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MARGIN ILLUSTRATION WITH A *SIMURGH* FROM A COPY OF JAMI'S
YUSUF WA ZULAYKHA

CENTRAL ASIA, BUKHARA; 964 H = 1556-1557
MARGIN PAINTINGS: PROBABLY MUGHAL INDIA; C. 1600

H: 26.3; W: 15.4 CM

The mythical *simurgh* is related to the dragon. In an Islamic context, the *simurgh* is described as an enormous and auspicious bird with colorful plumage and a magnificent tail. The holy book of the

Zoroastrians, the *Avesta*, mentions a special bird with the head of a dog called the *senmurv*, which could be a precursor of the *simurgh*. The *senmurv* has its nest in the “Sacred Tree of All Seeds,” and when the gigantic bird takes flight, the seeds are spread all over the earth.

The role of the *senmurv* is thus closely linked with the welfare of mankind, a role that seems to have been retained in the *simurgh* of Islamic art.

Published in:

Kjeld von Folsach: *Islamic art. The David Collection*, Copenhagen 1990, cat.no. 9;

Kjeld von Folsach: *Fabelvæsner fra Islams Verden*, Davids Samling, København 1991, cat.no. 56;

Kjeld von Folsach, Torben Lundbæk and Peder Mortensen (eds.): *Sultan, Shah and Great Mughal: the history and culture of the Islamic world*, The National Museum, Copenhagen 1996, cat.no. 105 and fig. 48;

Kjeld von Folsach: *Art from the World of Islam in The David Collection*, Copenhagen 2001, cat.no. 17;

Jens Kröger: “On Mahmud b. Ishaq al-Shihabi’s manuscript of Yûsuf va Zulaykhâ of 964 (1557)” in *Muqarnas*, 21, 2004, p. 245, fig. 6;

Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom (eds.): *Cosmophilia. Islamic Art from the David Collection, Copenhagen*, McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, Boston 2006, cat.no. 104;