is a champion young with unique power, brave, fearless, and the symbol of young passion and full force has risen for a great ideal. His goal is not only homeland but is universal. He wants to establish peace between Iran and Turan by bringing new regulations and incorporate these two separated worlds and despite all the heroes doesn't want to handle all the power. He wants to share another noble man like Rustam to do this. The anti-power nature should not be considered in minimal. Suhrab has broken the power disaster which is exclusive in advance and has eradicated the social excesses that is diabolical and perishable. Suhrab is Rustam plus peace following feature. He was deceived and forgave in knocked manliness (as acted against Hajir the commander of Sepid Army and Gorafarid) but he doesn't fool others. His failure is not important but his legitimacy is important. His conflict with Rustam is innovation and conservatism war. He runs towards goal so amorously that doesn't see anything in its surroundings. Ferdowsi's creative idea when considers this tragedy is informed logically that has located champions in an inescapable framework and it is clear that if they would identify each other simply such disaster would not occur but it cannot be said strongly then it would not lead to the worse end. What sorrow is more painful than choosing between child and a prescript functions for the traditionalism and patriot champion like Rustam (Shoar and Anvari, 1992).

### **Description of Painting**

The painting with content of "Suhrab hits Rustam on the ground" is surrounded in tabled chart within the golden margin. The angle of painting has been selected from opposite and the main text of painting oriented to the square. According to synchronization of the literature and subject of illustrated story the inscriptions were located at top and bottom of the painting so that top area included decorating, illuminating by theme in azure yellow color inscription covers topic of the painting written with hieroglyphics gave decorative aspects to it. The top inscription in 4 row and 5 bits of poetry in certain distance and the bottom of it in the left side of painting is in 2 rows and 2 bits of poetry. Hitting Rustam on the ground by Suhrab is in results of the battle done between them and the poem was written as comes from inscription text:

They clashed together in wrestling  
Poured the blood and sweat of each other  
Suhrab invaded by his hands such as a drunk elephant  
Like a fierce lion jumped  
He took Rustam's belt and dragged it  
It seemed that the ground was opened as a result of his power  
One of them shouted full of anger and hatred  
So that ruptured whole ground seemingly  
When Suhrab hit the lionhearted Rustam on the ground  
He came full of anger and hatred  
He sat on the chest of like elephant body of Rustam  
While his hands, face, and month full of soil  
Like a lion sits on the male zebra and catches it  
He got his shine dirk and wanted to lift his head  
Rustam look at him and said that I should tell you the secret  
Rustam said to the young man  
Look decently, the guardian of Mithras  
He said to Suhrab: the lion catchers' hero

### **Research Article**

Drop you lasso and hold your sword and wand

The painter illustrated the main painting towards the right side in the purple gray shades. Under diagonal line there are hills with blue and light pink wide and extended with tiny grass plant that created universal contexture in the whole theme. Of course the volume colorful stones scattered in the theme and modify its universality. The battle center in the empty space from visual elements orients view towards the first characters of the painting and story that governed by silence.

Rustam's shoulders are not located on the ground completely and he is pointing to Suhrab by his index finger with calm face and open eyes and the hat similar head of Dave in white color with decorating feathery and dress composed by skin of tiger.

Suhrab has sat on the Rustam's chest and raised his dirk. His hand has stayed static in the air and attended to Rustam. His combat dress is blue and other clothing elements are gold with decorations and details. His face is clear, roseate, and kind with small lips.

The struggle in the left top of painting between a strong lion with blue mane with a injured male zebra like a deer is observed in the theme covered by coarse grass and flowers next to and top of the hills line.

Two half-horses as the frame cut the painting of their body are in two sides of the painting. One in the right side under poems in brown with red dots harnessed with decoration with worried eyes while open month and takes nicker. It raised his foot and is elusive. The signs represent that it is Rakhsh, Rustam's horse. The short and fat soldier with circle face and roseate checks and small month stand next to it with his arc and prevent from its motion. His cloth is similar to Rustam's cloth in color and his cover is black. His boots are green. The flag installed on his helmet in red similar the feather and sign represents that he is one of Iranian soldiers and looks to the war more careful since Rustam as an Iranian champion is on the ground. In bottom left there is another horse body in light brown and yellow and red dots. It harnessed with decoration like tiger tail. It's month is open and takes nicker. Its eyes are worried too. It is creepy and raised its right foot and is elusive, but stopped by the soldier that stayed next to it. Dress of the soldier is the same as Suhrab's cloth. He is from the Turan army. Both soldiers have bow and arrow in their hands and painting is done carefully.

“A tree with pink blooms” was drawn in right side and its branches are towards the fight. This could not be accidently certainly also such as smooth and shining sky couldn't be accidently!

The large sycamore tree located on the top and approximately center towards fight scene where most of its branches are hidden under inscription is illustrated on the golden sky where in both sides there are blue and twisted clouds with white edges and have effective role in the getting depth to painting. Parallel to the hills line a river is illustrated at right side of painting where there is bush, coarse flowers and Cypress trees that represent immortality, life, and eternal life are grown. Some branches are raised from top of inscription and present themselves. The wild black cat with open month entered to the prairie next to the fight. Availability of two partridges in two sides of the tree and hidden rabbits beside the rocks, stones, and foliage and other elements are not hidden from artist's considerations.

### **Structural Analysis and Evaluation**

The cadre is similar to a window that is going to represent important subjects to the audiences. Frame is used for creating composition and space in the painting as the painter represent the depth of story and its content concepts for viewer by selecting illustration of the painting of hitting on the ground of Rustam in the frame of one page of the book. In the paintings of Shah Tahmasb's shahnameh, a development in the size of painting cadre in relation with poem content or story events are seen such as somewhere the cadre is stretched in top and vertical direction and somewhere is towards to the square and provided place in diagonal shape and extended in multi levels that make possible the illustration of wide painting from the nature (Yazdanpanah *et al.*, 2101). In the considered painting it is also evident that diversity of the frame size selected according to the poem content including four inspections at top and two in the bottom left. The advantage of bottom left in addition to positive effects resulted from elements relations with general structure caused more willing of viewer toward this (Dandis, 2011).

Availability of inspections at top and bottom except creating balance in the painting complete the relation between literature and painting like a belt since penmanship was one of critical fundament of painting of

### Research Article

Iran and when remaining the belt (literature, painting, and penmanship) the cultural and literature foundation were stronger.

The painter by selecting against angle involved the viewer with the subject of story. In doctrine Tabriz2 the relation between out and in is infinite relation that means that without borders content penetrate indoor and rotate around the center rather than driving input content to the out. Here another is not only viewer and work audience, but is the infinite nature that sense by removing outer boundary an such the viewer sense itself as a part of the space created by human mind.

Using the procedure where cutting the horse body in the painting cadre in the horizontal axe is another feature of the doctrine. It is new trend to creation perspective and splitting 2-dimensional space of page and caused improving in making composition. Elements of the painting by locating under or on the cadre of poem inspection. Add the depth of painting. We see trees in the painting that are under the cadre of poems or are out of them.

There is an inscription on the written lines and whereas they carry plans, depth and perspective view to achieving more space in the picture and at this time, all of the elements in box are vibrant, dynamic and with more motion in the page and break the time and location. “Line” is the indicator of the shape and complexities of an image are expressed through art. To direction of look, the direction of motion and objects run have a colorful communication that implies line and locates thoughts from its origin on its position. In this painting the volume and breadth of the space may be more illustrated with the subject, elements, in animation and color levels and their bindings run in the artwork composition. Spiral and twisting lines have been grown in order to create a link between levels of color, composition and unity in the artwork. This composition that appears as circular and spiral is most applied in Iranian painting as a tool to guide the beholders eye to the desired point. In this painting the battle is in the center of attention (Figure 2, 3).



Figure 1

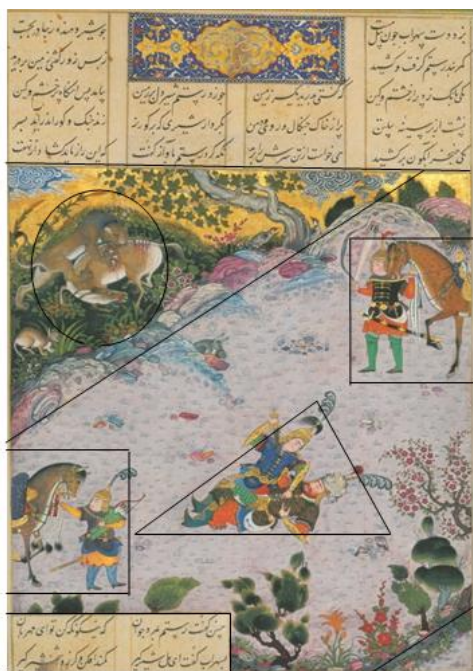


Figure 2

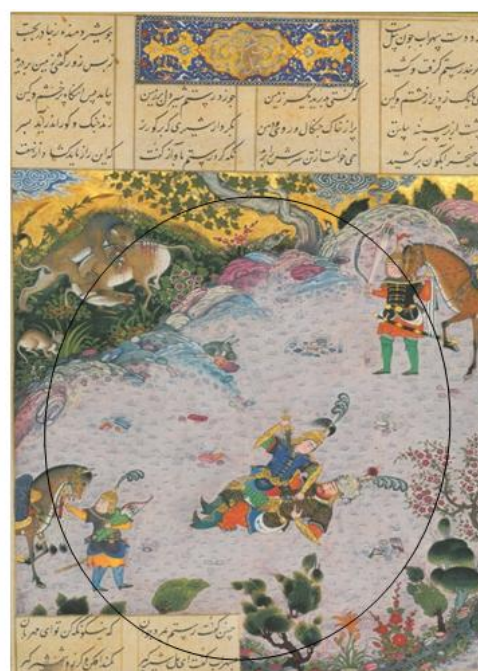
Configuration and relation of the frame much is obvious by placing subjects in the geometrical form. Achieving the intended meaning of an image expression depends heavily on the composition of the picture. In addition, the composition of a work plays an important role in attracting visitors (DandIs, 2011).

**Research Article**

Configuration and relation of the frame much is obvious by placing subjects in the geometrical form (Figure 4 and 5).



**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**

“Squares, circles and triangles, each of which with their specific features and attributed scenarios and features because of their inherent or human psychological reactions or due to the specific cultural expressions, stationary mode, honesty, openness and skillfulness are attributed to “square”; “Triangle” implies activity, controversies and contraction where the main subject of the painting is enclosed in. “circle” indicates endlessness, heat and preservation that all the elements are in the circle and the spiral torsion (DandIs, 2011).

The hills diagonal line causes surface separation from each other and on the other hand provides the background for the main event and is a “balancing factor” with the same hot and cold features. In contrast to the colors, the diagonal line is neutral and ranges from median green or gray and in some cases mild red and violet-like vermillion in color, respectively (Ayat, 2001).

In Shah Tahmasp Shahnama painting, the hills and up and bottom inscriptions play a major role, since the hills separate levels and provide the wide field for main event.

As avoiding the empty space is of Iranian art aesthetic characteristics, the empty space often is used for the visibility of the main subject and a full image, Imbalance in the stability and using tricks for the balance are among other features of this school that in this painting the painter has tried to keep balance through the choice of color scheme of purple gray, field of battle, grassland of hunting, and hills and rivers diagonal line, the coldness and warmth of the colors, and two horse torso in two sides of the painting.

**Aesthetic Analysis and Evaluation**

Painter with strong hands and imagination portrays Rostam and Sohrab face away from passion and expresses Babre-Bayan on Rustam and Sohrab combat dress, in blue which refers to la infinity and soul (Ethan, 2001).

Depicting a combat between two animals is the indicator of painters being faithful to the literary text and this verse of poem that “to conduct like a lion on a male zebra” and repeatedly in the lyrics, Ferdowsi, sees Sohrab as a lion. Lion that has a dual nature and is the indicator of power and regality, good and evil and goodwill and destruction accompanies Sohrab with the intention of gaining the rein for Rostam fights

**Research Article**

Iran and Kaykavousi and provides a beautiful visual pun. Poet with regard to animal symbols of Rostam and Sohrab makes the artist to depict a combat between two parties in a living space and lush meadows among shrubs and flowers in regard to loyalty to the text in addition to the grandeur and richness of colors, shapes variety, and river scenery which lead to invent poetic image.

In the process of creating the artwork the mutations of hands and the imagination of the artwork author as the most important factor in shaping the visual work interconnected to each other and the painter depicts two conflicted horses torso so that the box has cut them in both sides of the painting to show the presence of Iran and Turan troops so that the mind of the viewer's wander among imagination to the real world and vice versa. What is more helps in the imaginary of the paintings of Tahmasp Shahnameh is the use of golden color in the sky. "The Golden Sky" doubled the scene with high radiation, increasing power, and wastefulness, rebel, without logic heat and general excitement and anxiety. In addition, this color and other pure and rich colors are used in the other designs in the small and micro levels among motifs. In particular golden color soldier's helmet contributes to the decorative aspect of the image. Artist's elegance can be found in the application of various decorations and floral designs on the bodies cover, horses and weapons. Blue, silver, gold and turquoise colors did not merely stem from artist's fantasy and are therefore the outcomes of an objective view and witness the fact that exists only in a certain conscience of an artist. Because, as the tangible world discern requires the eye vision, view of the perfect world is in need of enlightenment to achieve intuition. "The golden color sky" which is yellowish and resembling sun shining manifests itself in the image that shows the highest purity of the material by the force of light, with a subtle radiant, without transparency, however, weight less as of the pure vibration metaphysical aspect as an indicator of a world beyond the mundane world is associated to a kind of consciousness apart from that of the normal human. And engaging in the presence of a male lion and a zebra combat in vibrant atmosphere, lush plants adorned with cheerful, colorful and live flowers in the hills above the diagonal line and the presence of a wild cat that resembles the evil and disaster aside, discontinuity of time and a multi aspects space discourse that undoubtedly influenced by the mystical vision is effective and shows the peak of perfection and aesthetic integrity of the image as if an informed watcher observes everything at once.

**Table 2: Characteristics of painting of Suhrab hits Rustam on the ground adopted from Shah Tahmasb's Shahnameh**

<b>The content of image</b>	<b>Battle of Rustam and Sohrab</b>
Composition	Ground covering, with the repeated plants , Spiral and circular composition, Lack of focus on the main character ,The lack of three-dimensional view, several establishing atmosphere , Linear composition of inscriptions in the image Limb amputation of horses by cadre.
States of bodies	Coordinated with customs of Safavids, Rather chubby bodies with a round face. Corresponding to the spiral composition and their relationship with other components.
Color of image	Variation in color and using smooth and harmonious colors that make use of very lively atmosphere , golden sky, blue clouds with white edges.
Others	Interest in the illustrations face, establishing movement across the image, working on the details of the dress.
Others' effect	School of Herat, Tabriz and portraying the battle scen.

"diagonal line of hills," is separated two mundane and divine spaces and "suggests a volatile and unstable situation, and associated with human emotions of joy and excitement, sadness and shock in equal amounts it is not sad and imaginary, but has a huge burden of sorrow and grief (Ayat, 2001).

With regard to the content and features of the work we can mention that Tabriz 2 school followers following the tradition of Behzad were highly interested in face to face battles or combat among huge



### **Research Article**

troops, elders meetings, romantic lovers meetings, and courtly ceremonies and parties with a lot of details. A clear example is when “Sohrab knocked down Rustam.”

It is worth noting that the painter, while remaining faithful to the literary text for Sohrab placement on the chest of like elephant with a dagger on his hand and the state of Rustam body on the battlefield ground, its similarity with the incidence among male lion and injured zebra, the restlessness horses, and the evil presence of the wild cats get along with them, diagonal line of hills, golden sky, and branches of trees mode all together increase the states of anxiety and fear in the scene that is associated with fighting and eventually its unpleasant outcome (Table 2).

### **CONCLUSION**

The finding of current critical attitude imply that from the perspective of structural analysis, the discussed painting has helical configuration in two directions of clock-wise and anti-clock-wise that caused motion in whole painting. Lack of focus on the main character of the painting, multi-dimensional establishing atmosphere, and the trick of cutting two parts of horse body helps for representing the army availability in two parts of fight field and depth viewing to the painting.. Or emerging or hiding the tree branches under the inscriptions in up and down of the painting has occurred that of course colorization of the painting helps to the enriching the painting from aesthetic point of view the symmetry conducted more excitement to the painting. The worried eyes of animal, the golden sky, and wild cat beside hills help to this. Availability of horses and fight between the lion and zebra help to focusing on the war aspect of the painting. These make the audience as a part of painting and aim him to the unpleasant end of story. Adoption between the painting and literature of epic of the kings and properties of Tabriz doctrine are of prominent features of the work.

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