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Huma'i, Jalal al-Din. *Tarikh-i Isfahan: Mujallad-i Hunar va Hunarmandan*. Mahdukht Banu Huma'i (ed.). Tehran: Pizhuhishgah-i 'Ulum-i Insani va Mutala'at-i Farhangi, 1996, 391pp.

## ABSTRACT

### **The History of Isfahan: the Volumes on Art and Artists**

تاریخ اصفهان، مجلد هنر و هنرمندان

*Tarikh-i Isfahan*, or *The History of Isfahan* has been written by professor Jalal al-Din Huma'i, a prominent twentieth century Iranian writer. The present volume is the only section of the series available and deals with the history of art in Isfahan. As the author was born in Isfahan, he demonstrates a great deal of enthusiasm for the place and discusses many aspects in detail, so that nothing is left unaccounted, and every aspect of history and art in Isfahan is covered.

His information about pre-Islamic Isfahan is limited only to the historical sites remaining from the Parthian era, details of which he has obtained from sources left by European archaeologists and travellers. The bulk of the book focuses on the Islamic era, particularly on the Safavid periods and onwards. Huma'i's extensive knowledge of different historical and literary works, in both Persian and Arabic is an extra credit to this book. Drawing on this linguistic ability, he has tried to gather different pieces of information on art, architecture,

artists and craftsmen scattered in anthologies, history books, poetry, theology and Sufi literature.

In the introduction, Huma'i reviews the general history of art, crafts and architecture in Isfahan from the Parthian era to the present time. He covers the growth of the local arts through different periods, and examines the impact of modernisation on them.

He presents the history of Islamic calligraphy and the development of its different styles. He provides a list of calligraphers who lived in Isfahan along with their biographies. Huma'i discusses the musicians, vocalists and instrument makers and provides their biographies. He gives a thorough explanation of different musical tunes (*maqamat*) as they appear in the traditional Iranian music and examines the development of Persian classical songs (*tasnif*).

A chapter is dedicated to the history of Persian painting and illuminations from the 15<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century to the author's time. He observes the process in which different schools of Islamic painting developed after the school of Herat in Isfahan. He also provides a list of the painters along with their biographies.

*Musaddiqan* (certifiers) and *massahan* (experts in land measuring) are also discussed and named. In order to ensure that he has covered all the different fields of art, the author devotes a chapter to the less popular types of art and craft. In the last chapter, he refers to *Shahnamah-khwanan* (the reciters of Shahnamah).

Amongst the strong points of *Tarikh-i Isfahan*, apart from the extended range of information based on different historical sources, is its comprehensive index at the end of the book, which

makes the task of a researcher easy. There are, however, some sections which deviate from the main subject of the book. As an example, topics such as *musaddiqan* and *massahan* may not be related to art.

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