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SUPPLEMENTS TO MUQARNAS

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PREFACING THE IMAGE
THE WRITING OF ART HISTORY IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY IRAN

BY

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PREFACES

A hundred regrets! Malik, unique in his age, has departed this world.
He was a calligrapher, a scholar, a dervish following the right path.
He was the Yaqūt of his age; the day when he left this world,
Has become the chronogram of his death: “Yaqūt of the century—Malik.”

In this poetic chronogram in two couplets the Safavid calligrapher Malik’s achievements and personality are conveyed: he is compared to Yaqt, a thirteenth-century calligrapher who was regarded as the greatest master of the “six scripts” (aqlām al-sitta, shish qalam, khūfūt-i sitta), and the year of his death, 968 (1560–61), is conveyed by an artful combination of words, each letter of which is assigned a numerical value, their aggregate totaling 968. The source of the chronogram is unknown. It is recorded in Qazi Ahmad’s Gulistān-i hunar (Rose Garden of Art, 1596–1606), in its comprehensiveness a behemoth of art historical-biographical writing.

Qazi Ahmad’s Gulistān-i hunar came at the end of a century of art history writing in Iran that had its origins in the late fifteenth century. From then onward, biographical notices of calligraphers, painters, and other practitioners of the arts were inserted into historical works. Biographies of poets mentioned that they were also skilled in calligraphy, depiction, illumination, and bookbinding, but as auxiliary competencies. Technical treatises (risāla) composed by calligraphers sometimes contained passages that recorded aspects of art history in either prose or poetry.

By the middle years of the sixteenth century a new form of writing, the album preface, had become established. Written to introduce bound collections of previously loose calligraphy, paintings, and drawings, these prefaces often contained lists of the names of practitioners and brief biographical notes about them strung together according to master-student affiliations. These genealogies of practice formed “chains” (silsilās) that were staged as histories of art. Each renowned master was a link in the chain of practitioners that made up the history of transmission: it was a means of organizing information that was also used in other branches of knowledge. Although Qazi Ahmad employs a similar scheme—chains of calligraphers subdivided according to script type and material—to organize his biographical vignettes, his text remains somewhat confusing because it combines elements of the album preface and the technical treatise (risāla), but its comprehensive scope more closely resembles biographical compilations in narrative form.

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2 In his text Qazi Ahmad gives the year of death as 969 (1561–62), as noted by Minorsky (ibid., p. 144, n. 497).

3 Collections of biographies are usually compiled according to profession or avocation and are arranged according to subdivisions of class or rank.
"i hunar" is usually referred to as a treatise, but in many respects it resembles a gargantuan album preface.

This book is about the album preface (dibâcha), a critical, but neglected category of sources that records the names of masters in the Persianate art tradition and organizes them into a history of art. The prefaces also express a culture’s view of the procedures, principles, and practices of art and give some idea of its criteria of judgment. They were prescriptive in several ways: they defined aesthetic canons and named key masters for each art form; they assessed the value of the album’s contents through the use of metaphor and association and by extension also defined the criteria for the album's reception. Their purpose was to introduce an array of loose materials ordered in the album and key participants involved in the album’s inception and execution.

As in any book, the preface was placed at the front of the album to introduce it and its contents. A few albums also had a conclusion.4 The terms used for prefaces to albums—dibâcha or muqaddima5—do not distinguish between literary forms and are used interchangeably. In books, a clearer distinction between the two words is sometimes found.6 Chahryar Adle has discussed the etymology and the additional meanings of the term dibâcha: an introduction to a work, a text written in a “florid” style, and an illuminated double-page frontispiece,7 all definitions that apply to most album prefaces. Referring specifically to the preface by Dust Muhammad, Adle concludes that translating dibâcha as “introduction,” rather than “preface,” would better express its function of introducing the album’s contents.8 But an analysis of the contextual relationship between prefaces and albums shows that the preface’s role varies considerably: some refer more specifically to the album’s contents than others. The preface does not always operate as a paraphrase or gloss on the album’s content; its role might be limited to the more abstract purpose of praising God, the Prophet Muhammad, the album recipient and maker, and the finished album.

Admittedly neither “introduction” nor “preface” in its current usage9 perfectly conveys

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4 Sultanov observes the alternatives for the conclusion to a written book—an epilogue (guft dar ikhtitām), a conclusion (khātimma), or supplement (tatimma, zayl). He notes that the ending “is not a summary of the work itself” and hence different from our understanding of a conclusion. T. I. Sultanov, “The Structure of Islamic History Book (The Method of Analysis)," Manuscripta Orientalia 1, 3 (December 1995): 16–21; esp. 20. For a general summary to the preface/introduction, see Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed. [henceforth EI2], s.v. “Mukaddima” (P. Freimark). Freimark discusses basic features of the preface, provides an overview of its history, and mentions some parallels with other non-Islamic prefatory traditions.

5 Additional terms include risāla and nāma in Dust Muhammad and ta’tīf in Shams al-Din Muhammad.

6 Sultanov (“Structure of Islamic History Book,” p. 16) notes that an introduction can be combined with a preface. He lists the topics addressed in the introduction, including information about the author, the objectives of composing the work, the methods used to do so, and in some histories, the theoretical principles of historical writing.


8 Adle adds that “introduction” is the more appropriate word in both its French and English senses (ibid., p. 249).

the function and form of these introductory texts. Ideally some neologism could be formed that would unite the senses of the two and convey the idea of alternating between the terms *dibācha* and *muqaddima* in the prefaces themselves. This interchangeability in terms is to be expected, perhaps, in a situation where a construct—the preface—developed originally for a written text was then used for a volume whose content was largely visual. The term “introduction” is not used here simply because its function today is so closely associated with providing historical background that aids comprehension and evaluation of the rest of the text. “Preface” has a greater range of meanings and does not suffer from the limitations of other potentially viable English terms, such as preamble, proem, or exordium. The preface served an introductory role: it presented its object, the album, that had come into being for a particular circumstance.

Ten prefaces written in Persian between the years 1491 and 1609, in Herat, Tabriz, Qazvin, Mashhad, and Bukhara, form the core of this book. Nine of them were composed during the first century of Safavid rule (r. 1501–1732 in Iran). They appear in the codex-format album (*muraqqa*), a bound collection of calligraphies, paintings, and drawings, arranged on pages and framed with margins of decorated papers. In producing the album, the compiler, who was often also the preface author, supervised the selection and preparation of materials, including their repair, resizing, reformatting and decoration with illumination, rulings, the addition of colored grounds, and their arrangement on the page. Sometimes the album’s patron was directly involved in its production, which in many respects paralleled the techniques used to make manuscripts. By the early sixteenth century, manuscripts were no longer conceived of as gatherings of single paper sheets, but rather as aggregates of pieces, each page a patchwork. The compiler usually assembled the album at the behest of a royal patron or a high-ranking courtier. When it was finished, members of the court formed an audience of arbiters, some of whom were also practitioners, who would gather to contemplate its contents—calligraphies, paintings, drawings, and illumination—and discuss them.

Although the majority of prefaces are to be found in Safavid-period albums, the earliest ones date from late-Timurid times (dynasty ruled 1370–1506). Beginning in the late fifteenth century and continuing throughout the sixteenth, calligraphers, librarians, and court functionaries compiled albums and wrote prefaces for them. While several prefaces were commissioned in tandem with the production of the album, some appear to have been written along with other “pattern” texts, for example, prefaces to collections of poetry and models of official and unofficial correspondence. They were then collected to make an *inshā* (lit.,

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11 Exordium: Lat., literally “the warp of a web,” used to refer to a part of a speech, an introduction (Cicero and Quintillian). Preamble: “1: an introductory part (as to a book, document) . . . specif: the introductory part of a statute, ordinance, or regulation . . . ” Proem: “1: a preliminary discourse to a longer piece of writing; 2: an introductory comment before a speech” (Webster’s Third New International Dictionary).
composition; epistolary art). Although the practice of writing prefaces for albums is attested in the late fifteenth century, the earliest known album to contain a preface dates from 1544–45.

Both album making and preface composition were also common practices at courts contemporary with the Safavids, the Ottomans and Mughals, as was the general practice of art historical–biographical writing. A preface composed by Muhammad Cenderecizade and copied by Haydar al-Husaynī (dated 1572–73, in Constantinople), accompanied an album for the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–95).12 Another, made for the Ottoman Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603–17), has a preface composed by Kalender Pasha (d. after 1614–15), the superintendent of construction (emīn-i bīnā) at the sultan’s new mosque in Istanbul.13 An art-historical text, also written in an Ottoman milieu, and one which takes second place only to Qāzī Ahmad in the frequency of its use in art historical scholarship, is Mustafā ‘Ali’s Menākbī hūnərverān (Books of Deeds of the Skillful) completed in 1587.14 It inspired numerous later biographical works.15

Several prefaces in Mughal albums are recorded.16 Two of the most famous albums, the Muraqqā-i Gulståsn and the Muraqqā-i Gūlsḥan, dating from the reign of the emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–27), each contains a preface. Mawlana Muhammad Husayn Kashmiri composed both.17 The Muraqqā-i Shāhī, assembled for Jahangir, has a preface composed by Abu al-Fażl Nurūg ‘Allamī,18 and an album for Shahdūkt Žayb al-Nīsā Begüm, a daughter of Awrangzeb (r. 1658–1707) has one by Mulla Muhammad Rīzā Rashīd Dīhlavī.19 In the beginning pages of the so-called Kevorkian album, ordered by Jahangir but added to as

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13 Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi [henceforth TSK], B. 408. The preface is unpublished. Kalender Pasha also composed a Fā’il-nāma that he dedicated to Sultan Ahmed I (TSK H. 1703). He became a vizier on 2 Shawwal 1023 (5 November 1614) replacing Ağa Yusuf Pasha. Kalender Pasha had been assistant treasurer before his appointment as superintendent of construction for the new mosque on the Hippodrome. See Mustafā Na’mā, Tārīh-i Na’mā, 6 vols. (Istanbul, 1864–66), 2:131. I thank András Riedlmayer for this reference.
15 Among the earliest works to make use of the Ottoman sources, including Nefeszāde (Gülzār-ul-sevāb, between 1623 and 1640) and Mustakimzade (Tuhyfe-i haftātın, 1759), is Cl. Huart, Les calligraphes et les miniaturistes de l’Orient musulman (Paris: Ernst Leroux, 1908).
19 Information about the preface is provided by Dānishpazhūh, “Muraqqā’sāzī va jung nivişī,” pp. 211–12.
late as the reign of Awrangzeb, the preface for a treatise on calligraphy by Mir ‘Ali is found enframed in luxurious illuminated margins.\textsuperscript{20} The Mughals also produced a considerable biographical literature which supplies many references to practitioners of the arts.

While comparison of these Ottoman and Mughal album prefaces to the Safavid examples can be instructive, their art traditions followed a different aesthetic path and developed into distinct regional traditions. Local factors resulted in stylistic hybrids; indeed, visual styles were deliberately forged to distinguish one dynastic group from its neighbor, a process of self-definition analogous to corporate identity that often had political and overtly ideological purposes. Although the great art traditions of the Safavids, Ottomans, and Mughals shared common roots (e.g., the early history of calligraphy), similar practices and media, and peripatetic practitioners who effected a measure of continuity across the three traditions, each grew more distant from the others as time passed. Comparisons of the art historiographic literature are tempting especially because they share a courtly language and common literary practices. But this book sets out to study preface composition in the first century of Safavid rule to lay a foundation for further exploration of connections between the written sources and the images, traditions, and practices. Wider comparisons are beyond its scope. Also beyond its scope is a detailed analysis of prefaces in relation to the specific contents of each album, a project I hope to deal with in another book.

PRIORITIES AND PERCEPTIONS IN THE STUDY OF SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PERSIAN ART HISTORIOGRAPHY

Even at its earliest stages, the study of Persianate painting, drawing, and calligraphy used a panoply of written sources, like Qazi Ahmad’s \textit{Gulist-i hunar},\textsuperscript{21} drawn from different literary genres and semantic contexts. The approach taken was to ignore their differences and assume that they contained documentary evidence essential to the identification of the canon of practitioners. Without attending to the literary aspects of the texts or other factors that may have shaped them, historians of art mined them for biographical elements in the hope of producing a historical construction. Textual criticism was not given priority. More pressing was the goal of reconstructing the practitioners’ landscape, to delineate its borders, identify its centers and schools, and assess the roles played by its patrons. The larger objective was to narrate a history of artistic development from the study of material evidence, in which the role of schools in centers of production (e.g., Baghdad, Herat, Tabriz, Shiraz),

\textsuperscript{20} See Stuart Cary Welch, Annemarie Schimmel, Marie L. Swietochowski, and Wheeler M. Thackston, \textit{The Emperor’s Album} (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), pp. 84–85, trans. on p. 91. That the album began with a treatise by the calligrapher is not surprising given that virtually every calligraphic specimen in the album is copied by him (or by his students and signed with his name). A synopsis of the album’s history is provided in ibid., pp. 11–30.

\textsuperscript{21} Among the texts made available in early studies were Dust Muhammad’s preface to the Bahram Mirza album and biographical passages on painters from Muhammad Haydar Dughlat’s \textit{Tārīkh-i rashidi} (after 1541) (Laurence Binyon, J. V. S. Wilkinson, and B. Gray, \textit{Persian Miniature Painting} [London: Oxford University Press, 1933], apps. 1 and 2; and Khvandamir/Amini’s preface to an album compiled by Bihzad (Thomas W. Arnold, \textit{Painting in Islam: A Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture} [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1965], pp. 35–37). Mughal historical sources were available in translation slightly earlier, as were excerpts from Turkish and Arabic texts on calligraphy (see Huart, \textit{Les calligraphes et les miniaturistes de l’Orient musulman}).
and an artist’s oeuvre could be determined and constantly refined. Basically, scholars were preoccupied with questions of attribution and provenance.

The value of primary sources for this methodology resides in their potential for historical reconstruction and for further refining the classification of material. Scholars view the texts as transparent, offering themselves to interpretation as a form of objective documentation in which personal motives—one critical factor among others that could affect the shape and contents of a text—did not enter into the process of writing. A variety of historical, cultural, literary, and physical dimensions are not considered. A good example is the treatment meted out to the preface in the Bahram Mirza album completed in 951 (1544–45) by Dust Muhammad. For scholars of Persianate painting, this preface is useful for the construction of a history of calligraphy and painting. Scholars have adopted Dust Muhammad’s narrative prima facie, and it has long since become the locus classicus for the history of Persianate painting. It is regarded as accurate in its sequence of art historical events, patron-artist relationships, and shifts in praxis and aesthetics, in part because it was one of only a few texts available to scholars in the early stages of the study of Persianate painting. As a result his narrative has in large part been reproduced in modern scholarship. The clarity of Dust Muhammad’s references to books commissioned by princely patrons also tempted scholars to identify them among extant manuscripts and to place these into the taxonomy of Persianate painting.

The emergence in recent years of many other sources has made it clear, however, that
Dust Muhammad was not the first to take up the practice of recording an art historical tradition; it predated him by some thirty years in a variety of texts. Extensive references to practitioners, patrons, and techniques are found in such disparate sources as biographies, collections of poetry, and histories, and in technical treatises that include advice as how to select and trim the reed pen, shape letters, make ink, and select and tint paper.27

It seems clear, then, that Dust Muhammad’s narrative could be replaced by others, for he was only one of several people engaged in writing a history of art and his understanding of that history developed from the sources that he had available to him: communications from his peers (critics and practitioners), a variety of written sources including histories, biographies, and poetic texts,28 and what remained of the art itself, either collected in royal libraries or distributed and exchanged by peripatetic artists seeking patronage in the courts of Central Asia, Iran, India, and Turkey.29 This last category is perhaps the most important because it provided the author of the preface with subjective judgment beyond the conventional received wisdom of his time, and was the source of variations between Dust Muhammad’s narrative and those composed by other authors.30 He composed his history of art by selecting from his sources and describing particular royal courts with their patrons and practitioners.

In writing his history Dust Muhammad had certain objectives in mind that gave his art historical conception its particular shape. His text was not a comprehensive listing of practitioners—if this had been his objective there are some notable absences—and certain

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28 In the preface he alludes to unnamed historians and biographers to support his contention that calligraphy originated with Adam; on Daniel as the originator of portraiture he invokes “the writings of the great”; on ancient painters he refers to the Khamsas of “several great [poets],” no doubt referring to Nizami and Amir Khusraw Dihlavi. Traditions on the origin of writing long precede Dust Muhammad, although it is not possible to identify the specific traditions that he drew on with greater precision. For example, Ibn al-Nadim cites a tradition attributed to Ka'b al-Ahbar who stated that the first “to originate Arabic and Persian script and other forms of writing was Adam.” Ibn al-Nadim adds that he wrote on baked clay. See Ibn al-Nadim, The Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadim: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge, 2 vols. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970), 1:7.

29 Dust Muhammad notes that during the reign of Sultan Husayn Mirza (r. 1470–1506) three fourteenth-century illustrated manuscripts with paintings by Ahmad Musa were in the Timurid sultan’s library. The existence of these manuscripts could have been reported to him, or Sultan Husayn Mirza’s ownership of them may have been recorded by notes and seals added to the endpapers of the manuscripts. Dust Muhammad would have culled the information from his examination of the volumes in the Safavid royal library. Among the manuscripts were a Mīrāj-nāma and a Kaftāla va Dimna. Paintings from the former are probably to be identified with those included in Bahram Mirza’s 1544–45 album. This would confirm the theory that Dust Muhammad’s historiographic method involved an examination of material artifacts. The second manuscript, a Kaftāla va Dimna, may be identified with the paintings mounted in a Safavid album compiled for Shah Tahmasp (IUL, F. 1422), most likely a few years later.

30 Dust Muhammad’s definition of the “six masters,” or the students of Yaqut, for example, differs from that of other historians.
metropolitan traditions of bookmaking, analyzed in modern scholarship and accorded great significance, are ignored by him. This is one way in which Dust Muhammad’s preface might be understood as canon-forming. Other factors that may have caused the particular inflections of Dust Muhammad’s preface include its relationship to the album proper and his synoptic view of a history of art from a Safavid setting. Unlike several other preface writers, one of Dust Muhammad’s central aims was to link Safavid practices of nastā’īq and depiction to their origins in the fourteenth century. A series of lengthy stories and anecdotes in Dust Muhammad’s preface are unparalleled in any other preface. All of these dimensions constitute a caveat against treating the preface as normative, untouched by personal concerns or contextually induced factors.

Subsequent art historical research has continued to fill out the history of the Persianate art tradition, making necessary adjustments along the way in the face of an expanding corpus of objects and information. But several subjects have not yet been pursued. One is the examination of the language used to describe the objects, media, practitioners, and qualitative achievements of the art tradition. Related to it is the language of judgment, an untapped medium for understanding criteria used for criticism and evaluation. Yet another concerns the analysis of texts as sources of artistic theories by which we might analyze ways of thinking about and seeing art if the study of Persianate visual culture is ever to escape from the strictures of certain forms of analysis (stylistic, taxonomic) and categorization (illustration, decoration).

The reception of Qazi Ahmad’s Gulistān-i hunar is indicative of these priorities and approaches. Belying the text’s reception, however, are two opposing trends that have run through the early study of Persianate painting and the arts of the book. In the first current, Qazi Ahmad’s Gulistān-i hunar, such texts as Dust Muhammad’s album preface, and references to practitioners in historical and biographical works from the late fifteenth century onward were read in a particular way. References to individual practitioners and patrons seemed to offer a cross-cultural parallel to the paradigm of Western art, especially of the Renaissance. In this model of Persianate art, aspects of the tradition’s distinctiveness were overridden to harmonize it with its European counterpart. Market forces and the concern to champion this tradition and thus make it equal to the Western one played a role in a formation that was designed to claim similarity.

The second trend was to try to define the aesthetics of Persianate painting as different. Insofar as painting remained confined to the book, it was diminished in value. Unlike the European developmental model in which painting traversed manuscript illustration to panel and then to oil painting and could be interpreted as the successive refinement of representational techniques from medium to medium, the Persianate tradition appeared to be bound up in a medium and context that was frozen in time—it would be medieval forever. The aesthetics of the Persianate painting articulated through opposition to the Western

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31 Such a study faces some serious problems because the relationship between certain adjectives and the features or qualities of the artwork they describe can seem obscure and esoteric to the modern reader. In his discussion about the criticism of calligraphy, Grabar pointed to the problematic nature of the various primary texts that might be enlisted to reconstruct the language of judgment used by the culture that produced the art. Grabar identified five themes that emerged from a group of critical texts spanning a long chronological period. See Oleg Grabar, The Mediation of Ornament (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), chap. 2, esp. pp. 83–92.

32 For references to these comparisons, see David J. Roxburgh, “Kamal al-Din Bizhad and Authorship in Persianate Painting,” *Mugarnas* 17 (2000): 119–46; esp. 119 and n. 9.
teleology of visual problem-solving and its formal priorities was defined as merely decorative, no different from ceramics, metalwork, glass, ivories, carpets and textiles. The objective in scholarship was to emphasize common aesthetic features of media as part of a larger effort to define what was particular to Islamic art.

One of the many benefits of studying primary sources lies in its potential to challenge, reshape, and perhaps eventually corroborate the cross-cultural paradigms and methodologies that have been applied, more often than not without questioning, to Persianate painting in general and the arts of the book in particular. Before detailing the manifold possibilities offered by a sustained scrutiny of the preface, it is important to lay out some of the perceptions and general notions that have blocked certain approaches to the study of texts. The power of such a perception is suggested by the absence of an interpretative literature or historical study about the written sources, either of separate genres or collectively. Because many preconceptions about the written sources are so deeply rooted, it is important to explain their history and foundation.

Research on the album preface and its historical context has turned up a number of written sources that have, by and large, evaded the attention both of scholars and a wider audience. Certainly still other written sources will be uncovered as manuscript cataloguing continues apace and scholars make a greater effort to cast their nets more widely and in less familiar waters. In the meantime it would be imprudent to claim comprehensive coverage based on the temporal and geographical parameters defined by the prefaces discussed in this book.

Scholars may have been deterred from analyzing the texts because of two deeply embedded notions that are quite alive in scholarship today. The first is that the Persianate art tradition’s textual corpus is scanty, especially when compared with the mass of European and Chinese art-historiographic literature. As Robert Hillenbrand puts it, “Dust Muhammad, the prime literary source for the latter art [viz., painting], is a very poor exchange for Vasari.” The second notion is that composing art historical texts was a short-lived and restricted activity. In 1918, Edgard Blochet asserted, “In fact, Persian connoisseurs, no less than European collectors, did not know the names of artists other than those transmitted in the literary

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33 An important aspect of the training and socialization of the homo academicus concerns the institutional framework in which his research practices occur. As a kind of disciplinary heritage, scholars tend to limit their activities to clusters of institutions where earlier generations of similar scholars have worked.

34 At an advanced date in research another sixteenth-century album preface turned up. It is by Mawlana Muhammad Mirak Salih-i Mashhadi, a grandson of Murvarid. He worked in the chancellery (divān-i inshā‘) under Shah Tahmasp. The preface survives in an anthology (jung) of Khatunabadi. An edition, based on a recension in Tehran (Kitabkhana-yi Milli no. 3849, fols. 229–30), was published by Dānishpazhīh, “Muraqqa‘ sāzī va jung nivīsī,” pp. 191–94.

35 There is considerable reference material for European and Chinese art literatures in addition to synthetic investigations of major themes and problems. See, for example, Julius von Schlosser, Die Kunstliteratur (Vienna, 1924); and Moshe Barasch, Theories of Art: From Plato to Winckelmann (New York and London: New York University Press, 1985).


37 Discussing art collecting, art history and the art market, for what he terms the “Islamic art tradition,” Joseph Alsp remarked on the “transition from an almost wholly anonymous though very great art to an art with many remembered artists,” and that “this transition occurred in Islamic art, although surprisingly late and in a relatively limited way” Joseph Alsp, The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and Its Linked Phenomena Wherever These Have Appeared [London: Thames and Hudson, 1982], p. 253). Although Alsp’s main reference was to an increased number of remembered masters, it necessarily depends on the “linked phenomena” of an art historical consciousness and writing about a history of art and its practitioners.
tradition of the *Habib al-siyar* and the ‘Alamārā-yi ‘Abbāsī, no painter except for those artists whose masterworks ranged between 1470 and 1540.’

Referring to the histories by Khvandamir and Iskandar Beg Munshi, Blochet combines the notions of brief chronology and paucity of information on references to artists and a history of art. Early scholars like Blochet faced tough problems, given the limited resources available to them, but it is surprising that many of their notions should have retained currency until now.

The perception that the written record on calligraphy and depiction is meager also held sway until quite recently in the study of Islamic architecture, but is now constantly being challenged. Three of the album prefaces, for example, are not known through the albums but through *inshā*, manuals of exemplary texts compiled as reference works for epistolary composition. The *inshā* provided models for various texts and instruction in matters of etiquette, rhetoric, and language. Usually short technical treatises are found in collections of texts often referred to as *majmūʿa*. *Insḥā* and *majmūʿa* typically do not have tables of contents, and they constitute such a massive number of manuscripts that cataloging even a fraction of them in any given library would be a daunting task. It is often pure serendipity that leads to the discovery of the written sources buried in them.

Throughout the twentieth century, however, significant efforts were made to compile lists of written sources important to the study of Persianate painting and the arts of the book, even if the intention of making each source available in transcription and translation has not followed. Making critical editions of those sources that appear in multiple recensions still remains to be accomplished, and for unique autographs—as the majority of album prefaces are—published versions often contain errors in reading or intentional omissions.

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40 Indispensable lists of Persian written sources for the study of the arts of the book, calligraphy and painting, composed in the pre-modern and modern periods were compiled by Dānishpazhūhī, “Sar guzasht-i nāmahā-yi khushnivās va hunarmandān”; idem, “Muraqqā’ sāzī va jung nivās”; idem, “Dābirī va nivisandāgī,” *Hunar va Mardum* nos. 101–6 and 109–18 (March 1971–August 1972); idem, “Gulzār-i saftā Shyraft,” *Hunar va Mardum* 93 (1349): 30–42; esp. pp. 30–32; Habibi, “Literary Sources for the History of the Arts of the Book in Central Asia”; and Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Study* 1:2, “N. Biography: (d) Calligraphists and Painters”; and ibid., 2:3, “G. Arts and Crafts, (d) Calligraphy.” A collection of Persian written sources was compiled by Najib Māyīl Haravī (*Kūtub ūrā’i dar tumudān-i islāmī* [ Mashhad: Astān-i Quds Razāvī, 1372/1993]). In his encyclopedic work on calligraphers, Mahdī Bayānī did not fail to mention primary texts composed by the calligraphers (*Afsāl va āfār*), Studies on individual written sources and their authors are too extensive to list here, but many are referred to in the above-mentioned articles and books. A rare exception is Qazi Ahmad’s *Gulstān-i hunar*, translated with annotations by Minorsky and a Persian edition published by Khvansari. A fairly extensive critical literature has developed from these two resources.

41 A rare exception is Qazi Ahmad’s *Gulstān-i hunar*, translated with annotations by Minorsky and a Persian edition published by Khvansari. A fairly extensive critical literature has developed from these two resources.

42 Work still remains to be done on such a well-known and published text as Qazi Ahmad’s *Gulstān-i hunar*. Recently, Porter studied an autograph manuscript of which Minorsky was unaware. See Yves Porter, “Notes sur le ‘Golestan-e Honar’ de Qazi Ahmad Qomi,” *Studia Iranica* 17 (1988): 207–33. For biographical details about Qazi Ahmad, see Ehsan Echrazi, “Le Kholāsat al-Tawārikh de Qāzi Ahmad connu sous le nom de Mir Monshi,” *Studia Iranica* 4 (1975): 73–89.
with or without indication. Transcription is often a selective process, with some passages privileged over others as being more significant in content—poetry or lengthy titles are routinely omitted, for example. Rarely are sources accompanied by a critical apparatus or commentary.

Most worrisome about the perception that the corpus of written sources is sparse, however, is the supposition that the lack of sources indicates an absence of a habit of thought. When the perceptions of paucity and restricted duration are combined with disappointment, the result is overreliance on a few written sources—Dust Muhammad’s preface and Qazi Ahmad’s *Gulistan-i hunar*—over others because they match most closely the priorities and expectations of modern scholarship, including content that meets the modern criteria of usefulness and a mode of literary expression that suggests a truthful representation of historical events and an explication of cultural values and aesthetics.

Another aspect of written sources that precludes their analysis and interpretation is the language used by their authors. Considered verbose and hyperbolic, overly embellished in rhetorical expression and strewn with complex, amphibologous words (words with several different meanings) and tropes, the Persian language got in the way and led to two polarized approaches. The first was to dismiss the texts as hollow statements. Thus we encounter such assessments of the prefaces as “high-flown gush,” where form is the content. Because the author’s sole interest seems to be a demonstration of literary prowess and technical virtuosity, meaning is thought to reside entirely in the text’s form (i.e., what is said is secondary to how it is said). The critical reception of sixteenth-century written sources is an extension of the general attitude toward Persian literature of the period: much of modern scholarly literature involves the critical appraisal of individual authors, their work, and the definition of literary trends, but many of these judgments have little or nothing to do with the values and priorities of the Persian literary tradition of the time, and in assessing its literary merits, features like originality, the substance of images, and psychological dimensions of poetry, all values consonant with European literature or defined by relationship to it, tend to be favored.

The second approach is the opposite extreme of neglecting form—defined here as all aspects of the literary complex, including structure, language, rhetorical framework, and themes—in order to isolate content. This has produced a reductive attitude toward the array of textual sources, leading to a literal reading of figural texts like those by Qazi Ahmad and Dust Muhammad, assuming them to be purveyors of factual information. But even those using this second approach find the written sources inadequate and lament the nature of their content which results from the confluence of an author’s choices and the practices

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43 Thus, in an essay on criticism under the subsection on Islam, Gabrieli writes: “Even in an age in which art had such popularity and refinement, this tentative criticism lacked an adequate theoretical basis,” *Encyclopedia of World Art* (New York, Toronto, and London: McGraw-Hill Book Co. Ltd., 1961), s.p. “Criticism” (Francesco Gabrieli), 4:143. The age he refers to is the sixteenth century of the Safavids, Mughals, and Ottomans.

44 Discussing the theories of Dust Muhammad, Qazi Ahmad, and Mustafa ‘Ali on the origin of painting, Rogers writes, “But these are *ex post facto* justifications, if that, and little better anyway than high-flown gush” (Filiz Çağman and Zeren Tanmuth, trans., edited and expanded by J. M. Rogers, *The Topkapı Saray Museum: The Albums and Illustrated Manuscripts* [Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1986], p. 23).

45 In her study of late-fifteenth-century poetry and its increasing focus on technical embellishment, Subtelny agrees with Rypka’s assessment that it resulted in “the culture of the word and form over content,” but she concludes, “One can hardly expect from this literature something that it was never originally intended to provide” (Maria E. Subtelny, “A Taste for the Intricate: The Persian Poetry of the Late Timurid Period,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 136, 1 [1986]: 56–79; 78).
of a literary tradition that exert their own momentum. Thus, B. W. Robinson writes:

One deplores the scarcity and often the unsatisfactory nature of the literary sources. Why could not the Persians record their artists and craftsmen as meticulously as the Japanese who have, for example, a dictionary of swordsmiths covering ten centuries and containing twelve thousand names, each provided with date, family, school, locality, signature, and characteristics.46

A frustration with language is transformed here into a regret about content: the Persian authors rarely record what one would have hoped or wished for. Aspects of the Persian language in which the texts are written only exacerbates this complaint about inadequacy of content. Rather than try to understand what was relevant to the authors, an anachronistic search for our own modes of thought ensues.

The Persian literary complex is so nuanced and challenging that it often defies easy comprehension. Multiple meanings of many passages are possible—especially in poetry—and the complete explication of alternate readings, cultural allusions, and images would require a lengthy gloss. The puns employed by authors, the inherent ambiguity of some words, and the easy slippage from one image into another yielding a sequence of diverse referents from single signifiers produce a textual structure that operates on numerous levels and that defies interpretative closure. This very feature only brings home the realization yet again that historical analysis of the written source must also attend to its literary dimensions and practices.

These responses stem from comparisons to the art literatures of other traditions, the seeming abyss that divides scholarly objectives from textual realities, and the implicit construction of culturally defining characteristics according to a framework of opposition. Embodying all three is Nabil Safwat’s characterization of the Ottoman calligrapher Mustakimzade’s Ṭuhfe-i ḥattatān (Gift of the Scribes, 1759); “Müstakîm-zade writes with simple, unpretentious scholarship, free from jargon, and with remarkable clarity; the sympathetic manner in which he integrates anecdotes, poems and biographical detail into a comprehensive history of Islamic calligraphy makes him an Ottoman Vasari, as it were.”47 Writing later in the tradition, Mustaqimzade comes closest to Giorgio Vasari because he is comprehensive and his language is seemingly original, free from the conventions of Persian literary practice. The subtext is that his biographies of calligraphers are of great use as a source and neatly intersect with the interests and priorities of the historian of art. Qazi Ahmad and Dust Muhammad might have been accorded the same comparison had they written in a different literary mode.

It is obvious that Persian art historical sources suffer from comparison to sources from other, especially European, art traditions.48 But not one of these comparisons is supported

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48 In his overview of sources available for the study of architecture, Hillenbrand (in *Islamic Architecture*, pp. 26–30) focuses on their documentary dimension, and the potential of the texts to help modern scholars understand lost buildings and architectural traditions. Although he notes that “literary sources on the whole provide a disappointingly meagre range of information on medieval buildings” (ibid., p. 26), he also remarks on the massive range of references in K. A. C. Creswell’s study of Islamic architecture. But the sources are still found to be wanting, especially compared to such writers as Alberti (ibid., p. 28), and Islam lacks the “invaluable and endlessly revealing sketchbook” of a figure like Villard d’Honnecourt (ibid., p. 27). By way of a concluding remark, he writes: “The collation of such scraps of information certainly helps to establish major trends, such
by a detailed analysis, and the comparisons require careful definition so that similarities and differences between discrete art traditions and the literatures that accompanied them are clearly articulated. Indeed, the various art historiographic traditions differ in significant details and concepts, but there are also many intriguing parallels.

Perhaps the strongest disabling force is the opposition between literal and figural writing, e.g., between Vasari and Dust Muhammad. This opposition begins with how meaning is constituted in a text—that is, the text’s literariness and its rhetorical formation—and is then extended to encompass what is judged to be significant content, the presence of description and its nature, and the scope and comprehensiveness of the text. Of course, the two traditions are not truly in opposition; the texts by Dust Muhammad and Vasari each use both literal and figurative forms of discourse. One of the greatest sources of criticism lies in the idea that the Persian written source is entirely figurative.

This opposition between literal and figurative discourse has long since been challenged in other disciplines. The study of historiography has responded to literary theory and to its new ideas about literariness. On this very subject Hayden White observes:

It is now possible to recognize that in realistic, no less than in imaginary, discourse, language is both a form and a content and that this linguistic content must be counted among the other kinds of content (factual, conceptual, and generic) that make up the total content of the discourse as a whole. This recognition liberates historiographical criticism from fidelity to an impossible literalism and permits the analyst of historical discourse to perceive the extent to which it constructs its subject matter in the very process of speaking about it. The notion of the content of linguistic form scumbles the distinction between literal and figurative discourses and authorizes a search for and analysis of the function of the figurative elements in historiographical, no less than fictional, prose.

as the continued existence of fire temples in Fars in early Islamic times... At the risk of labouring the point, however, it must be repeated that the material is so scanty that it is inherently inadequate as a reliable guide to what has gone forever...” (ibid., p. 26). Sources like vaqf-nāmas are given emphasis over the references to buildings occurring in historical works.


In numerous studies, Barolsky has examined the literary dimensions of Vasari’s Lives and notes that the approach to this work “still exaggerates the utility of the Vite as a source of historical information at the expense of its poetry” (Paul Barolsky, “The Trick of Art,” in Vasari’s Florence: Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court, ed. Philip Jacks [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], pp. 23–29, p. 28). For the manipulation of biographical profiles into typological frameworks, see idem, “Vasari’s ‘Portrait’ of Raphael,” in Raphael and the Ruins of Rome: The Poetic Dimension, exhib. cat. (Urbana-Champaign, Ill.: Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 1983), pp. 25–33.

White’s principal interests lie in the nature of historical discourse and the claims to truth granted to certain forms of literary representation, hence the subtitle of his book “mimesis effect.” It is part of an interest he and others have long had in one of the central problems of history, namely its origin in rhetoric and the notion that history could free itself from the subjectivity of language. Nancy Partner put it thus: “Among the genres of serious literature, history . . . continued the longest in unself-conscious and serene oblivion to the treason within—which is, that it is made of words.” What White points to in his recent work on figural realism has relevance for the opposition forged between European and Persian written sources because it diminishes the tight distinction that is drawn between the two. Moreover, it also undoes the foundation of the comparison by showing that narrative, the most privileged of discursive modes (and attributed to Vasari but not to Dust Muhammad), falls subject to the same principles as other forms of discourse. Hence narrative only appears to be doubly literal in its content and form.

When we turn to Persian literature, and to the preface in particular, figurative discourse predominates even in those passages of text that refer to specific experiences and judgments. They are organized linguistically as non-particular and always tend to the formation of absolutes. Tropology—that is, a theory of figures of speech and of thought—dominates Persian literature. The response to the trope in particular is to understand it as a normative linguistic habit that by its ubiquity loses the power to convey originality of experience or of thought. Describing this literary phenomenon as an analogical mode, Julie Scott Meisami has argued for the power of the trope in Persian literature, of how metaphor transcends itself by becoming allegory (the result of extended metaphors), a powerful device for human comprehension. She writes, “Metaphor transcends the status of a trope to become a ‘consistent means for signifying the inner substance of things,’ in a world in which ‘everything is a figure,’ a sign testifying to the unified, and unifying order of creation.”

We encounter a rhetorical mode of discourse that uses tropes to organize modes of perception, how experience becomes knowledge, or a means of accommodating the poetic in historical writing that was so well understood by Vico. It is clear that such linguistic

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53 Ibid., pp. 27–28.
54 For an expanded discussion about the role of narrativity in the representation of reality, see Hayden White, The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), chap. 1.
55 Some historians of art fully accept the trope’s ability to have meaning but grant it primacy in its initial usage. Its subsequent use in the literary tradition diminishes its value by virtue of repetition. Discussing the relationship between art and eloquence in Byzantium, for example, Maguire notes how rhetorical structures were useful during the iconoclastic controversy and how the concepts about art “lived on as a literary conceit,” and that by the twelfth century had “lost much of its force in polemic, but lived on as a convention in Byzantine literature” (Henry Maguire, Art and Eloquence in Byzantium [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981], pp. 11-12). On the Islamic tradition, Gabrieli writes: “But these descriptions are no more than intimations of esthetic criteria; conforming to the general conventions of the time, they often degenerate into affected conceits and maxims and thus they reveal no body of principles such as might be said to constitute an aesthetic” (Encyclopedia of World Art, s.v. “Esthetics” [Francesco Gabrieli], 5:59).
elements as the trope functioned in the preface’s rhetorical scheme to define value and to program the reader’s response to the album and its contents. The album and its preface were concerned with exemplarity; as we will see, the prefaces reveal that one of the album’s cultural values lay in its collecting together the works of high-standing, morally perfected practitioners. Perhaps in this way, the rhetoric of the Persian tradition extended to the preface continued the classical, specifically Ciceronian, definition of rhetoric as “speech designed to persuade” comparable to Augustine’s idea that the value of rhetoric lay in its power to induce action.58

APPROACHES AND METHODS IN LITERARY STUDY

Before proceeding with the study of the album preface, some additional words about working definitions and assumptions need to be said, particularly as they obtain to the literariness of the prefaces and the discursive tradition in which they developed. As in other domains of cultural practice, practitioners were intimately aware of the efforts of their peers. The later recopying of prefaces by Murvarid and Qutb al-Din Muhammad offers examples of the album preface writer’s cultural memory. The strong elements of continuity across the array of extant prefaces is easily explained by the relatively circumscribed group of authors, who were more cognizant of their cultural history than previously acknowledged. Two forms of intertextuality are also evidence of the authors’ knowledge of, and participation in, a literary tradition.59 The first is the rather crude use of texts *grosso modo* composed by other authors; sometimes textual segments were split apart and put into a new order in addition to the substitution of occasional words and phrases and the reordering of poetic hemistiches. The second form of intertextuality is represented by recurring themes, quotations from the Koran and hadith (tradition), and images and metaphors cast in slightly varied turns of phrase woven into the text. The latter were perhaps necessary allusions to earlier prefaces intended for the culturally informed reader.

Despite differences between individual prefaces and the thorny problem of whether or not the preface constitutes a genre unto itself, features of the album preface immediately inform the reader of what it is—he can make no mistake about its being a preface. Although unexplained in the sources, the album preface’s framework, language, and literary practice reveal that it was convention-bound and had to meet specific criteria of literary performance that were defined through precedent. The different forms of intertextuality indicate the requisite tradition-referencing in preface composition. In electing to compose a preface a particular


59 Some scholars have offered more restrictive definitions of intertextuality, discounting “thematic or generic kinship.” See Michael Riffaterre, “Textuality: W. H. Auden’s ‘Musée de Beaux Arts,’” in *Textual Analysis: Some Readers Reading*, ed. M. A. Caws (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1996), pp. 1–13; esp. 1–2. I thank Francisco Prado-Vilar for this reference. Riffaterre’s concern is the loose application of the term as a synonym for literary influence, but in the case of the Persian literary tradition, it is clear that at the levels of genre (understood here to involve themes) and in the use of metaphors writers often did consciously allude to other texts. Moreover, it would be hard in some instances to define the border between the generic and thematic and what Riffaterre defines as intertextuality, viz. “that form of reference experienced when the reader finds that a text presupposes another and that the latter provides the former with the means of interpreting it and of justifying its formal and semantic peculiarities” (ibid., pp. 1–2).
rhetorical complex was required, and the author’s place within this framework was established through the reworking of thematic elements and the use of a repertoire of language.

The creative process that led to the production of a preface is similar to that in other fields of artistic production. Characteristic of the Persianate literary complex, a tradition dominated by poetry with its established rules of meter, rhyme, and structure as well as its constellations of images, is a strong intertextuality and referencing of precedent. Poets were obliged to work in and through preexisting forms, as the rules of discrete genres circumscribed all creative activity, and they often chose consciously to re-cast images made by previous poets through a variety of imitative practices. Each work of prose or poetry occupied its place in a sequence of texts that ran backward and forward in time.

Parallel creative processes obtained in the arts of calligraphy and depiction. Calligraphers and artists also looked to past models throughout their working lives and not only in their formative years when models were used for the purposes of training, and in various ways their newly made works responded and alluded to the art of the past. It might even be accurate to say that the methods of creative conception and execution of calligraphy and depiction were as circumscribed as those of poetry, although this question has not been fully investigated. These fundamental principles and the performative aspect of the literary and visual traditions have more often than not attracted negative appraisal; viewed through a modernist lens they are criticized for excessive emphasis on ornament and lack of originality, as it is understood in a Western European, post-Romantic context. Rather than judge an

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60 One of the clearest and most concise introductions to these very aspects of Persian literature is by Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill, N.C., and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), esp. chaps. 1 and 2.


62 Inter medial correspondences between visual and literary art forms acquire particular visibility under the Timurids, and though this has been observed by several scholars, it is not entirely accepted by all of them. On this issue Rogers writes: “In Timurid culture parallels between literature and the different arts are now standard, though some of them are thoughtless and most are too vague to be significant” (J. Michael Rogers, “Centralisation and Timurid Creativity,” *Oriente Moderno* n. s. 15 [76], 2 [1996]: 533–50; esp. 542).


64 Although studies of Persian poetry generally acknowledge the impact that a defined corpus of images and the strict conventions of structure exerted on poetry, they did not prevent a criticism of these very features. See the excerpts from the separate studies of Browne, Gibb, and Rypka that are summarized in Subtelny,
art tradition for what it did not try to do, it would seem more appropriate to examine what it did do and to examine this aesthetic of familiarity, of repetition and perpetual return, of always already knowing.65 By so doing we might be in a better position to assess and define the nature of a viewer’s visual and verbal engagement with a work in the context of reception and parameters of judgment.

This book focuses on the album preface in sixteenth-century Iran when the practice of writing histories of art flourished. One of its objectives is to identify what may have given shape to its particular literary forms and the factors that prompted and sustained the habit. Regardless of the future discovery of now unknown texts and their addition to the corpus of what might broadly be referred to as art historiographic literature, at present all indications strongly suggest a critical mass of literature in the sixteenth century, particularly for the album preface. In this respect Blochet was not so far off the mark when he noted the density of references to practitioners between ca. 1470 and 1540. While the practices of recording the names of famous practitioners and of developing aesthetic criteria had emerged early on for the art of calligraphy, there are no comparable indications for the arts of depiction (painting and drawing). Nor is the evidence of a narrative history of practice in calligraphy as well as depiction until the early sixteenth century. In studying the prefaces, written sources are marshaled, including the manual or technical treatise and biographical notices (tazkira) about practitioners that are found in historical and biographical works,66 not only to examine those distinguishing features of the album preface but also to establish a variety of contexts for the practices of album making and preface composition. The primary objective of this book is to study the preface through a variety of approaches—historical, cultural, social, and intellectual. That said, a preface’s contextual relationship to the contents of its album is not a detailed subject of inquiry, although other forms of relationships are considered. The holistic examination of preface and album requires another optic and another book.


An exception is Subtelny’s article (“Taste for the Intricate”) on late Timurid poetry. She examines the criticism of Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i, ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami, and Dawlatshah Samarqandi of the “new style” (naw-ā’in) which they term takalluf. Takalluf involved the use of difficult meters, rhymes, and words, and the creation of unexpected, complex images. These three men, who flourished during the later Timurid period, voice criticism of features in contemporary poetics.

65 For the parallel feature of the ghazal, Losensky examined responses to a work composed by Baba Fighani. He concludes, “Read as a sequence, each poem serves to refine and deepen our reception of the others, as the implications and exact shade of meaning of each is made clear through contrast and comparison. The themes, imagery, and language of the ghazal were fixed in their essentials by the fifteenth century, and later poets had at their command a rich and precise means of artistic expression and communication” (Losensky, “Allusive Field of Drunkenness,” p. 255).

66 Some steps taken in the study of nomenclature have begun to develop a glossary of technical terms and to analyze artist’s materials and methods, the latter usually explored through questions of technological value and undertaken in the hope that tracking a given technique’s development would provide additional diagnostic markers in time and space. Notable among these studies is Porter, Peinture et arts du livre.
CHAPTER TWO

THE AUTHORS AND THEIR MILIEU

The hundred years or so (ca. 1491–1609) spanned by the album prefaces was one of great change in Iran and Central Asia. By the late fifteenth century the territories controlled by the descendants of Timur had dwindled to Khurasan and portions of Transoxiana. The long rule of the Timurid ruler Sultan Husayn Mirza (r. 1470–1506) had produced relative economic and political stability, conditions that allowed for generous patronage of architecture, the arts, and literary activities. 1 The Aqqoyunlu, or White Sheep Turkmen confederation, 2 based in the capitals Tabriz, Baghdad, and Shiraz, maintained control of western Iran. Ya’qub (r. 1478–90) and Rustam (r. 1493–97), renowned for their patronage, managed to attract talent away from the Timurid court in Herat. 3 By the early years of the sixteenth century, the Safavids would expand across these lands, uniting once again western and eastern Iran and synthesizing the traditions fostered and developed by the Timurid and Turkmen dynasties.

The Safavids had family ties to the Aqqoyunlu: the dynasty’s first shah, Isma’il, was a grandson of Uzun Hasan (r. 1453–78). But shifting loyalties among the Turkmen caused Ya’qub to be suspicious of the faction growing up around Haydar, leader of the Safavid Sufi order (the Safaviyya) based in Ardabil and founded by Shaykh Safi al-Din (d. 1334). Ya’qub called Haydar to the Aqqoyunlu court in Tabriz in 1486 and demanded he refrain from military acts and devote his attention to the spiritual leadership of his following. Two years later Haydar rebelled against Ya’qub’s directive and was killed; his three sons, Ali, Ibrahim and Isma’il, were imprisoned at Istakhr, but were freed in 1493. After ‘Ali had been executed by Rustam Aqqoyunlu, Isma’il was selected to become the new spiritual leader of the Safaviyya. Constant threats to Isma’il’s safety caused him to seek refuge at the court of Mirza ‘Ali Karkiya in Lahijan on the Caspian shore, where he stayed between 1494 and 1499. In 1500, he emerged once more to embark on a series of campaigns to avenge his brothers’ and ancestors’ deaths, supported by Turkmen of Azarbayjan and Anatolia who had become estranged from the Aqqoyunlu during Ya’qub’s rule. Isma’il first marched on the town of Shamakha where he dispatched the Shirvanshah ruler Farrukh Yasar, and then turned south to take Tabriz and bring the Aqqoyunlu line to its virtual end. In disarray, the Aqqoyunlu were no match for Isma’il’s Qizilbash forces. Now in control of Azarbayjan, Isma’il was crowned in Tabriz in 1501. Other victories quickly followed. By 1503, he ruled Fars, Persian Iraq, Kirman and Khuzistan, all territories formerly held

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3 For a synopsis of court culture under Ya’qub Beg, see ibid., chap. 5.
Changes in the early-sixteenth-century political landscape were not limited to the Safavid expansion and its absorption of Aqqoyunlu territories. The Uzbeks, based in Transoxiana, took advantage of the power vacuum caused by the death of Sultan Husayn Mirza in 1506. Although seven of his fourteen sons survived him, in seven or eight years only one would remain. All were willing to acknowledge Badi’ al-Zaman Mirza as his successor, but Muzzaffar Husayn Mirza became joint ruler through the support of his mother Khadija Beg Aqa. The joint rule of Herat and the province of Khurasan failed when the Uzbek ruler Muhammad Shaybani Khan invaded on 1 Muharram 913 (13 May 1507), and subsequent Uzbek attacks resulted in the deaths of three more Timurid princes. In the next year Badi’ al-Zaman Mirza was expelled from Astarabad, fled to India and then, in 1509–10, to Shah Isma’il’s court. He ended up in Istanbul where he too died. The Safavids, responding to the threat on their eastern border, set out for Khurasan in 1510; they conquered it, and the occupation of Iran was now complete. In 1511, Shah Isma’il committed forces to help Babur recapture Samarqand, perhaps with the hope of establishing a friendly buffer zone between Khurasan and those areas of Transoxiana beyond Samarqand.

During this period of uncertainty and political change—between the fall of the house of Timur and the rise of the Safaviyya—continuity was maintained by the members of the bureaucratic and religious classes who oversaw the operation of the state. The earliest known authors of prefaces—Murvarid, Khvandamir, and Amini—all served Timurid masters and occupied positions at court. As highly educated and erudite individuals, they also participated in its cultural activities. As notables, their unique combination of prestigious descent and talent made them desirable allies in the eyes of the newly established political elite. Some decided to retain their positions at court under the new Safavid or Uzbek regimes, while others withdrew from public life.

The other preface authors, who were known principally as calligraphers, reached maturity after all these tumultuous political changes and events of the first three decades of the sixteenth century had already occurred. The absence of prefaces and albums until ca. 1544, and their appearance after that time can be explained in part by the political situation in Iran and Central Asia. Although artistic output does not always follow the ups and downs of political upheaval and stability, the book represents a relatively modest outlay of funds that, unlike significant building projects, could withstand political vicissitudes and economic strain.

Two years after Shah Isma’il’s final conquest of Iran in 1510, Herat was retaken by the Uzbeks, precipitating an economic crisis in the city and its environs. In 1512, a caravan...
of some five hundred littérateurs, poets, and artists left Herat having received permission from the Safavid governor of the city. A poet named Vasifi went to Tashkent where he worked for the Uzbek Kildi Muhammad. Bukhara, another center of Uzbek patronage, received a major injection of Herati talent under Muhammad Shaybani Khan, though the height of its assimilation of Timurid culture took place somewhat later, in the time of Ubayd Allah Khan (r. 1534–39). This exodus of figures is attributable both to material conditions and to the tentative adoption and promotion of culture by the Safavid qizilbash. It dramatizes the process by which practitioners sought out optimum conditions from among a rival network of patrons and courts. The disbanding of a major court like Herat’s led to the redistribution of talent in many centers. Only a strong central sponsor, a leading patron, and his satellite courtly circle could provide the impetus needed for these talents to coalesce into a new metropolitan center. That impetus would be provided by the person of Shah Tahmasp.

The Safavids managed to reclaim Herat from the Uzbeks in 1513, but conditions were far from stable: the Uzbeks besieged the city in 1520 and again in 1523. Herat was critical for the transition to Safavid art for in the city were still assembled a significant cadre of intellectuals, poets, calligraphers and artists, and the vestiges of cultural production of the late Timurid period. Throughout the sixteenth century, Herat would serve as the training ground for future rulers and princes of the royal house. It is assumed that figures like Tahmasp, Bahram Mirza, and Sam Mirza also developed their knowledge of art and literature and formed their aesthetic preferences during their tenure as governors there.

The Safavids also faced a serious threat on their western border. The Ottomans had successfully routed the Persian army at Çaldıran in 1514, exacerbating political instability and diminishing Shah Isma‘il’s aura of invincibility. From that time on (between 1514 and 1524), Shah Isma‘il ceased to lead his armies into battle, removed himself from the conduct of state affairs, and appears to have busied himself drinking, the excesses of which resulted in his death.
When Tahmasp acceded to the throne in 1524, he was only ten years old and thus incapable of exerting his authority over the qizilbash amirs. His atabeg, Div Sultan Rumlu, ruled over the Safavid polity in accordance with Shah Isma’il’s wishes. A series of amirs from the various qizilbash tribes rose to supremacy one after the other, each favoring members of their tribe in the allocation of official positions, reversing the trend that had been evident in Isma’il’s reign, when notables of Iranian descent dominated in both military and civilian offices. The years between 1524 and 1533 are generally referred to as the “qizilbash interregnum.”

Some measure of political stability was reestablished after 1533, although the Uzbeks and Ottomans continued to pose a serious threat to Safavid hegemony, forcing an internal reorientation that involved the relocation of the Safavid capital from Tabriz to Qazvin in 1555. Additional periods of strife with the Uzbeks over Khurasan erupted in 1524–40, 1587–98, and 1631–38. Peace with the Ottomans was established with the Treaty of Amasya in 1555; it lasted until 1578. But throughout the 1540’s the Ottomans continued to pose a threat to Safavid stability; they had ventured as far as Tabriz in 1548. The Safavids also had to contend with internal conflicts. The qizilbash civil war that Shah Tahmasp had faced was repeated between 1576 and 1590, spanning the brief reigns of Shah Isma’il II and Muhammad Khudabanda, and continued into the early years of the reign of Shah ʿAbbas. Shah ʿAbbas (r. 1588–1629) finally managed to break the destabilizing power of the qizilbash by dismantling the tribal structure and replacing it with the ghulam system.

By the end of the sixteenth century, alternate patterns of artistic production had become firmly rooted with implications for the album. Throughout the sixteenth century, album production centered on the court and the initiative of royal or non-royal patrons. By the last quarter of the sixteenth century, however, the nature of album making shifted and the increased production of single-sheet paintings and drawings made album-making available to a wider social group. Both were in part due to changing cultural prerogatives and cultural prerogatives and

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Footnotes:

18 For a summary of this period, see Savory, “The Principal Offices of the Safavid State during the Reign of Tahmāsp I,” pp. 69–70.
discontinuities within the constitution of the court. The momentum of preface composition, so great in its middle years, now dwindled.

**THE PREFACE AUTHORS**

The following biographical sketches of the album preface authors have been patched together from various sources, mainly official chronicles and biographies composed by contemporaries, which provide some sense of each author’s courtly affiliations, position, and status, and of their activities beyond the art of literary composition. In the absence of a synthetic prosopographic literature or of some interdisciplinary study of early Safavid court life and culture, the sketches provide an essential foundation for the subsequent discussion of the authors’ milieux and a framework for court life.

Shihab al-Din 'Abd Allah Bayani b. Murvarid. Murvarid (d. 1516) composed the earliest album preface to come down to us. Called the Inshā'-yī muraqqā'-i Mir 'Alī Shīr (lit. “Composition for an Album for Mir ‘Ali Shir”), it is dated 897 (1491–92) in a chronogram. The title suggests that he composed it for the Timurid statesman, poet, and patron of the arts Mir ‘Alī Shīr Nava’i (1441–1501). Murvarid’s authorship of the preface is assumed from the fact that it is included in his inshā’ manual; the preface itself does not mention him.

One edition of Murvarid’s preface is based on recensions found in his inshā’ manual, titled the Sharaf-nāma. It also surfaces in two albums. It was copied by Murvarid’s eldest son, 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad, known also as Muhammad Muḥmin, as an exercise in tašqīṣ (a script used by chancellery scribes for copying official documents) and later bound into an album made for Shah Tahmasp for which Shah Quli Khalifa composed a new preface. The calligrapher Mir Sayyid Ahmad al-Husayni al-Mashhadi also copied Murvarid’s preface in nastā’qīṣ for an album that was compiled ca. 1572–75.

Murvarid’s father Khvaja Shams al-Din Muhammad Murvarid had served the last Timurid

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23 For biography see *EI2*, s.v. “Mir ‘Alī Shīr Nawā’i” (M. E. Subtelny); the essay is accompanied by an extensive bibliography. For a reassessment of some of the conceptions of Mir ‘Alī Shīr Nava’i, formulated by such scholars as Barthold, Bertels, and Semenov, see Maria Eva Subtelny, “‘Āli Shīr Nawā’ī: Bahshī and Beg.” in *Eucharisterion: Essays Presented to Omeljan Pritsak on his Sixtieth Birthday by his Colleagues and Students*, ed. Ihor Sevcenko and Frank E. Sysyn, Harvard Ukrainian Studies 3–4 (Cambridge, Mass., 1979–80): 797–807. Subtelny describes Mir ‘Alī Shīr Nava’i as the “overseer of the cultural life at the Herat court” (ibid., p. 797).
24 Istanbul, IUL, F. 1422, fols. 79 and 89. Using the edition of Murvarid’s preface published by Roemer, the sequence of pages in ‘Abd Allah b. Muhammad’s copy can be reconstructed as follows (references are to the pagination of the facsimile published by Roemer, *Staatsschreiben der Timuridenzeit*; Album F. 1422, fol. 89a (p. 1); Roemer, fol. 74a, lines 1–2, fol. 74b, lines 1–16; Album F. 1422, fol. 89b (p. 2); Roemer, fol. 74b, line 16, fol. 75a, lines 1–6, fol. 75b, line 1; Album F. 1422, fol. 79b (p. 3); Roemer, fol. 75b, lines 1–16; Album F. 1422, fol. 79a (p. 4); Roemer, fol. 76a, lines 1–4.
25 Istanbul, TSK, H. 2156. The dates are provided by elaborately painted and stenciled margins that include calligraphic cartouches which contain poetry and dates of completion (either 980 or 982). One margin is signed by the illuminator Yari (*Mazāhib*).
ruler Sultan Husayn Mirza (d. 1506) as vizier before he retired to become a dervish, and the sultan appointed him custodian of the shrine of Khvaja 'Abd Allah al-Ansari at Gazurgah, where he made improvements and repairs. Like his father before him, Murvarid served Sultan Husayn Mirza as a court official; he remained in office between 1470 and 1486, when, during the viziership of Qavam al-Din Nizam al-Mulk, he withdrew from public service. He returned to court again as a correspondence secretary (manšab-i risālat va parvāna) in 1498. Some time later, he was appointed keeper of the seal of the great council of amirs, a post formerly held by Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i.

Murvarid continued to serve Sultan Husayn Mirza until the latter's death in 1506, after which he left court once more, and, in Khvandamir's words, spent "most of his time copying Korans." When Shah Isma'il seized Herat in 1510 poor health prevented Murvarid from leaving the city. Although the shah showed favor toward him, he "decided to enter the treasure-house of retirement." In retirement he wrote a dīwān of qasids and ghazals; the Tārikh-i šahāt (a history of Shah Isma'il's reign); a collection of Munsha'āt (correspondence); the Tārikh-i manzūm (Versified History); and a Khusrav va Shīrīn. Khvandamir names two of the works—the inšā' compilation and the divan titled Mu'nis al-ākhbāb (Lovers' Companion) and, commenting on Murvarid's literary output, remarks: "His prose writings are like the words of Saḥbān [a poet and orator of proverbial eloquence] bedecked with jewels set in order and his versified compositions are free from the impurities of blemish and defect like pearls from the sea of Oman."34

Dawlatshah Samarqandi's Taẓkirat al-shuʿārā' (Biography of Poets), completed in 1487, is another useful source for Murvarid's life. He provides excerpts from several poems by Murvarid and praises his ability as a calligrapher, comparing him to Yaqt, his skill in inšā', and his closeness to the Timurid sultan. Similar details are provided in Zahir al-

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26 For a review of his career, see Khvandamir, Dastūr al-vaẓūrā', ed. Sa'id Nafti (Tehran: Iqbal, 1317/1938 or 1939), pp. 394–97.
28 Ibid., 2:513–14. For additional biographical details, see EI2, s. v. "Abdallāh Morvārīl" (P. Soucek).
30 Bahān Bū Ṣūmālī, Ašān al-tawārīkh, p. 213. The phrase he uses is dar ganj-i inzīvā girīfa ba-kīdār-i muqaddām-i mašīf-i majīd mawāfāq gārdīd, adding that his seclusion was for the copying of Korans (Sām Mīrzā, Tuhfa-yi Sānī, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 64).
31 The Mu'nis al-ākhbāb may refer to a second poetry collection, this time of quatrains, and not a collection of ghazals and qasidas. See Storey, Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Study, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 265. Sam Mirza (Tuhfa-yi Sānī, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 64), however, refers to the poetry collection by the same title (Mu'nis al-ākhbāb) but one comprising qasidas, ghazals, and rubā'is.
32 Sabhan Wa'il flourished during the early eighteenth century. He was still alive during the caliphate of al-Walid (r. 705–15). See EI2, s. v. "Sabhan Wa'il" (T. Fahd).
35 The use of the word yāqūt is ambivalent, meaning "pears" and referring also to Yaqt al-Musta'sīmi. Sam Mirza makes the same comparison. He notes that "the pen of his calligraphy in the scripts of naskh, riqū and taṣwīf continued [exhausted] those of the golden-penned masters" (kīl-ī khatṭātāsh raqām dar naskh va riqū va taṣwīf-i ustādān-i zarīn qalam kashīdā). To magnify the statement he inserts the misrāf, "no one has written thuluth the likes of his except for Yāqūt" (ba-yūsū-i û na-nisād kāsi magar Yāqūt) (Sām Mīrzā, Tuhfa-yi Sānī, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 63).
36 Taqarrub-i dārgāh-i sūrán-i gīrī panāh.
Din Muhammad Babur’s biographical notice: he highlights Murvarid’s skill in playing the dulcimer, calligraphy (especially ta’liq), and epistolography, noting that he was a finance minister before he became a beg, courtier, and intimate (ichkā) of the sultan.38

Ghiyas al-Dīn b. Humam al-Dīn Muhammad, known as Khvandamir. The preface for an album compiled by Bihzad is incorporated into Khvandamir’s inshā’ manual, the Nāma-yi nāmī, and for this reason it has generally been attributed to him,39 although it contains no reference to Khvandamir or to any other author. Muhammad Taqī Daneshpazhuh, however, has contested this attribution based on an edition of Sam Mirza’s biography of poets titled Tuhfa-yi sāmī (Sam’s Gift, completed no later than 1560–61),40 which contains a biographical entry on Amir Sadr al-Dīn Sultan Ibrahim Amini, a contemporary of Khvandamir. Sam Mirza’s entry for Amini lists the works that he wrote, including the “preface to an album of master Bihzad” (dibācha-yi muraqqā’-i Ustād Bihzād).41 This reference to an album preface in Sam Mirza’s biography of poets is unique, and there is no way to ascertain the specific relationship between the preface that survives in Khvandamir’s inshā’ manual and the preface by Amini,42 if in fact they are the same. Indeed, Bihzad may even have compiled more than one album. Given these irreconcilable possibilities, hereafter the preface will be referred to as Khvandamir/Amini.

Two dates, 1519 and 1522–23, have been proposed for the compilation of the Nāma-yi nāmī, though a combination of factors suggests that the earlier date is more likely, and that the preface was written in Herat during the last years of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s rule. The dating, however, assumes that the preface was written for an intended project and not just as a literary exercise. Also critical for its dating is the role played by Bihzad in the album’s compilation. Documentation in the form of a royal decree (nishān) ordered Bihzad to the Safavid court on 27 Jumada I 928 (24 April 1522) to assume the post of head librarian for Shah Isma’il.43 One of Bihzad’s most important projects would have been to supervise the

40 Ibid., p. 184.
42 If Amini compiled an inshā’ of his own compositions the preface might appear in it and could then be compared to the text contained in Khvandamir’s inshā’. It is also possible that the reference in Sam Mirza’s biography could be a later textual interpolation. Yet another possibility is that Khvandamir reworked the Amini model in a manner comparable to a preface author like Mir Sayyid Ahmad.
43 The request for Bihzad to serve as royal librarian is recorded in a decree bound in Khvandamir’s Nāma-yi nāmī (M. Qazvini and L. Bouvat, “Deux documents inédits relatifs à Behzād,” Revue du monde musulman 26 [March 1914]: 146–61). Recently, the documentary aspect of this decree was questioned because so many texts included in inshā’ compilations are invented—often with specific historical characters and places mentioned—for the purposes of illustrating some aspect of literary form, structure, or figure of speech, and because the Paris manuscript (BN, supp. pers. 1842) is dated by a chronogram to 925 (1519) several years before the dates which accompany separate documents contained in the collection. A new translation of the decree was published by Ebadollah Bahari, Bihzād: Master of Persian Painting (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 184–86, in which he summarizes the controversy over the decree’s authenticity and dating.
production of an extensively illustrated Shāhnāma of Firdawsi, the manuscript referred to in the primary sources as Shāhnāma-yi shāhī, that was commissioned by Shah Isma‘īl for his son Tahmasp though not finished until after Shah Isma‘īl’s death. The political turmoil between Sultan Husayn Mirza’s death in 1506 and ca. 1514 (when Herat regained some stability) diminishes the possibility that Khvandamir/Amini’s preface and its album were compiled in those years, especially in the absence of a significant patron. Since Bihzad’s reputation was sufficiently great before 1506 to have attracted the patronage of Sultan Husayn Mirza and Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i it is quite likely that the album was made for one of them. The later dates, 1519 and 1522–23, refer to the compilation of the Nāma-yi nāmī and not necessarily to the date of the preface’s composition or to the other documents contained in the inshā’.

Like other court functionaries drawn from the religious elite, Khvandamir (ca. 1475–1535) came from a family with long-standing ties to the Timurid house, whose positions often passed through families. His grandfather on his mother’s side was Muhammad b. Sayyid Burhan al-Din Khvandshah, known as Mirkhvand (1433–98), a descendant of a family of Bukharan sayyids and a courtier patronized by Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i. Khvandamir’s father served Sultan Mahmud b. Abu Sa’id (1453–95) as his vizier at Samarqand. Like his grandfather before him, Khvandamir enjoyed Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i’s patronage (beginning in the 1490’s). After Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i’s death, Khvandamir joined the court of Badi’ al-Zaman Mirza, the eldest of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s fourteen sons, for whom he went on several diplomatic missions. After Badi’ al-Zaman Mirza left Khurasan for India seeking refuge from the Uzbeks between 1512 and 1514, Khvandamir lived and wrote in the town of Basht in Gharjistan, east of Herat. Then for approximately two years (1514–17) he followed the court of Muhammad Zaman Mirza, grandson of Sultan Husayn Mirza. Unlike some intellectuals who had served the Timurids, Khvandamir appears to have kept his distance from the Safavid court, though he dedicated his major historical work, Habīb al-siyar, completed in 1524, to Khvaja Karim al-Din Habib Allah Savaji, vizier of Khurasan under Shah Isma‘īl’s rule. A second edition was completed in India, which allowed him to display his pro-Timurid sentiments. In ca. 1527 he journeyed to Agra via Qandahar, where

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43 The generally accepted scholarly argument about patronage and production is presented in Martin B. Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch, The Houghton Shāhnāmeh, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981). The Shāhnāma was begun ca. 1522 and completed around ca. 1535. Paintings were added to it as late as the 1540’s. For a critical assessment of some of the authors’ methods and arguments, see the review by Priscilla Soucek in Ars Orientalis 14 (1984): 134–38.

44 The final one was completed in 935 (1529) in India (ibid.). Khvaja Karim al-Din Habib Allah Savaji was vizier to Durmish Khan, who was appointed to govern Herat by Shah Isma’īl.
he met with the Mughal ruler Babur (r. 1526–30)\textsuperscript{47} and became a courtier both to Babur and his successor Humayun.

Khwandamir produced numerous works: a collection of wise sayings of kings and philosophers and notes on their charitable foundations called \textit{Ma‘āṣīr al-mulūk} (Memorials of the Kings) completed before 1498; two general histories, \textit{Khulāṣat al-akhbār fī bayān aḥvāl al-akhyār} (Summary of Histories in Describing the Conditions of the Most Excellent), completed 1500, and \textit{Ḥabīb al-sīyar fī akhhār afrād al-bashār} (Beloved of Biographies in Relating the Tales of People) completed 1524; the \textit{Nāma-yi nāmī} (Book of Renown), an \textit{inshā’} manual, in 1519 or after 1522–23,\textsuperscript{48} a panegyric biography of Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i titled \textit{Makārīm al-akhlāq} (The Virtues of Morals), completed in 1501 and dedicated to Sultan Husayn Mirza; and a biography of viziers, \textit{Dāstār al-vuzurā’} (Formula of the Viziers), completed in 1510. Humayun commissioned Khwandamir’s last work, the \textit{Qānūn-i humâyūnī} (Canon of Humayun, 1535), which describes the ruler’s ordinances as well as the buildings that he sponsored.

\textit{Amir Sadr al-Dīn Sultan Ibrāhīm Amini}. Amini (b. 1477–78; d. 1535) was one of Herat’s most important notables and an exact contemporary of Khwandamir. The most comprehensive biographical notice about Amini appears in Khwandamir’s \textit{Ḥabīb al-sīyar},\textsuperscript{49} where he begins by recounting Amini’s descent from the grandees of Transoxiana, Shaykh Zahir al-Din Abu al-‘Ala’, author of the \textit{Hīdāya} and renowned among the ulema, who counted among the members of Amini’s family tree. Amini’s mother’s father Mawlana Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahman served the Timurid princes Baysunghur and his son ‘Ala’ al-Dawla Mirza as a comptroller. His mother’s mother had a similarly prestigious background; one of her predecessors had been a \textit{naqīb} of Mashhad. According to Khwandamir, Amini was not only “adorned with noble ancestry”\textsuperscript{50} but possessed “complete learning, polite behavior, and hereditary and acquired perfections.”\textsuperscript{51} He is praised for works of both prose and poetry.

In listing Amini’s appointments, Khwandamir begins with his service (\textit{malāzamat}) to the Timurid prince Muzaffar Husayn Mirza. In 910 (1504–5), Amini came to the attention of Sultan Husayn Mirza who granted him the office of comptroller of the royal estates (\textit{manṣab-i sādārat-i khāṣṣa-yī humāyūn}). He retained this position until the death of Sultan Husayn Mirza and continued as comptroller under Muzaffar Husayn Mirza. The end of the Timurid house in Khurasan and the Uzbek capture of Herat resulted in Amini’s arrest. When he was released he retired, and in 1510–11, the Safavid Shah Isma’īl came to Khurasan and granted him fieś. In 1520 Shah Isma’īl commissioned a history of his conquests from Amini, called


\textsuperscript{48} Conflicting dates of completion can be found in the secondary literature, perhaps because of the varying dates of manuscript recensions (and the dates of their separate contents). A summary of the literature on dating the \textit{Nāma-yi nāmī} appears in \textit{EI2}, s.v. “Khwāndāmīr” (H. Beveridge–J. T. P. de Bruijn). Perhaps based on internal textual evidence, Storey notes that Khwandamir’s \textit{inshā’} manual was begun after the author’s forty-sixth birthday (ca. 1520) and that it was not completed before 1523 (Storey, \textit{Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey}, 3, 2, p. 269).

\textsuperscript{49} Khwandāmīr, \textit{Ḥabīb’s-Sīyar}, 3:326–27.

\textsuperscript{50} sharaf-i nasab āṛāstā ast.

\textsuperscript{51} ba-sufār-i fażl va adab va kamāltāt-i masrūq va muktasab-ī āṛāstā ast.
the *Futūhāt-i shāhī* (Royal Conquests). Khvandamir also mentions a treatise and quatrains by Amini who translated 'Ali b. Abi Talib’s *divān*. Khvandamir’s high respect for Amini is adequately attested by his biographical notice, but it is also shown by his quotation of Amini’s poems in the *Habīb al-siyar*, one of which is an elegy for Murvarid ending with a chronogram for the year of his death.52

Other sources provide additional information about Amini. Unlike Khvandamir, Amini was active in Herat under the Safavids. He agreed to become Prince Bahram Mirza’s preceptor (*mansūb-i ta’lim*) in 1531–32,53 and may even have served as vizier in 1535.54 He also participated in the war assembly held by the *qızılbash* amirs to decide how to respond to the Uzbek incursions headed by Bayram Oghlan.55

Dust Muhammad b. Sulayman al-Haravi. The preface written by the royal librarian and calligrapher Dust Muhammad for an album he assembled at the Safavid prince Bahram Mirza’s behest is by far the best known preface written and is frequently referred to in modern scholarship. Its epilogue (*khātimah*) is written in poetic form and its last couplet is a chronogram. The chronogram is highlighted in gold and reads, *Abū al-fath Bahram-i ‘ādil-nahādī* (“Abu al-Fath Bahram the Just”) which yields 951 (1544–45),56 the year of the preface’s completion.

Dust Muhammad refers to himself in the Bahram Mirza album57 preface as a scribe (*al-kātīb*) and says that he worked in the royal library. We also learn from the preface that he both wrote the preface and supervised the album’s arrangement and decoration. Inconsistencies between evidence and Martin Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch’s assertion that he was a calligrapher, painter, and the album’s compiler58 encouraged Adle to return to the written sources and to reexamine them in conjunction with signed and dated manuscripts and calligraphic specimens to find out more about him. Abolala Soudavar brought Budaq Munshi Qazvini’s *Javāhir al-akhbār* (Jewels of Chronicles), completed in 1576–77, into the debate. This is an important text composed by Bahram Mirza’s personal secretary. Qazvini worked for Bahram Mirza between ca. 1536 and 1549.59 In this work, Qazvini

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54 Szuppe, *Entre Timourides, Uzbeks et Safavides*, p. 100.
56 Various dates have been proposed for the album’s completion. For a definitive reading of the chronogram, see Adle, “Autopsia, in Absentia,” esp. pp. 221–25.
57 Unless otherwise specified, all references to the Bahram Mirza album in this book are to the album assembled by Dust Muhammad in 1544–45 (TSK, H. 2154). A second album, without a preface, was also assembled for Bahram Mirza (TSK, B. 410).
58 Dickson and Welch, *Houghton Shahnameh*, 1:4 and 34. They describe him as an “artist-calligrapher.”
59 The *Javāhir al-akhbār* was dedicated to Shah Isma’il II and exists today in a unique manuscript (St. Petersburg, State Public Library, Dorn 288). For reference and discussion, see Abolala Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts: Selections from the Art and History Trust Collection* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), pp. 258–59, n. 74. In another article (“Between the Safavids and the Mughals: Art and Artists in Transition,” *Iran* 37 [1999]: 49–66; esp. 54), Soudavar notes that the manuscript was written before its dedication to Shah Isma’il II in 1576 and was not updated. The dates of office are based on Budaq Munshi Qazvini’s remarks in a section of the *Javāhir al-akhbār* where he records a synopsis of his career. He states that he began to work for Bahram Mirza after the prince’s return from Gilan (ca. 1536–37) and that he worked for him for fourteen years. Savory has suggested that the
makes a systematic and consistent distinction between Dust [Muhammad] Divana the painter and Dust Muhammad the calligrapher, as Soudavar notes. Dickson and Welch had therefore incorrectly conflated two different individuals. To support Qazvini’s distinction, Soudavar notes that the captions in the Bahram Mirza album that ascribe paintings to the artist “Ustad Dust” are not likely to have been phrased in such an autoencomiastic way if the painter had been responsible for their execution, and concludes that Dust Muhammad the calligrapher made the ascriptions to the unsigned works and that he is not the same person as the painter by the same name.

Adle’s argument is long and complex, and he identifies many more practitioners of art and calligraphy named Dust Muhammad, all of them active during the sixteenth century. After an extensive analysis of texts and materials, he focuses on the three main artistic personalities in the group, Dust Muhammad b. Sulayman (Gavashani?) Haravi, Dust Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah, and Dust Divana/Dust Musavvir. Although some of his formulations are questionable, Adle’s thesis that the album’s compiler was Dust Muhammad b. Sulayman Haravi—who was a calligrapher but not a painter—is convincing.

Budaq Munshi Qazvini tells us that Dust Muhammad was from Herat, studied under the calligrapher Qasim Shadishah, wrote a copy of the Koran in nasta’liq, and pronounced the letter r as an l. He notes that Dust Muhammad was favored by Shah Tahmasp and that he was the only calligrapher whose services the shah retained. Qazvini ends by noting that Dust Muhammad taught calligraphy to Princess Sultanum, a uterine sister of Shah Tahmasp and Bahram Mirza. Sam Mirza also refers to Dust Muhammad “Gavashvan,” stating that he wrote nasta’liq well, that he excelled in poetry, prosody/metrics (‘arūţ), and riddles (mu’ammā), and that his pen name (takhallūs) was “Kāhī.”

length of time is in fact incorrect and proposes a shorter tenure of four years. For a summary of the passage outlining Budaq Munshi Qazvini’s career, see Roger Savory, “A Secretarial Career under Shah Tahmāsp I (1524–1576),” Islamica Studies 2, 3 (September 1963): 343–52. To date, the only published edition of the Jāvāhir al-akbār is incomplete, focusing on the Turkmen portions of the history. See Budaq Munshi Qazvini, Jāvāhir al-akbār, ed. Muḥšin Bahramnizād (Tehran: Aʿnā-yi Mīrāq, 2000).


For a shorter version of Dust Muhammad’s vita, see Elr, s. v. “Dūst-Muḥammad b. Solaymān Herāvī” (Chahryar Adle).

For references and complete text, see Chahryar Adle, “Les artistes nommés Dust-Muhammad au XVIe siècle,” Studia Iranica 22, 2 (1993): 219–96; esp. 227–28, and 287. Many of these items are repeated by Qāżī Ahmad, Gālīstān-i hunar, trans. Minorsky, Calligraphers and Painters, pp. 146–47. Princess Sultanum, also known as Mahin Banu, was one of three or four children borne by Shahi Beg Khanum (also known as Tajū Begum), daughter of Mehmed Beg Bektash (a Mawsilu Turkman), to Shah Isma’il. The others were Shah Tahmasp, Bahram Mirza, and possibly Pari-Khan Khanum I (Maria Szuppe, “La participation des femmes de la famille royale à l’exercice du pouvoir en Iran safavide au XVIe siècle,” Studia Iranica 23, 2 [1994]: 211–56; esp. 234, table no. 5). Hasan Beg Rumlu describes Sultanum as a hamshāra, a half-sister [i.e., by mother only] of Shah Tahmasp. He adds that she died on the evening of Wednesday, 14 Jumada I 969 (20 January 1562), and that she was born in 925 (1519) (Hasan Beg Rūmū, Aḥsan al-taṣārīkh, p. 536). For Sultanum’s main biographical references, see Dickson and Welch, Houghton Shahnameh, 1:247, n. 15. For a useful biographical summary of her, see Membré, Mission to the Lord Suphi of Persia, trans. Morton, pp. 80–81.

Sām Mīrzā, Tūḥā-yi sāmī, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 83. Adle points out an anachronism in Sam Mirza’s account
Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad “Qīṣṣa Khvān.” In 1556–57, Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad composed a preface for an album to be made for Shah Tahmāsp. It is not known if the album itself was ever even begun. The preface is included among a compilation of texts (majmūʿa). It is also found in an album preface signed by Mrī Sayyīd Ahmad al-Husaynī al-Mašḥādī, who composed it for an album for Amir Ghayb Beg in 1564–65.

In his preface Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad notes that he had been charged by Shah Tahmāsp with overseeing the production of an album assisted by others. Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad identifies himself again in the concluding segment of the preface where he writes, “the purpose of these words was to mention some of the masters whose monuments are in this album.” The choice of the words, qīṣṣa-khwānī, referred to Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad’s title of “storyteller.” He uses them again in the preface’s chronogram, which consists of two couplets of poetry, where the first hemistich reads “in assembling words in the form of a chronogram.” The phrase “assembling words” partially reproduces his name and title. The chronogram in the final hemistich consists of the word farkhuṇądḡ (“happiness”), whose letters add up to 964 (1556–67).

Little is known of Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s life aside from his position as storyteller during the reign of Shah Tahmāsp and that he was also a calligrapher. Scholars have identified him with Qutb al-Din Muhammad Yazdī, whom Mustāfa ‘Alī, the Ottoman statesman and man of letters, met and talked with on numerous occasions during his year-long sojourn in Baghdad (1585–86) where he held the post of finance director (defterdar). During that period, Mustāfa ‘Alī obtained a copy of a text that he identifies as the Risāla-yi qubṭiya (the Qubṭiyā treatise, i.e., written by Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad Yazdī), and remarks that he referred to it when composing his own work, the Menākīb-i hūnervān. The relationship between Quṭb al-Dīn Muhammad Yazdī’s treatise, which comprises the biographies of some
fifty-two calligraphers, described by Mustafa ‘Ali and the album preface is unclear. Even if ‘Ali’s description of Qutb al-Din Muhammad Yazdi’s treatise is partial, it would hardly accurately describe the preface: it refers to numerous artists as well as to calligraphers.

In his necrology for the year 920 (1562–63) the historian Hasan Beg Rumlu describes Qutb al-Din Muhammad Baghdadi’s qualities and achievements in the following way: “... with the combination of virtues and knowledge in the science of inshi’ and elegance of composition [he became] head of the secretaries noted for eloquence and in the art of adorning metaphor he imitated the works of eloquent rhetoricians. In the presence of the ruler, the refuge of the faith, he procured great favor.” He then concludes the entry by noting that Qutb al-Din Muhammad Baghdadi studied under Amir Ghiyas al-Din Mansur and by naming Qazvin as the place where he died.

Many aspects of this biographical sketch fit the qualities and abilities typical of album preface authors, including Qutb al-Din Muhammad Qissa Khvan who composed the 1556–57 preface. Hasan Beg Rumlu’s man worked as a secretary, was well versed in literary expression, and was an intimate of Shah Tahmasp. All of these qualities must have been true of the preface’s author, especially the rhetorical gifts required for oral recitation that made Qutb al-Din Muhammad fit for appointment as a storyteller. If Qutb al-Din Muhammad Baghdadi and Qutb al-Din Muhammad “Qissa Khvan” are one and the same, then the Qutb al-Din Muhammad Yazdi that Mustafa ‘Ali met in Baghdad in 1585–86 was clearly another person, because Qutb al-Din Muhammad Baghdadi had died in 1562–63.

Shah Quli Khalifa “Muhrdar.” The preface composed by Shah Quli Khalifa is bound into an album that he assembled for Shah Tahmasp. Shah Quli Khalifa refers to himself in the preface as having conceived of compiling an album, and that he had only pursued this objective when he found it reflected in Shah Tahmasp’s “mirror of the mind” (bar mir’āt-i ẓamīr). The shah gave him calligraphies and paintings and ordered him to arrange them in an album. Toward the end of the preface, and after he has praised Shah Tahmasp sufficiently, Shah Quli Khalifa lists his own titles. It is here that a slightly ambiguous phrase appears. Shah Quli Khalifa’s titles are preceded by the phrase jihat-i kitābkhāna, “for the library,” which would suggest that the album was made for Shah Quli Khalifa’s library. The end of the segment reads “so that it was completed” (ba-hadd-i itmām raśīd). In light of the internal references to Shah Tahmasp, we can only surmise that the album was ordered by Shah Quli Khalifa and perhaps made in Shah Tahmasp’s kitābkhāna.

Because the preface does not contain a chronogram for the year of its compilation, it
has to be deduced from Shah Quli Khalifa’s dates in office (1533–58). In their discussion of the album, Dickson and Welch offered the hypothesis that it was made shortly before Bahram Mirza’s album, a notion based on its dated materials, especially its calligraphies. In the same study, the authors suggest that a date in the 1530’s was most likely, and they suggest that Shah Tahmasp’s album had started a rivalry, in response to which the Bahram Mirza album was later made.

The dated specimens contained in the Shah Tahmasp album, however, challenge this purported date, because the latest calligraphy in it is dated 970 (1562–63), four or five years after Shah Quli Khalifa’s death. The calligraphy is mounted on fol. 38a and it is unsigned. One additional calligraphy in Shah Tahmasp’s album is dated 945 (1538–39), making the later years of the 1530’s most likely, if in fact the album was begun at the time Dickson and Welch proposed. Thus, while the composition of the preface may be securely attributed to Shah Quli Khalifa, his exact role in the formation of the album needs to be reexamined. The most plausible scenario is that he composed the preface expressly for the album, which was nearly finished at the time of his death in Ramadan 965 (July 1558). The general uniformity of margins and seam rulings where they exist suggests that this was the case. The fact that the internal rulings, inscribed within or around separate items attached to the pages, are incomplete and that a unifying program of illumination is absent, however, suggests that the album was not completed as originally planned.

From the Qavarghalu clan of the Zu’l-Qadar tribe, the amir Shah Quli Khalifa held the post of keeper of the seal (muhrdār) under Shah Tahmasp. By 1533 he had been appointed chief guard of the royal harem (šahšūkqās-bāsh), and then keeper of the seal when Shah Mahmud Beg Zu’l-Qadar was inadvertently killed by a horse in the archery square (maydan-i qabq-bāz). He is frequently mentioned in all of the sixteenth-century and early-seventeenth-century Safavid chronicles, especially in Hasan Beg Rumlu’s Ahsan al-tavārikh (Best of Chronicles), completed in 1577, ‘Abdi Beg Shirazi’s Takmilat al-akhbār (Perfection of Chronicles), not completed before 1571–72, and in Iskandar Beg Munshi’s Tārīkh-i ‘alāmarā-yi ‘Abbāsī (History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great), completed by 1629.

Shah Quli Khalifa was involved in various campaigns and missions because of his extensive military experience and diplomatic skills. He was sent along with Bahram Mirza and Ibrahim Khan Zu’l-Qadar to retrieve Shah Tahmasp’s rebellious brother Alqas Mirza in 1549–50, and he was ordered to attack the stronghold in Alborz in 1551. When Sultan Süleyman marched from Aleppo with an army in 1553–54, Shah Tahmasp sent Shah Quli Khalifa to Van and Vastan, and in the same year he joined Ibrahim Mirza, Badr Khan,
and Amir Ghayb Beg to offer Surkhab Ardalan military support. Some years earlier, in 1544–45, he was counted among the reception party that welcomed the ousted Mughal ruler Humayun on his approach to Tabriz, and perhaps participated in the cultured conversations that would have accompanied such an official meeting. We also learn that he accompanied Princess Sultanum when she visited the shrine of Imam Riza in Mashhad (1549–50), at the head of troops selected from the royal guard (qurchūs). Iskandar Beg Munshi notes that he held Qum as a fief from Shah Tahmasp, a cluster of properties that no doubt generated a significant income.

One of the richest sources for Shah Quli Khalīfa’s life is the account of Michele Membré, a messenger sent by the Venetian doge to the Safavid court, who wrote of his journey to secure Safavid support against the Ottomans. He reached the Persian border in July or August 1540, and finished his narrative two years later (5 July 1542). This European attempt at alliance belonged to a long tradition stretching back to the fourteenth century of seeking support to fight the Ottomans along their eastern borders. Not long after his arrival in Tabriz in the winter, Membré was put under Shah Quli Khalīfa’s care. He remained in Persia for nearly a year, and during that time he was the guest of many high-ranking courtiers.

Membré describes his host as “a rather fat man, with a slight defect in his eye and a short beard”; he notes that his son was Shah Tahmasp’s parvānachī (official who conveyed verbal orders), and that his house was in Tabriz. Later, he mentions somewhat equivocally, that one of Shah Quli Khalīfa’s wives was a sister (or cousin) of Shah Tahmasp. During Membré’s stay, a Turk from Adana came to the house and implored Shah Quli Khalīfa to obtain a kerchief from the shah. The man had seen the shah in a dream, and his hope was that the kerchief would be of benefit to his ailing father. Shah Quli Khalīfa managed to obtain the kerchief. He had earlier acted as an intermediary for another man who had requested one of the shah’s shoes for a similar purpose. Alexander Morton notes that the title khalīfa meant that Shah Quli’s position in the Sufi hierarchy was that of head of qizīlbāsh Sufism. Based on some of Membré’s experiences with him in Persia, Morton goes on to suggest that Shah Quli performed some of the functions that would ultimately be formally assigned to the post of khalīfat al-khulafāʾ. This title is in fact

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80 Iskandar Beg Munshi’s text reads: “When Homāyūn was only a farsaḵ from the royal camp, the Shah sent a party to meet him. This party consisted of the Shah’s brothers, Bahārum Mīrzā and Sām Mīrzā; Qāzī Jāhan the vīzier; Sevendūk Beg Aflat the qāvīḵāḵūs; Badr Khān Īštājī; Sāḥeqūli Khalīfa Zīl-Qdrār the mohrdār; and other emirs and principal officers of state” (ibid., 1:163). During Prince Bayezīd’s visit to the Safavid court, Iskandar Beg Munshi writes, “But Bāyazīd maintained his haughty and arrogant demeanor; he spoke not a word, and did not join in that cultured dialogue which every occasion of this sort demands” (ibid., 1:168). This and other descriptions suggest the cultural nature of discourse at receptions of the Safavid court.


82 For summary of diplomatic exchanges, see Membré, Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia, trans. Morton, pp. viii–ix.

83 Ibid., p. 31. The list includes Qara Khalīfa, Naranji Sultan, Qazi Jahan, Shahvirdi Khan, and Shah ‘Ali Sultan.

84 Ibid., pp. 20–21. For a definition of the post, see ibid., p. 92.

85 Ibid., p. 26. No reference to such a union is made in any of the known Safavid written sources, published or unpublished.

86 Ibid., pp. 41–42.

87 Ibid., p. 79. Also see Morton’s study on ritual beating, which deals in part with Membré’s experience during his stay with Shah Quli Khalīfa (Morton, “The Chūb-i Ṭarīq and Qizīlbāsh Ritual in Persia,” pp. 225–29).
attributed to Shah Quli Khalifa in the section of the album preface where his honorifics are listed.

**Malik Daylami.** Malik Daylami (d. 1561–62) belonged to one of Qazvin’s noble families, and was famed for his skill as a calligrapher and poet. He composed an album preface at the request of Amir Husayn Beg completing it in 1560–61. Malik Daylami refers to himself at several points in the preface. After discussing Amir Husayn Beg and his father Amir Hasan Beg, he inserts a chronogram in the form of a quatrain which he composed for the year of Amir Hasan Beg’s death (968/1560–61). Malik Daylami also describes how Amir Husayn Beg praised his calligraphy and encouraged him. It was rare praise indeed given that Malik Daylami was senior in status to Amir Husayn Beg. The second of two chronograms for the album’s completion names “Malik” as its writer (kand mâlik bahr-i ta’rikhash raqam, “For its chronogram Malik wrote.”). The chronogram reads “a garden of ravishing pieces” (gulshanî az qidî hâ-yi dîl-gushâ), whose letters yield 968 (1560–61). The chronogram that appears before Malik Daylami’s was composed by Mirza Muhammad Amni.

The richest source for Malik Daylami’s biography is Qazi Ahmad’s Gulistân-i hunar. Qazi Ahmad begins with Malik Daylami’s early training in the six scripts (viz., naskh, muhaqqaq, rayhânî, thuluth, riqa’, tawqi’) under the tutelage of his father Mawlana Shahra Mir Qazvini. He so excelled in these scripts that he rivaled the “six masters,” that is, the students of Yaqt al-Mustâ’im. Malik Daylami is also recorded as owning a specimen made by ‘Umar Aqta’, a calligrapher active in the fifteenth century. Malik Daylami also studied nasta’ ‘iqq.

Qazi Jahan Qazvini, Shah Tahmasp’s grand vizier (also given the position of vakil), started Malik Daylami on his distinguished career, when in 1556–57, he ordered him to Mashhad to work in the library of Prince Ibrahim Mirza; he also instructed the young prince in calligraphy. To Ibrahim Mirza’s loss, Malik Daylami was recalled to Qazvin to design architectural inscriptions for the Dawlatkhana, the Chihil Sutun Palace, and the Sa’adatabad gardens. Attempts to bring Malik Daylami back to Mashhad failed, no doubt to Ibrahim Mirza’s chagrin, and he remained at work in Qazvin until his death in 1561–62. Qazi Ahmad notes his accomplishments as a poet (especially of qasidas and ghazals), his composition

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88 Istanbul, TSK, H. 2151. In his Safavid history, Abî Beg Shirazi gives Amir Husayn Beg’s year of death as 967–68; the same date is provided in the album preface (968) (see Abî Beg Shirzâ, Takmilat al-akhbâr, p. 117). The reading may be in error, “Husayn” printed instead of “Hasan.” Amir Hasan Beg, Amir Husayn Beg’s father, died in that year as Malik Daylami records in the preface.


92 Simpson has pointed out inconsistencies in Qazi Ahmad’s dating. She suggests that Malik Daylami was in Mashhad in 963 (1556) (Simpson, Sultan Ibrahim Mirza’s Haft Awrang, p. 284).

93 Malik Daylami’s poetic talent is also acknowledged by Sâdiqî Beg Afshâr in his biography of poets composed ca. 1592 (Sâdiqî Beg Afshâr, Taṣkîra-yi majma’ al-khâvâs, ed. ‘Abd al-Rasûl Khâyyâmîpûr [Tabriz: Châphkhâna-yi Akhtar, 1327/1948], p. 208, no. 184).
of a Gây va Chawgân (Ball and Polo Stick, written in response to ‘Arifi’s text of the same title) for Ibrahim Mirza, and his plan to copy a Koran in nasta’līq. Hasan Beg Rumlu also writes that Malik Daylami studied religious sciences (‘ulûm) under Mawlana Jamal al-Din Mahmud Shirazi.\textsuperscript{94} Mir Sayyid Ahmad al-Husayni al-Mashhadi. Although the calligrapher Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s role as an author of prefaces has been contested, he is included here among those figures involved in the production of album prefaces because he copied Murvarid’s preface in 971 (1563), which is in an album (H. 2156) whose dated margins range from 1572 to 1575. During the assembly of the Amir Ghayb Beg album in 1564–65 (completed in 1565–66), he artfully reworked Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s 1556–57 preface composed originally for a projected Shah Tahmasp album.

He does not claim authorship of either example in quite the same way as Dust Muhammad, Shah Quli Khalîfa, or Malik Daylami did before him. In the preface to album H. 2156 he simply notes that it had come to pass in the year 971 and then signs his name “written by the poor, weak, sinful servant Ahmad al-Husaynî al-Mashhadi the scribe, may God forgive his sins and conceal his faults.”\textsuperscript{95} “There are no internal references to him. In Amir Ghayb Beg’s album he also signs his name at the end of the preface and the chronogram and notes it was completed in Herat. In the body of the preface he replaces Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s name with Amir Ghayb Beg’s where he talks of the inception of the project; retains Qutb al-Din’s punning reference to his title in the concluding passage, “Since the purpose of these words . . .” (chun maqṣūd az in qiṣṣa-khvâni . . . ), but deletes his chronogram. At the end of the preface he signs his name (using the same formula found in album H. 2156), inserts a poem, and writes out the date of completion (972). At the end of the album’s chronogram he signs his own name in the same way. But the preface in the Amir Ghayb Beg album reordered the components of Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s model and replaces many words and phrases. The scope of its reworking suggests more than mere copying, unless Mir Sayyid Ahmad was copying a preface written by yet another individual whom he does not name.

Mir Sayyid Ahmad is best known as a prolific calligrapher. The textual sources are unanimous in making him a student of Mir ‘Ali who was one of the most celebrated calligraphers of the sixteenth century; his specimens were avidly collected. Qazi Ahmad provides the most comprehensive biographical account and he identifies Mir Sayyid Ahmad as one of his five teachers in calligraphy.\textsuperscript{96} Mir Sayyid Ahmad was a Husayni sayyid of Mashhad, one among many groups descended from the Shi‘ite imams; he went to Herat to study under the calligrapher Mir ‘Ali and thereafter sought the patronage of the Uzbek ruler ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Khan in Bukhara. When the latter died, Mir Sayyid Ahmad returned to Mashhad and later went to Shah Tahmasp’s court where his responsibilities included copying


\textsuperscript{96} Qâzî Ahmad, Gûlistân-i hunar, trans. Minorsky, Calligraphers and Painters, pp. 10, 16, 32–33, 138–141, 147, 151, 163–166, 168, 170, and 173. Qazi Ahmad adds that he studied with him in Mashhad and that “the Mir designd to write for this humble one an album (muraqqa), several [samples] of single letters (mufradât) and many specimens of calligraphy (qiṣâ),” but all had been lost (ibid., pp. 10 and 141).
official correspondence. Even after he returned to Mashhad, he continued to undertake work for Shah Tahmasp, at the same time making his house a center for the teaching of calligraphy. Then charges were brought against him, and Shah Tahmasp demanded that he repay all salaries and wages from his years of employment. He tried to sell his house and leave for India, but the plan fell through. Finally in 1556 Mir Murad Khan, a local ruler of the province of Mazandaran, hired him with a salary, and his luck again turned.

Mir Sayyid Ahmad returned to Mashhad to visit his children in 1576, a trip that coincided with the accession of Shah Isma’îl II (r. 1576–78). Shah Isma’îl II requested that he come to Qazvin and offered him a house there, but in keeping with his turbulent career, its dramatic rises and drops in royal favor, and just plain bad luck Shah Isma’îl II died shortly thereafter. The calligrapher was forced to return to Mazandaran where he died in 1578–79. Qazi Ahmad adds that he trained two sons as calligraphers but that they “did not take the mîr’s place.”

Iskandar Beg Munshi claims that Mir Sayyid Ahmad was one of the two best calligraphers alive at the time of Shah Tahmasp’s death (he accorded first place to Mawlana Mahmud Ishaq Siyavushani). He also notes the calligrapher’s achievement in poetry, but says that “toward the end of his life his style changed, and he acquired characteristics frowned on by men of distinction.” He does not say what these might have been.

Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Vasî. Shams al-Din Muhammad’s preface is bound into a Safavid album of the latter half of the sixteenth century known as the Shah Isma’îl II album (H. 2138). Illuminated captions on the preface’s opening pages (fols. 2b–3a) record that the album was begun in Mashhad in the year 976 (1568–69) and completed in 984 (1576–77), during the reign of Shah Isma’îl II.

Sources on Shams al-Din Muhammad are scarce, but in his preface he refers to himself as the “miserable scribe and least of the two scribes” and informs us that his teacher was Mawlana Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari. He also notes that his master composed the Ţâqīrât al-kuttâb (Biography of Scribes) in the name of Shah Tahmasp. He excerpts a poetic passage from that biography in which Mawlana Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari praises Shams al-Din Muhammad. His reference to a Shams al-Din Muhammad Kirmani, a scribe active in Shiraz and Kirman, distinguishes Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Vasî from this well-known calligrapher. Other internal references to calligraphers who gained prominence in the later years of the sixteenth century confirm that the preface was written while the album was being produced, although ‘Abd al-Hayy Habibi contradicts this when he dates it to 1537 and identifies the album as the muraqqâ’ of Shah Isma’îl I, who died in 1524.

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97 Ibid., p. 141.
98 Iskandar Beg Munshî, History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great, trans. Savory, 1:266.
99 For text, see ibid., 1:266–67.
100 Kâtib al-haqq va aqall al-kâtibîn.
101 Qazi Ahmad informs us that Mawlana Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari was a student of Mawlana ‘Abd al-Haqq al-Sabzavari, a figure mentioned in Shams al-Din Muhammad’s preface immediately before his master. Qazi Ahmad gives numerous details about Mawlana Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari, adding that he met him in 965 (1557–58) in Mashhad. At that time he was “of ripe old age and of serene presence.” His son Mawlana Shaykh Muhammad became an artist trained by Dust Divana (Qâzi Ahmad, Gulistân-i hunar, trans. Minorsky, Calligraphers and Painters, pp. 75 and 187).
102 Habibi, “Literary Sources for the History of the Arts of the Book in Central Asia,” app. 1, p. 279, no. 46. Habibi does not cite a catalogue number for the album or an explanation of the date that he proposes for the preface’s composition by Shams al-Din Muhammad. Other theories for the album’s patron and date are summarized in Dânîshpazhûh, “Muraqqâ’ sâzî va jung nîvîst,” p. 182, no. 13.
Qazi Ahmad briefly mentions a Mawlana Shams al-Din Muhammad Katib, a calligrapher from Bistam who had studied with Mir Sayyid Ahmad. After some years in Herat, this Shams al-Din Muhammad worked in Shah ‘Abbas’s workshop/library (kitābkhāna) in Qazvin where he earned a salary (mavājīb) and was given a land grant (tuyūl). Although it is not possible to prove conclusively that they were one and the same, the calligrapher mentioned in Qazi Ahmad’s text is contemporary to the date of the album’s compilation (1568–77).

Muhammad Muhsin. Muhammad Muhsin completed his preface in 990 (1582–83). At the end of the preface he signed his name, noted that it was copied in Herat, and provided the year. Neither the preface nor the album of calligraphy and paintings to which it belongs contains specific information about a patron or recipient. Study of the calligrapher is based on a corpus of calligraphy signed by him. His use of the nisba al-Haravi suggests that he might have been born in Herat. One author describes him as being a student of Mir Muhammad Baqir b. Mir ‘Ali Haravi. ‘Abd al-Hayy Habibi simply notes that he was a calligrapher active sometime during the sixteenth century and that he was also a painter, a skill Habibi attributes to him without any source or further explanation.

Muhammad Salih. Muhammad Salih styled himself “the imperial scribe” (al-kātib al-khāqānī) in the album preface. The body of the text contains no reference to him and he signs his name at the end with the requisite petition for God’s forgiveness. The preface’s year of completion is provided by a chronogram, muraqqā-i khūb “beautiful album,” which yields 1018 (1609). Mahdi Bayani, however, reads the poetic chronogram as khūb raqam—excluding the word muraqqā—with a total numerical value of 948 (1541–42). Since the preface identifies the album’s recipient as Vali Muhammad Khan, the third ruler of an Uzbek dynasty referred to variously as Toqay Timurid, Janid, or Ashtarkhanid, who ruled from 1605 to 1611, it would seem safe to conclude that the chronogram should be calculated as 1018 (1609), squarely within the years of his rule.

Vali Muhammad Khan visited Shah ‘Abbas’s court in Isfahan in 1611 after he had been ousted from Bukhara by his nephew Imam Quli Sultan. With some assistance from Shah ‘Abbas I, Vali Muhammad regained control over Bukhara on 17 Jumada II 1020 (26 Au-

104 In the year preceding the album preface’s composition, events in Herat and the province of Khurasan had given the reigning monarch Sultan Muhammad (r. 1578–87) some cause for concern. In 1581, ‘Abbas Mirza had been “raised to the throne of Khorasan, with the style of Shah ‘Abbas” (Iskandar Beg Munshi, History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great, trans. Savory, 1:408). Sultan Muhammad’s response to the revolt, launched by some of the amirs, was to send forces to Khurasan in 1582.
106 Bayani remarks that this had been proposed by Mirza Ḥabīb Isfahānī, but he does not cite the source (ibid., p. 833).
107 A reference to the album and its preface appears in Ḥabībī, “Literary Sources for the History of the Arts of the Book in Central Asia,” p. 277, no. 30. Perhaps as a typographical error, the hījri year is given as 1081 and not 1018.
108 Bayānī, Aḥwāl va āgār, 2, 3, p. 777, no. 1117.
109 Huart makes a reference to a Mawlanā Salih, active in Bukhara during the reigns of ‘Abd Allah Khan and Iskandar Khan, that is, in the late sixteenth century. He add that Salih was trained by Mahmūd Shīhābī, a calligrapher who had worked for Uzbek patrons. Huart does not provide the source (Huart, Les calligraphes et les miniaturistes de l’ Orient musulman, p. 229).
Iskandar Beg Munshi makes an interesting reference to his nephew, also called Muhammad Salih, who composed a chronogram for the arrival of Vali Muhammad Khan in Isfahan. The chronogram, “The king of Turan has come,” yields the numerical value of 1020 (1611). Could the Muhammad Salih who composed the preface in 1609 be the same as the one who composed the chronogram in 1611?

THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL MILIEU

The preceding biographical sketches convey something of the breadth and complexity of the social field in which albums were made and prefaces composed. The preface authors were of either Persian or Turkic ethnic backgrounds and had various and changing affiliations to the royal court. Often they enjoyed their status by dint of effort and aptitude alone. But belying this richly textured social milieu is the fact that during the sixteenth century the practice of album making was limited to a small community in the court circle, comprising members of the royal house and select high-ranking non-royal patrons. A wider social involvement would only come at the century’s end, when shifts in patronage combined with changes in artistic practice allowed for many more participants to collect materials for albums.

Beginning in the late fifteenth century and throughout the sixteenth century, full membership of intellectuals, poets, and artists in the cultural elite was made more likely by such qualities as noble lineage (heredity promised a predisposition to perform well) and good conduct, but first and foremost, verbal acumen: presumably visual acuity was also desirable given the prominent role of works of calligraphy, painting, and drawing in the court’s cultural activities. Biographical notices about preface authors invariably mention their family origin, stressing prestigious descent whenever possible, and the advantages acquired through training under a renowned master. The circumscribed nature of this community of cultural brokers and players was only reinforced by the cultural practices of the literary and visual arts. Pedagogical and creative procedures of poetry, calligraphy, and depiction resulted in highly self-referential corpuses of work. Much depended on knowing the tradition’s history and working in response to it, and on being able to gauge subtle changes and departures from a string of known precedents. It is hardly surprising, then, that the habit of recording genealogies of professions and avocations peaked in the sixteenth century and that its sustenance and perpetuation served the interests of a tightly knit community of practitioners, who always had been, or who became, cultural insiders. It is this particular historical constellation that brought about the idea of combining a codex-format album collection with a preface and which exposed the logic of devoting portions of the preface to strings of pedagogical affiliation and/or stylistic filiation.

111 Ibid., 2:1051.
112 Ibid., 2:1045.
113 Perhaps by the late sixteenth century, and certainly by the early seventeenth century, albums were available to a broader clientele. In theory, this was the result of a shift in focus on the artist’s part to the production mainly of single-sheet paintings and drawings of which Riza ‘Abbasi was the most celebrated exponent. Collectors could purchase single-page works according to the size of their pocketbook, ultimately assembling the gathered materials into an album when they had collected a sufficient quantity.
CHAPTER TWO

THE TIMURID ACHIEVEMENT AND THE SAFAVID TRANSITION

The cultural achievements of the Timurid dynasty in literature, art, and architecture and the fame of the Timurid courts in cities such as Herat, Samarkand, and Shiraz are now well enough known to obviate the need for lengthy repetition. It is generally accepted that the aesthetic formation and criteria of value established and refined under the Timurids was the standard against which contemporary Ottoman and Aqqoyunlu Turkmen and subsequent Safavid, Uzbek, and Mughal dynasties would first model and then measure the objects of their own production before a process of change would cause the absorption of Timurid elements. Aesthetic departures from the Timurid artistic tradition by their contemporaries and successors have already been described in the scholarly literature, as have general aspects of continuity and change between the Timurids and the Safavids in the realms of political history and religion. But specific facets of court and political life within the context of the Timurid-to-Safavid period of transition merit discussion here because of their particular relevance to the milieu in which albums and their prefaces were composed.

114 The best general overview of the Timurid and Safavid dynasties is still The Timurid and Safavid Periods, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart, vol. 6, The Cambridge History of Iran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). A critical mass of recent scholarship and a renewed interest in the Timurid period date to the late 1980’s. Recent years have also seen an increased focus on the Safavid period, but many questions await analysis, especially a detailed study of aspects of change and continuity between the late Timurid and early Safavid periods.


118 In a series of essays [listed in the bibliography], Roger Savory examined changes in the balance between ruling, military, and bureaucratic groups and the nature of official positions at court.

The first facet is the Timurid courtly formation, which the Safavids largely replicated, and those cultural pursuits that were accorded value. In both cases, continuity and memory were ensured by practitioners who were living repositories of technique and knowledge. A related aspect was the long-standing contract between patron and practitioner in the Perso-Islamicate sphere, first identifiable in the tenth century. It was not only incumbent on the ruler to sponsor works of architecture as a contribution to society's general welfare—though its purpose is rarely described explicitly in those terms—but also to foster an atmosphere of intellectual endeavor and cultural pursuit. Art and architecture were consciously exploited as an expression of dynastic and individual accomplishment; art and architecture also affirmed the hegemonic power of the dynasty by displaying the ruler's command over the requisite human, material, and financial resources. Monuments and other forms of urban development offered a means of demonstrating a dynasty's might. Though they could be lost with the passage of time, they could also be recorded through the practice of historical writing. But these buildings and objects merely provided the setting for the court's activities, a broad range of private and public events and ceremonies that animated the social life of the city and its environs.

In gauging the reception of this Timurid court model, we are particularly well served by the accounts of four authors—Dawlatshah Samarqandi, Khvandamir, Muhammad Haydar Dughlat, and Babur—of whom the last three survived the dynasty's end. In their historical and biographical writings, the court and its cultural activities sponsored by Sultan Husayn Mirza and his foster-brother Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i are described in glowing, idealized, and often nostalgic terms, held up as the model for any would be patron. Some examples will suffice to illustrate the enduring legacy of the Timurids, although it would be inaccurate to depict later responses to their cultural achievement as unchanging; rather they took the form of a series of selections and transformations of chosen elements.

Writing in his Tārīkh-i rashīdī (1546), Muhammad Haydar Dughlat draws a comparison between the court of the Uzbek ruler 'Ubayd Allah Shaybani (r. 1534–39) in Bukhara and the Timurid Sultan Husayn Mirza in Herat. His description of 'Ubayd Allah Shaybani reads:

He wrote the seven scripts, but he wrote the naskh script best. He copied several Korans and sent them to Mecca and Medina. He also wrote naskh-tālq very well. He composed a divan of poetry in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian. He was well versed in the science of music, and even now some of his compositions are sung by entertainers. He was a padishah who combined all praiseworthy qualities. During his life there was such a collection of learned men and such a large population in Bukhara, his capital, that one is put in mind of Herat during Sultan-Husayn Mirza's time.120

Muhammad Haydar Dughlat also describes the breadth of cultural activity at the court under Sultan Husayn Mirza's and 'Ali Shir Nava'i's patronage.121 For example, he suspends his historical narrative to introduce brief biographical notices organized by primary profession (poets, calligraphers, painters, illuminators, singers and musicians), noting that he had done so "to show that his father went to Khurasan at a time when the greatness,
population, and culture of Khurasan in general and the reputation of Herat in particular were of the degree mentioned in the summary.” Of the calligrapher Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, patronized by Sultan Husayn Mirza and Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i, Muhammad Haydar Dughlat writes:

Today so much of the mulla’s writing remains that the mind can scarcely accept it, for in most countries of the world there are few connoisseurs of calligraphy who do not have specimens or books copied by the mulla. In the libraries of the rulers of the world, if there are not two or three books in the mulla’s writing, it is not counted as a library. This is a marvelous thing.123

Like Muhammad Haydar Dughlat, Khvandamir appends numerous biographies to his narrative of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s reign as a testament to the achievement of the Herati court. Babur and Dawlatshah gave the late Timurid Herati milieu equally positive assessments, noting the preponderance of men of talent and the preoccupation with art and its sponsorship.124 For Babur, “Sultan Husayn Mirza’s time was marvelous. Khurasan, especially the city of Herat, was filled with people of talent and extraordinary persons. Everyone who had an occupation was determined to execute his job to perfection.”125 At an even greater temporal and geographical remove was the Ottoman statesman and man of letters Mustafa ‘Ali. In the late sixteenth century, he complained that there was no patron who could match Sultan Husayn Mirza in stature, and ‘Ali likened himself to the poets ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami and Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i.126

The importance of the patronage that made such achievements possible is stressed in some contemporary Timurid accounts. One account is Mirkhvand’s universal history, the Rawżat al-safā’. In its preface,127 Mirkhvand treats various topics before describing what prompted him to write his history. After pursuing the project for some time, and occasional discussions about it with “enlightened figures at meetings” who encouraged him to compile a volume, the “deficient currency of the medium” and “the total absence all over the earth of princes to patronize talent”128 forced Mirkhvand to shelve it. Mirkhvand complained that, unlike him, writers in the past had been able “to attain their object through the support and encouragement of patrons eminent for wealth and fame, by the effulgent splendor of whose bounty they were enabled to reach their proposed goal.”129 That was until he fell under the watchful eye of Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i. Then Mirkhvand was freed from the concerns and anxieties that had held him back and provided with a library and a suitable dwelling in which to work. A Timurid decree (manshūr) dealing with Mansur Musavvir, artist and father of Shah Muzaffar (a contemporary of Bihzad), states that patronage (also

124 Their comments are provided in Subtelny, “‘Ali Shīr Nava’ī: Bahkshī and Beg,” p. 797.
129 Ibid., p. 11.
favor) of the arts (‘n‘ayat-i jānīb-i hunār) is incumbent upon all discerning persons (ašhāb-i bašār). The specific context of this general reference to patronage involves painting and corroborates the high value accorded to painting and the arts of the book, which we may have deduced anyway from the numerous manuscripts produced in the Herat court of the last quarter of the fifteenth century.

The cumulative result of these records, reminiscences, and descriptions was undoubtedly an idealized portrait of court life in Herat under the Timurids. But their writings also defined a canon of the literary and visual arts through their insisted focus on a core group of practitioners and by inferring the stylistic and formal values characteristic of these practitioners’ works. Together, the literature about the Herati court presented an inescapable record of achievement and a set of criteria for court culture; it also argued for the perpetuation of sponsorship, lest there be a break in the tradition.

Murvarid and Khvandamir/Amini, the authors of the two earliest extant prefaces, were close associates of the Timurid court and served as key elements in the transference of Timurid values to the Safavid elite. Descended from families with ties of service to the Timurid house, they were born into the class of the religious elite from which the royal bureaucracy was usually drawn. Murvarid and Khvandamir (Mirkhvand’s grandson) were intimates of Sultan Husayn Mirza and Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava‘i, the two leading patrons of the late Timurid period in Herat. Although their official positions would in any case have brought them into direct contact with these leading patrons, a hint of their closeness to them is conveyed by Khvandamir in a passage in his Habīb al-siyar, where he gives a moving account of Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava‘i’s illness and subsequent death. After the onset of the illness, Murvarid was put in charge of the amir, seconded Mawlana ‘Abd al-Hayy Tuni’s proposal to return to Herat where the advice of doctors could be sought, and accompanied the ailing amir back there. He then succeeded ‘Ali Shir Nava‘i as keeper of the seal at the great council of amirs.

The list of literary works composed by Murvarid, Khvandamir, and Amini is evidence of the range of their intellectual interests, the breadth of their knowledge, and their literary virtuosity, the latter demonstrated especially in the inshā manuals of Murvarid and Khvandamir. Murvarid exemplifies the erudite and highly literate secretary prized in the late Timurid period. At that time, secretaries and other bureaucrats exceeded the basic

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131 Khvandamir, Habīb al-siyar, 3:254–55; Habību’s-Siyar, trans. and ed. Thackston, 2:479. Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava‘i’s death a few days later. Khvandamir gives a vivid account of the impact of his death on the Herati community, describing their bereavement: “Renowned scholars cast off their turbans of dignity and wandered perplexed, wondering with whom they would find patronage, and respected men of letters ripped their robes of endurance, not knowing henceforth to whose assembly to go. What a hardhearted mountain it was that did not tremble in this catastrophe!” (Ibid., 2:479). The story is repeated by Hasan Beg Rumlu who describes the meeting of Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava‘i and Sultan Husayn Mirza. The amir needed to be held up by two men (one of them Murvarid), his arms cast over their shoulders (Hasan Beg Rümü, Ahsan al-tavārikh, p. 79).

132 Sultan Husayn Mirza granted ‘Ali Shir Nava‘i the right to affix his seal to state documents over all the other amirs’ seals. It came in response to his concern that he was not an amir by heredity (Subtelny, “‘Ali Shir Navā‘i: Bahkshī and Beg,” p. 803). Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava‘i expressed some concern at the impact his newly conferred status would have on the amirs. See Khvāndamīr, Habīb al-siyar, 3:159–60. To counter it, he placed his seal so low on documents that no one could affix theirs below his.
requirements of their profession by using a language of expression that represented the highest level of literate performance in the court culture. There was no doubt that he would best rival secretaries by penning a suitably witty rebuttal to their terse and challenging correspondence. But Murvarid was more than a secretary; he was still being lauded years after his death as someone accomplished in scholarship, poetry (in which he was likened to Ahli and Hilali), ta’liq and nasta’liq calligraphy, and playing the dulcimer. It comes as no surprise that his son Muhammad Mu’min was entrusted to the Safavid prince Sam Mirza for tutoring. It shows a structure of continuity maintained by heredity (among other factors, including the transmission of knowledge through practitioners and historical-biographical writing). In fact continuity is played out in Sam Mirza’s inspiration to compose his biography of poets (Tuhfa-yi sâmî) after Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i’s Majâlis al-nafâ’is (Assemblies of Precious Things), a monumental biography of poets who flourished in the late fifteenth century. Another example is Durmish Khan, Sam Mirza’s guardian, who ordered a Persian translation of the Majâlis al-nafâ’is from its original Turkish (Fakhri Haravi’s Lâ’tâ’if-nâmâ).

THE COURT CIRCLE: PATRONS AND PRACTITIONERS

Essentially the cultural activities of the Safavid court replicated those of the late Timurid one—hardly surprising given the strong elements of continuity fostered by such elements as literary expression in Persian, creative procedures and techniques, and living practitioners, as well as the “propagandists” of the Timurid achievement who proclaimed the glory of the dynasty’s courts throughout Iran, Central Asia, and India. The broader societal framework was also nearly identical, although future analysis of this specific historical transition will perhaps lead to further refinements. It was divided into two main classes, “Turk” and “Tajik,” a distinction used frequently in the written sources despite its vagueness. “Turk” referred to the qizilbash, a group of tribes (uymaq, pl. uymaqât) whose support for Shah Isma’il had brought the dynasty its military successes but who would ultimately threaten the stability of the Safavid house through infighting and persistent quarrels. In Dickson’s words, the uymaq “formed a closed group with special privileges and duties revolving mainly about their military functions and their special proximity to the Safavid house.” He also notes the elusiveness of the history of the separate uymaq (e.g., Rumlu, Shamlu, Ustajlu, Takkalu), emphasizing that to describe them collectively as nomadic would be incorrect given the close proximity of many tribes to urban centers and their varying degrees of sedentarization.

133 Contrasting secretaries of the Timurid period with those of the later Safavid period, Colin Mitchell (“Safavid Imperial Tarassul and the Persian Inshâ’ Tradition,” Studia Iranica 26, 2 [1997]: 173–209, esp. 209) writes, “the age of littérateurs dominating Persian chancelleries, where men like ‘Abd Allâh Marvârîd looked upon diplomatic correspondence as simply another forum for literary creativity, was coming to a close.”

134 Muhammad Haydar Dughlât, Târîkh-i Rashidî, trans. Thackston, pp. 131–32.

135 See EI2, s. v. “Sâm Mirzâ” (B. Reinert).


138 Ibid., pp. 6–7.
Members of the *uymāqs* served primarily military functions but also held administrative posts. “Tajik” referred to all those members of society who were not *qizilbāsh*, including religious groups, intellectual communities, and the bureaucracy (both inherited and appointed offices), the landed notables, villagers, and peasants. One of the sources of confusion in the usage of the terms “Turk” and “Tajik” relates to military-administrative positions: the written sources demonstrate that for appointment to such positions the two classes were not mutually exclusive categories.139

Like Murvarid and Khvandamir/Amini before them, the later preface authors were Persian-speaking. All were celebrated as calligraphers, and several of them worked as scribes and/or secretaries, but they did not hold the bureaucratic positions of the sort assigned to Murvarid, Khvandamir, and Amini. Students sought them out for tutelage in calligraphy, mainly *nastāʿīq*. Biographical accounts record such details as their court appointments and additional areas of expertise. For example, Dust Muhammad was royal librarian, Qutb al-Din Muhammad was a “storyteller,” and Malik Daylami was celebrated for his skill in poetry. In understanding a practitioner’s relationship to the court it is prudent to think of it according to a sliding scale of formality and informality. In other words, these talented personalities could be employed exclusively for their abilities, hired for long terms with a salaried appointment, or engaged for short-term projects that were limited in scope and for which they would receive some financial remuneration. Work could be carried out at the court or at some distance from it.

The one exception to the group is Shah Quli Khalīfā. As a member of the aristocratic *qizilbāsh* elite, his primary identification at court was through his affiliation to one of the *uymāqs*, and hence as a military commander, though he held a variety of bureaucratic posts as well (*muhdrār, ışık-qaṣī-bāshī, governor*). Chronicles are replete with references to his various activities in the service of Shah Tahmasp. He also held the position of *khulafāʾ*. Thus, like other *qizilbāsh* elite, he not only participated in the court culture but also practiced it. Our primary evidence of this is the preface that he composed for an album for Shah Tahmasp (presumably supervised by Shah Quli Khalīfā), demonstrating his literacy in Persian, and his supervision of the album’s assembly.140

The participation of *qizilbāsh* elite in the culture of collecting and album making at the Safavid court is attested by Amir Husayn Beg and Amir Ghayb Beg. In his preface, Malik Daylami refers to Amir Husayn Beg by the title “treasurer” (*khīzānādār*) and also notes that he was the son of Amir Hasan Beg the centurion (*yūzbāshī*).141 When his father passed away,  

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139 This crossing over is described by Dickson as a “lack of functional specificity” (Dickson, “Shah Tahmasb and the Duel with the Uzbeks,” p. 9). For specific examples, see Savory, “The Principal Offices of the Safavid State during the reign of Ismāʿīl I”; Aubin, “Études Safavides. I. Sâh Ismāʿīl et les Notables de l’Iraq Persan”; and McChesney, “The Conquest of Herat.” This is another factor which questions the true nature of *qizilbāsh* “originality” in the Safavid period, the ways in which the *qizilbāsh* altered the social and political structure of the Timurid and Aqqoyunlu dynasties. A similar functional non-specificity is also evidenced in the late Timurid context where non-Turkic officials could be granted the title of amir or *beg* and be given access to the * Türk devāns* (responsible for Turkic or military affairs, in contradistinction to *Sar devāns*, responsible for non-Turkic and financial affairs). See Subtelny, “‘Ali Shīr Navāʾī: Bakhshī and Beg,” pp. 803–4.

140 Another dimension of Shah Quli Khalīfā’s interests and concerns is shown by his having had the *ṣafvat al-sūfā* translated from Persian into Turkish. See Morton, “The Chūb-i Ṭarīq and Qizilbāsh Ritual in Persia,” p. 228.

141 Iskandar Beg Munshi writes, “The chief of the Ostāljū emirs at court was Hoseyn Beg the centurion, son of Hasan Beg. Hoseyn Beg held the status of emir in place of his uncle, Nazar Sultan; he was appointed
Shah Tahmasp had conferred upon him all of his father’s “offices, possessions, and servants.” Malik Daylami also dwells on Amir Husayn Beg’s participation at cultural gatherings where he conversed on the subject of calligraphy and copied nasta’liq, practicing its rules (al-qawā’id) and reaping its benefits (al-fawā’id) to such good effect that he “caused astonishment in men of experience.” Amir Husayn Beg patronized Malik Daylami as well as Muzaffar ‘Ali, a relative of Bihzad.

Mir Sayyid Ahmad composed the preface for Amir Ghayb Beg’s album, and though he makes scant mention of his patron, information about Amir Ghayb Beg is augmented by numerous references in contemporary histories. He is mentioned in connection with various military maneuvers, mainly on the western front, where the Safavids faced repeated attacks from their Ottoman neighbors. The most interesting aspect of this group’s patronage of albums, and presumably of the arts of the book, lies not in their involvement per se—although the cultural prerogatives of this non-royal group merit further study—but rather in the complex social dynamic that their participation highlights. It may be the case that their involvement in cultural activities acquired a new aspect in those years of Shah Tahmasp’s growing indifference to painting, from the mid-1540’s onward, when they were able to attract top-notch practitioners who would otherwise have devoted their energies exclusively to royal patronage. Other patrons of the royal house, including Bahram Mirza and Ibrahīm Mirza, similarly benefited. Be that as it may, engagement in the arts of calligraphy and depiction extended beyond the shah and his immediate family to the high-ranking officers of the court.

Although the details of the relationships between these people evade us, mainly because the textual record rarely mentions intimate experiences or the details of daily life at the
court, it is possible to outline the main aspects of the social setting in which album making and preface composition went on. An album project created a context of performance for the compiler in much the same way as a poet was called upon to invent and recite poetry at a court gathering (majlis). Album compilation was in itself regarded as a kind of authorship, as the compiler was responsible for recontextualizing a mass of loose materials and of transforming it into a coherent whole. Drawing on his extensive skill, creativity, and knowledge, the compiler would try to make a fitting album. When we examine the group of authors and album recipients, it is evident that album production created a nexus of participants, a context in which ethnic and social differences might be temporarily bridged by those qualities—individual merit, talent, and a range of competencies within a cultural tradition—shared by all members of the group.

Although it is not possible to determine the specific nature of relationships between all the figures involved, some comprehension can be reached through the written sources. Chronicles mention the transaction of official business—particularly military and diplomatic actions—that brought Prince Bahram Mirza together with Shah Quli Khalifā. The latter in particular seems to have had an especially close relationship to the royal house through the various services he performed, particularly his position as ʻishāk-ʻaqāstī-bāšī which gave him access to the shah’s private quarters and an important position at audiences. These and numerous other occasions and connections generated intimacy.

Achievement in the arts, especially in calligraphy, was so valued by the ruling elite that its members sought tutelage from calligraphers like Dust Muhammad and Malik Daylami. Dust Muhammad taught Princess Sultanum, daughter of Isma’il and sister of Bahram Mirza and Shah Tahmāsp; two of her calligraphies are mounted in Bahram Mirza’s album. Malik Daylami taught Prince Ibrahim Mirza, son of Bahram Mirza. Muhammad Mu’āmin, the son of Murvarīd, taught Sam Mirza. Rustam ‘Ali taught Bahram Mirza. As mentioned above, Malik Daylami comments on Amir Husayn Beg’s patronage of him as well as of the artist Muzaffar ‘Ali, and writes that Amir Husayn Beg himself practiced nasta’īq calligraphy. Another courtier, Muhammad Haydar Dughlat informs us that in painting he was the student of Mawlana Darvish Muhammad, who was in turn a student of Shah Muzaffār.

Such informal relations provided contacts between members of the ruling house, their courtiers, and those practitioners who worked for them as scribes, calligraphers, and li-

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147 In this respect the Safavīd post of ʻishāk-ʻaqāstī-bāšī was comparable to the Ottoman kapucbaşı who as chief gatekeeper guarded the royal quarters and similarly had an important role in the commissioning of royal manuscripts, acting as the sultan’s intermediary.


149 As Budaq Munshi Qazvīnī informs us (Javāhir al-akhbār, fol. 110).

References in the sources suggest that courtiers—calligraphers and artists included among them—could even become intimates or boon companions (muqarrab, ički, nadîm) of the ruler with access to court assemblies. For example, in a well-known statement, Iskandar Beg Munshi makes Shah Tahmasp a student of the painter Sultan Muhammad and refers to the shah’s general involvement with painters and painting: “Āqā Mirak Iṣfahānī, an eminent sayyid and outstanding artist, became the Shāh’s personal friend and intimate companion. Whenever the Shāh could relax from the affairs of state, he spent his time painting.” Dust Muhammad also describes Aqa Mirak as an intimate of Shah Tahmasp and writes that another contemporary, Ustad Kamal al-Din ʿAbd al-Vahhab, was excellent as an intimate companion. All of these references suggest that painting and drawing were activities of the innermost court circle of intimates.

Paintings bound into Bahram Mirza’s album offer evidence not only of Shah Tahmasp’s handiwork but also of Bahram Mirza’s. Two of the album’s paintings—depictions of two seated courtly figures—are attributed to Bahram Mirza in Dust Muhammad’s captions. In composing his preface, moreover, Dust Muhammad drew a parallel between the Safavid and early Timurid courts by inserting an anecdote that centered on how Prince Baysunghur treated his painter Amir Khalil in the wake of a serious breach of courtly conduct. The story constituted a historical precedent for the artist’s status and place at the court, while the paintings by Shah Tahmasp and Bahram Mirza offered evidence of their endeavors in the art of depiction.

Details gleaned from the prefaces and a variety of contemporary sources illustrate the interconnectedness of a social group in which calligraphy, paintings, and drawings were made, collected, and then mounted into albums. The sources also highlight an overlapping of expertise that we might otherwise think belonged in separate spheres. The participants’ diverse competencies established a common ground between the court and its cultural activities and the venues of scribal culture, literary culture, and the making of art. Thus, the album embodies a project where social distinctions could be transcended.

**THE RISE OF ART HISTORIOGRAPHIC LITERATURE**

More album prefaces were composed during the first century of Safavid rule than at any other time. When the number is combined with technical treatises and miscellaneous references to art and its practitioners in a broad range of texts, the resulting corpus shows the degree to which the history and practice of art were on the minds of practitioners and patrons alike.

151. Iskandar Beg Munshi, *History of Shah ʿAbbās the Great*, trans. Savory, 1:270. A segment from Hasan Beg Rumlū’s *Al-ṣan al-tawārīkh* regarding Shah Tahmasp’s activities in his youth is also illuminating in this regard: “In his youth his heart inclined to writing and drawing. And later he would ride Egyptian asses, on which he put golden saddles, and coats of gold embroidery, so that ‘Bāqul-ʿishq’ wrote that writers and painters, and Qazwīnīs and asses, flourished without trouble” (Hasan Beg Rumlū, *Chronicle of the Early Safawīs*, trans. Seddon, p. 208).

152. *dar nadîm bī-ham-bāz ast.*

153. An important parallel is offered by the Ottoman setting. The painter Nigari was a boon companion (nadîm) of Sultan Selim II and Nakkash Hasan Pasha belonged to the sultan’s privy chamber (personal communication Gülru Necipoğlu).
Pre-Safavid album-preface writing does not diminish the impression that historiography reached a high point in the sixteenth century. Murvarid and Khvandamir/Amini’s prefaces provide evidence for the genre’s beginnings in the final years of the fifteenth century. A search through the textual materials found in late-fifteenth-century insh" manuals, however, did not turn up any additional examples, though the inshā’ are where prefaces were likely to survive, given the absence of extant albums compiled during that period. The importance of Murvarid and Khvandamir/Amini’s prefaces, however, is made manifest by comparing them to later Safavid prefaces. Such a comparison reveals filiations of genre, not surprising given that the cultural network supported by the Timurids, including the visual and literary arts, led to the codification of practices and aesthetics as well as to the definition of canons, especially through the compilation of biographical works.

These brief observations about the chronological development of preface composition raise some critical questions, which are nearly impossible to answer with absolute certainty. The first concerns the practice of recording the names of artists and calligraphers in prefaces, a practice that arose shortly after the inclusion of biographical notices (tażkira) in histories. Late-fifteenth-century histories, like Khvandamir’s Ḥabib al-siyar, include biographies organized according to profession at the end of the historical narratives in which the key events of a given rulers’ reign are described. Thus, after the events in the reign of Sultan Husayn Mirza, Khvandamir introduces notices for a host of calligraphers, painters, draftsmen, and illuminators. Patched together from comments on their family background, place of origin, areas of expertise, and avocations, the short biographical notices offer the earliest examples comparable to those found in album prefaces of the sixteenth century. Notices about artists and calligraphers increase in frequency throughout the century. If we examine Khvandamir’s text for the regnal periods of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century, we find that the biographies focus on members of the religious class (judges, shaykhs, members of the ulema, sayyids), bureaucrats (viziers, šadrs, scribes), scholars, poets, and sometimes calligraphers.

This practice continues throughout the sixteenth century: biographical notices of calligraphers and painters are included in the histories of Hasan Beg Rumlu (Ahsan al-tawārīkh), Budaq Munshi Qazvini (Javāhir al-akhbār), Iskandar Beg Munshi (Tārīkh-i ‘alamārā-yi ‘abbāst), and Qazi Ahmad (Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh, The Conclusion of History), continuing the practice first discernable in Khvandamir. Biographical notices and miscellaneous references also abound in the memoirs of Babur and Muhammad Haydar Dughlat. References to the practices of painting, drawing, designing, illuminating, découpage, and binding are also mentioned in such sources as Sam Mirza’s biography of poets, the Tuhfa-yi sāmī.

This new emphasis on the artist introduced in the late fifteenth century, as evidenced by the habit of recording a list of makers and their achievements, is usually understood as reflecting a change in status and a new kind of recognition, but not necessarily an improvement in financial or social condition. To support this interpretation, evidence of an increased

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155 Ms. copied in 1576, State Public Library, St. Petersburg, Dorn 288.
159 Subtelny noted the phenomenon of artists like Bihzad who “now for the first time in a hitherto name-
rate of signed work in the latter half of the fifteenth century is marshaled—signing his name being taken as a prime indication of the artist’s new prominence. If this line of argument is inspected more closely, however, it seems an inconclusive form of evidence.

The evidentiary nature of an increase in signed works in the late fifteenth century is difficult to test because artistic production had changed by that time. Artists were producing many more single-sheet works (paintings and drawings), as calligraphers had for some time before them, and we may surmise that this increasingly used format offered the individual artist a different set of possibilities. One of these possibilities may have been to emphasize personal achievement in a way that had not been possible in the collaborative effort of manuscript painting. It is even possible to argue that a basic principle of manuscript painting was the removal, even the suppression, of idiosyncratic elements to ensure harmony of style, since the process of execution enlisted so many practitioners that it could otherwise easily result in stylistic cacophony. It is hardly surprising then that signatures are found so rarely in the context of the book. When there is a name on a painting, it possibly refers to the principal designer who supervised its composition and who provided designs for its separate compositional units.\(^{160}\)

A number of textual references and objects made in the early years of the fifteenth century offer tantalizing indications that there was a historical concept of art and its makers and a consciousness of a tradition to which Timurid artists and patrons fell heir. A history of art, albeit unwritten but with which the Timurids were actively engaged, is especially evident for calligraphy and calligraphers. For example, an album assembled for Baysunghur b. Shahrukh b. Timur between ca. 1427 and 1433 is defined by pedagogy (it contains specimens by Yaqut al-Musta’simi and six of his students), script (the six scripts), and the textual content of the calligraphers’ specimens (pre-Islamic and Islamic wise sayings).\(^{161}\) A second album assembled during the reign of Shahrukh (r. 1409–47), Baysunghur’s father, contains a massive array of calligraphies spanning the period between the late thirteenth and early fifteenth centuries.\(^{162}\) The longer chronological span establishes a connection between calligraphers active during the Timurid period and in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Like Baysunghur’s album, this second calligraphy album is focused on Yaqut al-Musta’simi’s achievement and calligraphic legacy.

Also from the early Timurid period is the ‘Arzadásht, a document that informs an unidentified patron, most likely Baysunghur, of the status of projects in the kitábkhāna.\(^{163}\) This

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\(^{160}\) Scholars have assumed that signatures in paintings mark execution by a single artist as a kind of masterwork. I address the problems with this idea and their assumptions in “Kamal al-Din Bihzad and Authorship in Persianate Painting.”

\(^{161}\) Istanbul, TSK, H. 2310.

\(^{162}\) Istanbul, TSK, B. 411.

document lists numerous works in progress, including manuscripts (with reports on the specific details of illustrations, illuminations, and bindings), portable objects, buildings and gardens, as well as tent fabrics and painted tent poles. The range of media and contexts illustrates the diversity of the projects undertaken and supervised by the practitioners of the *kitābkhāna*. Throughout, artists are named as working on particular projects, indicating a degree of specialization. One project refers to a design for a saddle made by Mir Dawlatyar. Khvaja Mir Hasan first copied the design, and his son Mir Shams al-Din and Ustad Dawlat Khvaja executed it in mother-of-pearl. The reference corroborates one aspect of the workshop’s creative method adduced from extant works, that is, the use of models—either completed works or designs on paper—as a source. A third Timurid-period album, named after Baysunghur because of the vast array of materials that correspond to his lifespan and result from some of his specific commissions, contains drawings in varying degrees of completion as well as paintings.\textsuperscript{164} Many of the album’s paintings and drawings date to the fourteenth century, expanding the chronological range of the album’s materials.

The three albums and textual references from the early Timurid period\textsuperscript{165} give us sufficient cause to reassess notions of the consciousness of an art tradition and the artist’s status. Still at issue is whether or not the practice of recording biographies—particularly of painters—at this time did or did not represent a fundamental shift in the artist’s status or a recognition that a history of art existed. As the preeminent form of artistic expression, calligraphy’s masters and the history of the practice of writing had for a long time been recorded. In the late fifteenth century, the first attempts were made to arrange references to artists into a sequence of aesthetic affiliation and stylistic filiation, a history, albeit one not quite as complete or as seamless in its construction as that of calligraphy.

In analyzing the accelerated impulse to write down biographies and to link these together to form professional histories, is it possible to suggest other sociocultural factors? What provided the impetus to record the names of art practitioners, to assess their relative merit, and to write about the origins of the artistic tradition? Is it possible to explain the rise of historiographic literature in the early Safavid period, a tradition that had no complete parallels before or after? The causes that prompted the inclusion of biographies in prefaces and elsewhere cannot be attributed to a single factor. Nor can their inclusion be explained by a single catalytic event, a line of argument that would be overly reductive in any case. The flaws inherent in the teleological approach, spanning the Timurid through the Safavid periods, are revealed by the instability inherent in a single class of evidence, e.g., the increasing frequency of the artist’s use of the single sheet. The rate of signing is not uniform because the factors that encouraged it are variable.

Part of the explanation resides in the constitution of the court and the involvement of its practitioners and patrons who shared particular interests and avocations. By the late fifteenth century, biographies of poets give a clear impression of what made the cultured man and what pursuits were valued. Key among the biographies is Mir ʿAlī Shir Navaʾi’s *Majālis al-nafaʾis*, translated into Persian in 927 (1520–21) by Fakhri b. Amiri Haravī (under the title *Laṭāʾif-nāma*, Book of Graces). Sam Mirza’s biography of poets, *Tuhfa-yi sāmī* (completed

\textsuperscript{164} Istanbul, TSK, H. 2152.

\textsuperscript{165} There are still more sources to examine, for example, documents relating to artists found in *inshāʾ* manuals.
before 1560–61), modeled after Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i’s volume, is equally informative about the value given to specific cultural pursuits.

Squarely in the Safavid period, and contemporary to the album prefaces of the mid century, Sam Mirza introduced his cast of creative personalities as poets, first and foremost. He records places of birth and parentage and cites selected verses from the poet’s output. In his sketches of poets, he never fails to mention other avocations for which they were renowned. In one place, Sam Mirza refers to them as “arts of virtue/excellence” (funūn-i fażā′ī). Foremost among such arts were poetry and literary ability, calligraphy, and inshā’. In referring to calligraphy, Sam Mirza often identifies a specific script (e.g., nastā’īq, ta’liq) in which the poet excelled, or one that the poet had invented. Mawlana Shah Mahmud is identified as a master of nastā’īq and student of ‘Abdī, and ‘Abdī as a student of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi. In the case of Anisi, his nastā’īq was so good that people considered it equal to Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi. Today we think of these figures primarily as calligraphers. Sam Mirza also refers to painters who were poets, including Mir ‘Abd al-Samad (a master of naqqāsh, taṣāvīr, and taqţīb), Aqa Mirak Naqqash (in the service of Shah Tahmasp and master of tarrāḥā and taṣāvīr), Malik Qasim, Qadimi Naqqash, Hafiz Charkin, Vassali Tabrizi, and Nabati Tabrizi. Some of them were painters by profession.

Another professional group included those employed in the chancellery or who possessed sufficient skill to take up those ranks if need be. Thus, many figures are praised for their erudition in inshā’, a skill useful outside the chancellery, since it involved a mastery of composition useful in numerous venues. Still other avocations are mentioned by Sam Mirza. Mir Ibrahim Qanuni specialized in calligraphy (khattī), harp (qānūn), and songs (naqshmāṭī), Mir Sana’i in the science of prosody (‘ilm-i ‘arūţ), calligraphy, social grace (adab), and conversation (muhāvarāb). Mulla Ibrahim in calligraphy, music (musiqi), and riddles (mu’ammāl). The artist Malik Qasim is praised for the fact that he wrote well in all scripts, for his inshā’, riddles, and prosody (‘arūţ).

The widened professionalization of poetry evidenced in Sam Mirza and in the earlier biography of Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i is matched by a broadening in the practice of paint-

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166 It appears in the notice about ‘Abd Allah Shihabi (Sām Mīrzā, Tūhfa-yi sānū, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 136).
167 He refers to two inventions: Majnun Chapnivis who invented ḫāmān; and Mulla Jan Kashi who invented shīkasta-basta (Sām Mīrzā, Tūhfa-yi sānū, ed. Dastgirdī, pp. 84–85, and 156).
168 Ibid., p. 81.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid., p. 39.
171 Ibid., p. 47.
172 Ibid., p. 68. Referred to by the term mušawwir.
173 Ibid., p. 138. Referred to by the term mušawwir.
174 Ibid., p. 84. Made numerous designs (naqshhā) and paintings (ṣūratāb).
175 Ibid., p. 143. Employed in making designs (naqshhā) and literary compositions (kārha-yi tašnīf).
176 Ibid., p. 145. Sam Mirza notes that he spent some time in design (naqqāshā) and washing lapis lazuli (lājvard shā’ī) to prepare the material for pigment production.
177 For example, Sayyid Husayn Vā’iz (ibid., p. 42), Maqsud Beg (p. 60), Malik Qasim (p. 68), and ‘Abd Allah Shihabi (p. 136). And facility with inshā’ is implicit for others, for example, Murvarid (pp. 63–66), Muhammad Mu’min (pp. 66–67), and Mawlana Ibrahim Astarabadi (p. 82).
178 Ibid., p. 46.
179 Ibid., p. 48.
180 Ibid., p. 82.
181 Ibid., p. 68.
182 Yarshater observes the broadening class origin among poets recorded in the late fifteenth century: “Among
ing, attested also by direct princely involvement in this and other art forms (e.g., découpage) during the sixteenth century. It was a practice no longer confined to the ranks of the professional painter. Moreover, as the concept of the cultural persona developed throughout the late fifteenth century to encompass poetry, good handwriting, verbal acumen (insha', prosody, riddles), and social graces, individuals had to have a variety of skills. It was a sociocultural context in which versatility and virtuosity were of paramount importance, and painting seems to have had an unquestioned place in it. The impetus to record the names of artists and the history and origins of practice surely stemmed from this overlapping competence and from the practice’s deprofessionalization when it also became a princely pursuit. In essence, this broadening of the practice resulted in the incorporation of the arts of depiction into historical and biographical literature whose composition had hitherto been the preserve of the literati and which were not composed by individuals whose primary occupation was making art. Because painting and the allied practices of the arts of the book acquired a new visibility in the eyes of the cultural arbiters, many of them extended their power to shape aesthetics and define canons by mentioning artists in their biographical and historical works.

Other independent factors played a role in this historical constellation, for example, the emergence of the album form and the long tradition of composing prefaces to introduce a work. The history of the preface form in other literary contexts had often involved the identification of key practitioners, so the logic of listing the names of calligraphers and artists probably seemed self-evident. A second factor was the tightly knit, integrated community of practitioners and patrons and those sociocultural venues where they were brought together. A third factor was the critical mass of cultural production inherited and maintained by the Safavids. Each one of these forces figured in the album, which not only contained the products of creative performance, memorializing those performances and their makers, but brought calligraphies, paintings and drawings together for scrutiny and discussion in the social context in which many of them had originally been produced, making them socially self-reflexive objects.

the vast number of practitioners of this art were not only professional poets for whom the Timurid and Türkmen courts vied, but also poets of humble birth and lowly profession. Mir ‘Ali Shīr mentions poets who were potters, drum-players, spinners, tent-makers, bag-sweepers, binders, and simple soldiers. He even characterizes two poets as ‘āni or illiterate” (Ehsan Yarshater, “Persian Poetry in the Timurid and Safavid Periods,” in The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 6, The Timurid and Safavid Periods, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986], pp. 965–94, esp. p. 980).
Most album prefaces mention the patron who issued the order for the album and the person charged with its compilation, but there seems to have been no uniform model of production. In some cases—for example, the Bahram Mirza album and the Shah Tahmasp album—the author of the preface also functioned as album compiler. In others—for example, the album assembled by Bihzad, and those commissioned by Amir Ghayb Beg and Amir Husayn Beg—the preface author was not named as being the compiler, although he may have participated in what amounted to a collaborative process of production. What emerges is that the patronage structure that lay behind an album’s production was extremely complex, particularly the role played by the patron. It is important further to refine the concept of the patron. Several prefaces suggest that the album was commissioned by a patron to hold materials he had collected. Equally possible is that some albums contained materials acquired by the album compiler not owned by the patron. Still another possibility is that the album was commissioned and then given to someone else who had neither collected its materials or been involved in its production. After the album had been ordered, he could be involved in its production or hand that responsibility over to the person he had chosen to write the preface. Only two prefaces, Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s for Amir Ghayb Beg and Malik Daylamí’s for Amir Husayn Beg, directly mention the patron’s involvement in the album’s production. Although it is not always clear how active this involvement was, the features of some albums suggest that individuals entrusted with their compilation enjoyed a fair degree of latitude. This is especially true in the case of the albums made for Bahram Mirza and Shah Tahmasp.

This last scenario runs against most patronage models adduced by scholars of Persianate art, which tend to see the patron’s role as that of arbiter in the description of, and refinements to, the specifications of a commission, despite the lack of clear statements that might support such a role. Emphasis on the patron results from an uncritical acceptance of the official historiographic and biographic sources that stress the patron’s knowledge, insight, and vision in all things cultural. Paradigms tend to replicate these portrayals, and there is, of course, an element of truth in all of them—princely patrons did compose poetry and learn calligraphy, and some even took up the brush to paint, as examples of paintings in albums signed by princely figures attest. When we try to imagine how this patron-focused decision process might have worked, especially considering all the instructions, precise descriptions, innumerable approvals, and disapprovals that would have been needed as the specifications for the project developed, we end up with a rather cumbersome result.

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1 In early studies of painting and the arts of the book scholars favored the historical patron. In this way early scholars, who were often collectors and dealers, were able to establish connections between the refined connoisseur of the past and present, thereby confirming the modern collector’s social status. This link was first suggested by Lowry and Nemazee, A Jeweler’s Eye, p. 41.

2 Although some scholars question the authorship of these productions, mainly in poetry. See V. Minorsky, “Jihān-Shāh Qara Qoyunlu and His Poetry,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 16 (1954): 271–97; esp. 283.
Contemporary book production offers a plausible alternative model. Under the direction of a controlling figure, a group of practitioners, some of them specialists in techniques such as illumination, ruling, and pigment preparation, worked under the album compiler.\(^3\) Shorthand commands and directives among this network of experienced practitioners were readily understood. Such a framework could easily follow the patron’s directives and desiderata.\(^4\)

**COMPOSING THE PREFACE, MAKING THE ALBUM**

The compiler’s task was to supervise the transformation of a loose collection of heterogeneous material into an arranged and ornamented whole. The preface stood at the beginning of the album to praise it and to introduce the collection and perhaps also to gloss its contents, albeit selectively, by introducing the important practitioners whose works might be represented in the album proper.

The album compiler composed the preface and album in the hope that the end result would satisfy, delight, and perhaps even surprise the recipient as he became reacquainted with his collected materials enhanced through techniques of decoration and processes of recontextualization. Discussions about the album may have occurred at intermediary stages in the process of its compilation; if not, we may surmise that the maker was greatly trusted by the patron/collector. It is also clear that the album could deliver a personal charge either through biographical associations attached to particular objects as experiential residue (a feature of all collections), content (e.g., portraiture), and other forms of visual and textual address. Although painting had occupied a prominent role in the spectrum of courtly production since the late fourteenth century and was clearly valued, seeing images outside a text-dominated domain emphasized aspects of the perceptual relationship between viewer and image that had been inherent in the book.

Changes in the interaction between viewer and image, brought about by the increased production of the single page in the late fifteenth century and of the album resided in the charges accruing in the image, through its social associations and its specific context of...

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\(^3\) This model derives in part from one developed by Simpson in her study of the *Haft Awrang* of Jami made for the Safavid prince Ibrahim Mirza (Sultan Ibrahim Mirza’s *Haft Awrang*). Constructed around the significance of the term *kitābkhāna*, Simpson’s analysis of the manuscript initiated debate about the circumstances and mechanisms of manuscript production from the internal evidence of the *Haft Awrang*. Its dated colophons and the many calligraphers and places of copying involved showed how some manuscripts could be made piecemeal in different centers and over several years and then brought together and completed in some temporary “institution.” For a short version of this argument, see Marianna Shreve Simpson, “The Making of Manuscripts and the Workings of the Kitab-khana in Safavid Iran,” in *The Artist’s Workshop*, ed. Peter M. Lukehart, Studies in the History of Art 38 (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1993), pp. 104–21.

\(^4\) And thus like the commissioning of historical works where the patron served as a programmer and the historian as an executor. A good example is the reference in Qazvini’s *Lubb al-tavārikh* (composed for Bahram Mirza) to Timurid prince Ibrahim Sultan’s commissioning of a history from Sharaf al-Din ‘Ali Yazdi. The patron could also issue general directives about the literary style of the work, its scope and content. A cross-cultural paradigm is the Italian Renaissance context in which labor was divided between a programmer and executor. See Martin Kemp, “From ‘Mimesis’ to ‘Fantasia’: The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts,” *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 8 (1977): 347–98; esp. 358.
exposure and use. By its mobility, the single-page image (painting or drawing) allowed for an expansion in the social contexts for viewing. Less ambitious and less labor intensive, these single pages could be made speculatively for ad hoc purposes, such as gift-giving, and could presumably be tailor-made for specific occasions.

Instructive with regard to the personal associations attached to the contents of the album is Qazi Ahmad’s account of the fate of an album of Prince Ibrahim Mirza (d. 1577), son of Bahram Mirza. After a description of the album and an encomium to it, Qazi Ahmad writes:

This album, with other treasures, fell to the lot of the late Princess Gauhar-Sultân khânun, one of the daughters of the late Shah Tahmâsp, at the moment of the wedding of that shining luminary with Ibrâhîm-mîrza. When the latter was killed, she washed out the album with water, although no one had seen a similar one and its price was tantamount to the khârîj [land tax] of a whole clime.6

Another manuscript recension of Qazi Ahmad’s treatise provides a motive for the widow’s act, to wit, “that it should not fall under the eyes of Shâh Ismâ‘îl.”7

This reference to Ibrahim Mirza’s album and the associations of some materials bound into it point to an equation formed between object and owner, suggesting again that the relationship between album compiler and patron was an intimate and trusting one. It had all the potential for restructuring or securing relationships as a contract of service and performance and hence for strengthening bonds. Album making might be understood as one of many available forms of courtly socialization in the sixteenth century.

The album prefaces have many features in common, including the set of topics usually addressed. One topic is the inception of the project—why and how the album came to be—although the authors only hint at the processes of album making through oblique references to “organizing” (tarkîb) and “arranging” (tartûb numâyad) an album, and “ornamenting” (tazyîn) its contents and folios. Understanding the implications of these terms is only possible through the examination of each album’s structure and the arrangement of its formerly independent materials into unified assemblages on single pages. This unified assembly is achieved through processes of addition and augmentation (by illumination, rulings, colored grounds, the repair of damaged and abraded surfaces), and/or subtraction (the removal of interlinear strips of unused paper in calligraphies, the trimming, resizing, and reshaping of paintings, calligraphies and drawings).

It is only possible to analyze the relationship of a preface to its album by using specific examples. The two absolute exceptions are the prefaces of Murvarid and Khvandamir/Amini, for they come down to us without the album that they presumably once accompanied.8 Although there is no way to be sure, the internal evidence of Murvarid’s preface

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6 On aspects of Ibrahim Mirza’s vita, including the problem of determining his date of birth, see Farhad and Simpson, “Sources for the Study of Safavid Painting and Patronage,” esp. pp. 287–88.


8 Two problems presented by Murvarid and Khvandamir/Amini’s prefaces are common to many materials contained in inshâ’ manuals. The first is whether or not the texts were composed with a specific object in mind or as a sample (see Felix Tauer, “Persian Learned Literature from Its Beginnings up to the End of the 18th Century,” in History of Iranian Literature, ed. Jan Rypka and Karl Jahn [Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968],}{
suggests that it is all that remains of an album made for Mir ‘Ali Shīr Nava’ī. Murvarid sketches a scenario for its assembly, beginning with the collector’s order to place some materials he had gathered into a binding for their preservation.9 Khvandamir/Amini’s preface also refers to an actual album, but one that is lost to us. Perhaps its folios were reincorporated into later-sixteenth-century albums, or destroyed, as was the case with Prince Ibrahim Mirza’s muraqqa.10 Khvandamir/Amini introduces his preface as “an appropriate description of the album, whose compiler (jāmi) is the manifestation of proper guidance and righteousness, Master Bihzad,” a description which served as a rubric for the preface in the inšā’ manual. In his preface, Khvandamir/Amini refers more than once to an album containing calligraphies, paintings, and drawings assembled by the artist Bihzad.

Dust Muhammad’s preface for Bahram Mirza’s album is especially informative about the project’s genesis. He begins with an encomium to God, the Prophet Muhammad, and the Twelve Shī’ī Imams, followed by praise of Shah Tahmasp and of Bahram Mirza. He then turns to Bahram Mirza who had spent his time examining calligraphies. One day Bahram Mirza decided that “the dispersed folios of the past and present masters be brought from the region of dispersal into the realm of collectedness.”11 The prince’s fiat is phrased by Dust Muhammad in such a way as not only to record the inception of the album but also to signal one of the central reasons for its compilation: to provide a convenient means for storing and organizing a collection of loose material. Dust Muhammad responded to the order by composing a preface and supervising the task of arranging and ornamenting (tartīb va taẓyīn) the commissioned album.

Similar explanations for the timely conception of an album in a collector’s life are related in nearly contemporary album prefaces. In 1564–65, Mir Sayyid Ahmad composed an album preface for Amir Ghayb Beg. Like Dust Muhammad, and following Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s model, Mir Sayyid Ahmad includes a lengthy section, but located toward the end of his preface, where he describes the inception of the album project:

[during the reign of ‘Abu al-Muzaffar Shah Tahmasp Bahadur Khan. . .] it fell into the hands of the poor supplicant of the ruler of the world Amir Ghayb Beg, and [since] calligraphies (scripts) and images were continually discussed in His majesty’s paradisiacal assemblies and celestial gatherings, it became necessary to study and view the above-mentioned pages and fragments, and because they had not been arranged or ordered it was difficult if not impossible to find any particular thing [that was] sought after, he felt it necessary to give order to this album so that it would be free of confusion. With the assistance of rare masters, skilful artists, peerless experts on calligraphy, and incomparable calligraphers, he set about arranging it and indeed an order appeared and an album unveiled itself, every page of which is de-

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9 Soucek and Çağman state that the album was made for Sultan Husayn Mirza and give its date as 879 (1474–75); see Priscilla P. Soucek and Filiz Çağman, “A Royal Manuscript and Its Transformation: The Life History of a Book,” in The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East, ed. George N. Atiyeh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 179–208, esp. p. 198. Soucek and Çağman suggest that an extant binding with verses by Jāmi may have been related to this album. They also conclude that the album referred to by Murvarid “contained choice specimens of calligraphy and painting donated by persons of culture and learning” (ibid.).


11 ki awrāq-i parishān-i ustādān-i mażī va muta’akkhārīn rā az hayz-i parishānī dar silk-i jum’īyat āvārd.
serving of one hundred cheers, nay, every one of its specimens is worthy of one thousand bravos!\(^12\)

Presumably the sheets (ṣahā‘īf) and fragments (qiṭā‘āt) were in Amir Ghayb Beg’s private collection. Mir Sayyid Ahmad here casts the production as a collaborative affair: Amir Ghayb Beg seeks advice from practitioners and those knowledgeable in the arts in order to produce the album that the preface composer goes on to praise. The intransitive verbs used here imply, in a rather idealistic tone, that the order of the album revealed itself as Amir Ghayb Beg and others worked with the disordered pages. The language suggests that there was always an order there but that it simply had to be discovered.

A comparable motive and sequence is outlined in Murvarīd’s preface that he composed for the album for Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava‘i. After gathering (jam‘ ġashṭa būd) a mass of “precious things and jewels,” the collector ordered the works assembled (mujma‘ ġashta) in a binding to preserve and protect them so that “those who seek will experience exceeding pleasure from them.”\(^13\)

In his preface to Amir Husayn Beg’s album of 1560–61, Malik Daylami, like Mir Sayyid Ahmad, describes its formation and decoration as a collaborative affair, and identifies Muzaffar ‘Ali (known to be a painter from signed works and written sources), Mulla Masih Allah (muzahhib, illustrator), and Jalal Beg (afshāngar, gold-sprinker), as responsible for the album’s arrangement, decoration, and the execution its margins. He then writes:

. . . after a while by the efforts and supervision of these two expert artists—the Hafiz of the Glorious Word Mulla Masih Allah the illuminator and Jalal Beg the gold-sprinker—the folios of this album have been better organized than that depicted on the mirror of the mind, and most of the folios’ margins have been decorated and illuminated in gold-work by the above-mentioned master Muzaffar ‘Ali.\(^14\)

The inception of the album and the process of its production are described in detail. Before listing the masters responsible for overseeing and executing the album’s form, the arrangement of its contents, and its decoration, Malik Daylami speaks of Amir Husayn Beg, who had encouraged Malik Daylami to persevere in calligraphy and Muzaffar ‘Ali in the art of depiction. Amir Husayn Beg had also himself practiced nastā‘īq and spent his time studying that art and meeting with like-minded individuals. In 968 (1560–61) Shah Tahmasp conferred upon Amir Husayn Beg the office of treasurer (khizānadār) when his father Amir Hasan Beg passed away and transferred all of his father’s “offices, possessions, and servants”\(^15\) to him, a sign of great favor. Malik Daylami then inserts a poem that contains a chronogram for Amir Husayn Beg’s year of death.

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\(^{13}\) tālīhā nā ān ān ḥāzzī mu‘āṣīd ba hāsīl bāshad.


\(^{15}\) jam‘-ī manā‘īb va ūlkā va mulāzīmān.
Knowing of the amir’s interest in calligraphies and paintings, every “sincere friend” (mukhlisân-i sădîq) and “agreeable companion” (yârân-i muwâfig) brought him specimens from which he could practice and were amply rewarded with robes of honor. After some time, Amir Husayn Beg had gathered numerous fragments (qiṭâ’â-yi nafis)—each one comparable in value to a specimen by the famous calligrapher Yaqt al-Mustâ’simi—treatises on and examples of beautiful writing, and the precepts of Muhammad of ineffable ornament.16 sheets of beautiful images,17 presumably drawings and paintings, and praiseworthy decorated pages,18 each one of which had been produced by an uncontestable master. Amir Husayn Beg then decided to have an album assembled from these “precious jewels” (javâhîr-i naﬁsa), viz. calligraphies, paintings, and drawings. Every folio of the album would be like a robe woven from gold and encrusted with jewels and pearls; every page of it would be like a garden. More praise of the album ensues before Malik Daylami brings us back to its function: “Just as in the assembly of that generous and benevolent man the taste of connoisseurs would experience complete pleasure from the collection of desirable things, so would the sight of those with understanding and insight find complete enjoyment from the contemplation of the elegance of calligraphic forms in gazing upon the beauty of images.”19

Dust Muhammad’s preface also contains statements that point to the album’s use and audience. Like the albums made for ‘Ali Shir Nava’i, Shah Tahmasp, Amir Husayn Beg, and Vali Muhammad, Bahram Mirza’s album would provide a context for looking, its materials fixed in place, and the completed album destined for his library. As a concluding remark to the sections of the preface covering the early history of calligraphy and the masters of nasta’îq, Dust Muhammad explains his omissions as an attempt to avoid too prolix a composition. He remarks that, although it was impossible to list the entire lineage of the masters of calligraphy, the album’s calligraphies would be held up to “the gaze of those possessed of sight/vision and visual/mental perception”20 and hence did not require further praise (ta’rîf) or description (tawâsîf). He closes the passage with the Arabic couplet, “Verily, our works point to us/so gaze after us at our works.” In doing so, he underlines one of the album’s functions—to invite its viewers to become engaged visually and verbally in its contents. Calligraphers not mentioned in the preface would be represented in the album by their specimens. After thoughtful examination of the specimens, the perceptive viewers could articulate the reasons why a given calligrapher was regarded as skillful and why he was celebrated.

At the end of his preface to Amir Husayn Beg’s album, Malik Daylami returns again to the album’s privileged audience of connoisseurs. “In truth an album has been completed upon which if the assayers of the treasuries of calligraphy and images gazed intently it would be appropriate.”21 Shah Quli Khalîfa also points to the album’s future audience in the

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16 rasâ’il-i hûsn al-khaṭṭa va al-musâ’il ki bā zînaﬁ mà-là-kâlâm bûd ba-ham rasîd.
17 safâhât-i suwar-i hasâna
18 acrâq-i nûqîsh-i mu’tahâsâna.
19 hamchûnâkî dar maﬂîs-i ‘ân sâhîk-i murû’at va ihâsân zâwq-i arbâb-i shawq az jamî’i marghâbât-i īssî lazzatî kâmîl dârad hamchûnî basâr-i akh-i fâhm va basârât az mulâhâzâ-yi lutf-i sârat-i khaṭṭa va mushâhâda-i hûsn-i sârat haqqi shâmîl yâhâd.
20 ba-nazâr-i arbâb-i basâr va basârât.
21 al-baqq musâqqa’ti sârat-i inâm yâfta ki agar nûqîdân-i khazâ’in-i khaṭṭa’t va suwar hamisha manzar-i nazâr daqîq sâzând râvâ ast.
concluding section, where he expresses his hope that if any fault is found in his compilation it will be forgiven.

These examples describe album formation and preface composition as the result of an order issued by a patron. Sometimes a specific reason for the order is given; sometimes its purposes may be left somewhat vague; at still other times a particular patron or reason for the album’s assembly may not even be given. From these features we may deduce that connections between prefaces and albums were fluid and that the relationship of one to the other could vary.

Shams al-Din Muhammad’s preface to the so-called Shah Isma’il II album is a good example of such complexity. Poetic headings set above and below the illuminated frames that mark the beginning pages of the preface give the dates when the album was begun and completed, 976 (1568–69) and 984 (1576–77) respectively, and Mashhad as the place of production. Shah Isma’il II is also mentioned in the poetic headings, perhaps because he was the ruling shah in the year of completion. No other evidence connects him to the project, and he is not mentioned in the preface. The only Safavid patron who is mentioned is Shah Tahmasp, whose numerous honorific titles are all listed, but Shams al-Din Muhammad’s phraseology indicates that Shah Tahmasp was dead at the time of composition. This dates the preface’s composition to after 1576 (the year of Shah Tahmasp’s death) but before 1577 (the date in the headings). One wonders whether Shams al-Din Muhammad took on the project without a specific patron in mind. Equally plausible is that the original patron died during the period of compilation—some nine years in all, though the album could hardly have been worked on steadily throughout that entire period—and that the reigning shah is mentioned in the illuminated headings as the potential, or intended, recipient. These are only a few of the possible scenarios. What is certain is that the preface was composed in the final year of the project.

Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s preface in album H. 2156 provides an example of yet another relationship between preface and album. It relies on Murvarid’s model with the substitution of some words and phrases. When Amir Ghayb Beg ordered an album, Mir Sayyid Ahmad again used a preexisting preface as his model—this time one written by Qutb al-Din Muhammad—but changed it significantly. As a result, neither album exhibits the level of interconnectedness between its contents and the custom-made preface that one finds in Bahram Mirza’s album. The one element that does establish a connection is the list of names of calligraphers, painters, draftsmen, and illuminators found in the preface. But the preface copied by Mir Sayyid Ahmad for album H. 2156 is dated 1563, eleven years before the earliest of the album margins, which are dated between 1572 and 1575. It is entirely possible that Mir Sayyid Ahmad never saw the album, and copied a preface for it at some remove.

Certain lines of transmission from master to student, or particular praise for one individual, can be reflected in the emphasis on works by particular artists and calligraphers gathered in the album. When these are absent, the preface’s relationship to the album is of a different kind. The preface then focuses on praise of God’s creation and the album. Often comparisons are drawn between the two, and some statement made about the benefits that accrue from art. The preface’s flexibility of structure, allowing discussions of key themes to be shortened or lengthened, permitted its insertion into albums for which it had not been composed including its adaptation to later albums. Lists of practitioners could
also be inserted between thematic elements. In short, the function of a preface vis-à-vis the album it accompanied differed according to what the author set out to do: recount a history of art, gloss the album’s contents, or have the preface function as an encomium to the album and its owner. The use of prefaces composed in the recent or distant past led to a chronological gap and potential contextual discrepancies between preface and album, but this was not regarded as a problem.

A second kind of context resulted from the location of the preface in the album. It was generally placed at the beginning, preceding the folios assembled from single-sheet calligraphies, paintings, and drawings, a place that makes perfect sense for a prefatory text, and the place where prefaces in other kinds of collections—for example, insha’, divans, biographies, and histories—are to be found. As in books, the opening pages of the album preface had frames illuminated in polychrome and gold. The beginning of the prefatory text was thus visually enshrined for the viewer as a signal used to mark a beginning. In Shah Tahmasp’s album, the initial page was an illuminated ex libris followed by the first page of the preface (fig. 1); it received a relatively modest broad band of illumination across the top of the page. Subsequent text pages relied on the power of the nasta’liq script alone to animate them with the occasional use of colored inks and pigments to highlight key phrases and names, or to introduce poetry (fig. 2). This basic scheme of using only the single band of illumination could be augmented. In album H. 2156 (fig. 3), the opening text which is full of Arabic quotations, uses outlined gold for the Arabic and black ink for the Persian. Small flowers in gold pepper the background, and a broad margin is filled with lotus flowers and rosettes washed in gold and a thinning and thickening line.

One of the meanings of the Persian term dibācha is an illuminated double-page frontispiece. The dual form of the Arabic word dibaja, dibajatani, meant “two cheeks,” an analogy appropriate to the open pages of an album or book. The imagery is similarly paralleled by the use, in prefaces and elsewhere, of words with multiple senses that draw analogies between calligraphy and the down on a young man’s cheek. The language is ripe with meaning; like the down on a youth’s cheek, the calligraphy on an ornamented double page was the object of the viewer’s contemplation. In album H. 2157 (fig. 4), the preface’s opening lines of text are framed in a double-page illumination, a densely worked and richly ornamented field of illumination composed of rectangular bands. The opening pages of Vali Muhammad’s album are similarly wrought with minute ornament done in gold and polychrome pigments (figs. 5 and 6).

Among the most developed marginal schemes are those found in Amir Husayn Beg’s album. Even in such august albums as those made for Shah Tahmasp and Bahram Mirza, margins could be quite a simple affair, made of little more than colored papers sprinkled with gold. Amir Husayn Beg’s album contained a wide variety of marginal schemes that combined techniques of stenciling, gold flecking, painting, illumination, and drawing, to depict their subject matter: landscapes filled with numerous plants and animals arranged across a continuous space or inside interlocking geometric shapes (figs. 7 and 8). Some consisted of repeating floral motifs combined with a geometric framework. The margins for Amir Ghayb Beg’s album are also lavishly decorated, one example combined stencil-

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22 The specific details of each preface’s physical context are provided in Appendix 1, where problems related to each album’s codicology are also discussed.
ing with drawing in gold (fig. 9). The stencil covered areas of the paper preserve its color, and weighted gold lines supply details of the flowers, dragons, and qilins. The opening pages of Amir Husayn Beg’s album are a visual tour de force (figs. 10 and 11). The illuminated frames that enclosed the text were surrounded by scenes of animals—cloud bixies, deer, tigers, leopards, lions, a bear, jackal, dragon and ox—in combat or at rest, birds perched in trees and wispy clouds floating in the sky.

Each element is executed with precise gold lines, stippling, and layers of wash on an ivory ground. Some elements are augmented by slivers or pockets of color: the petals of flowers, the wing-like protrusions of the dragon and bixies, the red blood gushing forth from the ox’s back as the lion takes a bite. Illuminated panels float above the ground: the lapis-lazuli rays are inscribed over the landscape, and the gutter rulings evaporate as they trail off into the margin. According to Malik Daylami, the margins of the Amir Husayn Beg album were ornamented by Muzaffar ‘Ali and perhaps also Mulla Masih Allah and Jalal Beg. Some of the preface’s pages could be simpler, involving only a gold-sprinkled paper.

The final page of the preface is announced (fig. 12) by strips of illumination that divide and bracket the three couplets of a chronogram which records the year of completion. It was composed by Mirza Muhammad Amni. A second chronogram composed by the preface’s author, Malik Daylami, appears along the lower end of the page where it is arranged inside three boxes linked together in a snaking form. Spaces are filled by triangles of illumination and encased in a thick border. The margin is a simple gold-flecked colored paper.

Though the dominant practice was to put the preface in the early sequence of folios, materials occasionally precede and even interrupt the flow of the text. This is the case in Shah Tahmasp’s album where the last two text pages are set at a distance from the cluster of consecutive pages with which the album opens; the reverse sides of the two text pages are paintings. A sharp division of a preface appears in album H. 2157, where that of Muhammad Muhsin is split into two distinct parts, the ḍibāḥa (preface) and khātima (epilogue), with three pages having preface text on one side and paintings or calligraphies attached to the reverse. The preface in Amir Ghayb Beg’s album uses a similar division, a continuous preface placed near the album’s beginning and a chronogram at the end, bracketing the album’s contents in much the same way as the two textual components of album H. 2157.

The Bahram Mirza album is a rare example of a Safavid album that has survived nearly untouched, and thus we are able to draw firm conclusions about the location of its preface. The beginning folios bracketed the preface between two sequences of calligraphies, paintings, and drawings that provided an avant-goût for the album. The placement of these works is not chronological but oscillates between present and past, a portent of things to come in the album’s later folios. Thus, the works not only announce the chronological boundaries of the album’s collection at the very beginning, but encapsulate a range of techniques, subjects, and styles. In essence, the first few folios form a visual preface that precedes the textual preface. The textual preface is sandwiched between the avant-goût and a vast array of collected materials, its calligraphies arranged according to a chronology that spans the period between the late fourteenth century and the album’s year of completion in 1544–45. Unlike the calligraphies, the arrangement of paintings and drawings in the album does not observe this chronology.
A conceit of a different order may have been manufactured in Amir Ghayb Beg’s album. Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s preface is divided into two parts, a preface and a chronogram. Unlike the preface’s folios, the chronogram was not completed. Its folios of text have been mounted in their margins (figs. 13–14), but the final additions of illumination to the sheets of paper, the seam rulings between text page and margin, and the final drawings in the margins are missing. Only the first stage of stenciling can be seen. The unfinished state is difficult to explain. Although a final determination of the Amir Ghayb Beg album’s sequence seems beyond reach because its folios have been reordered and combined with folios from other albums, some tentative observations are still possible. The attachment of the preface’s first page to the a side of a folio meant that its beginning was not structured as a double-page arrangement, a departure from the practice of all other albums. This feature indicates that the preface must have been preceded by at least one folio, and probably more. A sequence of illuminated and drawn panels, roundels, and frames is scattered throughout the album’s corpus of folios (mainly monumental illuminated frames, ‘uncēms, and rosettes or shamsas). As a group they show a degree of consistency in material, support, and aspects of their design and execution. These elements play with aspects of symmetry of composition, motifs, and color, and, arranged on facing pages, they would have established mirroring relationships. In form they are related to traditional components of the luxury volume, the illuminated double-page frames that mark the beginning of a book, as well as subdivisions (marking chapters or separate texts) within books. Some are formally connected to ex librises by their rosette (shamsa) form. In each case, however, their relationship to parallel forms in manuscripts is subverted. For example, illuminated shamsas do not fulfill their original function because they do not contain the ex libris. It is possible that some of these double-page arrangements preceded the preface.

Similar in effect, for they employ the mirroring relationship of items on facing pages of the open album, are two examples from the Amir Husayn Beg album (although they are currently misbound in the Amir Ghayb Beg album). These comprise large roundels containing dramatic studies of a dragon attacked by ferocious qilins (figs. 15–16). Each roundel is edged in a gold band from which rays project outward. Corner spaces with cusped borders contain floral motifs attached to a scrolling stalk and rendered in gold. In form, the roundels play with an allusion to the illuminated shamsa with which we would expect a book to open. But this album has two such shamsas. Closer inspection reveals another visual game—one drawing (fig. 15) is mottled, its surface scored from folding, small areas of paper abraded and absent—all features which suggest that it is older than the second roundel. The second roundel (fig. 16) is pristine, presumably done after the first roundel. Further scrutiny reveals significant differences in graphic technique. The roundels in effect bracket a double-page painting (the paintings, depicting a polo game and an enthronement, are on the reverse sides of the folios onto which the roundels were attached), and mirror each other through the viewer’s recollection of what had come before.

Like the newly made drawing of dragon and qilins in Amir Husayn Beg’s album, most of the illuminated materials in Amir Ghayb Beg’s album were probably executed for it and

23 Because the preface begins in medias res, it is possible that some folios are missing. The beginning passage Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s preface, upon which Mir Sayyid Ahmad based his own, comprises fairly extensive sections before he gets to the point where Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s preface takes off in the Amir Ghayb Beg album. This subject is discussed in chap. 4.
as such they represent a rare focus for an album. In the albums of Bahram Mirza and Shah Tahmasp, for example, illumination is used to bring cohesion to the assembly of separate items on each page, to accent the formal composition of calligraphy, and to frame a painting or a drawing. Larger fields of illumination are limited to the double-page frontispiece, to a *shamsa* containing an ex libris, or an ‘*unwān*, elements characteristic of luxury Korans and other manuscripts. The beginning materials of the Amir Ghayb Beg album similarly follow the structural components of a book, but in the album their expanded presence speaks of the full deployment of illumination as a category and technique of art. In Amir Husayn Beg’s and Amir Ghayb Beg’s albums, the technique of illumination becomes a central theme of the collected materials, showing the illuminator’s technical mastery. Illumination also had its masters.

**CONTEXTS OF USE**

It is strange that after a century of studying the arts of the book and in the wake of social history, so little has been written about the social context of Perso-Islamicate books and about where and how readers used them. Patterns of exchange by gift, acquisition through inheritance and booty, and the social groups that had access to books are now attracting greater attention, but modalities of reading texts—reading to oneself, or aloud before an audience of one or more—have been largely ignored, even though the act of reading to a listener is frequently depicted in book paintings. The paucity of studies about where and how literature was read and listened to and of how books were used contrasts sharply with

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All of these efforts will be further enriched through the patient and systematic analysis of written sources. References to high-ranking courtiers owning books as well as exchanging them as gifts are found in Khwandamir. Khwandamir tells of an Amir Kamal al-Din Husayn of Abivard who was sent on behalf of Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i to the Aqqoyunlu ruler Sultan Ya’qub. “It was decided that, along with other precious books from the royal library, he would take the complete works of Mawlana Abdul Rahman Jami to present to Qazi Isa and Sultan Ya’qub” (Khwandamir, *Habib al-siyar*, 4:350–51; trans. Thackston, *Habibu’s-siyar*, 2:525–26). But the librarian gave him the wrong book, mistaking a copy of the *Futuhât-i makkî* for Jami’s complete works. In his meeting with Sultan Ya’qub, Kamal al-Din Husayn told him that he consulted the book during his travels, which he had not (otherwise he would have learned of the librarian’s error). When Sultan Ya’qub opened the book, Kamal al-Din Husayn’s lie was revealed. As a result he lost the respect and favor of Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i.

Vasifi records the presentation at court in Bukhara of a copy of Katibi’s *Kulliyat* (complete works) copied by Sultan Muhammad Khandan. He emphasizes that Sultan Muhammad Khandan was the leading student of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi (k i az sar āmad-i şagirdan-i Mawlâni Sultân ‘Ali Mashhâdi ast). The book was presented to the Uzbek ruler ‘Ubayd Allah Khan as a gift (see Vasifi, *Badû’i al-vaqî’î*, 1:165–66).

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the extensive literature on Koranic recitation and the role of reading and audition in learning and scholarly transmission. Rather, it is the book’s visual dimensions—painting and the techniques of bookmaking—that have garnered the greatest share of scholarly interest. The range of impulses that made images in books desirable has been outlined, but the forms of interaction between text and image are only now being refined.

The album raises a different dimension of this last problem just as it establishes new criteria of use that ultimately call for some reformulations about the ontology of the illustrated book. The album was made to resemble a book in its form—it relied on a codex format structure of gathered folios stitched into a textblock and bound into the standard binding of upper and lower covers, elaborate doublures, and an envelope flap to protect the outer edges of the folios. Albums were usually built to a considerably larger format, however; albums in the range of 50 x 30 cm, much larger that the average-sized illustrated manuscript, and upwards of ca. 150 folios, are not uncommon. In the dimensions of its format and in sheer weight, the album is rivaled only by deluxe manuscripts of the Koran. The large format provided a wide surface area for the collected materials to be arranged across facing pages. For their arrangement, a multidirectional scheme was often employed, a mode that ideally suited the album’s use by a small group. This physical feature expanded the intimate, modestly scaled illustrated manuscript that was functionally matched to the solitary reader. In the manuscript, text and image were oriented toward a single position; some manuscripts, like the oblong-format safinā, were so small that they could be carried by a person in his sleeve.

The arrangement of an open album allowed several people to gather, look, read, and discuss its contents, and the multidirectional organization of the materials provided several legible vantage points around its edges. Close scrutiny of some detail in a painting, calligraphy, or drawing which was upside down from one side could be made right side up by rotating either the viewers or the album. Of course, the album could also be examined alone by a single person. Although many elements of the book carried over into the album—the often similar scale of execution in calligraphy and painting, the horizontal viewing format of an object laid flat or slightly tipped, and a sequence of folios protected between covers—other elements of the album established a new form of relationship between person and object and an altered phenomenological experience.

The most significant aspect of this change in experience relates to the role of text in the sixteenth-century album, mainly poetic texts of short form (maṣnavīs, ghazals, rubā’īs), composed in the Persian language and rendered in nastālīq. Texts composed in Arabic and copied


28 There are a few exceptions in the sixteenth-century albums, especially the large-format Chinese paintings on silk found in Bahram Mirza’s album. Other large format works include calligraphies. For the most part, however, the paintings, drawings, and calligraphies are of the same size and scale as the illustrated book.
in one of the six scripts were mainly didactic. In other words, the album’s textual dimension was not governed by a linear sequence like a manuscript, nor did it have a dominant narrative pursued from beginning to end. Its short texts on single pages, sometimes comprising as little as two or three couplets of verse, could be read rapidly, the eye roving over the page from calligraphic specimen to specimen or across the gutter of the album to the adjacent page. Albums could be opened at any point, its pages turned over in any sequence, backward or forward. It allowed the user considerable freedom. Even in those examples where the album’s textual materials were arranged according to an ordering principle, it did not reside in the text’s contents, and was one route of approach to the object and its use. The album’s textual character and the reader’s experience of it are similar to poetic anthologies or digests or compendia. These manuscript forms are also collections of texts of various lengths and could be structured to accommodate two texts by dividing the central field (matn) from the margin (hashiyat). Like albums, these collections arranged materials in a non-linear sequence—although certain principles did govern the overall arrangement of some—and united different literary genres in a single place.

Just as the album’s textual domain is distinct from a book’s, so the album’s paintings and drawings acquire a different agency from those in illustrated books. The works embody the history of a past tradition and its practitioners, as a collection of valued materials that makes a potent lieu de memoire. They exist at a place beyond text, although some of their subjects and themes conjur up recollections of written stories, and are offered up for the eye’s contemplation, for sustained scrutiny and critical appraisal. The primary role accorded to discerning visual phenomena (e.g., line, interval, composition, monochrome, polychrome) foregrounds the visual experience of those images bound into the album. Most prefaces refer to the visual study of the album’s materials: Shams al-Din Muhammad went so far as to say that “even those people who are incapable of reading and writing are inclined to look at calligraphy and to persevere at it,” a remark that underscores the perception of the visual aspects of calligraphy, seeing writing without reading what it says.

An attempt to describe the social contexts for the album in the absence of a detailed contemporary discourse on the subject forces us to turn our attention to the album’s physical features in conjunction with the patchy, but suggestive, textual evidence. The album’s structure and formal solutions made it equally well suited for contemplation by a solitary user or a small group of court intimates. In fact, references to the audiences (the plural is always

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29 Sometimes calligraphies are grouped on single pages according to calligrapher to show relationships between master and student, or are clustered according to like technique. In the case of the Bahram Mirza album, the calligraphies were arranged from beginning to end according to a relative chronology founded on pedagogical affiliations. The paintings and drawings do not follow this order, and their numerous repetitions of subject create coherence across the album’s frame by engaging memory.

30 In collections of poetry, for example, poems were arranged according to poetic form, and within each grouping according to rhyme.

31 Some scholars have observed that by the late fourteenth century features of painting in the book signal a changed relationship between image and text. In addition to a marked vertical emphasis in format, the features include a reduced rate of illustration, the expanded size of the painting to fill the page, and an expansion of pictorial detail. See Lisa Golombek, “Toward a Classification of Islamic Painting,” in Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, ed. Richard Ettinghausen (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1972), pp. 23–34; and Sheila S. Blair, “The Development of the Illustrated Book in Iran,” Muqarnas 10 (1993): 266–74.

32 va nīz ān kasānī kī az kkvāndan va nīvishtan ‘ārī and ba-raviyat-i khaṭṭ va mahāfazat-i ān mayil mī-nānāyand.
implied), and settings (majālis, mahāfīl, suḥbat) of the album as an object are mentioned in several prefaces.

Another line of approach to this question requires an examination of cultural activities and venues at the court, about which we are much better informed. Predominantly literary in function and content, these events in courtly life share features with the social context of the album, as inferred from the form of the album itself and alluded to in a few prefaces. The album was an object around which people gathered to converse and to exercise their powers of discrimination, just as poetic assemblies offered a time to debate, create, and criticize poetry.

Sixteenth-century written sources often describe formal occasions at the royal court, ranging from celebrations of marriages, births, and circumcisions, to major religious feasts and holidays (e.g., Nawruz), qurultay (an assembly of notables or a council), pīshkesh (gift-giving ceremonies), and ad hoc banquets for events such as diplomatic meetings or to celebrate military successes. In his narrative on the reign of Shah Isma‘īl in the Habīb al-siyar, Khvandamir describes many such events. When Shah Isma‘īl entered Shiraz, the citizens and merchants decorated the stalls and shops of the city, and a banquet was held in a tented enclosure; there was music and song and gifts were distributed. Later the shah ordered a Nawruz celebration. On another occasion, in preparation for a campaign, Shah Isma‘īl’s amirs gathered outside Kharraqan where a banquet was held and gifts distributed. At another Nawruz celebration held at Hawz-i Mahian outside Herat, pavilions and tents were erected, extraordinary gifts were presented (pīshkesh) to Shah Isma‘īl by Amir Najm al-Sani—the shah redistributed some of them to his royal guard (qurchīs) and servants. Some time after the birth of Sam Mirza, a head-shaving ceremony was held which involved weighing his hair against gold that was then distributed as alms. These occasions took place in both permanent and temporary settings indoors or outdoors; the place was often outfitted for the occasion with sumptuous textiles and displays organized by merchants and craftsmen.

Other forms of social gathering occurred beyond the strict formality of the court assembly (which focused on the royal presence), where rank was indicated by the spatial arrangement of the court’s members and visually signaled by their garments.33 Gatherings whose purpose did not involve some aspect of official business—that is, a social process in which political dimensions were not dominant—including the literary majlis (lit., assembly, gathering) and the feast (suḥbat), where food was served, wine imbibed, and people conversed. Other activities could be combined with them, including singing, music making, and the examination and discussion of single-sheet calligraphies and paintings, as well as materials bound into albums. Such venues were also critical contexts of socialization, but presumably cultural pursuits lay at their heart. They did not lack in protocol and etiquette: some majlises, for example, replicated elements from the royal gathering, mainly the spatial disposition of its participants according to rank and the treatment of seating (cushions and rugs).34

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which became successively less luxurious as one moved further away from the majlis host.

Unofficial gatherings that took place within the wider ambit of the court, sponsored not only by rulers and princes but by bureaucrats and amirs, are rarely mentioned in the Persian written sources. When they do crop up, it is typically in an anecdote recounted in the historical narrative (examples include Khvandamir’s *Habib al-siyar* and Muhammad Haydar Dughlat’s *Tārīkh-i rashidi*), to make some point about a person’s character, or as a respite from the historical description of events year by year, or as some veiled admonitory counsel. Exceptions include the synoptic accounts of Vasifi in the *Badā‘i‘ al-vaqā‘i‘* (completed by 1538–39) and of Babur in the *Bāburnāma* (completed 1529–30), whose texts are often likened to memoirs, and in which the hallowed historical and biographical framework is infused with extensive personal recollections.35

In Vasifi’s case, the anecdotes served a dual purpose. That he wanted to record his life experiences goes without saying. His imputed connections to the Timurid court and the luster he acquired from that association is certainly another factor. His text is replete with anecdotes of events at court; majlis insiders of the Herati milieu probably related the stories to him.36 His knowledge and Timurid affiliation established a pedigree that served him well under his Uzbek patrons. Vasifi’s recollections are idealized, and lying behind them is always the idea of the benefit accrued from cultural patronage, even if they do tell of humorous and picaresque events to illustrate a variety of human emotions and imperfections. In fact, Sultan Muhammad, known as Kildi Muhammad (d. 1532–33), hired Vasifi in 1518 as a courtier (*khādim*) whose job it was to tell amusing stories that also proferred advice in palatable doses.37

The Venetian messenger Membré, who recorded his experiences in *Relazione di Persia*, by contrast, shows different priorities in what he chose to tell in his characterization of the Safavid court.38 In his narrative Membré describes in detail his official audiences with Shah Tahmasp and refers frequently to Bahram Mirza and other Safavid princes whose company he joined on several occasions for private gatherings. He described Bahram Mirza as “a magnificent man who takes much enjoyment and is always making festival in his house.”39 Membré remarked, “He drinks a very great deal of aqua vitae and spirits of spices, as well as of cinnamon and spices. He has many handsome and finely dressed pageboys, among


38 Safavid written sources are less explicit in general and only hint at aspects of Bahram Mirza’s predilections. Thus, Sam Mirza talks of how Bahram Mirza “turned to carnal pleasures and in nature inclined to sinful behavior” (hażāżät-i nafsānī masrif bad va ta‘bī ba-ghāyat-i nowsarrif) (*Sam Mirzā, Tuhfa-yi sānā‘ī, ed. Dastgirdi*, p. 9). In a Safavid context such a phrase could refer to homosexuality and pedophilia, as noted by Adle (“Autopsia, in Absentia,” p. 233).

whom is one, called ‘Ali Jan, who has so many jewels in his turban-cloth round his cap that it is impossible to value them.” 40

At one evening gathering, when Membré joined Bahram Mirza for conversation, music, and feasting (suhbat), he describes Bahram’s retinue, noting how they were seated on fine carpets. They included a “very handsome” male singer, Naranji Sultan, 41 Kachal Shahvirdi Beg, Qara Khalifa, and a sayyid from Khurasan. Three young men, ‘Ali Jan, Shah Khurram (?), and “another boy from Shirvan” were seated together. On the other side sat three older men, including Bahram Mirza’s parwānāchī (individual entrusted to relay verbal command from a ruler or prince) and his sufrachī (table stewards). Musicians played numerous types of instruments. The company departed leaving behind two drunk young men. Some went to Naranji Sultan’s house nearby where they spent the night. 42

To date, studies of the court’s cultural life have been dominated by treatments of the poetic majlis, and particularly the majlis in the late Timurid context, and the literary activity made possible by the patronage of Sultan Husayn Mirza and Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava‘i. 43 Subtelny has also studied the majlis under the Uzbeks in the sixteenth century and in such centers as Bukhara, Samarqand, and Shahrukhiyya. 44 Although the Safavid majlis has been neglected, it is clear that many of its features and practices were retained and disseminated through the writings of Timurid cultural “propagandists” and literary circles. Differences between the Timurid and Safavid majlis surely existed, perhaps in the minutiae of its procedures or in the preference given to one literary form over the others. 45

Majlises could be more or less formal in their organization and etiquette; they were held by rulers and high-ranking courtiers, some of whom had formal positions at court. In Subtelny’s analysis of the late Timurid period the term designates “the customary form of socio-literary intercourse—a convivial gathering at which the main form of entertainment is engagement in witticism and story-telling, but primarily the recitation and critical discussion of literary works, particularly poetry.” 46 Gaining entry to the most exclusive majlises was difficult, to say the least, and required extensive preparation. The potential for public embarrassment and humiliation was high and to be avoided if the poet wanted to make his mark and find a patron, and, of course, standards needed to be maintained once access had been gained. Many of Vasifi’s recollections hinge on the failure of someone to perform, to comprehend nuances in meaning, or to realize that he was the butt of a joke. 47

In addition to poetic performance at the court majlis or before an audience, poets composed verse to mark specific events. A common form was the chronogram. Sixteenth-cen-

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40 Ibid.
41 Also attested in Sām Mīrzā’s Tuhfat-yi sāmī, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 179.
43 See Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” esp. chap. 3. Subtelny provides the first systematic analysis of the economic, social, and cultural contexts of poetry and the political implications of sponsoring court and cultural activities. For her analysis of the majlis, see ibid., chaps. 3 and 4. Subtelny pursued her analysis in the article, “Scenes from the Literary Life of Timūrid Herāt.”
44 Subtelny, “Art and Politics in Early 16th Century Central Asia”; and idem, “Scenes from the Literary Life of Timūrid Herāt.”
45 A comparative analysis of Timurid and Safavid literary values tends to argue for continuity but to cast it as a decline.
46 Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” p. 162.
tury sources are replete with references to occasional verse that acquired status as a memorable performance tied to an event in time. One example is a qaṣida (panegyric) written by Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i and presented to Sultan Husayn Mirza. Khvandamir introduces the event after describing the patrons for whom Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i worked before his propitious meeting with the Timurid sultan:

On the eve of Id al-Fitr he paid homage to the khaqan, and Sultan Husayn, delighted to see him after so long a time, showered him with favor. The next day, the day of the festival, he presented at his court his “Halaliyya” qaṣida, every line of which was a gem. This only increased the khaqan’s good opinion of him, and his rank and station with the emperor grew day to day until in the end all important affairs of the kingdom were submitted to his opinion, as will be described.

Muhammad Haydar Dughlat also mentions a poem composed by Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i, but this time for Abd al-Rahman Jami, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i’s spiritual guide. Nava’i joined the Naqshbandiyah Sufi order in 1476–77, presumably with Jami’s encouragement. When Jami returned from a journey to the Hijaz, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i sent a quatrain to welcome him, and Muhammad Haydar Dughlat cites the poem in full. Later in his biographical sketch of Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i, Muhammad Haydar Dughlat recounts an exchange between the Timurid statesman and the poet Banna’i, who had been one of the leading figures in Nava’i’s poetic circle. Although the witty and pithy exchanges between Nava’i and Banna’i were an inevitable feature of the majlis routine, they assumed such a scathing and nasty tone that Banna’i left for Tabriz where he worked with the Aqqoyunlu ruler Sultan Ya’qub (r. 1478–90). Banna’i ultimately returned to court in Herat, and the rivalry between him and Nava’i continued.

The power of extemporaneous verse beyond the majlis framework, in response to some event, action, or speech, is also mentioned in the sources. For example, Khvandamir tells an amusing tale about the poet Mawlana Hasanshah, a witty figure who found favor in his old age with Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i. After a “wicked woman” (zd’ifa-yi bad kardar) named Blue Indigo (vasmah-yi kabud) had been removed from her house, a lutanist named Khvaja Mutahhar went to Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i to request her property. Mawlana Hasanshah arrived immediately after the lutanist had made the request for the house, pipped at the post in his mission to obtain the house for himself. He “instantly uttered this quatrain,”

In a city where Mutahhar the lutanist is,
No one can close the gates of debauchery.
Every time a whore \{qabah\} is driven out of town,
This pimp comes and sits in her place.
Numerous occurrences of daily life were immortalized in poetry, where similar personal slights and criticisms are couched in witticisms and satire.

The funeral was another occasion for the recitation of occasional verse. Poets composed panegyrics to honor the deceased. For Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i’s funeral, Khvandamir cites one verse composed by Amir Sadr al-Din Sultan Ibrahim Amini, and adds his own (the concluding segment is a chronogram for the year of Nava’i’s death). He refers to them as elegies (qaṣâ‘id) and versified short poems (muqâṭṭat-i manzûm). The death of the Timurid Prince Baysunghur occasioned Mirkhvand to remark upon his patronage of various practitioners, especially calligraphers, before describing the period of mourning and the burial.

Poets, among them Sayf al-Din Naqqash whose matla’ is quoted, recited dirges (marâqâ). References to books in this rich anecdotal literature of courtly life are rare, but one, made in passing by Muhammad Haydar Dughlat, is especially telling because it refers to the use of books at the majlis. Muhammad Haydar Dughlat praises Sultan Sa’id Khan’s “good qualities,” his handwriting and orthography in Turkish, Persian, and Arabic, and his exceptional ability to read difficult handwriting. He then remarks, “{Sultan Sa’id Khan} never composed poetry by pondering over it, but in gatherings and assemblies, no matter what divan was opened and regardless of the meter and rhyme that came up, he could compose extemporaneously.” Sultan Sa’id Khan became angry when majlis participants tried to write down the poetry he had recited. The anecdote indicates that at least at some majlises, books were at hand for reference purposes and from which to recite lines. The line of poetry recited from the book established the foundation for an extemporaneous response. The response could be a witty comment on some aspect of the poem, an intelligent critique of the poetry, or a refashioning according to a dictated rhyme.

Just as there was occasional poetry, so was there also occasional art. Many paintings, drawings, and calligraphies bound into albums may have been inspired by specific events, although few are inscribed in a way that records their original impetus. Several works in the Bahram Mirza album were executed by high-ranking Safavids—Shah Tahmasp, Bahram Mirza, and Sultanum. One, a humorous painting of the palace staff (fig. 17), with which the album opens, has inscribed below it, “I was made for [my] beloved brother Bahram Mirza.” Shah Tahmasp’s signature appears at the top of the painting at the conclusion.

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57 The Persian has layers of meaning that can scarcely be contained in a cursory English translation. The noun muqâṭṭat also has the sense of a silk garment and the adjective manzûm can mean threaded, arranged in a line, and ordered. Analogies between poetry and textiles are commonplace in Persian literature.
60 In studying poetic response, emphasis resides in the analysis of the literary artifact and not in the contexts in which response occurred. A detailed analysis of specific examples of poetic response is presented by Losensky, Welcoming Fighâni: Imitation and Poetic Individuality, chaps. 5 and 6. For different forms of response, see Losensky’s index entry for “imitation,” where the technical terms are listed (ibid., p. 383). Also see Ricardo Zipoli, The Technique of Gaskh: Replies by Nauwi to Hâfiz and Gâmi, Quaderni del dipartimento di Studi Eurasiaatici 35 (Venice: Università degli Studi di Venezia, 1993).
61 For a lengthier discussion of this topic and specific examples, see Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” pp. 165–69.
62 Their works appear on fols. 1b and 2a (Shah Tahmasp); fol. 85a (Bahram Mirza); and fols. 7b-8a (Sultanum).
63 jihat-i barâdar-i ‘azîz Bahrâm Mîrzâ sâkhta shûdan.
of a list that identifies the six figures depicted in the painting.\(^{64}\) It is a painting full of humor, of rotund figures engaged in merriment, wine drinking, music making, and dancing, all the while scrutinized by a man leaning on a stick. The parodic nature of the image is exposed by the amusing names (e.g., the master of ceremonies is named “Watermelon Sultan” [Qarpuz Sultan]), the anti-ideal of corpulence, and the almost subversive attire of its figures. At the opening of the album, the painting introduced several aspects of the album—it was a personalized image made by a ruler for his princely brother that portrayed the form of social activity in which the album would have been made; and it memorialized what may have been a specific event. Perhaps it portrayed an event from Qarpuz Sultan’s life, of his haughty attitude, or offered a parody of courtly gatherings that went on without the ruler’s or prince’s presence. Another study of Qarpuz Sultan signed by Shah Tahmasp, rendered in a simple ink line, is among a collage of materials on the facing page. Depicting Qarpuz Sultan standing and holding a tray of elegantly stacked fruit, his head slightly lowered, and wearing significantly less ornate clothing, the drawing underscores the humor of the majlis-group painting on the facing page. In this way, the album is able to structure its materials so as to enhance some of their inherent meanings and associations.\(^{65}\)

In his Tārīkh-i rashīdī Muhammad Haydar Dughlat mentions a princely practitioner, a certain Abu al-Rashid Khan Ghazi (on the throne in 953/1546–47), who was endowed with talent in every art and craft. According to Muhammad Haydar Dughlat, “He sent several gifts to one of the ladies in the harem. One of them was a tree cut from paper, and the trunk, branches, and leaves were colored and made such that the practitioners of the craft would have been astonished by his invention.”\(^{66}\) Princely pastimes extended to the art of découpage along with painting and drawing.

In addition to directly commissioned pieces, works on paper were also made speculatively, apparently with no specific purpose in mind, as single sheets for examination at courtly assemblies.\(^{67}\) In a rare description by Vasifi we read of such a painting, its presentation, and the discussion that followed. In his anecdote, Vasifi tells of a painting by Bihzad in which he had portrayed Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i leaning on a cane and sitting in a garden that was planted with trees and flowers and inhabited by birds. In the context of the assembly, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i passed the painting to the first of four companions, Mawlana Fasih al-Din, identified in the text.

Mawlānā Fasīh al-Dīn . . . said, “Master, when I saw those blossoming flowers, I wanted to stretch out my hand, pick one and stick it into my turban.”

\(^{64}\) The figures are identified as (from right to left and top to bottom), Haybat Agha, Tuhfa Jan, Qarpuz Sultan, Mawlana Ahmad Fash, Turfa Raqass, and Ustad Nu’man Na’i.

\(^{65}\) Similarly humorous paintings were made in an Ottoman milieu. One example is a double-page painting by Nigari (Heydar Reis) depicting “Prince Selim practicing the royal sport of archery” (TSK, H. 2134, fol. 3), datable to ca. 1561–62. Nigari was Selim’s boon companion and may in fact be the buffoon figure holding a target. The painting is inscribed with poetic couplets by Nigari. For the interpretation and an illustration, see The Sultan’s Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman, exhib. cat. (Istanbul, 2000), cat. no. 30 (Gülru Nécipoglu), p. 222. For another painting depicting an event at the Ottoman court, attributed to Nigari, see ibid., cat. nos. 31.1–31.2 (Gülru Nécipoglu), pp. 226–27.

\(^{66}\) Muhammad Haydar Dughlat, Tārīkh-i rashīdī, trans. Thackston, p. 84.

\(^{67}\) For a study of the social contexts of viewing images that can be gleaned from a range of Ottoman written sources, see Banu Mahir, “A Group of 17th Century Paintings Used for Picture Recitation,” in Art Turc/Turkish Art, 10th International Congress of Turkish Art, Geneva, 17–23 September 1995 (Geneva: Fondation Max van Berchem, 1999), pp. 443–55.
Mawlānā Ṣāḥibdārā . . . said, “I too had the same desire, but [then] it occurred to me that if I stretched out my hand, all the birds would fly off the trees.”
Mawlānā Burhān . . . said, “When I looked at [it], I held back my hand and my tongue and I kept silent for fear that his Excellency the Mir might become angry and frown.”
Mawlānā Muhammad Badakhshī . . . said, “Mawlānā Burhān, if it were not unseemly and impudent, I would take that stick out of His excellency the Mir’s hand and hit you over the head with it.”

The chain of response outlined in the anecdote is structured according to the pattern of performance current at the court, where an assembly of literati, boon companions (nadim), and intimates (terms include muḥāšib, muqarrāb, ichki) improvise responses, in poetry or prose, when called upon to do so. Each participant tries to outdo the others in the wit of his repartee. The viewers’ exposure to the painting accords the image a particular function: it is a vehicle for members of the court to exercise their literary prowess.

This anecdote demonstrates one form of social and verbal structure through which paintings could be animated. It does not involve a detailed description of the painting and its formal elements; hence, as is the case in the album prefaces, there is no evidence of an expanded descriptive practice in the literature of the Perso-Islamicate tradition for either calligraphy or depiction. But in assessing the verbal responses to images it would not be prudent to conclude that formal values were not discussed. This can be inferred from elements of the prefaces’ pithy biographical sketches and summary statements about the expertise of one practitioner in comparison to another which often highlight formal elements of their work, its qualities and properties, and the technical skill manifested in the particularities of its execution.

In some instances the viewer’s response to images was structured using forms familiar to us in the poetic response of the majlis context or as a witty literate exchange also characteristic of the majlis—the response quoted from Vasifi is one such example. There is no corpus of descriptions of visual phenomena and elements of a literary practice analogous to ekphrasis (the verbal description of a work of art), but such a practice would seem redundant in the case of the album anyway. After all, one of the album’s functions was to provoke responses from its viewers within a social context. These conversations were not written down, unlike the occasional anecdotes about the poetic majlis. But the literary majlis setting is illustrative of the social context in which albums were viewed. Albums were probably examined in a comparably discursive and performative setting by a small group of culturally gifted participants. Several prefaces refer to the album’s context of study by using like or related terms (majlis, mahfi, suḥbat). In Malik Daylami’s preface, he notes how Amir Husayn Beg practiced nastaʿlīq calligraphy: “At intimate gatherings of people of virtue, they chose highly-skilled people and during these conversations sometimes they would be engaged in practicing precise nastaʿlīq.” This Amir Husayn Beg did despite the fact of his important offices (manaṣib) and affairs (mahāmm), marks of his high social status. Malik Daylami also recalls that he was called upon to explain the rules (qavāʾid) of calligraphy and to write practice

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68 Trans. in Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” p. 209. For Persian text, see Vaṣīfī, Baddā’īʾ al-saqqāʾīʾ, 2:149–50. Some of these figures are mentioned in other anecdotes told by Vaṣīfī and in the taḵkīra of Sam Miẓra.
69 bar majlis-i ārāb-i faqż va nuʿānasat-i ahl-i hunar va kamāl mī-gumārand va dar ayna-yi suḥbat gāhī mashghahlī ba-mashq-i khatt-i daqīq-i naskh-ṭalīq.
lines of calligraphy (nivishtan-i suțür-i mashq) at assemblies (majlis), and was thus favored among his peers (agran). The reference to peers, or equals, may be to other calligraphers present at the assembly.

Ultimately, many of the works introduced at assemblies as single sheets, or perhaps made in that context, found their way into albums. Such occasional paintings, drawings, and calligraphies or those made for ad hoc purposes were gathered by a collector, combined with older specimens from the art tradition, and transformed into an album.
Fig. 1. Opening folio of the preface with illuminated 'unvan. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 476 x 340 mm (folio). Istanbul University Library, Shah Tahmasp album, F. 1422, fol. 1b. (Photo: Istanbul University Library and Documentation Center, Istanbul)
Fig. 2. Text page copied in nasta’liq. Rendered in black and colored inks, 476 x 340 mm (folio). Istanbul University Library, Shah Tahmasp album, F. 1422, fol. 2a. (Photo: Istanbul University Library and Documentation Center, Istanbul)

Fig. 3. Opening folio of the preface with illuminated ‘unvân. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 459 x 305 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, album H. 2156, fol. 1b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

Fig. 4. Double-page illumination. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 349 x 232 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, album H. 2157, fols. 2b–3a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 5. Page from a double-page illumination. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 388 x 285 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Vali Muhammad Khan album, H. 2137, fol. 2a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

Fig. 6. Page from a double-page illumination. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 388 x 285 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Vali Muhammad Khan album, H. 2137, fol. 1b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 7. Text page from preface framed in painted margin. Opaque pigment, gold, silver, and ink on paper, 393 x 338 mm (folio), Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album, H. 2151, fol. 2b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 8. Text page from preface framed in painted and stenciled margin. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 393 x 338 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album, H. 2151, fol. 23a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 9. Text page from preface framed in stenciled and inscribed margin. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 461 x 344 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Ghayb Beg album, H. 2161, fol. 10b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 10. Page from double-page illumination with decorated margin at beginning of preface. Margin possibly executed by Muzaffar ‘Ali. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 393 x 338 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album, H. 2151, fol. 2a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

Fig. 11. Page from double-page illumination with decorated margin at beginning of preface. Margin possibly executed by Muzaffar ‘Ali. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 393 x 338 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album, H. 2151, fol. 1b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 12. Concluding page of preface with illuminated bands. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 461 x 344 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album [misbound in the Amir Ghayb Beg album, H. 2161, fol. 2a]. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

Fig. 13. First page of chronogram framed in a margin. Opaque pigment and ink on paper, 461 x 344 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Ghayb Beg album, H. 2161, fol. 186b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

Fig. 14. Last page of chronogram framed in a margin with signature of Ahmad al-Husayni al-Mashhadi al-Katib. Opaque pigment and ink on paper, 461 x 344 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Ghayb Beg album, H. 2161, fol. 190a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 15. Roundel depicting dragon attacked by qilins, mounted on an album page. Drawing datable to the late fifteenth century through early sixteenth century, possibly from a Turkmen milieu. Black ink on ivory paper, 313 mm (diameter of roundel). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album [misbound in the Amir Husayn Beg album, H. 2161, fol. 3a]. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

Fig. 16. Roundel depicting dragon attacked by qilins; mounted on an album page. Drawing datable to mid sixteenth century, Safavid milieu. Ink on ivory paper, 317 mm (diameter of roundel). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album [misbound in the Amir Ghayb Beg album, H. 2161, fol. 4b]. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

Fig. 17. Scene from a Safavid majlis. Painting signed by Tahmasp al-Husayni and made for Bahram Mirza. Opaque pigment and gold on paper, before 1543, 251 x 241 mm (painting). Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 1b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Muhammad Haydar Dughlat begins his *Tārīkh-i rashīdī* by expressing doubt in his abilities to complete the project, for he finds it impossible to craft an encomium that would be adequate for the praise of God:

Poor me, smitten with melancholy and perplexed, how can I proceed when I have not been given the ability to write description
To proclaim Thy unity, alas, my heart trembles. It is all I can do to mention Thy name. ¹

It is a clever way of avoiding the requirement that a literary composition begin with praise of God, His Creation, and perhaps also the Prophet Muhammad, relying as it does on the conventional expression of man’s limitations in attempting to describe God, never mind comprehending Him. ² To make amends for his deficiencies—and for good luck—Muhammad Haydar Dughlat quotes the preface from Sharaf al-Din ‘Alì Yazdi’s *Zafar-nāma* (Book of Conquests, composed in the 1420’s) up to the *ammā ba’du* (“now then”), the ubiquitous transition in literary works that connects preface to text.

Muhammad Haydar Dughlat’s anxiety about his qualifications for writing a literary composition are not entirely disingenuous. By declaring his inability to fulfill the requirement of beginning with God and Creation, he refers to the convention of doing so, and thereby uncovers an unspoken rule of prefatory composition. An examination of prefatory texts across the formulaic gamut of Persianate literature turns up such recurring motifs and images, and a shared body of words and figures of speech. Muhammad Haydar Dughlat is far more comfortable once he gets into the body of his history, recounting events that he had heard about or witnessed, using a language mostly free of those metaphors whose usage would indicate fluency in a set of literary conventions. It is not that he does not know them, as he uses these tropes and metaphorical expressions in his text albeit with often rough transition.

That Muhammad Haydar Dughlat reveals the conventional aspects of Persian literary expression is less interesting than his indication that one had a choice between literary modes of expression. Other authors were far more explicit in their discussions of literary conven-

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² Muhammad Haydar Dughlat here indicates the impossible dilemma of describing God and the danger of ascribing attributes to the transcendent and ineffable, and hence of anthropomorphizing Him. Apophasis is the term given to the “linguistic regress” that follows the attempt to name qualities of God. For a complete discussion of apophasis, or “un-saying,” see Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 1–5. The problem extends to the nature of the Koran—created or uncreated—as the word of God and the question of speech (*kalām*) as a divine attribute. For a summary of the different responses to these questions, see *EI2*, s.v. “Kalām” (L. Gardet).
tions, styles, and modes, given their clearest form in manuals of prosody that often combined general advice on composition and training with figurative expressions, metrics, rhyme, and guidelines for the critical judgment of texts. Writing in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, for example, Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Qays al-Razi wrote:

He [the poet] must not deviate with regard to the species of discourse and the varieties of poetry, such as: romantic and erotic preludes, praise and dispraise, encomium and imprecation, gratitude and grievance, stories and tales, question and reply, wrath and reconciliation, haughtiness and humility, disdain and forbearance; the mention of regions and customs, the description of the heavens and the stars, the depiction of flowers and flowing streams, the reporting of wind and rainstorms, the similes of night and day . . . in the manner of the most excellent and learned of the poets and the most poetic of the excellent and the learned.3

Levels of praise should be consonant with the rank of the subject:

He ought not to praise kings and sultans except with royal terms of description such as those mentioned in the chapter on hyperbolic description. Ministers and princes he should praise for prodigies of the sword and pen, drum and banner, sayyids and the ‘ulamā for nobility of descent and purity of lineage, for abundant culture and plenteous learning, for untainted honor and great merit. . . . Let him address each according to his station.4

Several aspects of the genres and motifs to which Shams Qays refers are found in the sixteenth-century album prefaces in which the criteria and levels of praise proportionate to subject are likewise followed.

Unlike Muhammad Haydar Dughlat, the preface authors selected a literary mode that made unrelenting use of the most complex forms of expression: an alternation of often internally rhyming prose (ṣaj) and various poetic forms; the use of amphibologous words (i.e., words having multiple referents), and seemingly countless adjectives to modify them; long lists of honorifics that accompany references to people, living or dead; obligatory creative acts in line with extant practices, e.g., recrafting an image to lend it a new metaphorical dimension, to demonstrate literary prowess and to refer to the literary tradition. Dominating each album preface is the language and intent of praise. It was a literary complex of behaviors and modalities fashioned at the late Timurid court through its network of contexts and institutions, e.g., the literary majlis and the royal chancellery, where a particular style of literary expression was given precedence. Murvarid, Khvandamir, and Amini excelled in it. Although the literary practices and preferred aesthetics of the late Timurid period did not lack their contemporary (and modern) critics for their excessive ornamentation and artifice,5 they retained their currency into the Safavid period.6

4 Ibid., p. 80.
5 Subtelny has written about the contemporary criticism of Timurid poetry by three of its practitioners, Mir ʿAli Shir Navaʿi, ʿAbd al-Rahman Jami, and Dawlatshah Samarqandi. All three criticized the “new style” (nawzān) which they called takalluf (lit. artificiality) which involved the use of difficult meters, rhymes, and words, and the creation of unexpected, complex images (Subtelny, “Taste for the Intricate,” pp. 57 and 59). By identifying internal criticism of literary trends, Subtelny is able to qualify the criticism of modern scholars like Rypka, Gibb, and Browne as “Orientalist.” Negative appraisal of both the poetry and prose of the Timurid and Safavid periods that pays little heed to the internal dynamics of the tradition has serious consequences, some of which are only now being addressed. Measured for their “quality” against the idea of originality of content, the literatures register for the modern critic a predominance of form over content, a deepening concern with intricate literary games and subtle references that would only change in the late sixteenth century.
In this literary tradition, imitation played an important role as a creative response to works of the past, as evidenced in the literary works of the age. The majlis discussed not only the extemporaneous response to model verses, but also poetry composed in the style of earlier poets and reworked using a corpus of inherited images, themes, and codified forms of imitative response. Reworking earlier texts to produce new versions was also common. When Husayn Va’iz Kashifi composed a new Persian recension of the *Kātīla va Dimna*, titled *Anwār-i suhaylī* (The Lights of Canopus, before 1504–5), he mentions in his preface that he had embarked on the project in response to a request from Amir Shaykh Ahmad al-Suhayli (d. 1501–3), and explains the reason thus:

> Value in modern reception is shifted to specific indices of originality and the performative dimensions of poetry; the mechanisms of reception are largely ignored. A few quotations from three scholars are indicative of the nature of the criticism generally. Writing on Timurid poetry, Shafi’i Kadkani describes it as a “versified gloss upon the poetic images and meanings of the Classical authors”; in prose writing he notes, after Bahār, that the quality is low “where firmness, fluency and other points of professional skill are concerned”; and that “the only innovations one sees in this period are the sobriquets, titles and flummery with which the later writers of the Timurid period dignified their patron at the beginning of their books and the openings of chapters—sometimes one has to wade through two or three pages and pick one’s way through ups and downs of eulogy, balanced and paired sentences, rhyming prose, and vacuous baseless titles” (Muhammad Rižā Shafi’ī Kadkānī, “Persian Literatures (Belles-Lettres) from the Time of Jāmī to the Present Day,” in Handbuch der Orientalistik, vol. 4, pt. 2, fasc. 2, History of Persian Literature from the Beginning of the Islamic Period to the Present Day, ed. George Morrison [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981], pp. 133–206, esp. pp. 142 and 143–44). Rypka described historiography of the Timurid period as “one of literary gourmets in high social positions who set more store by a refined artificiality than by eulogism,” and observes a “disregard of the substance in favor of the form,” and in poetry “an unusual increase in formal elements, presumably for the purpose of concealing lack of originality and poverty of thought” (Jan Rykpa, “Timūr and His Successors,” in The History of Iranian Literature [Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968], pp. 281, 283). Writing on Persian literature during the sixteenth-century, Safa says, “It must be confessed at once that, both in wording and in style, the poetry of this period lacks interest: except in a few of the more celebrated poets little of intrinsic value is to be found” (Z. Safa, “Persian Literature in the Safavid Period,” in The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 6, The Timurid and Safavid Periods, pp. 948–64, esp. p. 952).

Some scholars, noting that the “writer’s literary fame came often to depend on his ability to engage in an excessive use of metaphors and tropes and to adorn his style with a variety of devices,” reserve judgment and accept the difference between sixteenth-century attitudes to the literary tradition and its nineteenth- through twentieth-century critical reception (Yarshater, “Persian Poetry in the Timurid and Safavid Periods,” pp. 966, 981, and 990). Another exception is Schimmel, *Two-Colored Brocade*, esp. chap. 1.

The literary qualities and practices to which the fifteenth-century critics mentioned by Subtelny refer require further scrutiny. For example, Subtelny emphasizes the role of the riddle (mū’āmmā) in the Timurid period and how critical contemporaries were of it (also noted by Rykpa, ibid., p. 282), but Losensky has qualified her observation, noting that the total number of works written about the mū’āmmā was actually low (Losensky, Welcoming Fighānā: Imitation and Poetic Individuality, pp. 154–58) when compared to total poetic production. Indeed, if poetic imitation is understood generally as an index of “decline,” then Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i and Jami could equally well be considered culprits.

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6. Shafi’i Kadkānī (“Persian Literatures [Belles-Lettres] from the Time of Jāmī to the Present Day,” p. 147) claims that the major shift between the two dynastic periods is seen in the ghazal; in Safavid writing artifice is based not on metaphor but on the juxtaposition or opposition of words. Rykpa notes that continuity was maintained into the Safavid period through particular practices, forms, and stylistic features (e.g., similes, allegorical expressions, proverbs, witty sayings, and paradoxes) (Rykpa, “Timūr and His Successors,” p. 285; and idem, “The Safavids,” in History of Iranian Literature, p. 296).

7. Kamal al-Dīn Husayn b. ‘Ali, surnamed al-Va’iz, Kashifi (d. 910/1504–5), worked for many years of his life in Herat for Sultan Husayn Mirza and Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i. A summary of Kashifi’s biography and a list of his works can be found in *EI2*, s.v. “Kashifi” (Gholam Hosein Yousofi). The exact date of composition is not known.
And, although those who sit on the throne of the court of style are unanimous in praise of the magnificence of the words, and in applauding the eloquence of its compounds [miṣrāf], truly the word is that which Hazam said; nevertheless, through the introduction of strange words and by overstraining the language with the beauties of Arabic expressions and hyperbole in metaphors and similes of various kinds, and exaggeration and prolixity in words and obscurity of expression, the mind of the hearer is kept back from enjoyment of the meaning of the book, and from apprehending the pith of the subject . . . and this circumstance will undoubtedly be a cause of disrelish and a source of ennui both to the reader and the hearer, especially in this age, so characterized by fastidiousness, in which the minds of its children have become nice to such a degree that they expect to perceive the meaning without its being decked-out on the richly ornamented bridal-bed, as it were, of language; how much more when in some of the words they may require to employ a minute comparison of the dictionary, and to examine glossaries with care. Hence, too, it all but came to pass that a book of such preciousness [as this is] was almost neglected and abandoned, and that the people of the world were deprived of its advantages and excluded from them.9

To remedy this neglect, the Turkish amir ordered Kashīfi to “clothe the said book in a new dress, and bestow fresh adornment on the beauty of its tales of esoteric meaning, which were veiled and concealed by the curtain of obscure words and the wimple of difficult expressions.”10 In other words the existing Persian translation of the original Arabic Kalīla wa Dimna by Nasr Allah b. Muhammad (done between 1143 and 1146) was still too Arabized in its vocabulary, and the obscurity of its expressions forced the reader to turn to dictionaries and glossaries. Kashīfi was to produce a new version that would be readily comprehended by his audience and that would bring the aesthetic of the text up to date, thereby saving it and its valuable lessons from neglect.11 Mir ‘Alī Shir Nava‘ī had given similar advice to Mirkhvand; he told him to write his history in a style “free from the artificial ornaments of allegory and metaphor, exempt from the reproach of plagiarism, and far removed from the fault of enigmatic and obscure expressions . . . observe the medium between prolixity and conciseness.”12

‘Abd al-Vasi‘ Nizami was another figure at the court of Sultan Husayn Mirza in Herat. Khvandamir/Amini writes in glowing terms of his “good personal qualities and . . . expertise in the art of composition and writing correspondence and edicts.”13 ‘Abd al-Vasi‘ Nizami compiled an inshā‘ (a model book of composition) from the materials that he composed.14 Khvandamir/Amini also comments, however, on ‘Abd al-Vasi‘ Nizami’s failure to write a history of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s reign that satisfied the ruler; he used too many similes and metaphors.

Continuity in literary tradition from the Timurid to the Safavid dynasty and into the

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10 Ibid., pp. 10–11.
11 Browne considered the result of Kashīfi’s reworking to have produced the opposite literary effect, “full of absurd exaggerations, recondite words, vain epithets, far-fetched comparisons and tasteless bombast and represents to perfection the worst style of those florid writers who flourished under the patronage of the Timurids” (Edward G. Browne, A Literary History of Persia (A. D. 1265-1502), 4 vols. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902–28], 2:352).
13 Khvandamir, Ḥabīb’s-siyār, trans. Thackston, p. 520.
remaining years of the sixteenth century is manifest in the history of album-preface writing. Murvarid’s preface was used as a direct model and Khvandamir/Amini’s was imitated more generally. Their prefaces, along with other texts written by them, survived into the Safavid period in inšhā’. In choosing a preface for his history, Muhammad Haydar Dughlat went to Sharaf al-Din ‘Ali Yazdi, who composed a preface for his Zafar-nāma, a text commissioned by the Timurid Prince Ibrahim Sultan to record and celebrate the military victories of his grandfather Timur. Yazdi’s preface was available in manuscript copies of the Zafar-nāma, a text celebrated in the Safavid period, and also in his very own inšhā’.15 In many respects, Yazdi’s panegyric biography of Timur and his sons inaugurated a literary trend that reached its fullest development by the century’s end.16 At the end of that Timurid century was Kashīfī. A portion of his preface to the Anvār-i suhaylī would be used some eighty years later by Muhammad Muhsin for an album preface. The same procedure is found in Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s use of models composed by Murvarid and Qutb al-Din Muhammad.17

Continuity of vocabulary and the repertoire of figures of speech and themes are joined by specific uses of and references to literary precedent. All of these facets—linguistic, thematic, and organizational—underscore the performative dimension of literary expression, including the album preface.18 In producing literature the outcome was always partly anticipated. The newly made work derived legitimacy and coherence from its predecessors, and its novelty lay in subtle departures and surprising changes from all that had come before.19 Some have criticized this literary process for producing a tropological literature devoid of originality, an inwardly spiraling circle of increasing self-referentiality whereby form became content. But this judgment can quite easily be turned on its head. In the process of imitat-

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15 In his section on Timurid history, Yahya b. ‘Abd al-Latif Qazvini refers to Sharaf al-Din ‘Ali Yazdi and notes that the Zafar-nāma was completed in 828 (1424–25) at the order of Ibrahim Sultan. It is an unusual reference in Qazvini’s general history, especially because he does not mention any of the cultural achievements of other Timurid princes (Yahya b. ‘Abd al-Latif Qazvini, Lubb al-tavarīkh [Tehran: Intisharāt-i Bunyād va Guyā, 1363/1984], pp. 313–14). He dwells on Ibrahim Sultan’s numerous calligraphies for buildings in Shiraz and his commissioning of Yazdi to write the book. Qazvini completed his history in 948 (1542). Elsewhere Qazvini singles out the Zafar-nāma when referring to the numerous histories that recorded Timurid victories (ibid., p. 302).

16 The same intertextual phenomenon is found in prefaces to Safavid chronicles studied by Quinn. See Sholeh Quinn, “The Historiography of Safavid Prefaces,” Pembroke Papers 4 (1996): 1–25; esp. 2–20. Quinn studies instances of close references to preceding models, for example, Khvandamir’s use of Mirkhvant’s preface to the Rawḥat al-safā’ (ibid., pp. 3–6).

17 The same intertextual phenomenon is found in prefaces to Safavid chronicles studied by Quinn. See Sholeh Quinn, “The Historiography of Safavid Prefaces,” Pembroke Papers 4 (1996): 1–25; esp. 2–20. Quinn adds that in reusing models the author could modify them in various ways “such as versifying, simplifying, paraphrasing, and updating to make his own final version appropriate for the time” (ibid.).

18 The practice, also current in historiography, is often described as plagiarism, which Quinn notes is not “accurate or useful” (Sholeh Quinn, “The Dreams of Shaykh Safi al-Din and Safavid Historical Writing,” Iranian Studies 29, 1–2 [Winter/Spring 1996]: 127–47; esp. 131). Quinn adds that in reusing models the author could modify them in various ways “such as versifying, simplifying, paraphrasing, and updating to make his own final version appropriate for the time” (ibid.).

19 One of the fascinating problems of this intertextual literary culture is recognizing a specific literary precedent. Even in those instances where a specific intertext was unidentifiable, knowledge of the creative process was such that a text’s intertextuality was apprehended without knowing the source. For a different focus on this issue, see Michael Riffaterre, “L’Intertexte inconnu,” Littérature 41 (February 1981): 4–7. He suggests that what activates the “intertextual mechanism . . . is the perception of the traces of the intertext within the text” (ibid., pp. 5–6).
ing a model, the coherence and legibility of the newly crafted text depended on knowledge of its literary references and might be said to confer further originality upon the model while acquiring its own measure of the same. In essence, each work is a step backward and forward to past and future performances. Various levels of competence are evidenced in the prefaces, although all of their authors were immersed in modes of literary expression and tradition. Muhammad Haydar Dughlat and Mir Sayyid Ahmad, whose prefaces are appropriations and reworkings of earlier models, adequately attest to the challenge of responding to tradition.

ORGANIZATION AND SEQUENCE

All the prefaces have a set of motifs that constitute their building blocks; some are primary and others are secondary in importance. In selecting and joining these units together, considerable flexibility, not only in the length but also in sequence, was allowed. Only one unit, praise of God and Creation, had the exclusive right to come first so it appeared in all prefaces of albums and books. Other motifs—an account of the album’s inception and praise of the album’s patron, agent of production, and the resulting object—were almost always present, but could be arranged in any sequence and could reappear later in the preface for expanded treatment if earlier they had only been touched upon briefly.

The following analysis summarizes some of the prefaces to show how these motifs are presented in the order of appearance in the texts. Although this method runs the risk of identifying a genre by isolating key themes and elements and is thus a method of analysis that reflects its author’s own priorities and interests, an attempt has been made here to identify and distill motifs inclusively while avoiding the attendant problem of establishing a fixed and rigid taxonomy of the genre by acknowledging those permutations that exist between individual prefatory compositions. Permutations occur in both sequence and treatment: for example, one motif can be expressed in prose in one preface and poetry in an-

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20 On the interplay between original, copy, mastery and mastercopy, and a review of modernist and postmodernist attitudes to original and copy, see Richard Shiff, “Mastercopy,” Iris 1, 2 (1983): 113–27.
21 Comparable flexibility is found in the accessus ad auctores tradition. See Quain, The Medieval Accessus ad Auctores, p. 1.
22 These motifs bear a striking resemblance to several genres in addition to the beginning section of the *magnāvīs*, a poetic form of rhymed couplet, generally romantic or mystical in nature. *Magnāvīs* began with praise of God invoking His blessing, praise of the Prophet Muhammad, a eulogy to the poem’s patron, and an explanation of the reason for compiling the book.
other. In this way it becomes possible to discern patterns of convergence in, and divergence from, a specific literary practice and hence to understand how the reader apprehended a genre against or through which the new preface was composed.\(^24\)

Although a significant number of prosody manuals exist for Arabic and Persian literary traditions,\(^25\) discussing the practice of their composition was apparently not an activity to which littérateurs habitually turned. The authors of prefaces do not say why or how they composed their texts, and the state of scholarly literature about these prosody manuals is such that many questions about literary practices and criticism remain unanswered.\(^26\) Thus, deducing literary practices is only possible through a study of the texts themselves and the occasional references made by authors to their craft.\(^27\) Indeed, preface authors did the same thing: when composing new prefaces they consulted earlier ones from albums and written texts available in sources like the \textit{inshā}'s. Aspects of style and language and the rules of performance were acquired through knowledge of precedent and absorbed, assimilated, and perfected by practice.

Murvarid’s “Composition for an Album” (\textit{Inshā’-yi muraqqā'}) for Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i, 1491–92. Murvarid opens the preface with the image of the creation of the “multicolored album of the marvelous creation of the heavens”\(^28\) followed by a series of quotations from the Ko-

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26 In her essay on metaphor (\textit{isti‘āra}), Meisami notes that many of the early Persian manuals of prosody are based on Arabic ones without too much critical analysis. In an analysis of a few manuals, she is able to demonstrate changes in the definition of metaphor across the Persian examples but emphasizes the “need for a comprehensive study that would trace developments in poetic practice through the comparison of different poets and of usage in different periods” \textit{(EI}, s.v. \textit{“Estē‘āra”} [Julie S. Meisami]). At this time the study of Arabic prosody is more developed than Persian prosody although some of its principles can be applied to Persian.

Of great interest are possible continuities in the science of rhetoric as a social practice. Numerous continuities are apparent between classical writers and early Arab ones and beyond. For example, see Kamal Abu Deeb, “\textit{Al-Jurjānī}’s Classification of \textit{Istī’āra} with Special Reference to Aristotle’s Classification of Metaphor,” \textit{Journal of Arabic Literature} 2 (1971): 48–75. For some of the problems involved in this connection, see Heinrichs, “Literary Theory: The Problem of Its Efficiency,” esp. pp. 32–33.

27 As noted by Clinton, “Esthetics by Implication,” p. 74.

28 \textit{muraqqā’-i mulammād-ī hadī al-ibdāl-ī siphr}. 

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ran—including 91:3–4, “The night when it covers him over, the day when it reveals his radiance”;29 and 81:17–18, “The closing night, the rising dawn”—and two hadiths—“The pen dried up with what would be [until doomsday],”30 and a reference to God’s creation with “the first thing that God created was the pen”31—then two additional quotations from the Koran 3:47, “He says ‘Bel!’ and it is,” and 7:154, “Inscribed on them was guidance and grace.” The last quotation referred to the tablets given to the prophet Moses. Murvarid then goes on to say that studying the “fine meanings of the Koran” and the “seven traditions” for the creation of archetypes and forms was important, and adding that such a pursuit is not possible without rhetorical terms (alfāz), tropes (‘ibāra), words (aqvād), and metaphors (istī‘a).32 Ideas are preserved and immortalized through time only by the book and by writing. Reinforcement is provided by a poem that stresses the importance of books for allegory and topoi, concluding, “If there were no flowing streams in the orchard/no trace of flowers and basil would remain” (zi āb salsahā dar chaman agar nabūd/ namānad az gul va rayhān ba-bāgh hīch azgār).

In his next section Murvarid notes the degrees and ranks for each craft of refined artwork and every form of art: people who strive to reach the highest level in them, he says, should guard against pride. A poem attributed to ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad and first Shi’ite imam, is cited as an example of the benefits and value of calligraphy:

He who, if he struck his vengeful sword at the infidels’ head,
would cast them from the blackness of unbelief into the darkness of non-being.
And if his gem-scattering pen began to move,
at every minute it would obtain bounty from the origin of the tablet and pen.33

The importance accorded to ‘Ali b. Abi Talib in the prefaces, where his roles as calligrapher and inventor of Kufic and illumination are stressed and augment the status of both activities, took on a particular resonance among the Shi‘ite audience of the Safavid court. Murvarid continues with another of ‘Ali’s sayings, “I recommend to you the beauty of calligraphy for it is among the keys to sustenance.” He then makes a logical equation between ‘Ali’s involvement with calligraphy—a meritorious and noble craft34—and the value attached to such a pursuit, citing calligraphic specimens that ‘Ali left to posterity. He adds a poem in praise of ‘Ali:

29 Here the order of verses 3 and 4 is reversed.
30 jaffa al-qalam bimā hava kā‘īn.
31 awṣaf ma khalaṣa Allāh al-qalam.
32 Believing the album to have been a collection of poetry, Subtelny interprets this passage as an apology for the poetic art. See Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” p. 66.
33 The last line is especially rich in meaning. Fayţ also has the sense of a vessel brimming over with liquid, of copiousness and emanation, while mabda‘ can refer to a source, a principle. Together they conjure up an image of the pen brimming over with liquid, ink in the pen’s case, emanating from the divinely preserved tablet and pen.
34 qadr va sharaf-i in fann.
Like an unbored pearl from the ocean of sanctity
is every point that came from his pearl-scattering pen.
You say it was as if his fingers were in the hands of the Omnipotent
as if the reed in his miraculous fingers were a sign of Him.

\[
\text{(nā sufta gauhar\# ast zī bāh\#r-i valāyatash)
har nuqṭā kāmād az qalam\#-i dur-fishān\#-ī ū
gū\#r kī būd dar yadd\#-ī qudāt anāmilash}
chun khāmā dar anāmil\#-i mu\#jīz nishān\#-ī ū}\]

Murvarid returns to a saying, “Your offspring have studied writing because writing is one of the endeavors of kings and sultans.” This is meant to urge the reader to strive for perfection in calligraphy. The foundation for success lies in the imitation of calligraphic examples by those who have practiced this art.

At this point Murvarid turns to the album. He outlines the process of gathering materials and mentions that the objective of the album’s collector was to provide a means for protecting its separate pieces (ajzā’) in a solid and strong binding (jild\#-i ma\#ml va ma\#fhīz). Some of the materials listed for inclusion in it are pages (aerāq), pieces (ajzā’), histories (asārī), royal mandates/diplomas (manāshīr) among other things (va ghāyr zālika) that had been assembled (ki mujma\# gashta).\(^{35}\) A few calligraphers (ba\#î fu\#îl\#-yi kha\#štīn\#s) and artists (\#uraf\#-yi hunar iqtib\#s) busied themselves working on it until “a worthy arrangement and fitting decoration were brought into being.”\(^{36}\) He gives the date of completion as 897 (1491–92), and notes that portions of the concluding poem yield a chronogram for the date. The poem is complex in its imagery:

So long as this album ornaments the book of the world,
Mercury will use it to derive his order.
So long as its camphor-like whiteness becomes appealing because of its script,
at every moment it will surpass youths in excellence.
Virgo casts her shadow on the pages of constellations Lyre and Eagle
so long as powdered musk is scattered over silvery strata.
If someone asked about its completion, [as] a chronogram,
I would say “The pages were gathered to form an album.”

\(^{35}\) The terms used for the album’s contents and the fact that he mentions a group of poets assembled to make the album led Subtelny to conclude that this preface was composed as an introduction to an anthology of poetry (ibid., p. 62). The terms used by Murvarid—asārī and manāshīr—are used by Khvandamir when he refers to the inshā of both Murvarid and Isfizari. The album may have been composed entirely of calligraphies and poems, as opposed to other categories of materials like paintings and drawings. It is not likely that the term muraqqī would be used for an edition of collected poetry, most commonly referred to by such words as div\#n, jung, safīna, or kull\#yat.

One extant album dating to the early sixteenth century is composed of calligraphic exercises written in nastā\#līq by Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi and Shah Mahmud al-Nishapuri (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, ms. no. 179). It comprises eight folios (242 x 159 mm; written surfaces 127 x 75 mm) stitched into a lacquer binding. The calligraphies were executed as single sheets of paper that were gathered and framed in margins of colored paper sprinkled with gold. The album begins with Koran 1 (fol. 1b), and a saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (fol. 2a); fol. 2a is signed by Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi. Subsequent pages (fols. 2b–7a and fols. 7b–8a) are a series of texts signed by Shah Mahmud al-Nishapuri (fol. 7a, “at Tabriz”). The book offers an interesting variation on sixteenth-century albums and a possible parallel to the contents of the album described by Murvarid. This book was assembled from calligraphies using a process then current for manuscript production, but these aspects of its structure are equally prevalent in album making. Further, its definition according to famous calligraphers and by specific texts also makes it similar to albums.

\(^{36}\) chun\#anchī zāhīr ast tartībī tā’īq va ta\#yīnī mu\#wāfīq dīdand.
The fifth hemistich could also convey the image of a hyacinth casting its shadow over fields of wild rose, but the constellation imagery makes more sense because of the following line of musk sprinkled on heavenly strata.

Khvandamir/Amini’s Preface to an Album made by Bihzad (before 1523). Khvandamir/Amini’s preface begins with an encomium to God, referred to as the “immortal” or “incomparable” painter (naqqāsh-i azal), and in it His creative act is likened to the arranging of an “album with the heavens for its leaves,” but without pigments or pen (bī-rang va qalam). To emphasize God’s creative act by speech alone, he cites Koran 3:47, “[He says] ‘Be!’ and it is.” Creation is then compared to a workshop of variegated paintings of changing colors. Khvandamir/Amini turns to God’s fashioning of man, this time by reference to Koran 40:64 (“. . . who fashioned you and gave you excellent form”); and 17:70 (“. . . and exalted them over many of Our creatures”). He further develops the imagery of God’s creative act in a masnavī, by referring to materials (pigments), and implements (brush and pen):

When the divine pen wrote forms,
man became the manifestation of learning and skill.
When He hastened to reveal His skill,
the page of days was ornamented by Him.

Creation becomes an act of writing and of depicting:

The beauty of the writing and the beguiling image [painting/drawing]
drives patience from the learned man’s thought.
The eye is favored for seeing the writing’s form
but the heart is ignorant of its meaning.
Its form and meaning are praiseworthy,
they brighten the pupil of the eye.

39 The final bayt employs the concept of form (sūrat) and meaning (ma’nī), which among other things signi-
Returning to prose and to the “excellence of writing,” Khvandamir/Amini cites more Koranic verses in support of the benefits of calligraphy. He then turns to the “human soul’s savoring of design and depiction.” In an excursus into history, the preface brings the two occupations—calligraphy and depiction—together, claiming their continued practice by the noblest of Adam’s offspring since the beginning of time. In the next segment he deals with the album directly, noting the identification of important practitioners in the preface, and the inclusion of their calligraphies, paintings, and drawings in the album compiled (jāmi’) and arranged (murattab) by Bihzad.

A lengthy encomium to Bihzad, “the wonder of the age” (nādir al-ʼaṣr), follows. In it Bihzad is compared to Mani, founder of Manichaeism and painter of extraordinary skill, whom he has surpassed in the art of painting. The poem’s last two distichs praise Bihzad’s arrangement:

The beauty of these pages is a thing that further perfects these rarities.
As for the calligraphy’s form and the painting’s beauty no other page could have been written like it.

(kār ast jamāl-i in sahā’if
azād kamāl-i in tārā’if
dar šārat-i khaṭṭa wa ḥusn-i tāsīr
zi in sān vāraqt na-yāft tahrīr)

The album even rivals the “album of the sky” (muraqqa’-i sipihr). Its calligraphies are described as “pearls brought forth by the bejeweled pen of the diver from the sea of the inkwell to the shore of these folios”; its paintings, memorials (ma’āgīr) of their makers, are transferred (naqsh namūda) from the heart’s tablet to the pages of this book and are compared to houris who enchant the soul. Khvandamir/Amini finishes his praise of the album in a poem (qiṭ’a) whose dominant image compares the album and its contents to a sea containing pearls:

Every coveted pearl that is nourished in the ocean of contentment,

is to be found in this sea [i.e., album].
Like beauty, it lights the torch of the eye, like the meeting of lovers, it seizes every heart.

(har gauchar-i murād ki dar bahr-i khūshdīlī
parvarda-and jumla dar in bahr hāsil ast
hamchun jamāl mas‘īla afrāz-i dīdā ast
hamchun vāsāl khurramī andūz-i har dīl ast)

As a conclusion he comments on the task of composing a description worthy of the album, underscoring that only certain people are capable of doing so. He then adds yet another
poem praising Bihzad, and ends with a blessing on God, the Prophet Muhammad and his family.

Muhammad Salih’s Preface to an Album for Vali Muhammad, 1609. Muhammad Salih begins his preface with a poem praising God that describes His act of inscribing the events of time:

There is no friend sweeter in this world than a book in the house of sorrow that is the world; there is no consoled [like a book]. Every moment in the corner of loneliness from it [the book] are one hundred comforts and never an affliction. Praising You is the pen’s language, paper became camphor-strewing in gratitude to You. From Your prowess, the pen became musk-scattering, by Your writing, the leaves of the world acquired impression.

A prose passage then praises creation with the help of Koranic excerpts. Creation is a variegated album, a painting of colored patches; the heavens are ornamented with stars in accordance with the decree (tawqī), “He decked the nearest heavens with ornaments of stars” (Koran 37:6). Next the Prophet Muhammad is praised.

Muhammad Salih then moves into a statement about the benefits that accrue from contemplating calligraphic specimens and praises the album’s arrangement (tartīb) and decoration (tazyīn); its works possess perfect grace and ineffable freshness. Vali Muhammad is invoked as the patron of the album, and his extensive titles are listed. It was because his opinion inclined to a “compilation of sweet calligraphies by the calligraphers of the world, colored specimens of worthy scribes, assemblies of paintings by masters of the profession, and the tablets of right-thinking limners” that an album was assembled.

Muhammad Salih continues praising the album with a metaphor that likens its calligraphies to a collection of precious brides (‘arā’is-i nafaq) housed in the tent’s bridal chamber of concealment (dar hijla-yi ikhtifā), and praising God and His creation: He is the “binder of the workshop ‘Be!’, and it is,” who sewed creation together using the rainbow for stitches. The benefits of speech and discourse lie especially in their use for praising and recollecting God. A poem amplifies the idea of praising God, its final couplet a prayer of completion that reads, “… until heaven’s album is colored by the light of the fixed stars.” The poem introduces the final segment of the preface in which distinctions between Creation and created object—that is, the album—are blurred. Referring to Creation as “pages,” God is likened to a jeweler (muraqqā) who ornaments them with “intimate assemblies” (majālis-i uns), and

45 mujallid-i kākhānā-yi “kun fayakānu” [Koran, 2:117].
46 tā muraqqā’-i gardān az anvār-i kavākib-i savāhīt mulamma’ bāshad.
who “shed light on the eyes of the inhabitants of Paradise.”  The final poems are two quatrains which draw a parallel between creation (“This rare meadow which refreshes the soul/ is beautiful writing by the musk-sprinkling pen”) and the “new album.” The album’s pages are “the envy of the rose gardens of Iram.”  A chronogram ends the second quatrain, followed by a colophon where Muhammad Salih signs his name and begs for God’s mercy, which completes the preface.

These summaries demonstrate that the three prefaces have much in common. Their overall structure consists of an opening passage in praise of God and Creation, followed by a passage on the excellence of calligraphy and depiction, and concluding with a segment that refers specifically to the album, its inception, the process of its formation and its compiler(s). Next comes praise of the album and compiler, and they end with a date of completion or a blessing. Muhammad Salih uses similar motifs but some elements are rearranged in sequence and other motifs recur. For example, the praise of both creation and the album is repeated at the end of the preface, giving Muhammad Salih an opportunity to deploy still more images that link God-made creation to the man-made album and to display his knowledge and a host of figures of speech.

The prefaces composed by Mir Sayyid Ahmad and Shah Quli Khalifa are also similar to these three examples. The former’s preface for album H. 2156 was based on Murvarid’s. Shah Quli Khalifa’s preface further develops the theme of praise through an expansion of each topic while observing the general sequence: praise of God and Creation, praise of the Prophet Muhammad and ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, the ammā bu’du transition, Shah Tahmasp’s order for an album and Shah Quli Khalifa’s execution of it, praise of Shah Tahmasp, and thanks at the album’s completion. After a break, which might indicate the division of dibācha (preface) from khātima (epilogue), though neither is marked by a rubric, the preface concludes with further praise of the album and praise of Shah Tahmasp, and the hope that if those looking at the album find omissions or faults, they will emend them and forgive.

The most significant difference between these examples and the later ones by Dust Muhammad, Malik Daylami, Mir Sayyid Ahmad, Shams al-Din Muhammad, and Muhammad Muhsin is their slight tendency to be art historical in approach and the absence of lists of names, short biographies, and anecdotes. Murvarid makes only passing reference to ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, noting works by him, and to other calligraphers whose works are used as models. The people working on the album project are also not named, but referred to only as “calligraphers” and “artists.” When Khvandamir/Amini identifies the album’s compiler, he remarks that both calligraphy and painting have been practiced since the beginning of time by the noblest of Adam’s descendants and that his introduction will identify these important practitioners, though in fact it never does. The absence of long lists of figures important to the history of art is all the more puzzling because it does not correspond to contemporary patterns in biographical writing. Khvandamir included many short biographies of artists and calligraphers in his Habib al-siyar; Dawlatshah did the same

\[47\) va nār zaddāt ‘uyūn-i sækhān-i quds bād.
\[48\) in tufta chaman ki tāzā sæzād jān vā / zāhā raqānā ast kīk-i mūshk afshān rā.
\[49\) in tufta muragqa‘.
\[50\) har ṣaffa-yi ā ast rashk-i gulzār-i irām.
\[51\) Dust Muhammad, Shah Quli Khalifa, and Malik Daylami were the only authors to use this transitional phrase in their album prefaces.
in his *Taṣkirat al-shu’arā* (Biography of Poets, 1487). Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s *Ṣirāṭ al-suṭūr* (Way of Lines of Writing, 1514) also contains references to key figures in the history of calligraphy, though his primary focus is on advice about the practice, methods, and materials of calligraphy.

That Murvarid’s and Khvandamir/Amini’s prefaces are in *inshā’* may offer an explanation for the absence of lists of practitioner’s names. Their main function was to provide a good example to the writer composing his own preface. Murvarid and Khvandamir/Amini operate within the genre by using the requisite motifs and selecting choice quotations from the relatively narrow repertoire. The result is a framework of ideas and images that can be broken at different points for interpolations of prose or poetry, and expanded or shrunk according to the requirements of the new preface.

One wonders whether Murvarid’s and Khvandamir/Amini’s prefaces were intended as the final texts for the albums which they so clearly describe. They might constitute very polished and accomplished drafts, or prototypes suitable for *inshā’* because they are concise in their treatment of the most important aspects and elements of the genre. Khvandamir/Amini’s reference to the list of names of famous practitioners in his *muqaddima*, which does not in fact appear, would tend to support the hypothesis that the preface is not represented here in its final form, but the examples of Shah Quli Khalifa and Muhammad Salih suggest that a preface in its final form need not include names of specific practitioners.

A second group of prefaces does include lists of names (e.g., calligraphers, painters, draftsmen, limners), in addition to abbreviated biographical notes, occasional anecdotes and stories, and references to the practice and reception of art. Two examples summarized here are the prefaces by Dust Muhammad and Shams al-Din Muhammad.

*Dust Muhammad’s Preface to the Bahram Mirza Album, 1544–45*. Dust Muhammad’s preface to the Bahram Mirza album opens with God inscribing the events of creation on the preserved tablet (*laqīḥ al-maḥfūẓ*), supported by a hadith, “The pen dried up with what would be until the Day of Judgment.” This is followed by God’s act of creation, His rationale is given in the famous tradition, “I was a hidden treasure . . . that wanted to be known so I created creation in order to be known.” With the assistance of the pen, the first thing God created, He portrayed on the “slate of existence” (*takhta-yi hast*). Creation is likened to a mirror (*na-yi kard*) wherein names and traces were manifest (*maẓhar-i aṣmā va aṯār*). The seven heavens, stars, sun, and moon are next described. For this Dust Muhammad employs terms connected with the arts of the book and colors—ruling (*jadval*), page (*ṣafha*), white (*ṣafīdāb*), azure (*lājvard*), vermilion (*shangar*)—as he develops the imagery of God making the sum total of creation. God also makes black pens from the eyelashes of houris and draws beautiful locks of hair on the “face of day” (*ba-rū-yi rūz*). Dust Muhammad then cites Koran 54:50, where God’s creative act is said to have occurred in the “twinkling of an eye.” God created both Jesus and Adam by an act of speech alone after He had fashioned them

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52 Subtelny has remarked on the incomplete nature of many texts compiled in *inshā’* manuals and suggests that “only that part of the document was included that the writer thought was an illustration of good style.” See Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” p. 61.

53 *jafī al-qalam bīnā hawā ka’īn illā ya’wmi al-dīn*.

54 *kuntu kanzan mahfīyān fa aḥhabitū in ‘urifā fa khalaqtu al-khalaq lā ‘arafa.*
from dust. He breathed life into Jesus (Koran 15:29, 38:72). A poem follows on God and His Creation.

Adam is the next object of praise. His is the first “portrait” (paykar) to be made on the page of existence, a tree nourished with the water of mercy and beauty (dh-i raḥmat va jamāl), whose branches produced flowers of saintliness (karāmah) and guidance (hidāyat). Adam’s beauty is likened to Joseph’s; it provokes astonishment (hayrat), wonder (i‘tā‘ajīb), and confusion (tashvīr) in people:

The Eternal artist who drew that black script
O Lord, such wondrous forms are in His pen.

Next comes praise of the Prophet Muhammad. Through his prophecy he has abrogated “one thousand books” (hizār nāma) and past laws (qvā‘īd) and rules (ikhāms). Again a language of the arts of the book and calligraphy figures strongly, especially in a lengthy poem in praise of the Prophet whose predestination is confirmed by the hadith, “I was a Prophet when Adam was between water and clay.”

After noting the necessity of praising God, Dust Muhammad mentions the obligation of paying respect to the Twelve Imams who were the signs of God’s messenger. A poem praises the imams and ends in a prayer for the continuance of their offspring, and, as we move back into prose, the last of the imams’ descendants, Shah Tahmasp, is introduced, followed by a list of titles and honorifics. This provides the opening needed to praise Bahram Mirza, who is likened in a couplet to kings Faridun, Jamshid, Alexander, and Dara, and to turn to Bahram’s order that the album be made, and Dust Muhammad introduces himself as the scribe (kātib) who will arrange and ornament it.

Dust Muhammad then turns to the subject of calligraphy, noting that such an introduction is necessary in the album without saying why. He covers the early history of writing beginning with Adam and Enoch and the invention of different forms of writing by prophets and wise men; he credits Ya‘rub b. Qahtan, identifiable as a progenitor of the Arabs, with turning ma‘qilī script into Kufic, making him its inventor, and ‘Ali b. Abi Talib its perfector. Ibn Muqla, a vizier during the reign of al-Muqtadir (r. 908–32), learns three scripts—thuluth, muḥaqqaq, and naskh—from ‘Ali b. Abi Talib in a dream, but then his fingers were removed as punishment for alleged treason (he used his left hand to teach his daughter). Ibn Bawwab was a “student” of Ibn Muqla.

Several centuries are passed over, and we next meet Shaykh Jamal al-Din Yaqut, whom Dust Muhammad identifies as active during the rule of the last Abbasid caliph al-Mustansir (r. 1226–42). Yaqut received instruction from Ibn Bawwab, though this must certainly refer to the study of models and not direct pedagogy. When Yaqut had perfected these scripts, he transmitted this skill to six students who are then given permission to sign their calligraphies with Yaqut’s name. The six students are divided into two regional schools—of Khurasan and Iraq—in later generations. Dust Muhammad notes how one, Master Pir Yahya al-Sufi, did not study directly (bi-vāṣītā) with Khvaja Mubarakshah, thus introducing the notion of stylistic affiliation as opposed to direct pedagogical instruction. The next genera-

55 kantu nabīyyan wa Adam bayna al-mā’ wa al-finn.
tion of calligraphers in the six scripts is then introduced, their pedagogical filiations traced, and aspects of their achievements mentioned. The section closes with the mention of the taṣlīq script, its inventor Khvaja Taj al-Din Salmani, and it major exponents up to the Safavid period.

The next section, subtitled “Explanation of the Masters of Nastaṣlīq Script,” begins with the “qibla of scribes” Khvaja Zahir al-Din Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi inventing nastaṣlīq: “the descent of this chain can be traced no further back than him.” A long list of the exponents of nastaṣlīq follows; pedagogical filiations are listed, praise is accorded to some, particular qualities are identified. A bifurcation of the nastaṣlīq style is hinted at when Dust Muhammad introduces calligraphers Sultan ʿAli Mashhadi and his contemporary Mawlana Nizam al-Din ʿAbd al-Rahim Khvarazmi (known as Anisi), both active during the late fifteenth century. Some students of Sultan ʿAli Mashhadi are identified, and one of them, Mawlana Sultan Muhammad Nur, is singled out for extended praise. To list all the names or discuss all the works of those in the chain (silsila) would be impossible but because their calligraphies are included in this tome (mujallad) the “description of the beautiful form and praise of grace of the pen of this group” will be “placed before the gaze of those endowed with sight and knowledge.”

The next major section, “Introduction to Artists and Limners of the Past” is given over to the arts of depiction, Dust Muhammad connects the arrangement (tartib) and decoration (zīnat) of Korans to the pen (qalam), design (tarb), and form (raqam) of the “masters of this noble craft.” He claims that ʿAli b. Abi Talib was the first to ornament Korans and to develop the style of decoration that was later called islāmī (a variant on ʿislāmī). He identifies Daniel as the originator of depiction (tasvīr), recounting how the companions of the Prophet journeyed to Byzantium to meet with the emperor Herakleios and were shown a chest containing portraits of the prophets who came after Adam and culminated in Muhammad. God sent the chest to Adam, and Daniel had made copies of the portraits that the box contained. The line of depiction had continued since that time and the practice of drawing and painting was justified. The next transition is to Jesus and then to Mani, where he tells an anecdote about Mani’s Artangi Tablet, a silk painted with various images, and how it was received by potential converts to Mani’s religion. He mentions another “master of the past” named Shapur and suggests that the reader consult the Khamsas for further details about both him and Mani.

Dust Muhammad introduces the modern tradition through the person of Ahmad Musa, a contemporary of Sultan Abu Saʿid Khudaybanda (r. 1317–35), whom he credits with the invention of the style of depiction still practiced in the Safavid period. He lists some
the manuscripts for which Ahmad Musa executed paintings (they were later owned by the last Timurid Sultan Husayn Mirza) before he continues the genealogy of transmission—as he did for calligraphy—by naming masters and their students and patrons who sponsored artists. When he reaches Baysunghur, son of Shahrurkh and grandson of Timur, he describes an anthology that Baysunghur commissioned and the team which he assembled to make it. The narrative of transmission picks up again when the anthology is completed with Ulugh Beg introduced as the next patron of significance, followed by three artists—Amir Ruh Allah, Mawlana Vali Allah, and Bihzad—all active during the late fifteenth century. He singles out Bihzad for particular praise, noting his numerous works in the album and mentioning that he had served Shah Tahmasp.

The next section, “Mention of Scribes of the Royal Library,”62 is devoted to contemporary calligraphers, including himself. He has spent his life in service and part of that time praising an unidentified person, whom he addresses in the second person singular, presumably Bahram Mirza.

A lengthy rubric introduces the next section as the painters and artists (muşavvirān va naqqāshān) of the royal library. Because scribes (kuttāb) are “mentioned in every section of this preface”63 artists will also be listed according to reputation, beginning with Sultan Muhammad, followed by Aqa Jalal al-Din Mirak al-Husayni al-Isfahani and Mir Musavvir. Next come references to limners of the royal library, again arranged according to reputation.

The preface closes with a prayer (du’ā) in which Dust Muhammad expresses the wish that Bahram’s book (nāma-yi shāhzhāda Bahrānī) will endure as long as Bahram (Mars) remains at the apex of the heavens. A chronogram (taʾrīkh) is in a poem of five rhymed couplets where an angel praises the album’s completion and its calligraphy, depiction, and illumination. Bahram Mirza is extolled and the date of completion is given in the last line in a chronogram which combines Bahram’s name, title, and virtue.

Shams al-Din Muhammad’s Preface to an Album for Shah Ismā’īl II, before 1577. Shams al-Din Muhammad’s preface opens on a double-page illuminated frame, with captions above and below the prefatory text written in a white thuluth on gold. The beginning of the album is given as 976 (1564) in holy, praiseworthy Mashhad, and its completion as 984 (1577) during the “days of the reign of the greatest and noblest sultan, the most just and wise emperor, Abū al-Muẓaffar Sulṭān Shāh Ismāʿīl al-Ṣafavī al-Ḥusaynī.” It praises God and His Creation, drawing on the image of creation as a changeable album, and adduces the Koranic verse, “You make the night succeed the day, the day succeed the night” (3:27). The album of creation was ordered from pages of vernal and autumnal colors and bound together with the stitches of His benevolence. The Prophet Muhammad is praised and the segment closes with a reference to ‘Ali b. Abī Talib.

Shams al-Din Muhammad then moves to the benefits of writing that “elevates discourse,” supported by the verse, “Read, for your Lord is most beneficent, who taught by the pen” (Koran 96:3–4), and the hadith, “the first thing God created was the pen.” A poem elaborates upon the motif:

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62 zākira kitāb-i kitābkhāna-yi sharīfa-yi dī-lā-yi humāyūn.
63 dar in dibācha az hār bāb mazkūr.
verse: Existence took form by the pen
and it takes its brilliance from the candle of the pen.

masnawi: Writer of marvels, ruddy cloaked reed
with two tongues but silent in speech.

A resplendent cypress in stature spreading shade
that draws its night-tresses underfoot.

Straight as an arrow, in nature like a bow
that hides the countenance of day with dark night.

The poem uses the image of God’s creation as writing, a pen cloaked in red, no doubt referring to the reddish skin of the reed, which paradoxically has two tongues but does not speak (the tongues refer to the split nib of the pen). It is endowed with the capacity to speak but writes instead. It is cypress-like in its form (an allusion to the common metaphor of the beloved as cypress-like in form) and draws shadows beneath its feet, just as the pen leaves inky lines on the paper. The third and last couplet continues the theme of the pen’s form—another paradox, for it is straight as an arrow and curved like a bow—and the imagery of the pen writing: day and night refer to the white paper and dark ink. The simile of night and day, listed by Shams Qays, is used by other preface authors.

Shams al-Din Muhammad introduces the notion of the vegetal and the hair pen, treating the reed pen, the “palate sweetener of calligraphers and scribes” first. He inserts more sayings (hadith, kalâm, vaṣaya) to support the exalted status of calligraphy before he introduces the concept of basic (aṣl) and subsidiary (far) scripts of which he lists eight—the “six scripts” plus ta’liq and nastaʿliq. We read the tradition, “Whoever writes basmala in beautiful calligraphy will enter paradise without account”; ‘Ali’s saying “I recommend to you the beauty of calligraphy for it is among the keys to sustenance”; “calligraphy is one half of knowledge”; “calligraphy is spiritual geometry made visible by a bodily instrument”; and “beautiful calligraphy is property for the poor man as it is adornment for the rich and perfection for the nobles.” He hints that there are many more such sayings.

In the six scripts Yaqt al-Mustaʿsimi is again the “qibla of scribes.” Two other masters of the canon are identified, Khvaja ‘Abd Allah al-Sayrafi, “who was without equal in this world,” and Mawlana ‘Abd Allah Tabbakh, whose basic and subsidiary scripts were “like a night illuminated by the moon and stars.” The people of Khurasan considered Tabbakh’s script to be on a par with Yaqt’s. He begins with naskh-ta’liq and its inventor Khvaja Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi; he mentions his son, then Jaʿfar al-Tabrizi, and Jaʿfar’s students. He does not mention all the numerous calligraphers active during the fifteenth century, but after Jaʿfar jumps to Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi whose script is regarded “like the sun among all the stars,”

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64 kān shirīn kun-i khushnīvān va kālībān.
65 ki māha būda.
66 kaʿl-shams min sāʿir al-kāvākīb.
and lists his numerous students, singling out in a couplet Muhammad Qasim Shadishah for praise.

Mawlana Mir ‘Ali, a student of Mawlana Zayn al-Din Mahmud and son-in-law of Mawlana Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, is the next subject. Full of praise for Mir ‘Ali’s level of attainment in calligraphy, Shams al-Din Muhammad writes of the impossibility of describing and commending the calligrapher’s work even if one were supplied with the pages of creation on which to write and the duration of creation in which to do it. Other images associated with writing and clever amphibologies on terms associated with scripts follow. A poem concludes with praise of Mir ‘Ali followed by the names of his students and of other calligraphers, ending with Mawlana Anisi Badakhshi and the poem, “Friends do not practice calligraphy! For this art ended with Anisi” (yārān makunīd khusnivāsī/ ki-in khatm shud ast bar Anīs). The imagery establishes a parallel between Anisi’s relationship to other calligraphers and Muhammad’s relationship to other prophets. Like the Prophet Muhammad, Anisi is the “seal,” the final figure in a long chain.

Other calligraphers are mentioned, among them Mawlana Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari, Shams al-Din Muhammad’s master, who composed the Tażkira al-kuttāb (Biography of Scribes) in the name of Shah Tahmasp. Shams al-Din Muhammad then quotes a couplet from it: “Manifest on the countenances of handsome people is down like sweet basil/like the script of the calligrapher Vaşfi on a red sheet” (’ayyān zi‘āriz-i khābān buvad khaṭṭ-i rayhān/ chu khaṭṭ-i vaşfī-yi khaṭṭāt bar jarīda-yi ād). He concludes with the apothegm: “Calligraphy by the destitute is [like] potsherds and pieces of stone. Calligraphy by the eminent has the value of pearls and rubies” (khaṭṭ-i faqīr khazāf-rīzahāst va sang pārhā va khaṭṭ-i sharīf-i ishān durar va la’ālit purbaḥā). Here Shams al-Din Muhammad returns the praise of his master by deprecating his own achievement. He is destitute (faqīr) unlike his eminent (sharīf) master. As a conclusion to his section on the vegetal, or reed, pen Shams al-Din Muhammad notes that there are calligraphers other than those of Shiraz and Kirman, but that if he tried to single out some of them he would never come to an end. He then lists the names of those whose works are collected in the album, all of whom are his exact contemporaries.

The next transition is to the second pen, “the animal pen . . . [made] of hair,”67 that is, the brush. Here he says he will discuss the “hair-splitting Manichaeans,”68 the “sorcerer-like geniuses of China and Europe,”69 and the paintings and drawings by the likes of Mani, Bihzad, Muzaffar ‘Ali, and Mawlana ‘Ali Musavvir, but instead of doing so, he turns immediately to Mawlana Kepe who made stencils for calligraphies and depictions. He singles out his polychrome stencils (‘aks-i alvān), color-sprinkling of various colors (alvān afshān va ranghā-yi gūnāgūn), design (tarrāhī), and duplication (muṣannā) for special praise: “Portraits of angels and the faces ofhouris which were impressed on the tablet of the artist’s mind and designed on the page of the draftsman’s heart have not been reflected in anyone else’s mirror of the mind.”70

Shams al-Din Muhammad finally praises the album. “If the pages of the revolving heavens

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67 dīgar qalam ḥayrānī ast va ān az mū ast.
68 māshkarjān-i Māni farhang.
69 jādī-taḥīn-i khīštī va farang.
70 ḥaqā qā pārī pāyārī va āh manjārī kī bar lāsh-i khāṭīr-i naqqāsh va bar safīya-yi żāmīr-i tarrāh jala namāyad dar āṭīna-yi khāṭīr-i kīhkas rūtī na-namāyad.
and the folios of the almanac of day and night became full with descriptions of the forms, figures, signs, and traces of this incomparable collection, this body of rich possessions, up to this time not a tenth part of a tenth, would have appeared on the mirror of fortune.\footnote{agar saḥāʾif-i falak-i davār va awrāq-i rūznāma-yi layl va nahār pur-i ān taʿrīf-i swar va ashkāl va ‘alāmāt va ṣuwar-i jāmāt al-miṣāl va in firqa-yi nāʾin al-māl garad hanāz zi ‘ushrī az ‘ashkīr-i ān bar āʿina-yi zubār jāsīgar na-shād.}

The album is a place to return to again and again, a paradise that protects its flowers, a jewel box. He comments on the benefits that accrue from studying the calligraphies and images in the album. Human nature (tabāʾi-i insān) acquires spiritual/contemplative pleasure (hāzz-i rūhānī) and eternal bounty (fayż-i jāvidānī) from such works. Calligraphy is held in high esteem by elite and common people (khavāss va ‘avāmm) alike; even those who cannot read or write enjoy its visual contemplation. The final line of the album ends abruptly and is not a complete grammatical construction. This feature suggests that one folio of text is missing.

The second group of prefaces, illustrated here through the examples by Dust Muhammad and Shams al-Din Muhammad, differs from the first group only in its inclusion of lists of practitioners’ names and its anecdotes. Otherwise its treatment of motifs is the same though these motifs of praise and remarks about the album’s inception and completion are arranged in a variety of sequences. Shifts in balance also occur. Shams al-Din Muhammad expands his praise of the album and Muhammad Muhsin fills the entire epilogue with it. On the other hand, Dust Muhammad’s praise is brief, but his opening segment on God and His Creation is by far the most developed among the prefaces in the entire group as is his preface generally. It is also the clearest in establishing explicit pedagogical relationships between successive masters. In the other prefaces, lists of practitioners’ names are generally in chronological order, according to the successive generations after the founder. These lists embody a history through biography in much the same way as in the science of tradition the transmitters each form a link in a chain. Dust Muhammad divides calligraphy, depiction (painting and drawing), and illumination into separate parts (bāb). Like all the other preface writers, he covers calligraphy first, reflecting its preeminent status in Islamic culture. Through successive sections, each one dealing with a script or medium, Dust Muhammad covers the period from the time of the prophets to the Safavid dynasty.

Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s preface for Amir Ghayb Beg’s album comes closest to Dust Muhammad’s in comprehensiveness, in the range of media described, and in the number of practitioners mentioned. Shams al-Din Muhammad similarly covers the six scripts, nastālīq, artists, and contemporary calligraphers in separate sections. Both Malik Daylami and Muhammad Muhsin concern themselves only with calligraphy. For Malik Daylami, the history of nastālīq which he is most concerned to record begins with Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi in the later years of the fifteenth century and ends with his contemporaries. Muhammad Muhsin’s is more inclusive, treating Kufic and the six cursive scripts briefly, before listing masters of nastālīq from its invention to his own time, albeit in the most selective of fashions.

Each section on script, technique, and medium presents a narrative of transmission and perfection in which selected practitioners are named. In each, the passage of time is implied through the master-student relationship or by the impact of one practitioner on an-
other through the intermediary of works on paper. In some examples subdivisions are made according to metropolitan center or region. The only elements that break the narrative momentum are extended passages of poetry, especially numerous in Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s preface to the Amir Ghayb Beg album, or stories and anecdotes. The biographies of practitioners are rarely of great length, and where they are, only one or two practitioners are accorded the expanded treatment. Some preface writers explain this by the too lengthy composition that would result; some limit themselves to practitioners whose works are actually in the album. Dust Muhammad is the only one to insert prose narratives culled from such sources as Mirkhvand’s Rawżat al-ṣafū’. Mir Sayyid Ahmad also inserted breaks, but his are extended poems. In his section on the brush, he includes two versified tales, one extolling the artists of China, the other telling the story of a king’s artist who could draw like Mani and of the competition that ensued between this Mani-like artist and another.

LANGUAGE

As in many other Persian literary genres, prose is interspersed with poetry, the movement between the two reflecting the author’s literary talent. Poetry is introduced either according to its form—magnāvī, qi’ta, rubā’i—or by the general term for a distich (bayt), hemistich (misrā), verse (namā), or single verse (fard). Poetry is an integral component of the preface; it can be used either to reinforce a concept or to amplify its meaning through metaphor and allegory. Poetry and rhyming prose (saj’) can also modulate the pace of the text, by altering its tempo and cadence. Changes in meter or verses that could be read equally well in another meter required the reader’s close attention. Poetry was usually set off from prose, the poetic couplets arranged in a columnar format often inscribed with gold runnings.

Koranic excerpts and hadith in Arabic were also embedded in the prose, as in other genres. Both were selected for their suitability to the motif or theme at hand or as a source of authority, to ground statements in the uncontested truth of religious precepts and in a language, Arabic, still considered to be the most eloquent. Some prefaces included wise sayings attributed to other historical figures, for example, to ‘Ali b. Abi Talib or unidentified men. An analysis of Koranic verses and hadith used reveals a shared repertoire.73

72 Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i ranks Arabic first among the primary group of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. It has the “most eloquence and grandeur and there is no one who thinks or claims differently. For the glorious and sacred Qur’ān descended [from Heaven] in that language and the blessed sayings of the Prophet were spoken in it” (Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i, Muhākamat al-Lughatāin, introduction, trans. and notes by Robert Devereux [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966], p. 3).


Another example, Koran 30:50, “So consider the signs of His benevolence,” is among the verses cited verbatim in prefaces. It turns up with some changes in Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Ahmad Tusi’s Persian edition of ‘Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt wa ghara’ib al-nawwajātī (for the preface, see Ziyā al-Dīn Sajjādī, ed., Dībāchahā Nigār dar Dāʿī Qom [Tehran: Zavvār, 1372/1993 or 1994], pp. 218–20, esp. p. 218), in modified form in Dust Muhammad’s preface (in an Arabic couplet that he probably culled from another source), and earlier in Khvandamir’s Dastūr al-vuzarā’ (1510) (Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn b. Humām al-Dīn known as Khvāndamīr, Dastūr al-vuzarā’, ed. Sa‘īd Nafīsī...
Handy manuals of quotations were available for reference, among them the *Nuzhat al-kuttāb wa tuḥfat al-ahbāb* (The Scribes’ Diversion and the Friends’ Gift; before 1327) by al-Hasan b. Mawlānā ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Juvallī al-Muẓaffarī, a compilation of Arabic and Persian quotations useful in epistolary composition.74 It includes a hundred verses from the Koran, a hundred traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, a hundred sayings of saints and wise men, and a hundred couples of Arabic poetry with Persian paraphrases. In the preface to his *A manslaughter*, Kashīfī addresses these very literary dimensions of his composition:

It is further to be noted that in the midst of the tales I have but briefly availed myself of the various sorts of Arabic expressions, by introducing certain verses from the Kur’ān and sayings of the Prophet necessary to be mentioned, and traditions and well-known proverbs; and have not clogged the work by employing Arabic verses, but have adorned the page of the narrative with jewels of Persian poetry, which is inlaid like blended gems and gold.75

A finely tuned balance between languages and between prose and poetry perfectly describes these features in the album prefaces.

In addition to compendia, *inshā’* also often contained lists of useful words and titles in both Arabic and Persian and model texts. Lists in a manuscript of Kashīfī’s *Makhzan al-inshā’* (Treasury of Composition) arrange such words in schematic grids. Although defined as written composition and compilation, the term *inshā’* (or munsha’a) also refers to style and belles-lettres.76 The Arabic root yields the Persian words for secretary, munshī (pl. munshīyān), and epistolary compilation (munsha’a). An ideally qualified munshī ambitious to reach the highest levels of the state bureaucracy, and perhaps even to move in court circles, needed to excel in the art of composition. Like any other profession, advancement required strength in writing, the munshī had to have a store of knowledge of the minutiae of literary precedent, to possess sufficient verbal agility and intellectual acumen to navigate a course through it and to be fluent in Arabic as well as Persian. Early on, Nizāmī ‘Aruzi Samarqandi de-

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76 For descriptions of the different types of inshā’, see *EI2*, s.v. “Inshā’” (H. R. Roemer). It would seem unwise and inaccurate to force the distinction. Rare are the inshā’ that belong exclusively to one type or the other. What seems to distinguish the two broad categories is the emphasis given to a particular text type in a compilation, the broader one often approaching encyclopedic scope. *Inshā’* remain understudied and deserving of detailed analysis. With the exception of Roemer’s edition of Murvarid’s *Sharaf-nāma*, accompanied by an introduction and useful notes, few others are available in an edited format. On the general subject of inshā’, see *EI*, s.v. “Correspondence: ii. in Islamic Persia” (Fath Allāh Mojitāhā’ī); and Mitchell, “Safavid Imperial *Tarassul* and the Persian *Inshā’* Tradition.” For collected examples of inshā’ documents, see ‘Abd al-Husayn Nava’ī, ed., *Shāh Ismā’īl Sa’favi: Asnād va Mukātabāt-i Tārīkhi Hamrāh hā Yūddastābāh-yi Tafṣīl* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Arghāvān, 1368 [1989]); and idem, *Asnād va Mukātabāt-i Tārīkhi-yi Irān* (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjuma va Nashr-i Kitāb, 1361). I would like to thank Andrās Riedl Mayer for sharing with me a copy of a paper he presented at the International Workshop on Ottoman Sources of the Period 1580–1650, Balatonalmádi-Vorosmehény, Hungary, June 1989. Titled “*Munša’ā* and Other Copybooks of Correspondence as Source for Political and Cultural History,” it contains many insightful observations that apply equally well to the Persian inshā’ tradition and has an extremely useful bibliography.
fined the secretary’s art in his *Chahār maqāla* (Four Discourses, ca. 1156) as “... comprising analogical methods of rhetoric and communication, and teaching the forms of address employed amongst men in correspondence, ... displaying in every case orderly arrangement of the subject matter, so that all may be enunciated in the best and most suitable manner.”

In his discourse on the secretary (the first of four professionals deemed essential to the ruler), Nizami ‘Aruzī lists their ideal qualities as high birth, honor, discernment, reflection, and judgment. Achievement was possible only after immersion in the core curriculum of literature, defined by Nizami ‘Aruzī as “the Scripture of the Lord of Glory, the Traditions of Muhammad... the Memoirs of the Companions, the proverbial sayings of the Arabs, and the wise words of the Persians; and to read the books of the ancients, and to study the writings of their successors, such as ... [long list of authors follows].” The secretary’s patient study of these books “stimulates his mind, polishes his wit, enkindles his fancy... and ever raises the level of his diction, whereby a secretary becomes famous.”

With such demands placed on the secretary, it comes as no surprise that style books were numerous and written by some of the most notable professionals. Among the best known and most widely copied *insha*’ from the Timurid and early Safavid periods are those of Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Ali Yazdī, Murvarid, Kashīfī, Mu’īn al-Dīn Isfīzārī, ‘Abd al-Rahmān Jamī, ‘Abd al-Vāsī’ Nizāmī, and Khvandāmīr. Like the secretary, the poet also required extensive knowledge of the tradition. According to Nizami ‘Aruzī, the poet is essential to the king, for he guarantees the ruler’s immortality by writing about him in *dīvāns* and books. Like the secretary the poet must immerse himself in literary tradition. He must commit to memory “20,000 couplets of the poetry of the Ancients, keep in view 10,000 verses of the work of the Moderns, and continually read and remember the *dīvāns* of the masters of this art, ... in order that thus the different styles and varieties of verse may become ingrained in his nature, and the defects and beauties of poetry may be inscribed on the tablet of his understanding.”

The preceding summaries of the prefaces highlighted some of the puns made by authors in their prefaces through the use of homonyms (*tajnīs*)... One example of paronomasia—for there are several subcategories of *tajnīs*—is in Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavārī’s poem about Shams al-Dīn Muhammad that he quoted in his preface: “Manifest on the countenances

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78 Ibid., p. 12.
81 A list of such compilations in Persian is available in Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Study*, 3:2, section E, “Ornate Prose.” Some of the examples that Storey lists were written explicitly for *insha*. Many more are devoted to the general subject of elegant prose composition and include diverse forms of advice for the writer on such subjects as sentence and phrase formation as well as examples of useful forms of address and other items that could be quoted in correspondence.
82 For a brief list of *insha*’ from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Tauer, “Persian Learned Literature from Its Beginnings up to the End of the 18th Century,” p. 434. One of the authors not already mentioned is Mu’īn al-Dīn Isfīzārī who worked as the chief correspondence secretary at Sultan Husayn Mirza’s court. He was skilled in diplomacy and epistolography. Of his books, the best known (Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, 3:430–31) is a history of Herat, *Rawżat al-jannāt fi tārīkh madīnat Harāt*.
83 Ibid., p. 32.
of handsome people is down like sweet basil/ like the script of the calligrapher Vâfi on a red sheet.” The use of the word vâfi referred to Shams al-Din Muhammad’s sobriquet, but the second line could equally well be read as a play on words, “like the script of a praiseworthy calligrapher on a red sheet.” Another pun may be adduced from Khvandamir/Amini. In concluding his praise of Bihzad at the end of his preface he inserted a poem,

When one hair of your brush showed itself to the world,
it placed a line of abrogation over Mani’s face.

Many natures of good form are born from Him,
but your talent was born better than all the others.

In the final hemistich the phrase “was born better” (bih-zâd) made a pun on Bihzad’s name by its homophony. Another form of homonymy involved the graphic form of words where changes in the placement of the diacriticals produced another word and another set of meanings.

Amphibologies are frequently used. In amphibology (iltibâs, iltâm) the words have a meaning in their syntactic context and others even if they do not always work in the sentence. 84 For example, in his opening section praising God’s Creation, Shah Quli Khalîfâ uses terms that conjure up the names of the six scripts: viz. thuluth (“one third”), muhâqqaq (“in truth”), tawqî (“decreed”), rayhân (“sweet basil”), riqâ (“letters”), naskh (“archetype”). The same amphibologies are used by Shams al-Din Muhammad and Muhammad Muhsin, and some are found in the above-mentioned poem of Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari. Dust Muhammad also used some of them. Other commonly used examples include ghubâr (a minute script/dust, fog), jadval (ruling/table or rivulet), barg (folio/leaf), khât (calligraphy/the down on a youth’s face), and the pair of terms aßl and far, source/root and branch, respectively, applied to the basic and subsidiary calligraphic scripts.

Among the most common metaphors (isti-fâra/majâz) is one which makes a correspondence between Creation and album (muraqqâ). Working by analogy rather than similitude, 85 it is used in every single preface, at least once. We come across the “album of fortune” or “album of heaven” (muraqqâ’-i gardân), “album of the world” (muraqqâ’-i jahân), “the album of different colors” (muraqqâ’-i mulamma), “the variegated album of time” (muraqqâ’-i rûzgâr-i bûqalamûn), and the “album of the firmament” (muraqqâ’-i sipîhr). Other simple metaphors

84 For a study of poetical language, specifically figurative language related to the body, see Cl. Huart, Anîs eI-Ochchâq: Traité des termes figurés relatifs à la description de la beauté par Cherif-eddûn Râmi (Paris: F. Viewig, 1875). The treatise, Anîs eI-ushshâq, was composed by Sharaf al-Din Rami in 1423.
85 Meisami draws a clear distinction between the two (Medieval Persian Court Poetry, pp. 37–38). Reading Jalal al-Din Rumi’s discussion of comparison (miqûl) and likeness (miqâl), she concludes: “Metaphorical comparison—where the metaphor is essentially an extended or amplified simile—presupposes a gap between man and the universe that contains him, a gap that can be crossed only by grasping at perceived or imagined resemblances. Analogical comparison presupposes a continuity in which similitudes are, so to speak, generic constituents of existence. In a mode of composition based on analogy, metaphor transcends the status of a trope to become a ‘consistent means for signifying the inner substance of things,’ in a world in which ‘everything is a figure,’ a sign testifying to the unified, and unifying order of creation. The ultimate manifestation of this style is, of course, allegory, in the broadest sense: analogy also presupposes polysemy.”
include references to a page or pages, thus: “revolving page of fortune” (ṣafha-yi dawrān), “page of being” (ṣafha-yi kawn), “page of the world” (ṣafha-yi rūzgār), “pages of the sky” (ṣahā’if-i falak), “page of the world [of] ‘Bel,’ and it is” (ṣahīfa-yi ‘ālam-i kūn fayakānūn), “the page of ‘Nūn. By the pen and what they write’” (ṣahīfa-yi nūn wa al-qalam wa mā yastārūnūn). Variations on it substitute another word for page (e.g., folio, leaf): “folios of the world” (awrāq-i jahān), “folios of the age” (awrāq-i zamān), and “folios of the album of the firmament” (awrāq-i muraqqā’-i sipīhr). In each instance, the metaphor invokes God’s created world and heavens, changeable, variegated and in motion, and these pages or folios of the world and heavens are inscribed with the signs of God. These simple comparisons are well suited to the album, also a created object of many pages or folios, multicolored, and inscribed with calligraphy, depictions (paintings/drawings), and illumination. The amphibologous use of qalam, lit. pen, also to mean brush, facilitates the conception of all of these creative actions as analogous to writing. 86

RECURRING THEMES AND IMAGES OF THE ALBUM

The summaries demonstrate how motifs and themes recur in this group of album prefaces and how certain metaphors or allegories were created for the album and its production. Sketching out these motifs helps to provide a frame of reference for the album, to uncover cultural views about it, and to understand the benefit thought to derive from contemplating its contents. The encomia to the album proclaimed in the prefaces are prescriptive and form an analogical framework of comparison for the viewer. Some motifs framed meaningful correspondences; others concerning the album’s production reveal key concepts of its creation and confer upon it the role of memorial, an aggregate of traces of past and present masters gathered between its two covers for posterity.

Metaphors are most commonly used by the preface writers to draw an analogy between God’s creation and the album. Murvarid’s opening image is of creation as “a multicolored celestial album,” closely related to Khvandamir/Amini’s “album of celestial pages” and expanded by him in his description of the album as resembling a workshop of textiles of changing colors. The analogy between creation, or also a textile, and album—an obvious development of the image of creation as a book assembled from pages—may be construed at a literal level as applying to its colored pages and diversity of contents. The implication is that the album stands as a microcosm of creation (figured in the numerous metaphors of the celestial album). Murvarid emphasizes God’s creative act by speech and observes that the first thing made by Him was the pen; the emphasis on the connection between creation and writing is made by his reference to the tablets inscribed with God’s law. Khvandamir/Amini names God the “immortal” or “incomparable” painter, and casts creation as an act of writing and depicting. Clearly, if God was to be likened to a painter, He had to be distinguished from any earthly counterpart by removing the temporal dimension of the pro-

86 For detailed studies of metaphor, see Heinrichs, Hand of the North Wind, and EIr, s.v. “Este’āra” (Julie S. Meisami). Meisami’s essay highlights more complex forms of metaphor and contains essential references to studies that have attempted to create categories of metaphor.
cess and any trace of labor. Thus, God brought creation into being by saying “Be!,” and He required no instruments to achieve His task.

In his discussion of Khvandamir/Amini’s preface, Arnold says that the author compares God to the painter. He casts Khvandamir/Amini’s discussion of painting as a kind of apologia. There is, however, little in this preface which would indicate that such an impulse should be interpreted as a defense of depiction in the light of the theological condemnation of the artist or his paintings. Although some tension between images might permit such a literal reading, Khvandamir/Amini also stresses why God’s creation is to be distinguished from the painter’s images. Dust Muhammad, after having implied a correspondence between God and man in their creative pursuits, also carefully removed both time and labor from God’s act of creation. Analogies between creation and album are developed through the use of terminology related to the arts of the book and calligraphy.

Similar metaphors recur in all of the other prefaces where creation’s qualities of changeability, movement, and multicoloredness—vernal and autumnal colors and shifts from black to white and from night to day—find correspondences in the man-made album. Shah Quli Khalifa describes the heavens as a patched cloak (muraqqa’), using a term that was applied to the album. In Malik Daylami’s preface, the inhabitants of paradise wear such patched cloaks.

Shams al-Din Muhammad describes the Shah Isma’il II album as “an incomparable collection” a “place to return to again and again.” A poem follows which describes the album as a garden of roses and tulips, safeguarded from the destructive forces of the weather and decay. In his preface Malik Daylami deftly weaves together a series of interconnected images as he leads up to the album. God’s creation is a garden brought to order, elements of corruption removed and replanted with the pious; Amir Husayn Beg, the album’s patron, sits with fellow calligraphers in this ordered garden (i.e., the world) and practices nastaliq which is “the freshest herb in the garden of ‘calligraphy is one half of knowledge’ ” after a biographical interlude in which Amir Husayn Beg’s merits are described and his father’s death is noted, we learn of the album’s inception. It would be like a robe spun from gold and encrusted with jewels, each one of its pages resembling a garden. In this garden the greenery would be writings (arqām) the color of ambergris and the flowers would be drawings and illuminations (nuqūsh va taghībāt). Its rulings (jadval) would be like flowing streams and its margins (ḥavāshi) populated with designs of nightingales and partridges. Its paintings (ṣūrathā) would resemble youths and companions endowed with pomp and riches walking in the garden. Malik Daylami’s chronogram for the year of completion returns again to the image of the album as garden. Muhammad Sāliḥ and Muhammad Muhsin also make ample use of the garden metaphor.

Metaphors involving the world, the heavens, and the garden provide powerful images that make use of spatial analogies, comprehensive or circumscribed in scope, and, by alluding to change and flux, suggest that the microcosmic album could equal the infinite diversity of the macrocosm. Returning to an album brings surprises and unexpected discoveries, just as the changing seasons and times of day and night lend the world an altered aspect. The

87 Arnold, Painting in Islam, p. 37.
88 Ṭū i jamādā-i ‘adīm al-misāl.
89 ba-majāba-īst.
90 rayhūn-i tāza-yi bustān-i al-khaṭṭ nisf al-‘ilm ast.
sensory pleasures of the album are also invoked: its contents are like sweet-smelling herbs, or ambergris, or like a tranquil place sheltered from the weather, lush in its greenery, watered by flowing streams. To look at an album engages the senses, not only of sight but also of smell. Although some of these sensory pleasures are false attributes—the album's contents are not perfumed or animated by wind or gravity—the conceit of the synaesthetic metaphor only underscores the album's power to delight.

ALBUM MAKING AS AUTHORSHIP

The long tradition of extolling a craft through well-chosen metaphors leads preface writers to praise the album compiler's labor, a theme that would be addressed by all subsequent preface writers. Khvandamir bases his judgment of the finished album on its arrangement and decoration. Khvandamir/Amini uses the same criteria, but goes further, comparing the album to a sea filled with pearls. Near the end of a poem he has composed about Bihzad's work as compiler, Khvandamir/Amini writes: “The beauty of these pages is a thing/ that further perfects these rarities.” Murvarid’s and Khvandamir/Amini’s prefaces are filled with pearl imagery: calligraphy is likened to a string of pearls on a page brought “forth by the bejeweled pen of the diver from the sea of the inkwell to the shore of these folios”; ‘Ali’s calligraphy is likened to a trail of miraculous points made by his pen or fingers, each point pressed into paper “like an unbored pearl from the ocean of his sanctity”; ‘Ali’s pen sprinkles pearls from its nib.

Shah Quli Khalifa says of his album: “Its beautiful folios set with jewels are at the limit of favorable opinion”; it [the album] would make the seven heavens (sab’ samavāt) envious. In his preface, Muhammad Muhsin writes: “In this beautiful album the stringing together of royal jewels reached the limits of completeness, conclusion, and finality”; “the perfection of the dazzling pearls [in] this gem-studded jewel box! What an album [it is]! each of its pages is charming and has one hundred hearts in tow; its pages are paradisiacal specimens; all of its pieces are of ethereal constitution.” Malik Daylamī notes how the master Muzafr ‘Ali, for “reasons of beauty and adornment,” had ornamented the “calligraphies and fragments of past [masters].” He was complete in his mastery of “calligraphic découpage” (qiṭā’-āt-i marqāma) who had “inscribed characters, forms, and written lines, all skills needed for the production of albums.

Similar imagery is also found in references to the poet’s craft and had long been used in both Persian and Arabic traditions. In his so-called Apologia (ca. 1485–92), Sultan Husayn

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91 For examples used by the poets Shams Qays, Farrukhi and Nasir Khusraw, see Clinton, “Esthetics by Implication.”
92 ša bā sūr-hadd-i ʾilmām rasīd kanzi-ī jāzāh-rī shāhāvār-i in zibā muraqqā’ va ba-ghāyat va anjam kashād.
93 taknīl-i laʾāli-yi ʾābdār-i in dary-i muraqqā’ chi muraqqā’ ki hār varāq az vag ʾil-rubāy ast sad dilash dar ʾay ʾaṣfahāyāsh namānāhā-i bitishū tīg āhāysh hamaʾ asir sisīh.
94 sabāb-i zib va zināt.
95 khutūt va qiṭā’-āt-i sābīqā.
96 mubarrirā ba-ragām va qaf va tahbīn.
Mirza calls the contemporary poet Jami “a master stringer of poetical gems,” and, invoking the other thousand poets in the Herat region, he states that their “job is to string pearls of meaning onto the cord of poetry and to enhance gems of precision with the garb of adornment and beauty.”

In the prefatory remarks to his *Muhākamat al-lughatain* ( Judgment of Two Languages, 1499), Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i writes:

> A word is a pearl in the sea of the heart, and the heart is a gift which gathers unto itself all meanings. The gem is brought to the surface by the diver but it becomes a thing of value only in the hands of the jeweller. Word pearls from the heart convey their value and degree when spoken by the masters of speech. Their value grows and they are praised according to the skill of the speaker.

On the reuse of figures and metaphors, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i noted how good poets could “reanimate the weary and the dead.”

In his image, the distinction between the diver and jeweler at first implies two agents, but in fact signifies two processes that must be performed to make good poetry. It is not enough to retrieve the image like the diver; the image must be recrafted and enhanced by the jeweler. Later, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i recalls how “early in my youth I began to perceive a few jewels from the inkwell in my mouth. These jewels had not yet become a string of verse, but jewels from the sea of consciousness which were worthy of being placed on a string of verse began to reach shore, thanks to the nature of the diver.”

In the next image, he enters a garden full of roses (roses stand for writing) where the thorns had prevented “many collectors of roses {guldastahand} from grasping . . . the roses waiting to be plucked . . .” Writing poetry was a tricky affair.

Vasifi imagines himself as a pearl diver “diving into the sea of thought and gathering up splendid pearls of images.” An earlier use of this imagery is in ‘Ismat Bukhari’s qasida on Khalil Sultan’s *divān* (written before 1411), where he says, “Every string of pearls versified forms an ordered whole in the thread of the *mastār*.” Another, still earlier use is Shams Qays’s reference to the poet who “should be like a master jeweler who increases the elegance of his necklace by beauty of combination and proportion of composition, and does not diminish the luster of his own pearls by variations in joining and disorder in arrangement.”

Shams Qays also likened the good poet to a painter:

> [The poet] should be like a skilful painter who in the composition of designs *(taqāsīm-i nuqūṣīh)* and in the drawing of the curving branches and leaves *(tasāwīr-i shāh kh va barghāh)* places every flower somewhere and draws each branch outward from it, and in the blending of colors uses each color in some place and gives every color to some flower. Where a deep color is appropriate he does not use a pale one, and where a dark color is appropriate, he does not use a light one.

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101 Ibid., p. 2.


103 Ibid.

104 Quoted in Subtelny, “Taste for the Intricate,” p. 70.


107 Trans. in Clinton, “Esthetics by Implication,” p. 81.
Shams Qays’s comments distinguish between thematic and expressive elements in poetry and how they are brought together into an effective order.\textsuperscript{108}

Along similar lines is a passage in Nizami’s \textit{Haft Paykar} (Seven Portraits, 1197) where he refers to the process of poetic practice and also acknowledges the tradition’s intertextuality:

\begin{quote}
I searched through books both fine and rare
for what would free the heart from care.
Whatever chronicles might say
of kings, that in books chosen lay,
An earlier poet, of keenest mind,
had ordered all in verse refined.
From it, some ruby chips remained,
shards from which others something feigned.
I, from those fragments, jeweler-wise,
this precious treasure cut to size,
So that the experts who assay
all efforts, this most worthy weigh.
That which was left by him half-said
I say; the half-pierced pearl I thread.\textsuperscript{109}
\end{quote}

Thus, Sultan Husayn, ‘Ali Shir Nava’i, Vasifi, ‘Ismat Bukhari, Shams Qays, and Nizami all conceptualize the poetic process as one of selecting images from a repertoire of forms cast by previous poets and of subjecting them to perfecting and enhancing.\textsuperscript{110} The improvement occurs by remaking them (by addition or subtraction) and/or recombining them into an order—a thread or \textit{maṣṭar}—the linearity of which stands for the syntactic sequence of the hemistich/distich (\textit{miṣrā} / \textit{bāyāt}).

Khvandamir/Amini and later album preface writers rely on this metaphor and its conceptual framework, which Khvandamir/Amini applies to Bihzad’s album by an analogical process. Bihzad’s compilation, arrangement, and decoration are freed from a neutral or passive characterization by Khvandamir/Amini’s poetic imaging. Bihzad submits the materials to a series of transformations and recontextualizations by which they are perfected. We can, perhaps, take the liberty of invoking Nizami’s image of recutting “ruby chips” and “shards,” of piercing the “half-pierced pearl” and threading it, and compare these actions to the album compiler’s processes of trimming, illuminating, framing, and so forth. Separate items—calligraphies, paintings and drawings—were brought together to form surfaces and sequences, like the string of pearls forming “an ordered whole on the thread of the \textit{maṣṭar}.” Khvandamir/Amini’s reference to the active role played by the album compiler offers further insight into the perception of the album as a collection. It is a product of a set of creative decisions and therefore in itself a form of authorship.

The preface writers used the metaphor of the poet’s craft to describe the process of compiling an album. Numerous comparisons were drawn between the poet and the compiler: both worked with preexisting materials and reorganized them into new sequences which altered their meaning. The ubiquity of this metaphor of craft ensured comprehension and,

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p. 77.
\textsuperscript{109} Excerpt from Nizami Ganjavi’s \textit{Haft Paykar}; trans. in Meisami, \textit{Medieval Persian Court Poetry}, p. 201.
introduced as a criterion of praise, it also established a theme for discussion of both content and production when the album was viewed. The analogy between poet and compiler applies equally well to preface authors—they too patched together components fashioned by earlier writers.

**THE ALBUM AS MEMORIAL**

Analogies drawn between an album and verdant gardens, richly woven textiles encrusted with jewels, and folios that resembled shores strewn with precious stones underscored the value of the album’s contents and the pleasure to be found in contemplating them. The bright colors and hard edges of Persianate paintings were, like jewels and pearls, without defect or blemish and were unified and crisp in form. Writing was a succession of black dots joined together on white paper to form a continuous line, making it possible to imagine calligraphy as a string of pearls. When extended, this metaphor could also signify the album’s orderly arrangement and the compiler’s process (also referring to the notion of the poet’s process). But another value is signaled in the prefaces, in both prose passages and in the wise sayings drawn from the repertoire of Arabic expressions, namely that calligraphy was of moral benefit, a notion derived from the particular status of writing in Islamic culture. Value also lay in studying and practicing calligraphy, in applying oneself to the rules of beautiful writing and in mastering them.

Many of the quotations referring to calligraphy’s merits had been used by calligraphers for exercises beginning in the fifteenth century, but the corpus itself dates to a much earlier time. Some of these sayings turned up in the prefaces, and were copied in calligraphies to demonstrate knowledge of Arabic learning and, like Koranic verses, were used as authoritative texts.

Murvarid connects the agent of praxis and the resulting object, a nuanced play on the

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111 The most comprehensive gathering of sayings on calligraphy as a meritorious art can be found in Annemarie Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1984). Grabar (Mediation of Ornament, pp. 64–65) concisely summarized the importance attached to calligraphy in an Islamic context: “as writing was the vehicle of God’s message, so God’s message became a hallowed piece of writing. . . . From this sort of knowledge pertaining to the text of the Revelation itself, it was easy to imagine or assume that every letter or word had in it a particle of the divine, and thus that writing itself was holy.”

112 See, for example, the treatise composed by Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi (d. after 1009–10) (Franz Rosenthal, “Abü Haiyân al-Tawhîdî on Penmanship,” *Ars Islamica* 8–9 [1948]: 1–27). The second half of al-Tawhidi’s treatise consists of anecdotes and sayings attributed to a host of historical characters.

113 Arabic sayings about calligraphy that appear in the album prefaces can be summarized as follows: “Whoever writes *basmala* in beautiful calligraphy will enter paradise without account” (man *kataba* bi-šusn al-khâṣṣ bi-ism Allâh al-râhman al-râhîn dakhala al-jannat bi-ghayr hisâb), Shams al-Dîn Muhammad and Mir Sâyyid Ahmad (H. 2161) [attributed to Muhammad al-Abtahi]; “Ali b. Abi Talib’s saying, “I recommend to you the beauty of calligraphy for it is among the keys to sustenance” (alâ’iyân bi-šusn al-khâṣṣ fa-inâahu min mafasîth al-rizq), Murvarid, Mir Sâyyid Ahmad (H. 2161), and Shams al-Dîn Muhammad; “calligraphy is one half of knowledge” (al-khâṣṣ nisf al-ilm), Malik Daylamî and Shams al-Dîn Muhammad; “your offspring have studied writing because writing is one of the endeavors of kings and sultans” (alammâ asâlâdakum bi-l-kitâb hu-ma inâahu al-kitaâb himam al-nolâk wa al-salâfîn), Murvarid; “calligraphy is spiritual geometry made visible by a bodily instrument” (al-khâṣṣ handaasatun râhînîyayatan yuzakhru bi-ilâm jismînîyayatin), Malik Daylamî and Shams al-Dîn Muhammad; and “beautiful calligraphy is property for the poor man as it is adornment for the rich and perfection for the nobles” (al-khâṣṣ al-hasan li-l-fâsîr malûn wa li-l-ghâniy jamâlûn wa li-l-akbâr kamâlûn), Shams al-Dîn Muhammad. In other sources the saying, “Calligraphy is spiritual geometry,” is attributed to Euclid and Yahya b. Khalid. For Euclid, see Rosenthal, “Abû Haiyân al-Tawhîdî on Penmanship,” p. 15.
concept of calligraphy as the soul's geometry made “visible by a bodily instrument.” In his poem, Murvarid describes every point made by ‘Ali’s pen as being “like an unbored pearl from the ocean of his sanctity.” Each one is like a particle of his soul given physical embodiment on the page; writing stands for his ethical intent. Cast in terms of the miraculous, he asks if writing’s cause is due to ‘Ali’s body or to his pen. The conceit might refer to ‘Ali’s sheer skill and proficiency, indicating that he does not need a manual instrument, or it might refer to his exceptional ability as a direct result of his innate qualities; he requires no mediating device to give his soul corporeal shape. Khvandamir/Amini goes so far as to state that “when the divine pen wrote forms/man became the manifestation of skill and learning.” But what men?

Khvandamir/Amini describes Bihzad’s supreme achievement in painting as being miraculous: his paintings astound the viewer because he has achieved perfection: “Bihzād unequaled in his time/ Mānī [was only] a fable in his time” (Bihzād yagāna-yi zāmana/ Mānī ba-zamāna-yi ū fisāna); “He took a hair from [Mani’s] brush and gave life to inanimate form” (mī-yi qalamash zi ā sitādā/fān dāda ba-sīrat-i jamādī). Khvandamir/Amini’s comments may be regarded as referring to Bihzad’s skill and dexterity as a painter; about the paintings he writes, “In delicacy of form it is hair-splitting.” The poetic encomium to Bihzad is preceded by a description of the painter’s moral disposition—“pure in faith, a traveler along the paths of affection and love”—and followed in a final poem by a pun on Bihzad’s name, which he renders as “was born better.” Thus, combined with his patient application of the methods of painting and to his skill, Bihzad’s purity and moral rectitude seem essential components of—in fact prerequisites to—any explanation of his achievement. Not content with that, Khvandamir/Amini suggests that Bihzad had inherited a high moral disposition. Prefaces after Khvandamir/Amini’s mention noble lineage and moral disposition with increasing frequency.

The favor accorded by God to mankind—singling man out over all other creatures—is reiterated in several prefaces by way of Koranic verses. But some men were accorded greater favors and virtues than others. Innate inherited qualities, as opposed to acquired ones, are frequently mentioned in such texts as Khvandamir’s Habīb al-siyar and in biographies of famous men arranged by profession or avocation and appended to the end of the narrative of a ruler’s reign. Commenting on the ruler Sultan Husayn Mirza, Khvandamir writes, “Among the most generous gifts and weightiest signs by which God has singled out some great rulers is the gift of noble lineage, which insures nobility of character and praiseworthy conduct.” Describing Amir Sadr al-Din Sultan Ibrahim Amini, Khvandamir writes that

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114 Another frequently used saying, but one not attested in the album prefices, is “Calligraphy is the tongue of the hand,” often attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. It also suggests that calligraphy is a means of transfer between intellect and the physical world. Calligraphy as word and signifier of speech is entrusted with the power to speak on the individual’s behalf and to act as a testament for his ethical state.

115 dar digat-i tabí muḥšīf ast. A language of the miraculous also pervades writing about calligraphy. For example, one topos of the writing tradition is the reference to grains of rice inscribed with Koranic verses or even whole suras. Grabar (Mediation of Ornament, p. 85) has rightly suggested that calligraphy’s power to amaze and surprise constitutes an important element in the aesthetic vocabulary of the judgment of calligraphy.

116 This is also the case with Dawlatshah. He says of Shahrukh, “through perfect religious observance, purity of innate nature and good moral character, [he] reached the station of sainthood and was aware of things unseen.” See Dawlatshah, Taṣākirat al-shu’arā’, p. 376; trans. in Thackston, A Century of Princes, p. 20.

he was not only “adorned with noble ancestry” but possessed “complete learning, polite behavior, and hereditary and acquired perfections.” His good conduct was nourished by the divine.

This conception of the source and cause of man’s talent has a history that long precedes Khvandamir and that underwent constant shifts in balance and emphasis according to whatever political or religious movement was dominant at a particular time. As we have seen, the conception is reiterated by both Khvandamir/Amini and Murvarid. Murvarid implies that calligraphy provides exempla, mentioning in particular Ali b. Abi Talib’s specimens, which not only offered good calligraphic models but embodied a sign or trace (āsār) of the practitioner’s very moral essence. Such a symmetry between a person and his work is stated directly in yet another sixteenth-century text, Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s Šīrāt al-suṭūr. Studious application and the perfection of balance between body and pen bring about the manifestation of this essence. Khvandamir/Amini’s focus on Bihzad indicates that paintings and drawings could also embody the practitioner’s essence, a transfer achieved through the creative process.

Khvandamir wrote a book entitled Ma’āṣir al-mulk, a compilation of information “on the institutions, foundations and wise sayings of kings and ancient sages.” The book gathered the traces or memorials (ma’āṣir) of famous figures from the past that had been transmitted by material and textual records. The same term (ma’āṣir) is used to refer to the contents of the album made by Bihzad, and it describes the process of how the calligrapher or artist moves an image of written characters or of forms occurring in the phenomenal world from the mind to the surface of the page. The identical process is mentioned by Malik Daylami, Shah Quli Khalīfa, and Dust Muhammad, where the term āsār refers to the album’s calligraphies, paintings, and drawings. In the Arabic couplet cited by Dust Muhammad,
“Verily, our works point to us/so gaze after us at our works,” the notion that, like a footprint (another meaning of ąsr), the work was an imprint of the person is further developed into the claim that people could be understood through a visual analysis of their works.

This conception of the work as an imprint or trace of its maker was what made the sum total of the album’s contents a memorial. The notion of writing as recorded speech embraced calligraphy and could also be extended to paintings and drawings. These works were a record of a practitioner’s patient application of technique and practice and demonstrated their virtue through endeavor and achievement. Hence, beyond the significant sensory and contemplative pleasures that were to be derived from examining art, the album guarded for posterity and salvaged from ruin works that constituted mankind’s legacy.

INTERTEXTUALITY AND LITERARY BORROWINGS

Several aspects of literary congruence in the prefaces, basically lexical incidence, thematic tropology, and recurring figures of speech, have, as noted earlier, been particularly criticized by modern readers of sixteenth-century literature. Repetitions of topoi and tropes are said to indicate lack of originality and the result fails to function as meaningful, communicative discourse.\textsuperscript{127} Valuing original, substantive references to experience and looking for psychological insight, some modern readers have found the Persian literary tradition hackneyed and trite. Although imitation can be thought of as original and creative,\textsuperscript{128} modern assessments devalue repetition and ignore the value attached to performance in the sixteenth century,\textsuperscript{129} a feature no less true for the visual arts and calligraphy than for prose and poetry. Modern critical evaluations thus tend to lose sight of the mechanisms that drove the sixteenth-century literary and visual traditions and to impose upon them an entirely inappropriate value system. But more than that, such evaluations are founded on the idea that any given expression can be original and that, in its form, discourse is adequate to particularize the lived and felt experience of its author and that it can even succeed in doing so. This has grave consequences for the judgment of the trope and topos. It is their very literariness that so readily reveals them to us and that emphasizes shared experiences and cyclical patterns.\textsuperscript{130} Despite surface differences in the aesthetics of discourse, all

\textsuperscript{127} For the legacy of Romanticist notions of originality in the modern reception of Persianate poetry, see Losensky, “Allusive Field of Drunkenness,” p. 228.

\textsuperscript{128} This was duly noted as early as 1944 by Gustave E. von Grunebaum (“The Concept of Plagiarism in Arabic Theory,” \textit{Journal of Near Eastern Studies} 3 [1944]: 234–53). Writing on Arabic poetry, he noted that “originality played a considerable part in the formation of the Arabs’ literary judgment” even though it is “hardly noticeable to us” (ibid., p. 234). Von Grunebaum reviewed developments in the definition of theories of plagiarism in Arabic poetry and went on to develop his own notions of literary creation and literary creativity in another article (idem, “The Aesthetic Foundation of Arabic Literature,” \textit{Comparative Literature} 4, 4 [1953]: 323–40) where he discussed the implications of a circumscribed field of creativity and topics and how originality functioned within it. Curiously, he ended by claiming that the adherence to tradition “prevented the Arabs from recovering their literary creativeness” (ibid., p. 340).

\textsuperscript{129} Losensky has examined the importance of repetition in poetry and the implications of the poetic process (ibid., esp. pp. 238–54).

language can be reduced to repetition—otherwise how would communication be possible? And so we might ask if tropes and topoi make such experiences less true or less meaningful.\textsuperscript{131}

Two additional aspects of the literary dimensions of the prefaces remain. The first is the use of textual excerpts, whether sentences or passages in prose, or couplets in poetry and the nature of this borrowing. Although direct quotations from the Koran and traditions are immediately recognizable and sometimes wise sayings are attributed to their author, poems or prose passages from other authors are hardly ever identified. While some are easily identifiable, they are in all probability the tip of the iceberg. The second aspect is the preface in written books and involves a comparison between them and the album prefaces.

As reworkings of existing prefaces, Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s two extant prefaces, for album H. 2156 and for Amir Ghayb Beg’s album, constitute significant challenges to determining the nature of authorship. In neither instance does Mir Sayyid Ahmad insert his own name into the body of the preface as other preface writers—for example, Malik Daylami, Dust Muhammad, Qutb al-Din Muhammad, and Shah Quli Khalîfâ—had done. By mentioning their names, they directly indicated their role in the execution of the preface and sometimes in the supervision of the album’s production. Mir Sayyid Ahmad signs his name at the end of each preface, adding a colophon as if to imply that he only copied out the text, but in fact both prefaces show evidence of reworking.

For his preface to album H. 2156, Mir Sayyid Ahmad essentially followed the basic order of Murvarid’s example. In the first half of the preface little is changed: some words are substituted or added, and transitional phrases modified. In the second half changes are more substantial; some segments are entirely deleted; others, for instance the section where Murvarid describes the formation of the album, are abbreviated. Mir Sayyid Ahmad substitutes Murvarid’s “men accomplished in calligraphy and who procured knowledge about art”\textsuperscript{132} with “patchworkers and artists”\textsuperscript{133} who were occupied with the album’s production. He deletes the verse with which Murvarid ended his preface, and changes the date to the year in which he completed it. Given that the preface in album H. 2156 is dated some nine years before the album into which it was inserted, Mir Sayyid Ahmad could have copied it as an exercise in calligraphy without any specific album in mind. The Shah Tahmasp album has Murvarid’s preface copied as an exercise in \textit{ta'līq} by his son Muhammad Mu’min in among pages of finely written chancellery documents.

A preface to an album assembled for Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–95)\textsuperscript{134} also uses Murvarid’s model. Its author was Muhammad Cenderecizade and the copyist Haydar al-Husayni (it is dated 980/1572–73, in Constantinople). He kept somewhat closer to Murvarid’s version, retaining three of the four couplets from the concluding poem and added the year he completed it and the place where it was copied at the end. Cenderecizade inserted his name

\begin{itemize}
\item[132] \textit{fuĝalâ}-yi khatt shînâs va ‘uraflâ-yi hunar iqṭibâs.
\item[133] \textit{vassâlân va naqqâshân}. \textit{Vassâlân}: the term probably embraces the arts of binding, margin-making, and other skills essential for making an album (trimming, resizing, ruling, gluing).
\item[134] For a description of the album and its contents, see Duda, “Das Album Murads III. in Wien.”
\end{itemize}
at the point where the process of album making is introduced, noting that he supervised its arrangement.

Mir Sayyid Ahmad did a major remodeling of Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s preface. The opening sequence where God, His creation, and the pen and tablet are praised has disappeared. Mir Sayyid Ahmad takes up at the point where the two types of pen, the vegetal and the hair, are introduced. Occasionally substituting words, he otherwise follows Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s course through the entire segment on the history of calligraphy, its scripts and masters, from its earliest period to his own time. He also keeps the next major section of his model where the hair pen is introduced and its Manichaean, Chinese, and European practitioners are mentioned; the segue into ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, and the poem where the Chinese response to ‘Ali’s work is described. The hemistichs of one couplet are reversed and another couplet is deleted. A long segment of Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s text is missing. Mir Sayyid Ahmad retained the transitional passage immediately after the poem and then picks up Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s model at the next long poem that tells of the competition between two artists at the king’s court. He retains the next transitional passage, where the seven modes of depiction are listed, and the poem that follows, with minor changes. The next three elements are reversed. Mir Sayyid Ahmad places the masters of Fars and Iraq first, and deletes the names of Master Sultan Mahmud and his son Mirza ‘Ali. Qutb al-Din Muhammad writes that all of the masters were students of Bihzad and that they worked in the royal kitābkhāna. A poem of seven couplets in Qutb al-Din Muhammad is reduced to five in Mir Sayyid Ahmad. The transitional passage to the other group of masters is retained; in it we are advised that only recent masters will be mentioned. Mir Sayyid Ahmad next describes the masters of Khurasan (who had come first in Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s preface) with no deletions and also keeps intact a poem praising Bihzad.

The next major theme is the album’s inception. In form it follows Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s model. Shah Tahmasp is mentioned and his titles are provided. But while Shah Tahmasp is the patron of the album in Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s preface, he is only mentioned in Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s preface because etiquette requires mention of the current shah. Amir Ghayb Beg’s name is substituted for Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s as the overseer of the album’s production. The closing section follows Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s model, with occasional word changes and the reordering of some lines of poetry. The chronogram that contained a portion of Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s title (qiṣṣa-khwān) and name is deleted, replaced by Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s signature, prayer for forgiveness, and year of copying. The colophon is broken by two couplets of poetry that do not appear in Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s preface.

The immediate model for Mir Sayyid Ahmad appears to have been Qutb al-Din Muhammad. Although we should bear in mind that some of Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s changes

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135 Comparison is based on the version of Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s preface published by Husayn Khādvī Jam, “Risālā-i dar tāriḵ-i khaṭṭ va naqīšāt.”
136 The theme is so central to the preface genre that its absence is puzzling. In its present binding, the preface begins on fol. 7a (prefaces usually begin on the b side of a folio). Given the codicological changes made to Amir Ghayb Beg’s album, it is possible that the one or two folios onto which Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s opening sequence could have been copied are missing, but there is no way to be certain.
137 The relationship was already observed by Dickson and Welch, Houghton Shahnameh, 1:281. They describe Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s preface as a “plagiarized version.”
might be attributed to his use of a different recension of the preface than that available to us, the scale and purpose of some changes are so significant that scribal variation cannot be the sole explanation. Recensions of Murvarid’s preface in numerous manuscripts of his \textit{inshā’} manual ‘reveal only minor differences between texts.

Repeated passages are found in other examples. Some of the poetry composed by Qutb al-Din Muhammad and later copied by Mir Sayyid Ahmad with alterations was taken from an earlier text, the \textit{Ā’in-i Iskandārī} (Rules of Alexander, 1543–44) written by ‘Abdī Beg Shirāzi (1513–80). The source was a section of his \textit{masnāvī} that focused on “the virtues of art and the virtuous artists,” especially “artists of Manichaean pen” and “portrayers of Artangi forms.” Qutb al-Din Muhammad extracted lines and modified them according to the principles of imitative response. Some hemistichs are kept intact; in others words are reversed or replaced. Later in the century, Shams al-Din Muhammad used three couplets of the poetry in Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s preface without any modification: “Writer of marvels, ruddy cloaked reed/ with two tongues but silent in speech/ A resplendent cypress in stature spreading shade/ that draws its night-tresses underfoot/ Straight like an arrow, in nature like a bow/ that hides the countenance of day with dark night.” Only a few years later, Muhammad Muhsin would do the same, but his source was different. Fully two pages of his preface (fols. 66a and 66b) are taken directly from Kashīfī’s preface to the \textit{Anvār-i suhaylī} (1504–5).

None of this should come as a surprise in a literary tradition where borrowing and imitation constituted a central element in creativity. Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s poems are responses to models that followed accepted rules of imitation. Mir Sayyid Ahmad and Muhammad Muhsin are exempt from accusations of plagiarism (\textit{sarq al-shīr, al-sariqa}) because they make no claim to authorship—they simply signed the prefaces as if their only role consisted of transcribing the text. Shams al-Din Muhammad, however, does claim to have composed the preface and does insert poetry without any alteration.

As Losensky has noted, two forms of intertextuality in Persian literature need to be distinguished. The first is systemic, resulting from the conventional usage of language. This form applies to the repertoire of figures of speech, lexical incidence, and recurring themes. The second is intentional allusion to a literary source where “the poet consciously refers to an earlier text and expects his audience to recognize the reference.” Distinct forms of conscious allusion were codified to reflect various relationships between model and imitative response. In theorizing intertextuality, forms of borrowing needed to be separated out as did the nature of intent, whether such correspondences resulted from intentional theft or the unconscious repetition of literary property. Every imaginable outcome

\begin{footnotes}
\item[138] For an edition, see ‘Abdī Beg Shirāzi, \textit{Ā’in-i Iskandārī}, ed. Abū al-Fażl Hāshim Ev-Oghli Rahimov (Moscow: Dānish, 1977). The full examination of this extremely interesting text extends beyond the scope of this study. For other compositions by the poet and biographical details, see \textit{EIr}, s.v. “Abdī Shirāzī” (M. Dabīrsīāqī and B. Fragner).
\item[139] \textit{fażilat-i hunar va fażil-i humarmandān}.
\item[140] \textit{nagqāshān-i māni-qalam}.
\item[141] \textit{sīratgarān-i arzhang-raqam}.
\item[142] Some scholars have offered more restrictive definitions of intertextuality, discounting “thematic or generic kinship.” See Riffaterre, “Textuality: W. H. Auden’s ‘Musée de Beaux Arts’,” esp. pp. 1–2.
\item[143] Losensky, “Allusive Field of Drunkenness,” p. 229.
\item[144] For examples and terms, see ibid., pp. 229–55.
\end{footnotes}
is covered in this literature, and a consistent system was developed by the twelfth century. Qazvini’s (d. 1338) system relied on the model Shams Qays composed in the early thirteenth century (where he applied Arabic theory to his works on Persian prosody). Qazvini’s guidelines can be divided into four parts. In the first, he held that commonly used phrases, metaphors, and metonymies belonged to everyone and could not be plagiarized. In the second, he held that plagiarism could take two forms, either open or hidden. In the third, he claimed that accusations of plagiarism were valid only if one could be certain that the second poet intentionally copied the first.

The fourth part is divided into five sub-sections: a Koranic verse or hadith could be inserted into discourse without introducing it as a quotation and small changes to it were permissible; if a poem is inserted into a text the quotation should be indicated unless it is so well known as to obviate the need for identification—small changes were also permissible. Borrowed prose could be turned into poetry and vice-versa; a story and poem could be alluded to without any direct reference. To the last, al-Taftazani added proverbs or well-known sayings. The preceding rules would absolve the preface writers of any accusation of plagiarism, especially since the vast majority of materials that they do cite were well within the bounds of well-known literary precedent.

The preceding discussion focused on various aspects of the literary dimensions of the prefaces and examined forms of intertextuality in literary practice. In addition to manuals of useful quotations, authors could consult references in compilations of inshā’ which were an important vehicle of textual transmission and which shaped literary aesthetics. Several of them were available. Writing in his history Habīb al-siyar, Khvandamir mentions notables who flourished during the reign of Sultan Husayn Mirza and who excelled in epistology. Murvarid, Kashīfī, Isfizari, ‘Abd al-Vasi’ Nizami, and Qādi Ikhtiyar al-Dīn Hasan were adept in inshā’ and compiled manuals of texts that they had composed. Under the biographical notices of earlier rulers, Khvandamir identifies, among other epistolographers, Sīmī Nishapūrī and Khvāja Yusuf Burhan (a descendant of Shaykh Ahmad Jam). Khvandamir describes Khvāja Yusuf’s treatise as containing the epistolary compositions of past writers. The habit of compiling inshā’ collections from materials excerpted from another author’s collected texts was as common as the production of entirely original ones. Numerous later manuals contain choice texts—letters, decrees, certificates, and prefaces—excerpted from and attributed to their original author’s work. This habit supports the contention that similarities between album prefaces are the result not only of conventions of organization, theme, and language, but of familiarity with specific models. Texts composed by figures like ‘Abd al-Vasi’ Nizami were still being used well into the Safavid period, with passages from his compositions turning up in Safavid correspondence.

The same reuse is attested in the examples of album prefaces described above. Several known instances of Murvarid as a model can be explained by the wide distribution of his inshā’ (Sharaf-nāma), which served as a vehicle for dissemination. Qutb al-Dīn Muhammad’s

145 The list is paraphrased from von Grunebaum, “Concept of Plagiarism in Arabic Theory,” pp. 244–45.
147 One example is the excerpt taken from Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Ali Yazdi’s inshā’ and found in a manuscript titled Majmā‘-yi rasā‘l, Istanbul, Süleymanie Library, Esad Efendi 3769. Included among the excerpts is Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Ali Yazdi’s Dībā‘-yi muraqqd‘-i Khvāja ‘Abd al-Qādir (fols. 111b–17b).
Preface may have become known in a similar way, surviving as it does today in *majmū‘a* and *inshā‘*. Khvandamir/Amini’s preface survives today in Khvandamir’s *inshā‘* (*Nama-yi nāmā*). But this is merely the most immediate connection between *inshā‘* and the album; there are other conceptual relationships to consider.

First, both *inshā‘* and album are collections of material defined by preestablished categories. Although no single album equals the *inshā‘* in its textual content, the album did share the pedagogical and didactic function of the *inshā‘* collection: the practice of compiling examples of letters and decrees composed by well-known historical figures and used by the *inshā‘* reader as paradigms for construction, rhetoric, style and composition is not so far removed from the idea of the album. Second, albums were also assembled from important works—written, drawn and painted—that offered excellent examples for study. The biographical aspect inherent in the *inshā‘* manual is taken even further in the album, a massively developed biographical object. Its contents also offered access to a host of prominent figures from the past, because their works were records of their skills and achievements.

Finally, preface writing was analogous to poetic practice and album composition. Several metaphors of process, first applied to the poet but also appropriate for the album compiler, have already been mentioned. The etymology of the word for album (‘*muraqqa‘*’) provides another linkage. The word means, in Edward William Lane’s definition, “a garment or piece of cloth, much patched, or having many patches. And hence, as being likened to a garment much used.”149 It made perfect sense for the album as an object assembled from an aggregate, each of its pages a patchwork assemblage. The analogy extends equally well to the poet’s practice of combining metaphors and textual fragments into a newly ordered whole.

In reading examples of prefaces from a variety of works, commonalities of structure, language, theme, and metaphor also come to the fore. Selected examples are summarized in appendix 2. A comparative study of prefaces and album prefaces reveal several literary continuities. For example, regardless of the project or field of endeavor, whether history in prose, works on ethics and philosophy, poetry, or a polemic tract on the Turkish language, that the preface introduced, God’s creation played a critical role. God fashioned and favored man and provided him with prodigious gifts of thought and of communication through speech and writing. Man could create too, although the nature of his creativity required tempering and definition in relation to the *creatio ex nihilo*. The advantage acquired through these multifaceted endeavors was that they made a record of man’s achievement, as a form of memorialization, a power also critical to the album.

Despite these numerous close relationships of theme, form, language, and the stress on human capacities to create, critical differences emerge between the prefaces written for albums and the prefaces written for books. In the album prefaces the themes of praise, whether to God, the Prophet Muhammad, the album owner and compiler, or to the finished album...
are massively expanded. We find no articulated theory of method or consideration of the very foundations of knowledge. Comparison only highlights the album preface’s rhetorical dimension, its coy relationship to the subject that it introduces. Theories of art, criteria of judgment, and the benefits acquired from the visual examination of calligraphy, painting, and drawing, while mentioned, are not described in detail or articulated to the reader as principles. There is a disconnection between visual experience and verbal articulation that cannot be adequately explained or understood as an absence of thought or of action. Rather, the literary dimensions of the album preface find their closest analogies in poetic practice, in the fun and games of saying one thing and meaning another, of fixing meaning. A complete verbal discussion of the album’s contents could only occur in the context of viewing as a form of immediate reception integrated with seeing, a series of conversations, observation, debate, and criticism. To record such discourse was deemed redundant. Instead, the prefaces drew on a store of examples and precedents written with a literary complexity that required the full attention of its reader.
CHAPTER FIVE

ART IN HISTORY AND PRACTICE

The writing of history using biography, where chronology is expressed through genealogy, is a feature that developed early on in Islamic historiography. Specialized biographies compiled according to profession of the “restricted” type, to use Wadad al-Qadi’s term, developed as a literary genre in the first centuries of Islam. General biographical dictionaries made up of compilations of notices about exemplary and famous figures are a much later development. The first example is probably the Wafayât al-a‘yan of Ibn Khallikan (d. 1282), who, like many authors before him, introduced it as “a concise work in the science of history.”

The origin of the division into “classes” (tabaqât), which lies at the foundation of Islamic biography, is thought to be an outgrowth of hadith. According to this notion, the principles of spiritual genealogy were applied to the organization of intellectual endeavors; the application was also regarded as a manifestation of a more general Arab concern for genealogy. Others have explained it as connected to the “Muslim concept of the history of salvation, with the succession of pious men, beginning with the prophets, whose characters were so many models to be imitated.” By the end of the ninth century, tabaqât had become “part of a global preoccupation of all scholars in different fields: to give to society the canons for transmitting knowledge, whether sacred or secular, . . . by means of a biographical tool.”

BEFORE THE PREFACE: BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL WORKS, AND TREATISES ON CALLIGRAPHY

Both types of biography—specialized and general—were prevalent in the late fifteenth century: ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami’s Nafaḥat al-uns min ḥazarât al-quds (Sweet Scents of Intimacy from...
the Presences of the Pure), commissioned by Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i in 1476–77 and completed in 1478–79, is a collection of notices of five hundred and sixty-seven saints; Khvandamir’s Dastūr al-vuzārā’ (1509–10) is a compendium of biographies of viziers from the Umayyad through the Timurid dynasties; and Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i’s Majālsī al-nafā‘īs (begun 1490–91), provides biographies of contemporary poets who wrote in Persian and Chaghhatay. Also from the late Timurid period is Dawlatshah Samarqandi’s Taẓkira al-shu‘arā’ (Biography of Poets), completed 1487, which he dedicated to Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i.9

In Khvandamir’s biography of viziers the notices are arranged according to the dynasty that they served. Although reading and writing and eloquence in speech were required of all viziers, and hence references to the possession of good script are ubiquitous in taẓkira notices, some viziers (such as Ibn Muqla) were especially renowned for their calligraphy. Among them was Ibn Muqla (Abu ‘Ali b. Muqla), to whom Khvandamir devotes an entry in the section on viziers under the Abbasid caliphate: “Calligraphy, the viewing of which afforded perfect pleasure to the sight of people of insight, he strung on the thread of invention, and with his miraculous jewel-sprinkling pen he drew the line of cancellation through the written characters of the calligraphers of the entire world.”10 The remaining portion of the biographical notice describes his service under several caliphs, leading up to the point where the caliph ordered his hand to be cut off for alleged treason. Khvandamir asks: “Why did they cut off his hand when it is the vehicle of calligraphy and it copied so many Korans?”11 He ends by noting that Ibn Muqla served three caliphs and that he copied three Korans during his lifetime.12

Dawlatshah’s comprehensive collection of biographies of poets was the first to be written after al’-Awfī’s Lubāb al-albāb (1221), two and a half centuries earlier. Paul Losensky described Dawlatshah’s goal as “nothing less than to create a poetic universe”13; the resulting work reflects the project of literary codification and consolidation pursued by the Timurid and Turkmen dynasties.14 Dawlatshah’s biographical work comprises one hundred and fifty notices about poets past and present, each entry following a relatively standard structure and including biographical information such as family background, origins of the poet, class, education, patron, teacher, etc.15 At a minimum, he cites one hemistich (matla‘) by the poet, and he often comments on the merits of the poet’s work and assesses his talent. Dawlatshah’s biography is divided into separate sections, each devoted to a particular class or rank (tabaqa‘) of poet. The work ends with a discussion of contemporary poets, and in particular six poets who were patronized by Sultan Husayn Mirza. Dawlatshah’s compilation became the model for biographies of poets compiled during the Safavid period by Sam Mirza (Tuhfa-yi sāmī)

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11 dāstī rā vaṣī‘ī-khāft ast va chand musūfāf niwīshāta chīrā mūkūrād (ibid., pp. 79–80).
12 dar ayyām-i hāyat sīh musūfāf dar qalam āśārd (ibid., p. 80).
14 Ibid., pp. 151 and 138.
15 The same categories of information are given in poets’ biographies in Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i’s Majālsī al-nafā‘īs. For a summary of them, see Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” pp. 28–30.
before 1560–61, and Sadiqī Beg Afshar (Majma’ al-khavāss, The Concourse of the Elite) compiled in the 1590’s.

Dawlatshah and Mir ‘Alī Shīr Nava’ī wrote their biographies principally for the purposes of mentioning poets and illustrating their achievements through exemplary poems. Other competencies like calligraphy, drawing, and music-making that went beyond rhetoric, discourse, and mastery over poetic forms are adduced to demonstrate the subject’s range of expertise and conspicuous talent. Another context in which Dawlatshah refers to calligraphers and artists is in his synopsis of a ruler’s career, where he sketches a picture of court life, culture, and patronage by listing a group of participants, producers, and arbiters. He considers two Jalayirid rulers, Sultan Uvays who he says painted in the “Vāṣitī” manner and was the teacher of the artist ʿAbd al-Hayy;¹⁶ and Sultan Ahmad, “a master in such forms of skill as depiction, illumination, bowmaking, arrowmaking, and inlay among others,” who also wrote the six scripts.¹⁷ The entry ends with a hemistich composed by the sultan.

In his synopsis of the Timurid sultan Shahrukh’s reign, Dawlatshah focuses on four outstanding men who worked in Herat during that time, specializing in music, singing, architecture, and painting. The entries on Baysunghur and Ibrahim Sultan emphasize the generosity of their patronage and recount anecdotes illustrating the rivalry between the courts in Herat, Shiraz, and Samarqand.

Despite his clear admiration for this cultural precedent, Dawlatshah also promotes the superiority of his own contemporary setting. Where he describes the argument Baysunghur and Ulugh Beg had over which was better, the Khamsa of Amir Khusraw Dihlavi or the one of Nizami, for example, he writes that in his time such a debate would easily have been settled; “If such prejudice existed today, the minds of the cambists, who are currently appraisers in the bazaar of excellence—long may they endure—would have uncovered a rule of preference and abolished all ambiguity.”¹⁸ His comment implies that a method of arbitration had been developed that offered a definitive answer to the problem by using a set of processes for judging quality which was superior to that of the early Timurid period.

It was also in the later years of the fifteenth century that writers began to insert notices about calligraphers and artists into universal histories. Similar boasting about advances in judgment to those found in Dawlatshah can be found in notions of the superiority of the new in the history of art, advanced by Khvandamir in a series of references to practitioners of the arts that occur in his biographies, principally in the Habib al-siyar, which begins in the pre-Islamic period and ends in 929–30 (1523–24). After each section on an individual reign, which provides the framework for his history, he inserts lists of notable figures arranged by primary occupation. Under the reign of Shahrukh (r. 1409–47), for example, Khvandamir lists the names of comptrollers (ṣad), viziers, sayyids, shaykhs, and other learned men. Within each class, individuals are arranged by their date of death. Only occasionally do we find anecdotes about calligraphers or artists in the historical narratives proper.¹⁹

¹⁷  va dar awzâ-i hunar chun tavīr va taghib va qawâjî va sihâmî va khâtim-bandî va ghayr zalîka ustâd bâdî va shish qalam-i khanîvast pâyvâsta bâd râh-i tarjînamandâd va raf-i ishtibâh kardând (ibid., p. 342).
¹⁸  agar ân ‘asbahayat dar in rûzgâr bâdî khâtīr-i nuqqâd jâshâriyân-i bâzâr-i fâzî-i in rûzgâr ki ‘amr-shâh ba-khulûd payvâsta bâd râh-i tarjînamandâd va raf-i ishtibâh kardând (ibid., p. 267).
¹⁹  One example of a calligrapher’s biography placed in a historical narrative is that of Mawlana Ma’ruf whom Khvandamir names as the master of Mawlana Shams al-Din (a.k.a. Muhammad b. Husam or Shams
In his earlier history, the *Khulāṣat al-akhbār fi bayān aḥṣāl al-akhyār* (1500), Khvandamir completed the work with an epilogue comprising biographical notices of some of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s contemporaries.20 In the *Habib al-siyar* he increasingly emphasizes artists and calligraphers beginning with the reign of Shahrukh. Two entries about artists active during Shahrukh’s rule show a historical and genealogical conception that suggests a consciousness of a history of art, though not expressing it as such. The first entry is on Mawlana Sham al-Din al-Haravi, a student of Mawlana Ma’ruf. Working under Baysunghur’s patronage, “he signed many of his calligraphic specimens in the name of Yaqut al-Musta’imi and the quick-sighted ones who appreciate subtleties accepted this situation.”21 Mawlana Ja’far Tabrizi is praised for his excellence in all scripts, especially nastālīq. Three of his students—Mawlana Azhar, Mawlana Shihab al-Din Abd Allah Ashpaz, and Mawlana Shaykh Mahmud—are the Ibn Muqla, Sayrāfī, and Yaqut of the age.22

Khvandamir evaluates the calligraphers’ skills by comparing them with past masters. He pairs Ja’far’s three students with Ibn Muqla, ‘Abd Allah al-Sayrafi, and Yaqut al-Musta’imi, though he does not elaborate on the specific aspects of their calligraphy that would justify the comparison. The progress of nastālīq had culminated in the recent past. Writing on the perfection of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s nastālīq at the end of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s reign, Khvandamir says that he had “obliterated the calligraphy of masters of the past and present.”23 Mawlana Mir ‘Ali is the last nastālīq calligrapher whom Khvandamir mentions, bringing the reader fully into the present, after his account of the Safavid ruler Shah Isma’il and thus at the very end of his history. Mir ‘Ali, known to be a sayyid, is, he says, “the leading calligrapher in nastālīq script.”24

Skill in calligraphy is a virtue often mentioned by Khvandamir, whatever the profession of the personage he describes, indicating that the acquisition of good writing was a prerequisite for any kind of participation in courtly culture. In addition to calligraphers, dependent to various degrees on court patrons, he writes about correspondence secretaries employed by the court whose advantage lay in their ability to write well (mainly in tīlīq), and probably

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20 The conclusion lists monuments and gardens of Herat and biographical notices divided according to art in history and practice.


22 Ibid.


24 va dar khatūt-i nastālīq sar āmad-i khus-nīsān (ibid. 4:618–19).
quickly. Mawlana ‘Abd al-Hayy Munshi, Mawlana Mu’ın al-Din Muhammad Isfizari, and Amir Nizam al-Din ‘Abd al-Hayy Munshi are among those mentioned. To some extent the groupings indicate a separation between practitioners who specialized in ta’liq and those who specialized in nasta’liq. Khwandamir also distinguishes between the “six scripts” and the more recently invented ta’liq and nasta’liq. Discussing Khvaja Muhammad Mu’min (b. Khvaja Shihab al-Din ‘Abd Allah Murvarid), Sam Mirza’s tutor, he says that “in the delineation of the basic scripts he has risen to such a height that in Iraq and Khurasan today he is considered the most accomplished calligrapher of that region.”

His statement is doubly “historical” in its separation of a canon of scripts from more recently developed and perfected ones and its promotion of Muhammad Mu’min as a repository of an aesthetic dating from the late thirteenth century to a contemporary setting.

Some of Khwandamir’s biographical notices are humorous, others judgmental in tone. His entry for Mawlana Simi Nishapuri revolves around an anecdote about two men placing a bet on how many maccasts of dates the bulimic calligrapher could eat. Of Mawlana Sultan Muhammad Khandan, he notes his predilection for the good life: living in Herat, he “sometimes deigns to produce examples of calligraphy.”

Notices on court painters sponsored by Sultan Husayn Mirza and Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i accompany the entries for learned men. He writes of Mawlana Hajji Muhammad Naqqash that he “constantly delineated strange things and wonderful forms with the pen of thought on the pages of time” and was complete in his mastery of depiction and illumination. Khvaja Mirak Naqqash, also a calligrapher, was peerless in depiction (“taṣīb”), and was complete in his mastery of depiction and illumination (“taṣīb”). Mawlana Qasim ‘Ali, a member of the ulema, was “in the craft of making gold leaf and gilding... likewise at the limit of experience.” Khwandamir’s notice on Bihzad is entirely consistent with the praise of the artist in the Khwandamir/Amini preface:

[Bihzad] manifests rare images and wonderful artistic manifestations. Wielding his pen like Mani, he has canceled out the works of earthly painters and his miraculous fingers have effaced the depictions of mortal men.

[couplet]
He took one hair from his brush
he gave life to inanimate form.

The notice on Bihzad compares his skill and ability to that of the painter Mani and all the painters in between, and ends by identifying his patrons Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i and Sultan Husayn Mirza and the prognosis for his continued favor and success. Khwandamir concludes again that he has outdone all prior achievements in painting, just as Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi had done for nasta’liq.

Khwandamir partly modeled his history on Mirkhvand’s Rawzat al-ṣafā’ in its chronological

26 Ibid., 4:62.
27 va gāhī himmat bar kītābāt-i musakh-i sharīfā mī-gumārād (ibid., 4:363).
29 Ibid.
scope and language, but the biographical notices at the conclusion of regnal periods seem to have been his own idea. Mirkhvänd’s volumes, covering the Ilkhanid and early Timurid periods, contain no biographies, and it is not until the seventh volume, in a summation of the cultural and intellectual achievements of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s rule written by Khvandamir as a continuation of Mirkhvänd’s history, that biographies appear. In large measure they are the same as those found in the Habīb al-siyar though slightly rearranged. Anecdotes and brief notes about artists and calligraphers also occur in the body of Mirkhvänd’s history, but they are integrated into that history as noteworthy events.

An examination of the biographical notices placed at the end of regnal periods in Khvandamir’s universal history indicates that before Shahrukh’s time (d. 1447) calligraphers and artists were not singled out in discussions of famous men attached to, or associated with, the court. The only exception is a reference made in a biography dating from the Ilkhanid period to a vizier’s skill in chancellery script. Numerous notices accompany pre-Timurid accounts and mention shaykhs, scholars, members of the ulema, poets, muhaddiths, chess players, and musicians, but references to painters and calligraphers are absent. Despite this absence, other references in Khvandamir indicate that he knew about calligraphers active in the pre-Timurid period, notably Ibn Muqla, Yaqut al-Mustas‘imi, and ‘Abd Allah al-Syrafi. This gap in his history may be explained by his focus on courtly life and its participants and perhaps also by his conviction that the most direct precedent for late Timurid and early Safavid court life could be found in the patronage of Shahrukh and his son Baysunghur at Herat. Dawlatshah takes court history slightly further back, locating the origins of court-sponsored painters in the reigns of the two Jalayirid rulers, Sultan Uvays and Sultan Ahmad.

Dawlatshah and Khvandamir both had a clear conception of the history of depiction and calligraphy that emerges from reading their work. They also believed that the arts had been further perfected in their own time. Their history of depiction, in particular, parallels the historical and genealogical conception of the tazkira: the search for origins is often incorporated into other works on poetry. For example, the preface to Mawlana Sayfī’s Arūzi Bukhari’s ‘Arūz-i sayfī (Metrics of Sayfī), completed in 1490–91, a treatise on poetic meter and rhyme, presents a series of arguments and opinions by various writers as to who was the first poet to write in Persian—Bahram Gur, Abu Hafs Sughdī, or Rudaki. Pinning the origin of a technique or practice on a historical individual had long belonged to the Islamic intellectual tradition, motivated in part by the need to explain precedents for customs. The earliest known practitioner of the genre, which came to be referred to as awā’il, is Abu Bakr b. Abi Shayba, whose Muṣannaf (literary work) written in the ninth century contained a section on “firsts.” The earliest monographic treatment of “firsts” was Abu Hilal al-Askari’s Kitāb al-awā’il (Book of Firsts, before 1005); one of the best known was Tha‘alibi’s Latā‘if

34 The densest group of references to calligraphers is prompted by Baysunghur’s death (Mirkhvand, Rawżat al-safā’, 6:704–5).
35 For references to treatise, see Storey, Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey, 3, 1, no. 292.
36 See EL2, s.v. “Awā’il” (F. Rosenthal).
37 Listed in ibid. Shortly after the Musannaf were works entirely devoted to the topic by al-Kalbi, al-Mada‘ini, and al-Hasan b. Mahbub.
al-ma’ārif (Subtleties of Knowledge, before 1038). Tha’alibî’s work includes several “firsts” for writing and materials: Idris (Enoch) “was the first to use writing” and to write with a pen, and Joseph was the first to use papyrus (al-qarâfis). Elsewhere we learn that Samarqand is famed for its paper “which has driven out of use the Egyptian papyrus and the parchment which previous generations employed; this is because it looks better, is more supple, is more easily handled and is more convenient for writing on. It is only made in Samarqand and China.”

Other works of belles-lettres (adab) contained chapters about language and writing. In his late-tenth-century Fihrist (Canon) Ibn al-Nadîm began with a section on “the languages of the peoples, Arab and foreign, the characteristics of their methods of writing, their types of script and forms of calligraphy.” He cited numerous traditions which attributed writing to different men, among them one from Ka’b (al-Ahbar) saying that Adam was the first person to write in the Arabic and Persian scripts, explaining later that Adam wrote on clay before other supports came into use, including copper, stone, wood, leaves, bark, tanned hides, silk, parchment, and paper.

As Khvandamir’s history moves further into the sixteenth century, biographical notices become more numerous but the same is not the case for the histories of Babur (Bâburnâma [Book of Babur], before 1530), and Muhammad Haydar Dughlat (Târikh-i rashidi, 1546), which are more circumscribed in scope chronologically and geographically. Because of Babur’s narrower focus, biographical notices were confined to celebrated people at Sultan Huseyn Mirzâ’s court. The last Timurid ruler’s death in 1506 occasioned a long biographical sketch, followed by notices for his children, wives, concubines, amirs (the longest on Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’î), ministers, viziers, learned men, poets, artists, and musicians. His list of artists—Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, Bihzad, and Shah Muzaffar—is thus surprisingly brief.

Despite a longer chronological span that offered more opportunities to talk about courts and their activities, Muhammad Haydar Dughlat, like Babur, concentrates mainly on the

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38 `Abd al-Malik b. Muhammad Tha’alibî, Lata’îf al-md ârif. For a translation, see C. E. Bosworth, The Book of Curious and Entertaining Information: The Lata’îf al-md ârif of Tha’alibî (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968). The first chapter, “Concerning the First Occurrences of Various Things and the First Persons to Do Various Things,” is an excellent example of the scope of such works and of the pleasure to be derived from reading them.
39 Ibid., p. 39. For identification of Enoch with Idris, see n. 5. In an addendum, Bosworth notes how Idris was “associated or identified with Hermes Trismegistus, the founder of hermetic philosophy who, according to the . . . Epistles of the tenth-century Basran group of the Ikhwân as-Safî . . . journeyed to Saturn and spent thirty years there learning the secrets of the heavens before bringing them down to mankind” (ibid., p. 147).
40 Ibid., p. 68.
41 Ibid., p. 40.
42 Ibid., p. 140. He adds the story that knowledge of paper-making was derived from captured Chinese prisoners brought to Samarqand (see ibid., n. 143).
44 Ibid., 1:7.
46 For notes on the composition of the text, its cultural context, and a translation, see Thackston, The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, pp. 9–31. As it survives today the history covers the periods 1494–1503, 1504–20, and 1525–30. For an explanation about the lacunae, see ibid., p. 11. Babur’s history is an often personal account of events that he experienced during this period.
47 For a translation of the text and commentary, see Thackston, Mirza Haydar Dughlat’s Târikh-i Rashidi. The history covers the period between ca. 1329 and 1543.
48 The notices were published as excerpts by Muhammad Shaffi, “Iqtibas az vâq’iāt-i Bâbur,” Oriental College Magazine 10, 3 (May 1934): 140–49.
notables of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s time, another testament to the fame of the Herat court. The occasion used to introduce his biographical notices is a trip that he made to Khurasan. He organizes the notices into separate categories—mystics, learned men, poets, calligraphers, painters, illuminators, singers, and musicians—before returning to his narrative. The section on calligraphy includes references to practitioners and their students, scripts and their inventors, arranged into a narrative that traces a history of calligraphy from the late fourteenth century into the sixteenth century. We are treated to a passage on Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, with an excerpt from his treatise inserted into it. An anecdote tells how Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi learns an important lesson, when he was asked to complete an unfinished _Khamsa_ copied by Ja’far al-Tabrizi. On his way to court to seek approval for the section he had completed he was greeted by the calligrapher Azhar, who disapproved of what he had written and punished him by locking him up in his house for two days. When Azhar released Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, he told the young calligrapher that he was talented but that he lacked technique and furnished him with samples to study and copy. Muhammad Haydar Dughlat closes with biographies of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s students and their followers.

Muhammad Haydar Dughlat’s treatment of painters is not strictly chronological. He begins with Shah Muzaffar and his father Master Mansur, making detailed comments about quality and technique of their works and noting that Shah Muzaffar died young and therefore left few examples. Next Bihzad is discussed briefly, mainly in comparison to Shah Muzaffar. Then Muhammad Haydar Dughlat jumps back to the time of the Ilkhanids (r. 1256–1353) and writes about ‘Abd al-Hayy, noting that contemporary practitioners thought he was a saint and that in later years he attempted to destroy his own works. Returning to the late fifteenth century, he mentions students of Bihzad—Qasim ‘Ali Chihragushay and a second Qasim ‘Ali—and Bihzad’s master and father Mawlama Mirak Naqqash, whom he describes in detail. He comments briefly on Ustad Baba Hajji, his brother Ustad Shaykh Ahmad, Mawlama Junayd, Ustad Husam al-Din Ghadaragar, and Mawlama Vali. He mentions another pupil of Bihzad’s, Mulla Yusuf, and ends with Mawlama Darvish Muhammad, the master of Muhammad Haydar Dughlat. It is at this point that one realizes why he devoted so much attention to Shah Muzaffar, who had trained Mawlama Darvish Muhammad, making him Muhammad Haydar Dughlat’s artist-grandfather. The section on illuminators is brief: only Yari and Mawlama Mahmud are mentioned. In both the sections on painters and on illuminators Muhammad Haydar Dughlat notes that there were many more, but that he has limited himself only to the masters.

The habit Khvandamir—and Mirkhvand to a lesser extent—had of recording names of calligraphers and artists notable in the life and culture of the court in the late fifteenth century was continued into the sixteenth century by Babur and Muhammad Haydar Dughlat. Dawlatshah and Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i also mention practitioners of calligraphy and the arts of depiction and illumination but for the most part as auxiliary skills, as does Sam Mirza

49 See Thackston, _Mirza Haydar Dughlat’s Tarikh-i Rashidi_, pp. 117–32. The biographical notices were published as excerpts by Muḥammad Shafi’, “Iqṭībās az tārīkh-i rashidi,” _Oriental College Magazine_ 10, 3 (May 1934): 150–70.

50 The section on artists was translated by Arnold with a commentary and notes on terms (T. W. Arnold, “Mirzā Muhammad Haydar Dughlāt on the Herāt School of Painters,” in Binyon, Wilkinson, and Gray, _Persian Miniature Painting_, app. 2, pp. 189–91).

51 An intelligent discussion of the terminology and the points of comparison was made by Soudavar, _Art of the Persian Courts_, pp. 95–97.
in his biography of poets. But only Muhammad Haydar Dughlat provides a section on calligraphers in narrative form, and it comes some two years after Dust Muhammad’s preface, the earliest known example. Thus, although events in artists’ lives figure in the history proper and as strings of biographical notes at the end of regnal periods, he does not form a history of art as a narrative although he certainly shows a historical sense of past and present.

In the aftermath of the album preface, several Safavid-period histories contain narrative accounts, including those of Hasan Beg Rumlu, Budaq Munshi Qazvini, and Iskandar Beg Munshi. For example, in his *Ahsan al-tavarikh* (completed 1577), Hasan Beg Rumlu traces a history of calligraphy amid his necrology for the year 919 (1513–14), the year in which Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi died, thus providing the rationale for a historical account. More developed is the narrative in Budaq Munshi Qazvini’s *Jawāhir al-akhbār*, completed around the same time (1576–77). His account of calligraphy and the arts of depiction was prompted by the naming of Caliph al-Muqtadir (r. 908–32), whom Ibn Muqla had served as vizier, in the historical section on the Abbasid caliphs. Qazvini’s text is full of intriguing asides, and he divides the narrative into separate parts according to medium (calligraphy and depiction) and divisions by script. Iskandar Beg Munshi’s section on calligraphers, painters, and other practitioners inserted at the end of the narrative of Shah Tahmasp’s rule is longer but comprises sequential biographies of the kind found in Khvandamir’s *Habīb al-siyār*. We can conclude from these three examples that after the middle years of the sixteenth century an art historical narrative or biographical component was a required element in any history.

Another category of source that offers evidence of an art historical sense is the technical treatise. Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s *Širāt al-sūfīr* (Way of Lines of Writing, 1514) contains a


53 After praising Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, he mentions calligraphers Ja’far and Azhar. He then relates the absence of writing in ancient times until Tahmuras. Different kinds (tāfšīl) of writing are listed. Ibn Muqla is credited with the invention of nastākh and thulūth. He trained his daughter to become a calligrapher. Ibn al-Bawwab, the inventor of muhaqqaq and rayhān, comes next and then Yaqut, the slave of the Abbasid caliph al-Musta’sim. Yaqut’s six students are identified as well as their students. Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi is identified as the inventor of nastā’īq and early-fifteenth-century masters of this script are mentioned in passing before we are introduced to the students of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi. A long treatment of Mir ‘Ali is next, mentioning how he rivaled Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, and an inventive poem that Mir ‘Ali wrote about one of his students (Khvaja Mahmud Siyavushani) is inserted. A brief list of sixteenth-century calligraphers closes the narrative before Hasan Beg Rumlu returns to his necrology for the year 919.


55 The ensuing narrative spans the period from Tahmuras and the emergence of writing and begins with the early history where he mentions ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (for Kufic), Ibn Muqla, his daughter, Ibn al-Bawwab, and Yaqut al-Musta’sim. The first three masters (Ibn Muqla, Ibn al-Bawwab, Yaqut) are each granted two of the six scripts. A few calligraphers and scripts are next mentioned out of chronological sequence, before Budaq Munshi Qazvini returns to Yaqut whose works he has seen in Bahram Mirza’s library. Yaqut’s “six students” follow, and the narrative continues apace with the transmission of these scripts by subsequent generations, ending with Hafiz Futa. His next division treats nastā’īq script, beginning with its inventor Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi and ending with Mir Mu’izz Kashi in the sixteenth century. Thereafter comes the section on the artists; much more abbreviated than the previous sections; it begins with Bihzad and ends with Khvaja Jan, but is interrupted by a discourse on talqīg script. Some artists who lived before the fifteenth century are named. A final section treats sīyāq script and ruqūm.


57 For a brief description of the text, also titled *Rišāla-yi manzūm dar ’ilm al-khāṭṭ* (Versified Treatise on the Art of Calligraphy), and a list of recensions, see Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, 2, 3, no. 645; and Muhammad Taqi Dānishpazhūh, “Sar guzasht-i nāmahā-ī khush-nivāsān va hunarmandān,”
section on the origins of nastālīq, in which he names Khvaja Mir ‘Ali, a calligrapher whose lineage went back to ‘Ali [b. Abi Talib], as its inventor. The connection to ‘Ali signified Mir ‘Ali’s exalted place in the history of calligraphy. According to Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, “scribes old or new are gleaners in his field,” and Mir ‘Ali held his own against the extraordinary talent of Ja’far and Azhar. The beginning section of the treatise deals with the origins of writing. Before ‘Ali b. Abi Talib “laid the foundations of the Kufi script,” people wrote in maqālī and Hebrew scripts. ‘Ali b. Abi Talib developed Kufic (asl-i khaṭṭ-i Kūf), from which all other scripts are derived. Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s treatise was written before the album prefaces that contain lists of practitioners and narrative histories of art. In its naming of select individuals from the history of calligraphy it resembles the histories and biographies composed in the late fifteenth and into the sixteenth century, where a chronology of calligraphy is implied but is not given a detailed exposition.

Other treatises of the sixteenth century contain chapters, or sections (bāb), on masters (ustādān) and inventors (mukhtarāt) or originators (mubtadi’). Mir ‘Ali Haravi, in his second chapter of the Midād al-khuṭṭāt (The Model of Scripts, 1519–20), listed masters of the six scripts (shish galam) from Ibn Muqla to Yaqt (instructed by ‘Ali b. Abi Talib in his sleep) and his students, stopping in the middle of the fifteenth century, and he attributes the inventions of ta’līq to Khvaja Taj al-Salmani and nastālīq to Khvaja Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi. The most recent nastālīq calligrapher that he mentions is Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi. He then adds some general comments about all their achievements. Majnun Rafiqi follows an identical chronological scope, by arrangement of scripts, and list of masters in his Khatt va savād (Script and Ink, 1533–34). Majnun Rafiqi, in the first chapter of Ādāb al-mashq (The Good Manners of Practice, ca. 1533–34), includes a “mention” (zikr) of inventors...

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60 Ibid., p. 107.


64 For an edition of the treatise, see ibid., pp. 209–36; 213–14. Mayīl Haravī provides no date. In the essay by Afshār (“Rīsālā-yi khaṭṭ-i Khalīl Tabrīzī,” p. 326, and n. 10) a treatise by the same title is given to Baba Shah Isfahāni, following Bayān. Muhammad Shafi had previously attributed it to the calligrapher Mir ‘Imād Qazvini. In Afshār’s list of treatises he does not mention Majnun Rafiqi’s Ādāb al-mashq (p. 326), although it appears in Mayīl Haravī’s listing, and he dates Baba Shah Isfahāni’s text by the same name to 940 (1533–34).
and masters in verse. The poetic framework allows an extraordinary economy: the identities of a sequence of calligraphers are conveyed by a single word. They are arranged according to period of activity beginning with ‘Ali [b. Abi Talib] who introduces Kufic after maʿqilī, and leading from Ibn Muqla to Ahmad Rum (a.k.a. Shams) in the six scripts, to Khvaja Taj [al-Salmani] in taʿlīq, and from Sayyid ‘Ali [Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi] to “Mas’had” [Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi] in nastaʿlīq. Specific aspects of their technical contributions are not mentioned, although a comparison between calligraphers of present and past emerges as a leitmotif. Qualities of their calligraphy are cited in their praise.

A highly detailed, narrative history of the six scripts and of nastaʿlīq is found in a treatise, Qawānīn al-khuṭṭī (Canons of Scripts), devoted mostly to calligraphic practice and technique and written by Mahmud b. Muhammad sometime around 1561–62.67 He begins his discourse on the history of the six pens (shish qalam) or six scripts (khūṭṭī-i sitta) with Ibn Muqla, and traces their transmission through to Ibn Bawwab and Yaqut al-Mustā’simi. The amount of detail he supplies for the history is unusual. He significantly develops the biography of Ibn Muqla; we learn of an intermediary figure between Ibn Bawwab and Yaqut, in the person of Qabus b. Vashmgir, the governor of Tabaristan, Jurjan and Gilan, and that Mawlana Saffa al-Din ‘Abd al-Vahhab was Yaqut’s teacher. He makes numerous points about Ibn Bawwab’s and Yaqut’s successive technical developments and the aesthetic changes that resulted in the style inherited from Ibn Muqla, and supplies dates of birth and death.

The six students of Yaqut are the subject of the next major section in the history of the six scripts, followed by their students, including Khvaja ‘Abd Allah Sayrafi. Here we learn that Sultan Abu Saʿid went to the khvaja’s house for instruction in calligraphy. Calligraphers of the fifteenth century, identified as calligraphers of Khurasan, are treated in equal detail. An anecdote about Mawlana Maʿruf’s prodigious acts of copying (1,500 couplets in one day) is culled from the Maṭlaʿ al-saʿdayn,68 as is the note that Maʿruf signed his pieces with Yaqut’s name and those “sharp-eyed [cognoscenti] of the world accepted them as Yaqut’s calligraphy.”69 Then the chronological sequence is broken, for he next deals at length with Muhammad Muʿmin, known as Khvajagi Murvarid. We learn here that at royal majlis60 he offered instruction in the rules and canons of calligraphy,61 presumably by demonstration. Mahmud b. Muhammad notes that he came to the attention of Muhammad Muʿmin in 935 (1528–29) after he had spent time copying from his specimens. Finally he says that Muhammad Muʿmin left for Hindustan in the later years of his life where he died in 950

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67 Also known by the title Qawāʾid al-khuṭṭī, Afsahr (“Risāla-yi khaṭṭ-i Khalil Tabrīz,” p. 326) dates it to 969 (1561–62). The text was mentioned by Habibi, “Literary Sources for the History of the Arts,” Safavid Sources, no. 26, and published in edited form by Māyūl Haravī, Kūhū ānī dar tamuddan-i islāmī, pp. 291–319. Māyūl Haravī notes that virtually nothing is known about Mahmud b. Muhammad and arrives at his dating of the treatise (1560–70) through internal evidence (ibid., pp. lxix–lxxv). I also consulted a manuscript recension in Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Walker Or. 28. The text is so detailed as to warrant separate publication. I am currently working on a translation and commentary of it.

68 The historical work is Kamal al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Razzāq b. Jalal al-Dīn Ishāq Samargandi’s Maṭlaʿ al-saʿdayn va maqūma al-bahrāyin, a history of the Timurids from 1304 to 1470.

69 mutabahāsīrān-i jhān ba-khaṭṭ-i Yaqūt gahūl kardand.

70 dar badu-yi tūlū-i nāṣīr-i salātan naṣāb-i kānūyāb ba-majlisāt-i bihiṣṭ uʿān sar fārāz gashtā.

71 qawāʾid va qawānīn-i khaṭṭī maʿrūz mī-dāshīt.
More calligraphers follow including those of Fars, among them the Timurid prince Ibrahim Sultan b. Shahrukh.

The next section covers the masters of nastālīq, beginning with its inventor Khvaja Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi who is “of the rank of Ibn Muqla.” Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi taught this script to a group of students, among them Mawlana Ja’far Tabrizi. Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s relationship to his master Azhar is compared with that between Ibn Bawwab and Yaqut. Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s year (919/1513–14) and place (Mashhad) of death are recorded, one of his poetry is cited, and an excerpt from his treatise on calligraphy is quoted. A quatrain sent to Bihzad by Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi concludes the notice. The detailed entries on Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s six students follow.

The next major figure Mahmud b. Muhammad covers is Mir ‘Ali; he again draws metaphorical parallels between past and present (the names of ‘Abd Allah Sayrafi and Yaqut are invoked) to emphasize his majesty. Mir ‘Ali spent his early days in the chancellery (dār al-insāḥ) at Herat transcribing decrees (akhkām) before moving to Bukhara where he made changes in the manner of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi. Mir Sayyid Ahmad went to Bukhara to study with Mir ‘Ali, and worked there for some time before returning to his home in Mashhad. Mahmud b. Muhammad then mentions more students through the line of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, including Shams al-Din Muhammad Kirmani and Mawlana Jamshid Mu’ammaı. Toward the end he returns to others of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s students: in his estimation, Malik Daylamī is the most important of the latter-day (muta‘akkhirīn) masters who followed Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi and Mir ‘Ali. At first he studied with his master before studying nastālīq under Rustam ‘Ali and Hafiz Baba Jan in Qazvin in 1537–38. He praises inscriptions in Qazvin by Malik Daylamī who was born in 1518–19 and died on 18 Zu’l-Hijja 971 (28 July 1564). Finally, the history comes to a close with two calligraphers: the first is identified as Anisi, and the second Padshah, his brother, who pursued a manner different from that of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi.

THE ALBUM PREFACE: WRITING HISTORIES OF ART

The structure of the album preface was sufficiently flexible to allow for interpolations so that narratives of transmission conceived of as histories of art could be placed between thematic units of the album preface as lists of practitioners and sequences of master-student relationships. The author could also add anecdotes about artists and patrons in addition to biographical notes, make claims about the origin of techniques and scripts, and sometimes provide general assessments of the quality and other aspects of the practitioner’s performance. Art historical sections of the preface could be further divided according to practice and categories of calligraphy according to script (Kufic, the six scripts, nastālīq and ta’līq). Calligraphy was treated separately from depiction (painting, drawing, illumination).

In each section, chronology was governed by the principle of transmission, i.e., each practitioner became a link in the chain leading from past to present. The concept of linked practitioners constituted a history of art. As in other practices prestige derived not only from innate ability but also from pedigree, that is, under whom one had studied. The structure

72 ki ba-manzila-yi Ibn Muqla ast.
of history-as-biography found in the preface is related to the isnād (lit. leaning against), a chain of authorities essential to the reliable transmission of a tradition or report, and to the silsila (lit. chain; the word silsila is used for chains of practice in the album prefaces). Silsila implied a continuous sequence of individuals and referred specifically to a chain of spiritual descent within the Sufi orders, tracing a master back to the order’s founder, and even back to the Prophet Muhammad. In the Naqshbandi Sufi order, the silsila was also a means of tracing the transmission of divine grace (fayḍ) and blessing (baraka) from God. As Arthur Buehler observed, the isnād and silsila “are based on a more encompassing principle: the personal encounter between two reliable transmitters.” Ideally, transmission of knowledge should be made to the student by a spiritually perfected master, a direct communication often described by the word suhbat, companionship. A similar authority was invested in some of the practitioners of the arts of calligraphy and depiction. The language of the preface claims moral perfection and purity for select practitioners, and notions of transmission give emphasis to direct training, although in theory some of the master’s moral qualities were deposited in their work and could be experienced through it.

The historical-biographical aspects of the album preface are found in Dust Muhammad, Malik Daylami, Mir Sayyid Ahmad (in his preface for the Amir Ghayb Beg album), Shams al-Din Muhammad, and Muhammad Muhsin. Their genealogies of practice can be diagramed in a series of charts (appendix 3). By adding consecutive numbers to the named practitioners, it is possible to show that preface writers did not necessarily follow a strictly linear trajectory, but often doubled back to supply additional information about a practitioner. Murvarid, Khvandamir/Amini, Shah Quli Khalifa, and Mir Sayyid Ahmad (preface for album H. 2156) do not insert lists of practitioner’s names or anecdotes amid the preface’s thematic units. The preface by Khvandamir/Amini is an exception; a significant portion is devoted to Bihzad, praising his achievements in painting and his compilation of the album. At one point Khvandamir/Amini promises to name other practitioners, but never does.

Some of the reasons for variations between individual album prefaces arise from the preface’s relationship to the album. The preface may have been composed with a specific album in mind, or it could have been written as a model. The preface might mention some of those makers whose works were mounted in the album, as a gloss on its visual contents, or a more fully developed narrative could be written to record for posterity a history of practice, thereby doubling the album’s function of preservation.

In assessing how the prefaces might be understood as histories of art, three interlinked aspects will be examined. The first concerns the means used to structure the history and

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73 See EI2, s.v. “Isnād” (J. Robson).
74 The system, originating in the treatment of hadith, was applied to other disciplines including other religious sciences (fiqh, usfūr), history, and geography among others. For an overview of the isnād system, see Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development, and Special Features* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), chap. 5. Siddiqi explains how the isnād was also applied to the hadith collections themselves—and the books of other disciplines—as a means of laying out the transmission of the book as a collection (ibid., p. 81). These authenticating certificates were called ḵāṣa. For the classifications of hadith, see John Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadith* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), chap. 6.
77 Ibid., p. 84.
how its information is arranged. The second involves the biographical framework, the practitioner, and the modes and techniques of his practice. The third turns to the forms of response mentioned in the preface and to the basis of judgment.

THE ORIGINS OF PRACTICE

In the prefaces there are shifts in balance between the sections that deal with forms of practice—calligraphy and depiction—and techniques or script types, and more or less fully fleshed out articulations of the transmission history ranging from a telegraphic sequence of names to detailed explanations of practitioners and their training. The early history is sometimes present, sometimes not mentioned at all. Malik Daylam’s preface deals solely with nasta‘liq, although the Amir Husayn Beg album for which it was written contained numerous paintings, drawings, and illuminations as well. But despite its absence in some prefaces, early history was of paramount importance, for it marked the first cause of an event, such as the development of a script or technique. The inventor stood at the head of the transmission sequence.

Following the long-standing tradition of avā‘il, or “firsts,” the identity of several of the first makers included prophets and other significant sources of prestige and authority. 78 The most fastidious recorder of firsts was Dust Muhammad. He asserts that Adam was the first to form characters (fārāh-i khaṭṭ mī‘īṣṭ) and to make ink (miyād sākḥī);79 Ya’rub b. Qahtan derived Kufic from ma‘qūlī script and thus was the inventor of Kufic (vāzī‘-i khaṭṭ-ī Kūfī); three of the six scripts (thuluth, muhaqqaq, naskh) were introduced by Ibn Muqla after ‘Ali b. Ali Talib appeared to him and instructed him in them;81 Khvaja Taj al-Dīn Salmani “invented the foundation of tā‘līq script and contrived to codify its rules”;82 Khvaja Zahir al-Dīn Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi was the inventor (mukhtartī) of nasta‘liq; ‘Ali b. Abī Talib was the first to ornament Korans with designs and illumination. Daniel originated portraiture by copying images of

78 In this respect the silsilas of calligraphy and depiction in the prefaces are comparable to the histories of different trades. In his study of artisans and guild life, principally of the late Safavid period, Keyvani writes: “According to the traditions of the guilds, a chain (silīsa) of blessing (barakāt) from God passed through Jibril, Ādam, Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, and Muhammad to ‘Āli and Salmān Fārsī, the two great patron saints of all guilds, and from Salmān Fārsī to each guild’s pīr.” Kashīfī (d. 1504) records genealogies for the professions of storytelling, wrestling, and other kinds of entertainers in his Futūvat-nāma-yi sulātanī. An early-seventeenth-century source, Khaṭ Khurāsāni, wrote that ‘Āli was the common patron of all guilds. See Mehdi Keyvani, Artisans and Guild Life in the Later Safavid Period (Berlin: Klaus Schwartz Verlag, 1982), p. 201. Although some of the sources are slightly later than the album prefaces, ‘Āli’s role as patron certainly dates to a much earlier period, especially if the connections of guilds to futuwa are accepted. For the earlier period see ibid., pp. 205–11. For the argument against the idea that guilds were part of the futuwa, see W. Floor, “Guilds and Futuwat in Iran,” Zeitschrift der Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 134 (1984): 106–14. The role of ‘Āli as patron to the fitūyan is also discussed by H. E. Wilfī, “The Islamic Craft Guilds and Their Socio-Religious Background,” Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia 3, 2 (December 1965): 66–74; esp. 71 and n. 9.

79 Dust Muhammad introduces the source of the claim as “in the opinion of the lords of history, the masters of biographies of happy traditions, and followers of the traditions of the best of mankind” (nāzīd-i arbab-i tavārīkh va asbāb-i sīyār-i fakhanda-yi wa abāllī-yi kadī‘-ī khvār al-bashar).

80 az wulūb-i ma‘qūlī ba-Kūfī azvād.


82 vāzī‘-i asrī-ī khaṭṭ-ī tā‘līq-ān tādhīn-ī ikhtirā‘-ī ‘in važī‘i fardmūdā-ānd.
the prophets sent to Adam by God; Ahmad Musa introduced the style of depiction that continued into the Safavid period; and Ustad Qivam al-Din invented (ikhtirāt) inlay work in bindings (munabbat-kārī dar jild).

No other preface writer approaches this list in comprehensiveness, although some give credit to the same people. For example, according to Malik Daylami, Mir Sayyid Ahmad, Shams al-Din Muhammad, and Muhammad Muhsin, Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi invented nastālīq. Mir Sayyid Ahmad attributed the invention of Kufic to ‘Ali b. Abi Talib and notes that he was the first to decorate Korans with illumination. Muhammad Muhsin says ‘Ali b. Abi Talib was the first person to record the “traditions of the divine revelation and commands and prohibitions of the asylum of the Prophet”83 Muhammad. Mir Sayyid Ahmad attributes the origin of ta’līq to Taj al-Din Salmani and ‘Abd al-Hayy Astarabadi Munshi. Both Mir Sayyid Ahmad and Muhammad Muhsin claim that Ibn Muqla derived, or extracted, the six scripts from Kufic,84 and go so far as to date the event to the year 310 (922).

**SILSILAS AND MECHANISMS OF TRANSMISSION**

Because history was synonymous with biography, historical process could be described by naming a sequence of practitioners. This episteme was applied across a gamut of professions and pursuits. It provided a readymade framework equally well suited to the transmission of the arts of calligraphy and depiction. Phrases used in the prefaces invoked this genealogical structure of practice; for example, “to come to a conclusion” (sar āmad/an), “chain of lineage/descent” (intisāb-i in silsila), and “the chain of masters” (silṣila-yi arbāb). Sometimes a similar principle was applied to the calligraphic scripts, as the “tree of the six scripts” (shajara-yi khūṭūt-i sitta), a notion expressed by Mir Sayyid Ahmad. Along similar lines is Shams al-Din Muhammad’s division of the scripts into “basic” (ašl) and “subsidiary” (far’) groupings (ašl and far’ also meaning “root” and “branch”). A hereditary principle of relation and transformation is also found in references to the history of script types. Dust Muhammad notes that Kufic is derived from maqīlī. Mir Sayyid Ahmad writes that the six scripts are derived from Kufic and that ta’līq was taken from riqā’ (az riqā’ ma’khūz ast).

This view of the history of scripts may have been founded on a belief that this was what actually occurred. Modern scholarship tends to discard these notions, including claims that Kufic was “softened” (lit. moistened) to produce the six scripts,85 noting that Kufic coexisted with the cursive even before their codification under Ibn Muqla. The idea that Ibn Muqla’s reforms resulted in cursive scripts replacing Kufic in Korans86 has been disproved. Attributing the invention of nastālīq to Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi is understood as an impulse to eponymize; he was only one of many calligraphers involved in the development of the script.87 From their different perspectives contemporary and modern views about the six scripts and nastālīq are both true. In writing an internal history of transmission, however, the concept of the

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83 āšgār-i vaḥī al-hayy va avāmar va navābāb-yi hāẓerat-i risālat panāhā.
84 khūṭūt-i sitta ki . . . istīkhrāj az khūṭĪ Kūfī namāūda ast.
“first” and of successive change to inherited practice dominated any other form of historical representation. History was driven by the episteme of genealogy and heredity, which explains the impetus for attaching a name to an “invention”; the founder occupied the essential position of first source.

Pedagogical relationships in the chain of practice are not always made explicit. It is assumed that they are known because the panoply of written sources, including histories, biographies, and treatises, yields extensive information about calligraphers in particular. For example, it may well have been common knowledge that ‘Abd Allah learned nastā’līq from his father Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi, so it did not need repeating. Sometimes transmission was inferred simply by naming successive masters to avoid too prolix a composition. Those masters not named in the preface had representative works in the album and would be discussed.

Many of the prefaces, however, do clearly lay out pedagogical relationships, especially in calligraphy, removing the potential for ambiguity and deepening the historical conception. Relationship to an acknowledged master was the principal means of organizing the history of art. In general, such relationships were expressed through the use of the terms “student” (shāgird) and “master” (ustād), hence, “so and so was the student of master X.” A more emphatic phraseology, “without intermediary” (bilā ṣāsiṭa), is sometimes employed. It is a phrase rife with the sort of metaphorical meaning we encounter elsewhere in the preface because the noun ṣāsiṭa also refers to the largest pearl or jewel strung on a necklace (and therefore at its center). This phrase thus conferred great prestige on the student, who was favored not only by direct tutelage but also by being the preeminent student to have received that teaching. Links forged by pedagogy were often combined with family ties, either as a son, daughter, son-in-law, or maternal uncle.

In organizing the practitioners into chains of practice, key masters formed clusters to emphasize important moments in transmission history. One such constellation comes in the later stages of the history of the six scripts (variously referred to as aqlām al-sitta, shīsh qalam, khūṭīt-i sitta), after the formative masters Ibn Muqla and Ibn Bawwab, when Yaqūt al-Muṣtaʿsimi emerged as the third most important master of the canonically basic scripts, which he then further perfected and refined. Yaqūt trained six students who became known as the “six masters” (ustādān-i sitta) to echo the canon of scripts. Another major cluster formed around the calligrapher Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi who was considered by many to be unequalled in nastā’līq script in his time or after. Mir ‘Ali, who came after Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, was trained by Zayn al-Dīn Mahmūd, a son-in-law and student of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi. He is given greater or lesser significance in prefaces, according partly to when the texts were written. He is barely mentioned by Malik Daylamī and Mir Sayyid Ahmad, but some years later, he is touted by Shams al-Dīn Muhammad and Muhammad Muḥsin.

The importance of the early-fifteenth-century masters for the transmission of scripts, especially nastā’līq, is often represented by a shorthand listing of names. However, Dust Muhammad is careful to trace the connection of Jaʿfar and Azhar to the calligrapher Hafīz Hājī Muhammad, who then trained Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi in his sīsilā of practice. Azhar’s importance is also emphasized in Malik Daylamī’s preface, where six students of Azhar

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88 Anthony Welch (Artists for the Shah, p. 152) observed the numerous family relationships between artists of the Safavid period and he suggested that “marriages between artistic families were sought after, possibly as a means of transmitting genetic abilities, perhaps too as a way of establishing a de facto guild.” He gives several examples of family relationships between artists and calligraphers (ibid., n. 4).
are listed, Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi among them. Mir Sayyid Ahmad also makes this connection, but without naming additional masters whom Ja’far and Azhar had trained. In Shams al-Din Muhammad’s preface, Ja’far’s importance is tripled: he not only trained Azhar in nasta’liq, who would then go on to teach it to Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, but he instructed ‘Abd Allah Tabbakh in thuluth and ‘Abd al-Hayy Munshi in ta’liq. Thus, Ja’far combined skill in the six scripts with skill in nasta’liq and ta’liq. This made him heir to Yaqut al-Mustaṣimi’s legacy and transmitter of the recent inventions of nasta’liq and ta’liq by Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi and Khvaja Taj al-Din Salmani.

Relationships between successive masters or generations could also be defined in terms of affinity in manner (ravish,  taraf), an aggregate of elements such as letter-shaping, proportion, placement, and grouping of diacritical marks, and the spacing of letters and words on the page. It occurred, perhaps, in those instances when a practitioner did not have a direct connection to a master or to an intermediary teacher with a desirable pedigree. After he has mentioned the students of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi and Mir ‘Ali, Muhammad Muhsin lists still other groups who followed the calligrapher’s styles. In the case of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, he writes about “that group who possesses the manner of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi . . . .” and for Mir ‘Ali, “and now the person who follows the manner of Mawlana Mir ‘Ali is Mawlana Muhi. . . .” In both instances Muhammad Muhsin uses the term ravish, meaning manner, mode, or way.

Mir Sayyid Ahmad distinguishes between those calligraphers who had studied directly under Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi from those who worked in his style. He writes of “other famous calligraphers whose writings, from musk-like pens, are in the manner of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi. . . .” A slightly different example is offered by Dust Muhammad, when he notes that, although Ustad Pir Yahya Sufi did not study directly under Khvaja Mubarakshah Zarin Qalam, he was his student. This apparent contradiction is found again in Dust Muhammad’s preface, first where he asserts that Ibn Bawwab was a student of Ibn Muqla, and second where he states that Yaqut al-Mustaṣimi was a student of Ibn Bawwab. The fact that Dust Muhammad dates Ibn Muqla’s period of activity to the caliphate of al-Muqtadir (r. 908–32) and Yaqut al-Mustaṣimi’s to the caliphate of al-Mustansir (r. 1226–42) poses some chronological problems if his statements about pedagogy are taken literally. The chronological relationships between masters of the earlier and later periods were well known. In one source, Mahmud b. Muhammad’s treatise, the author provides dates for numerous occurrences.

The implication of these examples—that a master could work in someone else’s style without direct instruction and the apparent anachronisms in the description of some master-student relationships—is that transmission was mediated through the paper model alone. In direct instruction, one would watch the master write, learn such techniques as pen-cutting and material preparation by example, and receive general mentoring. But even direct tutelage

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89 Ravish is used in several prefaces and taraf in Mir Sayyid Ahmad.
90 va janāt ki ravish-i Sultān ‘Ali Mashhadi dārānd.
91 va kālā ki dar ravish tatābbu’ namāyad ba-Mawlānā Mīr ‘Ali Mawλānā Muḥi ast.
93 There is some ambiguity in Dust Muhammad’s text. He notes that Ibn Muqla taught his daughter calligraphy with his left hand (ba-dast-i chāp ta’lim fardād) after the removal of his fingers. The next line reads “Ali b. Hilāl, who is known as Ibn Bawwab, was his [her?] student” (‘Ali b. Hilāl ki ba-Ibn Bawwāb mabshūr ast shāqīr-i ā ast). The third-person pronoun could conceivably refer to the daughter and not necessarily to Ibn Muqla.
under a master involved the study of calligraphic models. This very process is addressed directly by Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi in two sections of his treatise on calligraphy:

Collect the writings of masters,
Throw a glance at this and at that.
For whomsoever you feel a natural attraction,
Besides his writing, you must not look at the others,
So that your eye should become saturated with his writing,
And because of his writing each of your letters should become like a pearl. 94

He explains the two forms of preparatory exercise (qalam-i mashq) as qalamī and naẓarī, and defines them as copying a model and gazing at a model, respectively. In gazing or looking, one observes the writing’s words, letters, and dots (lafẓ, hurūf, nuqṭ). Next, he moves to actual writing, where the presence of a model is inferred:

Whatever writing you wish to reproduce (naql),
Try not to hammer the iron when it is cold.
Be patient over each letter,
And not just give a glance and proceed carelessly.
Look at the strength and weakness of the letters,
And have before your eyes their shape (tarkīb).
Watch their ascent and descent,
Taking pleasure in both.
Take account of the shams (flourish?) of the writing,
So that it be clear, clean, and satisfactory.
When your writing has made progress,
Seat yourself in a corner and do not idle about.
Find some small manuscript
Of good style and hold it before your eyes.
In the same format, ruling, and kind of writing
Prepare yourself to copy it. 95

The process outlined by Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi combines the calligrapher’s recall of letter shapes impressed in his memory through patient study with the physical presence of a model in the act of writing. Models were of critical importance after all: how otherwise could one study the balance of calligraphy on the page, the relationship of black ink to white paper; the spacing of the lines in relationship to each other and the edge of the sheet; the sequencing of adjacent single letters, their combination into words, and the relationship of words to words? The lack of direct training in such critical techniques as trimming the pen’s nib (for different scripts) presented serious but not insurmountable obstacles to the calligrapher. The form of the pen’s nib—if actual pens were not available—could be reconstructed through a process of trial and error by studying specimens and comparing the results of

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one’s own efforts against them. The study of specimens provided one basis for claiming pedagogical affiliation.

Within the dominant framework of the stylistic and technical aspects of pedagogy, whether direct or mediated through a paper model, other processes of classification were developed as subcategories. One is spatial and implies the persistence of a specific style in a metropolitan center or region. Dust Muhammad divides the tradition of the six scripts into two lines—Pir Yahya al-Sufi in Iraq (silsila-yi ahl-i ʿIrāq) and Mawlana ʿAbd Allah al-Sayrafi in Khurasan (silsila-yi šāhīrdī-yi khaṭṭātān-i Khurāsān)—which are later brought together in the person of Mawlana Muhammad b. Husam, but which no doubt also continued to play out as separate stylistic lines. Mir Sayyid Ahmad alludes to masters of calligraphy in Khurasan, Iraq, Fars, and Kirman, and divides his section on masters of the “hair pen” (i.e., brush), or artists, into two groups: those of Fars and Iraq and those of Khurasan. Shams al-Din Muhammad has a separate section on the masters of Shiraz and Kirman in his passage on nastāʿīq. The dominant presence of a master over a local tradition was sustained by the replication and repetition of his aesthetic through such processes as copying, both in pedagogy and in production. Sultan ʿAli Mashhadi’s presence was so strong that Malik Daylami wrote that “every student took gleanings from his copious harvest and provisions from the dinner table of his writings.”

After naming important masters like Jaʿfar and Azhar of the six scripts, Mir Sayyid Ahmad asserted that other masters of Iraq, Khurasan, Fars, and Kirman were but “eaters of crumbs from the table of these masters.” Next to these preeminent figures, the works of slightly lesser masters resembled leftovers. Dust Muhammad remarks that Yaqut’s six students were allowed to sign specimens in the master’s name, “and he [Yaqut] gave permission to each one that if they signed their good specimens in the name of the shaykh [then] it would not be a sin/crime.”

In addition to the spatial classification of school or regional tradition, the style of nastāʿīq attributed to ʿAbd al-Rahman Khvarazmi is distinguished from the stylistic line descended through Sultan ʿAli Mashhadi. Mir Sayyid Ahmad and Muhammad Muhsin remark on this difference, while Dust Muhammad only notes that ʿAbd al-Rahim Khvarazmi (Anisi), a son of ʿAbd al-Rahman, was a contemporary of Sultan ʿAli Mashhadi. All five preface authors who include lists of practitioners record that Sultan ʿAli Mashhadi learned it from Azhar (in Dust Muhammad’s account an intermediary is added). Only Malik Daylami states the descent of the alternate style from the common link of Azhar, and does not mention

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97 An early example dates to the thirteenth century when two calligraphers attempted to reconstruct the method of Ibn al-Bawwab. See David James, “The Commentaries of Ibn al-Bawwab and Ibn al-Wazid on Ibn al-Bawwab’s ʿOde on the Art of Calligraphy” (Rāʿiyāh fi l-Khaṭṭ), in Back to the Sources: Biblical and Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Dermott Ryan (Sandy, 1989), pp. 164–91, esp. p. 171. Another example, dating to 1690, is a treatise, Asrār al-khaṭṭ (Secrets of Calligraphy), on the techniques of calligraphy composed by Muhammad Fazl Allah Ansari va al-Faruqi. In it the author mentioned how he had collected specimens by such calligraphers as Ibn Muqla, Ibn Bawwab, ʿAbd Allah Sayrafi, Yaqut, and his contemporaries and studied their styles. He composed his treatise based on a study of the calligraphic specimens. For a discussion of the treatise, see Y. K. Bukhari, “A Rare Manuscript on Calligraphy,” Islamic Culture 37, 2 (April 1963): 92–99.

98 va har shāgīrdī az khirmān-i fayż-i ʿū khusa va az khvān-i raqāmash tusha yāft.

99 riza-khūn-i khvān-i in ustādān ast.

100 va har yak rā rukhsat dād ki agar khaṭṭ-i khūd rā ba-nām-i Shaykh kunand in na-barshand.
Abd al-Rahman Khvarazmi, noting instead ‘Abd al-Rahim’s pedagogical connection to Azhar. Most prefaces suggest that the nastālīq inherited through Azhar developed along different lines in the hands of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi and ‘Abd al-Rahman Khvarazmi. Mir Sayyid Ahmad writes that Mawlana ‘Abd al-Rahman Khvarazmi “made a change in the style of this group [family] and his two sons became masters of his style.” Following the language used by Mir Sayyid Ahmad, Muhammad Muhsin observes that Mawlana ‘Abd al-Rahman Khvarazmi “made a change in the style of this group. His two sons became masters; one [was] ‘Abd al-Rahim known as Anisi and the other ‘Abd al-Karim known as Padsha[h] and the manner of their script is known best through Mawlana Anisi.”

Malik Daylami gives a slightly different version. He observes other styles contemporary to Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, singling out that of ‘Abd al-Rahim (Anisi). He does not mention ‘Abd al-Rahim’s father, and claims that Anisi taught his brother ‘Abd al-Karim. According to Malik Daylami, Anisi was Azhar’s student but “improved [his style] by increasing ornament.” The same concept of two dominant styles in nastālīq is addressed by Malik Daylami. Differences of opinion between the authors of the prefaces, however, occur in their sequences of masters.

Thus far, we have been looking particularly at those sections of prefaces that cover the history of calligraphy. What about the history of depiction? It is clear that calligraphy and depiction were not viewed as entirely distinct: building on a notion first expressed by ‘Abdi Beg Shirazi in his so-called Theory of the Two Pens, depiction was connected to writing and understood to be a similar act. After all, both used the same instrument, the pen, and depiction was thought to have begun in the embellishment of Korans with designs and illumination by ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (Dust Muhammad and Mir Sayyid Ahmad refer to the first Shi‘i imam’s practice). The line-based process of drawing and illumination and the application of techniques such as outlining made calligraphy and depiction seem interrelated in many important respects. In structuring their prefaces, Mir Sayyid Ahmad and Shams al-Din Muhammad use two major divisions—the vegetal pen (reed) and the animal pen/hair pen (brush). The division reflected the perceived continuity between calligraphy and depiction—although they might be treated as separate categories, they were not viewed as mutually exclusive creative procedures.

It was perhaps because of correspondences in conceptual notions of creation, and because techniques were applied across media and the processes of production and pedagogy showed many similarities that a history of depiction could be written in much the same way as that of calligraphy. That said, it rarely occurred. The most developed narrative history of depiction is found in Dust Muhammad. After locating the origin of the illumination and design of Korans in ‘Ali b. Abi Talib and of portrayal in the prophet Daniel, he begins his transmission narrative in the fourteenth century with Ahmad Musa, who inaugurated the
style of depiction that was still current in Dust Muhammad’s time. Dust Muhammad is careful to trace a continuous chain of practice after Ahmad Musa, noting the affiliations between successive masters.

The chain comes to an end with Bihzad in the early sixteenth century. Bihzad is a transitional figure in this history; he is the best of the mutaqaddimān, or masters of the past, in illumination (taḡḥīb) and outlining (tahṛīr); he is the most excellent of the muta‘ākhkhūrīn, or latter-day masters, in depiction (tašvīr). Terms for past and present were used as general historical markers in contemporary writing. In his section on contemporary masters, Dust Muhammad lists artists without noting any pedagogical connection between them, although he does supply ample details about their work. In addition to this detailed articulation of transmission up to the late fifteenth century his preface is unusual for the lengthy anecdotes he provides about key events in his history of depiction. In fact, the narrative of transmission and its anecdotes are so complex as to warrant a separate study.

In the other preface sections about depiction which appear in Mir Sayyid Ahmad and Shams al-Din Muhammad its history is traced, albeit telegraphically. In both prefaces we learn of the visual achievements of Mani and the European and Chinese traditions, as well as ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, a critical source of prestige, given that he had added illumination and designs to the Koran. Yet another form of symmetry between calligraphy and depiction is that, just as the basic scripts of calligraphy could be described as a canon of six (khaṭṭ-i shish qalam asl ast), so depiction can be understood as a typology of “seven modes” (haust asl), viz. islāmī, khaṭāʾī, farangī, fasālī, abr, [vāq], and girih.106 Mir Sayyid Ahmad concludes with lists of masters of the “animal pen” which he divides into two broad regions—Fars and Iraq, and Khurasan. For each region, the earliest artist is identified as active during the second half of the fifteenth century and no master-student affiliations are explained. Shams al-Din Muhammad’s section on the animal pen is still briefer; he names four artists, beginning with Bihzad, and ending with the contemporary Mawlana Kepek.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

These historical narratives display some consistency. A comparison of the histories in individual prefaces shows that, for the early periods in particular, consensus existed about the canonical masters and those who initiated certain scripts and techniques. For later historical periods they are less consistent in naming masters. These latter-day masters are accorded the role of either perfecting the inventions made by the first practitioner or of perpetuating a style imparted to them by a master.

Among the most difficult features to discuss are the variations between prefaces in their treatment of recent times. It is certainly the case that omissions or condensed lists of names cannot always be justified by the author’s explanation of avoiding prolixity, and it is hard to distinguish between genuine and disingenuous uses of this topos of textual economy.

106 The earliest expression of the typology is Qutb al-Din Muhammad in 1556–57. Later writers Sadiqi Beg and Qazi Ahmad also refer to it. See Qutb al-Din Muhammad Qıṣṣa Khvān, “Risāla-i dar tārīkh-i khaṭṭ va naqṭāshī”; Dickson and Welch, Houghton Shahnameh, 1: app. 1; Sādiqi Beg, Qıṣṇūn al-suwar; and Qazi Ahmad, Gufsītān-i hunar, ed. Khvānsārī, p. 132. For an analysis of the girih mode, see Gülru Necipoğlu, The Topkapi Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture (Santa Monica, Calif.: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995).
Variations between prefaces might result from the fact that there was no master narrative of a history of art and that what appears to be a departure from consensus was a different telling or a conscious manipulation of history. One of the author’s objectives may have been to shape a canon rather than merely write down the generally accepted view, if there was such a thing. It is also possible that the later periods were so flexible that the canon remained subject to negotiation and debate. Self-interest and rivalry surely lay beneath the surface of preface writing, even if it is not possible to marshal specific cases as evidence. But this personal dimension of the text’s constitution should not be forgotten in the analysis of the history that the text narrates. These lists of names were not value-free.

Two examples of manipulating the canon can be mentioned here. The first involves the author placing himself in the line of transmission. Dust Muhammad does not mention his master, emphasizing instead his service to Bahram Mirza, but then only one of the calligraphers, Mawlana Shah Mahmud [Nishapuri], named in the segment about contemporary calligraphers, is connected to a master. Muhammad Muhsin does not refer to himself in his history. Malik Daylami refers to his master, Rustam ‘Ali, although only in passing, but it was a prestigious connection indeed for it established a link between Malik Daylami and Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi. Shams al-Din Muhammad is more transparent: under the section on the basic scripts, he mentions his master Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari, and before him ‘Abd al-Haqq Sabzavari who was a student of the fifteenth-century master ‘Abd Allah Haravi (a.k.a. Tabbakh). The line infers that Shams al-Din Muhammad descends in the basic scripts from ‘Abd Allah Haravi who had studied under Ja’far.

Mir Sayyid Ahmad is still more direct in his preface to Amir Ghayb Beg’s album. He writes that he was the student of Mir ‘Ali who was held by some as equal to Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi. Some preface writers were reluctant for whatever reason to use the preface for grandstanding. Dust Muhammad placed two calligraphies by Princess Sultanum at the very beginning of the Bahram Mirza album; according to Budaq Munshi Qazvini, Dust Muhammad had instructed Sultanum in calligraphy. By arranging her calligraphies near the album’s beginning he could convey his role as teacher and intimate of the royal house without appearing to boast.

Other forms of manipulation lay in emphasis and in the very fact of naming a practitioner, living or dead. Points of emphasis were probably intended to promote an individual or to maintain an already enhanced status. Shams al-Din Muhammad talks at length about Muhammad Qasim Shadishah and Mawlana Kepek, though there is no indication why he does so other than to praise their technical brilliance. Calligraphers who are not mentioned also give us reason to pause. Dust Muhammad barely refers to calligraphers who had worked under the Turkmen dynasties. More broadly speaking, many more masters are included in the album than are mentioned in the preface. A good example is Hafiz Baba Jan, who is not mentioned by Dust Muhammad, but who, according to Malik Daylami, was, like him, a student of Rustam ‘Ali. Mahmud b. Muhammad, author of the treatise Qavānīn al-khuṭūṭ, made Malik Daylami a student of both Rustam ‘Ali and Hafiz Baba Jan. Writing in

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107 Further study of canon formation in the context of sixteenth-century Iran might be informed by studies about artistic lineages and histories in China. Liscomb argued, for example, that some critics (Du Qiong) in fifteenth-century China did not have an interest in establishing orthodox lineages, which she dates to before the time of the author Dong Qichang (1555–1636). See Kathlyn Liscomb, “Before Orthodoxy: Du Qiong’s (1397–1474) Art-Historical Poem,” Oriental Art 37, 2 (Summer 1991): 97–108, esp. 97.
the *Javāḥir al-akhbār*, Budaq Munshi Qazvini, who had been Bahram Mirza’s personal secretary, notes that Rustam ‘Ali taught Bahram Mirza and had later gone on to serve (*khidmat*) the Safavid prince Ibrahim Mirza. His entry about Hafiz Baba Jan is extensive. He mentions that in playing the lute (*dād*) Hafiz Baba Jan was considered to be a second Khvaja ‘Abd al-Qadir, a famous polymath of the Timurid court. He was in the service of Bahram Mirza “who conferred the dignity of a close relationship upon him” (*qurb va manzilat-i tamām yāfī*); his father had lived during the reigns of Sultan Husayn Mirza and Sultan Ya’qub and his services were sought after. Given Hafiz Baba Jan’s importance and his proximity to Bahram Mirza—mentioned by Budaq Munshi Qazvini years after it would have mattered—one wonders why Dust Muhammad neglected to mention him and thus confer upon him special favor.

Dust Muhammad’s history of depiction is centered on the tradition in Khurasan just as his history of *nastaʿlīq* emphasized Timurid Khurasan over Turkmen Tabriz. He does not mention artists working in the Turkmen court in Tabriz during the late fifteenth century, although the origin of the modern tradition began in Tabriz under Ahmad Musa and continued under Jalayirid patronage. Timurid production during the fifteenth century and under Baysunghur, ‘Ala’ al-Dawla Mirza, Ulugh Beg, and Sultan Husayn Mirza is emphasized. Exchanges between the late-fifteenth-century Timurid and Turkmen courts of Herat and Tabriz allowed for the dissemination of knowledge about each. By the early Safavid period the cultural products of both Timurid and Turkmen patronage were known, although the former may have eclipsed any other.

The achievements of artists who had worked under Turkmen patrons, principally Khalil and Ya’qub Beg, were presumably also known to Dust Muhammad, even if he did not care to write about them. Indeed, one *Khamsa* of Nizami, begun in the middle years of the fifteenth century under the Timurid prince Abu al-Qasim Babur, was incomplete at the time of his death and fell into Turkmen hands. Pir Budaq, Sultan Khalil, and Sultan Ya’qub each inherited it and contributed to the manuscript’s completion. Shah Isma’il finally acquired the book and had it finished. These details, amounting to a history of the book’s progress and its ownership, are supplied in a colophon. Also in that colophon are the names of the Turkmen artists Shaykhi and Darvish Muhammad and the calligraphers Azhar and Anisi (*Abd al-Rahim Khvarazmi*), also associated with the Turkmen. Books of this

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109 Interesting in this respect is a *Khamsa* of Nizami in Istanbul, TSK, H. 757. Annotations on its flyleaves and its dated colophons, some of which have been tampered with, record the production of the book and some of its successive owners. The flyleaf bears a note recording the manuscript’s transfer to Muhammad Mu’min, son of Murvarid and future tutor of Sam Mirza, in Herat 1512. Muhammad Mu’min functioned as treasury bookkeeper. A seal on the same page dated 1501 is of Ahmad Feridun Bey, son-in-law of grand vizier Rüstem Pasha. Tannd suggests that the manuscript was a gift to Ahmad Feridun Bey. She also notes that the colophon on fol. 288a is dated 1499–1500, signed by Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, transferred from Shaybaq’s treasury to Shah Isma’il’s and illuminated by Yari Muzahhib in 1510–11. Bihzad added illustrations to it in 1512–13 (Tannnd, “Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts,” p. 161, n. 29). If the colophon on fol. 288a is a later addition, it enhances the history of this particular book, inherited by the Safavids from the Timurids after a brief Uzbek interlude. It is one example of the prestige accorded to Timurid manuscripts and of Safavid continuities.

110 Istanbul, TSK, H. 762. The most exhaustive study of the manuscript is by Füiz Çağman, “Topkapı Saray Müzesi, Hazine 762 No. lu Nizami Hamsesi’nin Minyatürleri,” Ph.D. diss., Istanbul University, 1971.
kind and practitioners who served under successive regimes ensured continuity of knowledge and of practice into the Safavid period. This heavily documented book only emphasizes Dust Muhammad’s omissions, thus highlighting his pro-Herati sentiments. His historical representation runs counter to the physical evidence that the Turkmen tradition played an important formative role in the development of Safavid style. 112

THE PRACTITIONER’S PLACE IN THE TRADITION

The individual practitioner played a central role in these histories of art. Augmenting this framework of transmission through the silsila were brief descriptions of the practitioner’s works, notes on aspects of his achievements, and observations about their nature. Lengthier anecdotes of the kind we encounter in historical and biographical works are absent; even the most developed notices in the prefaces are pared down compared to those found in histories and biographies. Only major figures in the history of art, like Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi and Bihzad, receive expanded treatment. A fine balance was kept between the narrative of transmission and the biographical excursus.

PROGRESS AND PERFECTION

Comments about the refinements made by practitioners to the practices of traditions in which they worked deepen the historical narrative figured by a succession of masters. Change was great or minor. Some practitioners continued in the tradition imparted to them by a master and stayed close to that inherited aesthetic. This hierarchical phenomenon is particularly evident in the case of the students of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, or for that matter of Yaqut, and applicable also to depiction—Dust Muhammad noted that after ‘Abd al-Hayy’s death “all masters followed his works.” 113 It is what contribution the individual made to the tradition that is emphasized and not anecdotes about their personal experiences, travails, likes and dislikes and so on.

In reading the historical narrative one constantly comes across assessments that imply a kind of progress or inexorable linear movement in the history of art. In his history of the six scripts Dust Muhammad notes that the six students of Yaqt had “drawn a line of cancellation over the calligraphies of the masters of this art,” 114 and, after mentioning the generation of students trained by the six masters, inserts the hemistich, “This is the working of good fortune: to whom will it turn now?” 115 The history of nasta’liq is written in much the same terms, except that its history as an invention of Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi is more recent.

After the sequence of masters of nasta’liq we arrive at Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, who had taken nasta’liq to its limit—no one from beginning (ibtidā) to end (ghāyat) could equal or exceed him. In the section on contemporary calligraphers, however, he writes that Mawlana Nizam al-Din Shaykh Muhammad in “speed and power of pen” 116 was “unequaled in the world

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112 The idea of a Timurid and Turkmen stylistic synthesis in the Safavid period is one of the dominant notions that informs Dickson and Welch’s study of the Shāhnāma-yi Shāhī (Houghton Shāhnāmeh, 1, chaps. 3–4).
113 va ba’d az fawt-i Khvāja hama-yi ustādān taqtaba-i kārkhā-yi ishān kardand.
114 raqam-i naskh bar khaft-i māhirān-i in fann kashida.
115 īn kār-i davlat ast kunān ī kā-rā rasad.
116 su’at va quvrat-i qalam.
and chief of the scribes of the nation” and that Mawlana Nur al-Din ‘Abd Allah is “distinguished by the beauty of calligraphy and peerless in speed of copying.” Successive achievements and the inflation of language begin to give rise to apparent inconsistencies. How can two people be at the same time unique in the world and judged as equals by the same criteria?

Dust Muhammad, in his narrative on depiction, attributes the origin of the Safavid style to Ahmad Musa, representative samples of whose work survived into the late fifteenth century (Sultan Husayn Mirza reportedly owned manuscripts with paintings by him). Through a sequence of transmission came Pir Ahmad Baghshimali who worked in the style (šī‘a) of Khvaja ‘Abd al-Hayy, in which he could not be outdone. Next comes Amir Khalil, a painter who worked on the production of an anthology modeled after a manuscript made for Sultan Ahmad, a project instigated by Baysunghur. The group working on this project was augmented with the arrival of Khvaja Ghiyas al-Din Pir Ahmad Zarkub from Tabriz. When Amir Khalil saw the paintings made by the younger artist, Khvaja Ghiyas al-Din Pir Ahmad Zarkub, he gave up depiction. Moving into the later fifteenth century, the section closes with Bihzad, who is the “most excellent of the latter-day [masters] in the art of depiction” and “an example for the old masters in illumination and outlining.” Returning to his contemporaries in a later segment of the preface, Dust Muhammad notes Sultan Muhammad’s contribution to depiction. Like Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi with nastā’īq, Sultan Muhammad had taken his art form to a limit beyond any imagining.

The theme of successive refinement is not limited to Dust Muhammad’s preface. Malik Daylami notes how by degrees Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi had perfected aspects of Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi’s invention, comparing him to Yaqut in a symmetry between past and present. Shams al-Din Muhammad uses the same kind of comparison, but this time between ‘Abd Allah Tabbakh and Yaqut. Relationships between the practitioners of past and present are also found in the biographical notices written for both historical and biographical works. At times they suggest historical progress and a perfection that is effected through a sequence of makers but whose agency is never entirely clear. Is it predestined, as Dust Muhammad’s hemistich suggests? Or is change effected through the involvement of the practitioner in what has come before?

MODES, TECHNIQUES, AND EXPERTISE

That the preface was not used to impart technical knowledge or give instruction is not surprising; another literary genre, usually going by the name risāla (treatise), performed that function. Numerous published editions and reference sources have already been cited for the literature on treatises. A useful summary of the sixteenth-century sources is in Afshar, “Risāla-yi khāṭṭ-i Khalil Tabriz,” pp. 325–26. Additional references may be gleaned from his notes (ibid., nn. 1–15). Afshar lists three treatises from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: (1) Adab al-mašq by ‘Abd Allah Sayrafi Tabrizi (before 732/1331–21); (2) Risāla-yi khāṭṭ attributed to Mir ‘Ali Tabriz (before 850/1446–47); and (3) Tuhfat al-muḥīḥān by Ya‘qub b. Hasan Shirazi, nicknamed Siraj al-Husayni (858/1454). To Mayil Haravi’s published treatises he adds one by Khalil Tabrizi (ibid., p. 323).
on techniques (selecting pens and cutting their nibs), and on process by studying and copying models had been written since at least the eleventh century. One of the earliest of these is Ibn al-Bawwab’s Rā‘ūya fi al-khāṭṭ (Ode on Calligraphy, before 1022), a qasida rhymed in the letter rā‘. It was copied no less than four times, and probably more, in the centuries after his death in commentaries written by Ibn al-Basis (1253–1316) and Ibn al-Wahid (b. 1249) before 1311; Ibn Khaldun’s Muqaddima (Prolegomena to a universal history, completed before 1406) and Muhammad b. Hasan al-Tibi’s Jāmi‘ maḥāsīn kitābat al-kuttāb (Collection of the Scribes’ Good Writing, Dated 1503).122

The calligrapher’s custom of writing down the technical knowledge that he had accumulated through experience continued beyond the sixteenth century. Among the best known treatises,122 many of them written in rhymed verse, are those by Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi (Ṣatrāt al-suṣūr, 1514), Mir ‘Ali Haravi (Miḍād al-khuṭṭāt, 1519–20),123 Ibid al-Basis, “Rasmi al-khaṭṭ, The Form of Calligraphy, 1523–24; Ḥaṭṭ wa saḥād, 1533–34; ‘Adāb al-mashq, no date given),123 and Mahmud b. Muhammad (Qavānīn al-khuṭṭāt, 1561–62). Comparable texts existed for the practitioners of depiction. Simi Nishapuri’s Jācher-i Simī (Simi’s Jewels, not before 1435),126 although intended for an audience of secretaries, contained advice on papers, dyes, and colors, recipes for ink, and selecting pens, and practical knowledge that was of use to calligraphers and perhaps even artists. Sadiqi Beg Afshar’s Qānūn al-ṣuwar (Canons of Painting, between 1576 and 1602)127 contained technical advice on making and handling the brush, applying color, tints and washes, varnish and gilding, preparing silver, gold, and pigments from vegetal and other mineral sources. All of this was preceded by recollections about how he had become an artist, the reasons for writing the treatise, and advice on how to find a master. In its combination of themes the treatise may be considered comparable to Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s on calligraphy, imitating the model but reshaping its contents for practitioners of depiction. Qazi Ahmad still remembered Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s treatise when he sat down to compose the Gulistān-i hunar (1596–1606). He inserted it after

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123 For a biographical synopsis of Mir ‘Ali Haravi, see Māyah Harāvī, Kitāb ṣāḥēr dar tamuddān-i īslāmī, pp. 1–liii.

126 For details about the treatises and their author, see Storey, Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Study 2, 3, Biography: (d) Calligraphists and Painters; and Māyah Harāvī, Kitāb ṣāḥēr dar tamuddān-i īslāmī, pp. lxi–lxii.


127 For an English translation of the treatise and commentary on its terminology, see Dickson and Welch, Houghton Shahnameh, app. 1. Additions to the list of published editions of and sources about the Qānūn al-ṣuwar include Muhammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, “Qānūn al-Ṣuwar,” Hunar va Mardum 90 (1349): 11–20; and Porter, Peinture et arts du livre, app. 2, pt. 2.
his biographical sketches of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi and his students. Passages are also found quoted in Budaq Munshi Qazvini’s *Jawāhir al-akhbār*.

Insider knowledge about the treatises matched that of the prefaces, or so the recopying of them in part or in whole would suggest. Although these treatises were devoted principally to the transmission of knowledge about technique, processes, and procedures, they too began with prefaces, some of whose textual components corresponded to the prefaces that appeared in books (e.g., an explanation for why the text was written, personal history, advice on how to succeed), themes not found in the album preface. However, some treatises placed calligraphy in a historical framework (Mahmud b. Muhammad offers the best example), just as the album preface would.

These treatises comprise a rich body of literature that merits separate study, especially from the standpoint of their language. For example, although its purpose was to impart knowledge that could be put to good use by its reader, and writing them in poetry may have been meant to facilitate memorization, they also had shortcomings. Both Ibn al-Basis and Ibn al-Wahid, commenting on the “Ode on Calligraphy” in the thirteenth century, criticized Ibn al-Bawwab for speaking in “generalities which only served to conceal the details of his art.” At one point in his treatise Ibn al-Bawwab had written: “Then turn your attention towards making the point/for the point is the crux of the task/Do not ask me to reveal it/it is a secret to which I shall hold.” Perhaps the poem was never intended to be an effective means of transmitting information. At the outset, Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi proclaimed his reluctance to record the rules of calligraphy in his treatise: “To expose the rules of writing in verse/In [the opinion of] this humble one is a complete error/Because in writing there is no limit and no end/As in words there is no finality.” Training required a holistic approach—instruction, study, and practice.

Many of the preface authors were able, if not celebrated, calligraphers, and they were perfectly capable of expounding on the rules of calligraphy, its techniques and practices, but they did not do so. Where matters of process and production are concerned, the importance of the preface resides in what it reveals about categories of art (substantives such as calligraphy or depiction), whether by medium or technique, and the conceptual notions of the creative processes involved in making art.

The preface’s sections of transmission narratives are divided according to medium and mode. Under the medium of calligraphy (*khatt*), the major divisions were Kufic, the six scripts,

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128 Using the edition of the *Gulistān-i hunar* edited by Khvansari, it is possible to identify the text quoted in Budaq Munshi Qazvini’s history (St. Petersburg, State Public Library, Dorn 288). Near the beginning of his narrative history of calligraphy (fol. 106), Budaq inserts thirteen couplets from Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s treatise section where ‘Ali b. Abi Talib is praised and comments are made about his calligraphy (corresponding to Khvansari, p. 65, lines 13, 14, 15, 17, 18; and p. 66, lines 1–6, 10, and 13). Some pages later (fol. 109), Budaq Munshi Qazvini quotes more couplets from the section of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s treatise where the calligrapher explained what prompted him to write the treatise (corresponding to Khvansari, p. 66, lines 14–21 and p. 67, lines 2–6 [7 replaced], and 8).

129 The commentaries are translated and discussed in James, “The Commentaries of Ibn al- Başiş and Ibn al-Wahid on Ibn al-Bawwab’s ‘Ode on the Art of Calligraphy’ (Rā’iyyah fī-l-Khatt),” p. 171. James also provides short biographies and synopses of the two calligraphers’ careers.

130 Trans in Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 118.

131 An early attempt to come to grips with both substantives (categories such as calligraphy and depiction) and attributives (the language used to describe visual features in words and metaphors) was made by Armenag Sakisian, “Esthétique et terminologie persanes,” *Journal Asiatique* 226, 1 (January–March 1935): 144–50.
nasta’liq and ta’liq subdivided into basic and subsidiary. By the sixteenth century Kufic had largely fallen out of use in the arts of the book and for single-page calligraphy, and though it was common enough in architecture, it was used only sparingly in manuscripts for illuminated chapter headings. The six scripts appeared principally in Korans, ta’liq in a broad range of chancellery documents, and nasta’liq in manuscripts and single-page calligraphies. The principal mode of calligraphic execution was black ink on paper, although some calligraphers excelled in the use of colored inks (kitābat-i ʿalvān, rang nīvisī; Dust Muhammad mentions Mawlana Sultan Muhammad Nur and Mawlana Kamal al-Din Rustam ‘Ali in this regard). Other specialized techniques, such as outlining (taḥrīr), required the use of a transfer process, usually pouncing. A model calligraphy would be transferred (naqī) or copied to another sheet of paper and outlined in a fine inked line. The outline drawn in ink could be left that way or filled in with colored ink or illumination (tazhib), the latter constituting yet another specialized skill. Another method was to cut the paper onto which calligraphy had been transferred to make découpage calligraphy. Some calligraphers were skilled in several techniques and are praised accordingly, but the expertise of additional masters was needed. A calligraphic specimen executed by one individual could be reproduced in another medium by another master to produce a series of multiples.

The category of depiction (tasvīr) embraced what we would identify as painting, drawing, and illumination; it is only when specific techniques are referred to that they can be distinguished from the others under the umbrella category of depiction. Some examples include pen-and-ink drawing (called qalam-i siyahī by Dust Muhammad referring to Amir Dawlatyar), painting when color mixing is mentioned (called ba-ālīn-i fitna angīz rang āmīz namūd/ba-rang āmīzī by Dust Muhammad referring to Khvaja Ghiyas al-Din Pir Ahmad Zarkub and Aqa Jalal al-Din Mirak al-Husayni al-Isfahani), and illumination (tazhib). Mir Sayyid Ahmad refers to the various techniques of depiction collectively but does not list them (alvār-i īn fann-i bī badal, “the manners of this matchless art”).

Prefaces frequently mention techniques mastered by practitioners. Dust Muhammad singles out Bihzad’s competence in the art of depiction (fann al-tasvīr), illumination (tazhib) and outlining (taḥrīr). Bihzad’s adoptive father, Amir Ruh Allah (a.k.a. Mirak Naqqash), was also said to be expert in all these techniques. Beginning as a memorizer of the Koran, Amir Ruh Allah took up writing, became a copyist, bowmaker, and under Vali Allah’s tutelage, learned outlining and illumination before taking up depiction (tasvīr), here referring specifically to painting, Mawlana Kepek ‘Akkās-i Harawī (the Herati stencilmaker) was comparably gifted. Shams al-Din Muhammad mentions his skill in making stencils for calligraphies and depictions (tasvīrāt va khutūṭ-i ‘aks), and singles out for particular praise his polychrome stencils (‘aks-i ʿalvān),132 sprinkling of various colors (alvān afshān va ranghā-yi günāgūn), design (ṭarrāḥī), and duplication (musannā).133 Other skills mentioned include binding, leatherworking, gold sprinkling, and découpage.

132 Qazi Ahmad also mentions Mawlana Kepek in the Gulistān-i hunar. Glossing the term ‘aks and Qazi Ahmad’s statement that “his ‘aks made people free from [their former use] of gold sprinkling,” Minorsky proposes that the term “refers to the covering of the background with faint colors (of plants, flowers, animals etc.) which in fact was a technique superior to mere ‘gold-sprinkling’” (Minorsky, Calligraphers and Painters, p. 193, n. 691). Minorsky adds that Mahdi Bayani translates ‘aks as the use of stencils.

133 The word perhaps refers to mirror-reversed calligraphy. The same term is used for this category of calligraphy in an Ottoman context (personal communication, Filiz Çağman).
Practitioners of depiction excelled in a broad range of techniques, including processes of design, the transferring of a model, and finished execution; content ranging from figural to non-figural, and media such as pigment, ink, dyes, and gold and silver. All processes involved in the arts of the book, and not just painting, were subsumed under the word depiction. Because of this, the term *haft asl* (seven modes) can be confusing: did it include both animate and inanimate content and thus refer to categories found in illumination, drawing and painting? Or did it refer exclusively to the content of illuminations? 

Calligraphers and depictors alike were judged according to performance in some of these technical categories. Some calligraphers could not only write but could also transfer their writing to make outlines and then decorate the writing with illumination. Some depictors could also design or transfer designs and complete works in more than one medium. The importance of using models for practice and of transferring models to make new works meant that the practitioner often had to have functional range or adeptness in different techniques. This technical virtuosity removed boundaries between forms of practice.

Of equal interest are the implications techniques of transfer had for the understanding of authorship. In transferring the visual elements of a calligraphic model to new work the latter existed as a multiple, each one an original copy of the model. Copying was also common in painting and drawing. The compositional elements of either single-sheet paintings or drawings or manuscript paintings could be derived from the works of earlier or contemporary practitioners: the outline was transferred to the new work and differences articulated by such means as changes in color schemes, remodeling of form, or inserting the transferred element into a new compositional network. Reperformance through imitation was only one form of connection between masters in the history of art; another was the ability to perform in the manner of a master, an ability frequently referred to in the prefaces and in other texts. Technical virtuosity was so complete that a viewer could understand the work of one maker for that of another.

**JUDGMENT AND RESPONSE**

Technical ability and competence were the criteria for assessing the merits of a practitioner and judging a work of art. Recognition of these features conferred distinction upon a practitioner; as assessments based on skill they were made in abstract or generalized categories. Another means of judging the work and its maker was by gauging relationships between one of their works and its precedents, an intervisual relationship. This involved recognizing a response to a preexistent and known work (either written, painted, or drawn) and/or noting changes introduced by the practitioner within the boundaries of codified modes of practice. This feature of gauging visual relation and difference perceived by the sixteenth-century courtly viewer comes closest to what we might describe as invention or originality in a work of art.

Nowhere in the prefaces do we find extensive descriptive responses to particular images, whether calligraphy or depiction. One example of this form of response crops up in the

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134 I have dealt with this issue at length in Roxburgh, “Kamal al-Din Bihzad and Authorship in Persianate Painting,” pp. 119–46.
Bāburnāma where Babur writes, “Bihzad was one of the painters. He painted extremely delicately, but he made the faces of beardless people badly by drawing the double chin too big. He drew the faces of bearded people quite well.” But observations of this kind are extremely rare, and comments about works of art in the prefaces amount to characterizations of visually perceived properties or attributes residing in the works. Formal elements of a work of art are also implied, but through analogical literary modes. For example, the metaphorical comparison of jewels or pearls and depictions can be understood as a reference to their lustrous surfaces and brightly colored fields of faceted and hard-edged colors. If the same metaphor is applied to calligraphy it makes the lines of ink pearls or jewels scattered by the pen, a metaphor not well suited to an evocation of calligraphy’s formal features but a powerful intermedial concept that likened the calligrapher’s process to the poet’s. Both calligrapher and poet worked with ideas, speech, and words that were equal to pearls and jewels in value. Two forms of response can be identified: the attributive, which describes an abstracted quality of the work, and the metaphorical, which infers relationships between things based on like qualities. The two responses are entirely consonant with the preface’s rhetorical, literary complex whose vector was the exemplary and the praiseworthy and tended toward the absolute.

Before going over some specific examples of attributes it must be emphasized that our comprehension of the language of judgment, aesthetics of value, and evaluation faces several problems. Contemporary dictionaries provide some insight into the meanings of attributives/adjectives, but they do not guarantee the specific sense that the author wished to convey, either through a subtle shift or inversion of normative usage or of tone. Nor do the meanings necessarily fit the specialized vocabulary that may have developed for the discussion of a particular practice.

Another dimension of language concerns the assumed similarities between spoken and written communicative expression, which elides the potential difference between what or how people spoke when viewing a work of art and how preface authors wrote, or how they annotated a practitioner’s name with the attributes of his work. If the poetic majlis was like the social context in which an album—or indeed a single-page work—was viewed, we could infer that differences between speech and written discourse were minimal and that a mode of expression in the Persian language was continuous between its spoken and written forms. The response to a painting by Bihzad recorded by Vasifi at a majlis hosted by Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i demonstrates how verbal rejoinders to the painting—and to each other—were structured in much the same way as the linguistic jousting of a majlis. This example suggests a measure of continuity between the spoken and the written word, although it is impossible to be certain how viewers behaved or what they said in the encounter.

136 I found that many of the problems that arise in the assessment of a language of aesthetics for Persianate art are also true for the study of Chinese art under the Ming (see Craig Clunas, Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China [Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991], chap. 3, esp. pp. 75–78).
137 Exemplary in this respect is Michael Baxandall’s Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style (rpt. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). Baxandall examines a variety of social practices that may have shaped the value system and language applied to the experience of works of art. For an analysis of critical language used in Vasari, see Roland le Mollé, Georges Vasari et le vocabulaire de la critique d’art dans les ‘Vite’ (Grenoble: Élégant and Université Stendhal, Grenoble 3, 1988).
Dust Muhammad’s reference to a painting by Sultan Muhammad, generally thought to be the painting of the court of Gayumars from the Shāhnāma-ī shāhī, is comparable to that found in Vasif. In general praise of Sultan Muhammad, Dust Muhammad writes that he had “taken depiction to a place that although the firmament has one thousand eyes, it has not seen anything equal to him.”  His painting in the Shāhnāma is such that “the teeth of his pen [brush] would wound the hearts of the lion-hearted of the forest of depiction and the leopards and crocodiles of the workshop of beautiful writing and their amazement at his images [would make them] bow their heads.”  Astonishment resulted from the inability to comprehend his images—the starry sky of one thousand eyes was even incapable of doing so—and unable to match them, even the most forceful practitioners of the age (lion-hearted, leopards, and crocodiles) were forced to acknowledge Sultan Muhammad’s superiority. Praise of Sultan Muhammad is framed by a single image, but the response is conveyed through an extremely clever metaphor. Continuing with references to the artists Mir Musavvir and Aqa Mirak, Dust Muhammad confesses his inability to describe their works. He attaches no attributes to the visual features of painted or drawn images. Shams al-Din Muhammad’s writings about the painted and drawn images are also metaphorical, and he only uses three attributes—graceful (lutf), pure (pākīzāgī), and clean (tamīz)—to characterize depictions.

Adjectives appear most commonly in summary assessments of a calligrapher, and in some prefaces add up to a vocabulary of evaluation. Dust Muhammad is the writer who most regularly expresses judgments, especially for the nastaliq tradition. In referring to `Ali b. Abi Talib’s Kufic he remarks upon its perfection in his hand and the hallmark feature of the letter alif with a split at its top. The calligraphy of Yaqut’s six students was of perfect beauty (kamāl-i hūsn). In Dust Muhammad’s opinion, Anisi’s calligraphy is delicate/graceful (nūzuk), pure/clear (ṣaf), and agreeable/pleasing (pasandī); Sultan Muhammad Khandan’s is solid/firm (mustaḥkam), and he “wrote with [an] essential quality” (ba-kayfiyat nivashtand); Muhammad Qasim Shadishah’s is light/delicate (nūzuk), clean (pākīzā), and pleasing (pasandī); Khvaja Ibrahim’s is sweet/delicate/nice (shīrīn) and clean/pure/chaste (pākīzā); Shah Mahmud’s is graceful (dil-farīb) and ornamented (ba-zīb). Nur al-Din `Abd Allah is praised for “beauty of calligraphy” (husn-i khāṣṭ) and “quickness of copying” (surat-ī kitāb).

Malik Daylamī’s comments are few and far between; he remarks on Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s purity (ṣafā) and sharpness (fīz). Anisi improved Azhar’s style through “ornament and adjustment/trimming” (takalluf va iṣlāh). Mir Sayyid Ahmad only describes properties of ta’līq, characterizing the ta’līq copied by secretaries in Khurasan as “at the extremity of freshness and movement” (nīhāyat-ī rūṭābat va harakat) and the secretaries of Azarbayjan and Iraq as “perfect in firmness, maturity, essentials, and taste” (kamāl-i istihkhām va pakhtagī va usūl va chāhmī). He writes of Bihzad’s “firmness of fingers” (quvvat-i bānān) and “power over the pen/brush” (qudrat bar qalam). Shams al-Din Muhammad refers to the features of three calligraphers. Of Ja’far al-Tabrizi’s calligraphy he says that it is “very beautiful” (ḥisyrār nīk); of Muhammad Qasim Shadishah’s that it is “at the extremity of sweetness, elegance, and

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139 Shīr-i-mardān-ī bisha-yi tāsvīr va palangān va nihangān-i kārkhāna-ī tabārīr az nīsh-i qalamash dil rīsh va az ḥayrat-i sūratāsh sar dar fīsh and.
lightness” (ba-ghāyat-i shīrīn va namakī va nāzuk), and of Anisi Badakhsh‘i’s that it is “very pure, sweet, and light” (bizār saf va shīrīn va nāzuk).

Broadening the analysis of terminology to study the use of attributives in other written sources might help to expose patterns of lexical incidence and thereby give a sense of a shared evaluative repertoire. It might even become possible to determine whether or not a common vocabulary existed: was there a means of communicating specific aspects of visually perceived features in a comprehensible way among the members of a group of arbiters, or were verbal judgments made in an idiosyncratic language that required glossing? Even if it remains impossible to connect the verbal descriptive to its visual attribute, the language does provide a digest of qualities regarded as positive.141

Another aspect of the attributive remains to be considered; in reading the author’s judgments in a preface it is hard to separate the qualities of writing from the qualities of the calligrapher, especially when one remembers a recurring theme of the preface, namely, that the album is a memorial containing the works of past and present masters. Personal attributes, evinced by conduct in life, are often noted. Dust Muhammad emphasizes Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s “good character” (husn-i akhlāq); that Mawlana Sultan Muhammad Nur was an accomplished (sar-anjām) and pure (pākīzangī) scribe, who was pious (zard) and abstemious (tāqū) his entire life; that Sultan Muhammad Khandan was gentle (kāchik-dīl) and a pleasant companion (khush-suḥbat). In the Khvandamir/Amini preface Bihzad is praised as an artist whose “thoughts are pure, who walks in the path of love and friendship. . . [magānī] A pen like Mani’s, auspicious traces/ of beautiful disposition, praiseworthy ways.”142

The high moral qualities of practitioners may also be detected in the honorifics applied to them. Introducing Mir Sayyid Ahmad as one of Mir ‘Ali’s “rightly guided students,”143 Shams al-Din Muhammad calls Mir Sayyid Ahmad a “sublime repository [who has] striven to acquire perfections.”144 He attaches comparable epithets to other calligraphers. Shams al-Din Muhammad introduces another group of calligraphers collectively as “masters who are repositories of virtues, of eloquent manner, of beneficial and copious works, and strive to attain perfections.”145 He dubbed Amir b. Husayn al-Sharifi al-Mashhadi a “master of exalted origin and noble lineage who has striven to gain perfections.”146

In both actual references to good conduct and in titles that imply it the attributes are comparable to those used to describe the visual features of calligraphy. Hence, the language of judgment evaluates the work (āṣār) in terms of its being an impression of its maker. The work is a palpable record of the maker and an index of his exemplary qualities. Just as language in praise of conduct is distilled into abstract categories, so too is the language used to judge and describe achievement. Both trade in absolute qualities—patience and perseverance result in mastery over self and technique.

141 Sakisian attempted to match texts to works of art but without sufficient attention to the cultural contexts in which the texts were written and thought about the purposes that they served (“Esthétique et terminologie persanes”). More recently John Seyller tried to link a numerical system to visual features of the Mughal paintings and drawings onto which the numbers were inscribed (John Seyller, “A Mughal Code of Connoisseurship,” Muqarnas 17 [2000]: 178–203).
142 saf’t i tiqād sālīk-i masālik-i muḥbhat va vaddād . . . /mānī gaham kūjista āṣār / nīkā shīyam ḥamīda nūvār.
143 ya az shāqūriān-ti rashīd-i vaj ast.
144 šiyyūd-i ma’āb kamālāt-i ikhṭiāb.
145 āḏar az utstādān-i hāzrat-i fāzāl-i ma’āb fasāḥat shīrīr ifādāt va ifāzāt āṣār kāmālāt iktisāb.
146 hāzrat-i rif’at niṣāb sharafat inīsāb kamālāt iktisāb.
Around the subjects of innate disposition and ethics (akhlāq) an extensive literature grew in the Islamic tradition, and numerous works were written on good character (husn al-khulūq) and moral perfection.\textsuperscript{147} Among them are didactic treatises that gave advice to rulers, a blend of a mirror for princes and a collection of wise sayings. One example is Husayn Va‘iz Kashīfi’s \textit{Akhlāq-i muhsinī} (Morals of the Beneficent, 1494–95) dedicated to Abu al-Muhsin, one of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s sons.\textsuperscript{148} It includes definitions of moral qualities and exemplary sayings of moral figures. For example, giving thanks (shukr) to God is one moral category; it was achieved through man’s heart, tongue, and limbs. The eye’s form of service was “to behold with reverence the works of creation.”\textsuperscript{149} Another category was endeavor and exertion (jīdd wa jahd), with allusions to the benefits to be gained from perseverance, hard work, and noble pursuits.\textsuperscript{150} The ruler’s patronage of building was particularly important especially because it benefited his subjects and also stood as a record of that dynasty’s might and benevolence.\textsuperscript{151}

The idea of perseverance is obviously an idea congruent to the practice of calligraphy and to the language used for its reception and judgment. Kashīfi’s treatise also described the kinds of men according to their rank, and advised the ruler:

\begin{quote}
To each one of mankind there is a particular rank \textit{(martaba)}; which was prescribed a long time ago. If any man should transgress beyond his own limit; quarrels will arise, to the left and to the right. Keep every man in his proper station; And then sit down with prosperity in thine own place.\textsuperscript{152}
\end{quote}

Rank could be vouchsafed by innate qualities. The recurring expressions in the prefaces about a practitioner’s various noble qualities—and noble lineage where prestigious descent could be legitimately claimed—not only attests to the need to define his rank but states it as a direct result of such qualities. Despite Kashīfi’s advice, advancement and self-improvement were possible if one developed talent and skill.\textsuperscript{153} Practitioners were repositories of both

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{147} In the absence of a synthetic study of Islamic ethics, see EI2, s.v. “Akhlāq” (R. Walzer and H. A. R. Gibb).
\item \textsuperscript{149} Ibid., p. 8.
\item \textsuperscript{150} Ibid., pp. 37–38.
\item \textsuperscript{151} Also important in this regard is Khvandamīr’s \textit{Mā‘āgīr al-mulūk} (1498), a listing of the monuments and achievements of kings. The book concludes with statements about the monuments of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s rule.
\item \textsuperscript{152} Ibid., pp. 47–48. For the Persian, see Husayn Va‘iz Kāshīfī, \textit{Akhlāq-i Muhsinī}, p. 58.
\item \textsuperscript{153} An early-fifteenth-century manual (\textit{Anīs al-nās}, “The Good Companion,” ca. 1426–27) composed by a certain Shuja, and dedicated to Ibrahim Sultan b. Shahrūkh, on the topic of ethics, contained a section on classes according to three “classes: awsat al-nās (middle class); mulūk va arhāb va utsahām (princes, lords, and high officials); mardum-i bāzārī (lover class).” In his study of the text, de Fouchécour noted that Shuja “also differentiated between bad extraction (bad asl) and good extraction (asl) with virtue (huwar, huwarmand). He noted that the author was writing “for and to create a man who is neither truly powerful nor vulgar, a ‘well-born’ man in whom virtue finds a fertile ground” (C.-H. de Fouchécour, “The Good Companion” (\textit{Anīs al-Nās}): A Manual for the Honest Man in Shīrāz in the 9th/15th Century,” in \textit{Iran and Iranian Studies: Essays in Honor of Iraqi Afshar}, ed. Kambiz Eslami [Princeton: Zagros, 1998], pp. 42–57; esp. 46–47. The separate classes are sometimes delineated in the mirror-for-princes genre. A tenth-century manual composed by Qādī al-Nu’mān in Fatimid Egypt contains a section on classes. Salinger notes that this portion of text is ostensibly “an exhortation
\end{itemize}
innate and acquired talents, and innate talent could be augmented through supra-natural intervention. According to Dust Muhammad, Ibn Muqla was instructed in *thuluth*, *muhaqqaq* and *naskh* by ‘Ali b. Abi Talib when he saw him in a vision (*dar vaq‘a‘a dīd*); Yaqut al-Musta‘simi “brought down the occulted rules of this science from heaven to earth.”154 In their technical treatises, Mir ‘Alī Haravi (*Midād al-khūṭāt*) and Majnun Rafiqi (*Khaṭṭ va savād*) wrote that ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (referred to by Majnun as “Shah-i Mardan”) came to Yaqut in a dream and said to him: “Cut your pen diagonally!,” and when he did so his calligraphy became purer, and it is because of this that his calligraphy is preferred over Ibn Muqla’s, not because of basic principles but rather for its purity.155

References and allusions to the concept of the work as an index of its maker are scattered throughout the prefaces. One example is the praise of ‘Ali b. Abi Talib offered by Dust Muhammad: “The pen-riding fingers of no creature have left their mark on the field of writing the likes of that majesty’s valiant and miraculous fingers.”156 The sign, or distinguishing feature, of ‘Ali’s writing, aside from its purity and grace,157 was the split *alif* and the fact that parallel letters on the front and reverse sides of a single sheet were lined up. ‘Ali b. Abi Talib was the perfect exemplary figure for both calligraphy and depiction. Developing the statement “the foundation (*masnad*) of the name of writing consists in the practice of virtue,” Sultan ‘Alī Mashhadi wrote:

The aim of Murtaḍā-‘Ali in writing
Was not merely characters and dots
But fundamentals, purity, virtue;
And he pointed to this by the beauty of his writing.158

(gharaẓ-ī Murtaḍā ‘Alī az khaṭṭ
na hamīn lafẓ bād va haʃr va naqīt
bal ušul va safā va kūbhī bād
zī ān išrārat ba-husn-ī khaṭṭ faramūd)

We could not hope for a clearer expression of the symmetry drawn between work and maker. That the calligraphic impression as an index of virtue was an idea that had existed since the beginning of the tradition of beautiful writing. In his qasida on calligraphy, Ibn Bawwab wrote:

Strive that the fingers of your hand
will write what is good

given by ‘Ali, or possibly the Prophet Muhammad himself, to a new governor.” The section on classes is divided into five parts: “[1] the soldiers; [2] the governor’s aides, such as the *qādīs*, the administrators, the secretaries and so on; [3] those who pay the *kharj*, i.e., the tillers of the soil and others; [4] the merchants and the artisans; [5] and finally, the lowest class, the poor and the needy” (Gerard Salinger, “A Muslim Mirror of Princes,” *Muslim World* 46, 1 [January, 1956]: 24–39; 30).

154 ẓawbāt-ī mahfiṭ-yi in ‘īn rā az āsmān ba-zamin āwād.
155 dar khūb did kī farmāda gālam rā muharraf qatī zan chun chanān kard khaṭṭ-ī ī āsftar shud va in kī khaṭṭ-ī ī rā bar khāṭṭ-ī Ibn Muqla tarjih mi-dahand na az jihāt-ī usāfī ast bākī az jihāt-ī safā ast. This is the passage as it appears in Majnūn Rafeqī, Khaṭṭ va savād, in Khūb ārā‘ī dar tamuddan-i islāmi, ed. Māżīr Haravī, p. 189. The earlier text by Mir ‘Alī Haravī, Midād al-khūṭāt, is slightly different (see ibid., p. 89). Sultan ‘Alī Mashhadi had recorded the same experience, viz. that ‘Ali came to him in his sleep and gave him a specimen of calligraphy (khaṭṭ) and a “suit of clothes” (Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 109).
156 āsmāl-ī nay savār-ī bīkī asfrīd gān chun shah-savār hamān-ī mo‘jīz nisbān-ī ān haʃrat bar maydān-ī khaṭāb na-guyashta.
157 ‘a‘alāmat-ī khaṭāb-ī ān haʃrat ba’d-ī safā va litāfāt-ī ān ast.
So that it will be left behind you
in the abode of deception.
For whatever a man does now
will confront him on the morrow
When he has to face
the inscribed record of his deeds.  

In short, the judgments applied to calligraphy in the prefaces were extensions of ethical concepts. The notion that a work’s relation to its maker could be described according to a set of idealized and distilled properties helps to explain the nature of its reception; the verbal articulation of formal features did not take the path of endless descriptions but focused on absolute properties instead.

While the ethical standing of depictors was also not in question—Khvandamir/Amini’s praise of Bihzad is sufficient evidence of that—the use of attributives in the reception of paintings, drawings, and illuminations was different. When responses do occur they are cast in metaphors that relativize the work or in the trope of incomprehensibility. Dust Muhammad wrote that even the heavens, endowed with the power of one thousand eyes, could not comprehend Sultan Muhammad’s paintings. The designer (farrāḥ) Kamal al-Dīn Husayn’s motifs were such that even the most “discerning vision could not understand the perfection of their substance.”  

One potential reason for this disconnect between what is seen in depictions and calligraphies and verbal response has already been noted, that is, that the works would be discussed while viewing the album, making descriptions in the preface superfluous. A second reason relates to technical mastery, to the suppression of the signs of manufacture in the execution of the painting in particular, and hence the impossibility of understanding what is seen as made. Another reason is provided by Dust Muhammad where he stops short of describing Yaqut al-Musta’simi’s calligraphy:  

If a wise man does not describe the sun
the emanation of its light is sufficient description.
And if he does not speak in praise of musk
the smell of musk is a sufficient eulogizer of its substance

The essence of the work is so forceful and tangible that it speaks its own encomium.

Before the album preface was developed references to calligraphers, painters, draftsmen, illuminators, and rulers who took up the pen and brush appeared either as clusters of biographical notices or in the narration of events. These references offered a summary portrait of the cultural and intellectual life of the court and displayed a sense of history and continuity.

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160  nazar-i bārīk-hūn ba-kunh-i kamālah na-rasīda.
through transmission. The corpus of technical treatises written by eminent calligraphers beginning in the sixteenth century gives the first indications that biographical notices were turning into narratives in a way comparable to the shift from the annal to the proto-narrative chronicle. Just as many forms of human endeavor had their history traced and recorded, so too would the arts of calligraphy and depiction.

Although there is ample evidence that a broad range of writers—Khwandamir among them—knew about the history of practitioners, it was the calligraphers themselves who wrote histories of their practice. Although immersed in the culture of the court and not unsympathetic to calligraphers, painters, and draftsmen, Khvandamir/Amini and Murvarid had different priorities. Shah Quli Khalifa followed in their path. Dust Muhammad, Malik Daylam, Mir Sayyid Ahmad (following Qutb al-Din Muhammad), Shams al-Din Muhammad and Muhammad Muhsin chose a different one. Hence, while the inclusion of lists of names appears to be optional in an album preface, inserted among the preface’s thematic units, the fact that art historical elements appear in those prefaces composed by practitioners is significant. Their choice no doubt reflected a form of personal investment, a wish to define their place in the genealogy of a given practice and to record the history of their tradition. It was a kind of knowledge best known by the practitioners and passed down from generation to generation. 161 Specific sources used by the preface authors are scarce, though Dust Muhammad hints that he may have used actual manuscripts as a basis for writing his history (he refers to copies of manuscripts with paintings by Ahmad Musa in the library of Sultan Husayn Mirza, for example).

But what kind of an art history do the prefaces represent? The history of art stems from the marriage of history with biography; what people did was inseparable from what they were. 162 When the impulse arose, the narrativized historical list was applied to the practices of calligraphy and depiction. Thus, the origins of a history of art can be traced to a specific type of professional biography that had been inspired by an interest in knowledge and skill. The rhetoric of the preface was of praise and not imprecation, consonant with the mode of representation found in histories, among other literary works. An illustration of the manipulation of biography and its proper content is the handling of Bihzad’s biographical sketch in the history by Budaq Munshi Qazvini and the treatise of Qazi Ahmad. For his sketch of Bihzad, Qazi Ahmad used a portion of text from Qazvini and reworked some of the biographical details about Bihzad’s life. References about Bihzad’s service to Sultan Husayn Mirza as librarian (kitābdār) and Shah Tahmasp’s patronage of the artist (Qazvini notes that Bihzad was like a companion [musāhib] to the Safavid shah) are retained. Absent from Qazi Ahmad’s sketch, 163 however, is a rumor interjected by Qazvini, 164 that Bihzad loved wine and constantly drank it despite Shah Tahmasp’s ban against it. Qazi Ahmad chose not even to hint at Bihzad’s predilection, focusing entirely on his positive qualities and unblemished character. The rhetoric of praise is also manifest in the language for

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161 On the oral transmission of historical tradition, the anxiety about its failure to guarantee remembrance through loss of memory and the destruction of the physical record, see Mīrzā Haydar Dughlāt, Türīkh-i rashīdī, trans. Thackston, pp. 3 and 89.


164 Budaq Munshi Qazvini, Javāhir al-akhbār, fol. 112b.
describing individual achievement, attributes consonant with the qualities of the maker. It was a history of art that was dominated by transmission and that could be subdivided according to practitioner, school, mode, and technique.

It may well be that the consequence of the dominant focus on practitioners and transmission produced the particular form of narrative found in the album prefaces. It is a form much like the chronicle, a type of historical discourse whose inability to realize complete narrativity has been discussed. The structure of the Persian chronicle and, in particular, the narrativized lists of the prefaces, often present a sequence of statements about events or individuals without coordinating connections that would make an inferred causality explicit. The paratactic structure required the reader to fill in the lacunae.

A tension emerges from this art historical conception. The history was structured through a sequence of practitioners who brought about change at particular times. Such changes were often characterized as abrogating or canceling what had come before. From this we might infer a history of art as a process of successive developments made by practitioners that ran in the single direction of constant improvement. Moreover, by attaching change to a particular master, aspects of performance which were held to constitute that change in the master’s works could be construed as an index of that person; the innovation was caused by the self and was an expression of the self. Running against this interpretation, and hence in tension with it, is the relationship between tradition and response to tradition, or between successive works in the history of a practice. For both calligraphy and depiction, new works responded to what had come before, and within a realm of creativity that was circumscribed according to technique, idioms, and manners. In this context, invention and originality took on a wholly different aspect; copying was critical for learning calligraphy and the arts of depiction, as is illustrated by the anecdote that Yaqut’s students were allowed to sign his name on specimens that they had copied. Similar anecdotes are found in other sources.

How did process and tradition affect the place of the practitioner within the tradition? It is clear that some masters were regarded as vertical markers along the axis of the history of art, accorded the invention or extremely significant change in a technique or mode, but the same rules applied to them regarding the tradition. Azhar’s counsel to Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi was that he had talent but lacked technique. The significance of their impact is perhaps to be measured by the fact that they were imitated and that their style was disseminated. Their style was constituted into a metropolitan or regional—or even trans-regional—aesthetic.

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165 For distinctions between annals, chronicle, and narrative history, see Hayden White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” *Critical Inquiry* 7 (Autumn 1980): 5–27. Using commonly accepted definitions in historiography, White writes that both annals and the chronicle as forms of historical representation are “imperfect” in their “historicality . . . evidenced in their failure to attain full narrativity of the events of which they treat” (ibid., p. 9). The function of completely realized narrativity is that the events possess “a structure, an order of meaning, which they do not possess as mere sequence” (ibid.). The chronicle is characterized by its “failure to achieve narrative closure. It does not so much conclude as simply terminate. It starts out to tell a story but breaks off in medias res, in the chronicler’s own present; it leaves things unresolved” (ibid.).

166 Partner discusses paratactic prose in medieval histories and the idea that it was “a conscious alternative to linear structure, ruled by its own aesthetic,” and goes on to say that “this attractive, sophisticated hypothesis . . . requires that we assume a world of writers and readers who found in juxtaposition their primary clue to meaning. Like practiced viewers of films whose central ‘statement’ works from calculated montage, these imagined past readers easily filled in gaps, ‘read’ the significance of contiguous images, made form out of the presented elements of artistic experience” (“The New Corfinicius,” p. 18).
Study of works of art reveals, however, that artists and calligraphers also skipped generations and looked further back than their immediate contemporaries in their search for models and lessons. The tradition defined a field for performance, a fact that calls for a particular definition of progress or change: contributing to the tradition was not about overturning its rules and prerogatives but working within a universe of predetermined terms—small change, as we might gauge it, could be big change.

Then there is the individual master. It is abundantly clear that for calligraphy the work embodied the maker, and that the language used to describe personal traits in encomiastic biographical literature was translated to the work as a set of personifications. Such a language essentialized the experience of the work of art, characterizing it as an aggregate of desirable properties. Disparities between the internal view recorded in the prefaces and other sources and the modern view opens up an enormous chasm in the articulation of visual features. This is especially apparent in the modern impulse to read a practitioner’s relationship to his work according to evidence of particular and idiosyncratic features in it. As such, it runs in an opposite direction from the internal view of the index which was to understand it as made by an individual but explicable only in absolute terms.
CHAPTER SIX

LIFTING THE VEIL FROM THE FACE OF DEPICTION:
DUST MUHAMMAD’S PREFACE

Another form of picture-making by water and pigment existed in the Cathayan realm and the Frankish realm until sharp-penned Mercury inscribed the sultanic seal in the name of Sultan Abū Sa’īd Khudaybanda. Ustād Ahmad Mūsā, who was his father’s pupil, lifted the veil from the face of depiction and the depiction that is now current was invented by him.¹

The implications of this often-quoted passage from Dust Muhammad’s preface to the Bahram Mirza album are rarely examined. Ahmad Musa, a painter trained by his father and active during the reign of the Ilkhanid Sultan Abu Sa’īd (r. 1317–35), is credited with developing a new and exciting mode of depiction, a veritable paradigm shift, whose impact, according to Dust Muhammad, was still palpable in the 1540’s. Through a rich, meaning-laden metaphor, Dust Muhammad likens Ahmad Musa’s creation of this new idiom to an act of unveiling, of removing a cloth that had obscured and concealed “depiction” (tāṣūr, depicting and depiction²). But the metaphor steadfastly retains its ambiguity when one attempts to connect the textual account and the painted image. Did Ahmad Musa, this painter with a prophet’s name,³ merely uncover what was there all along by perfecting and refining some aspect of technique, of composition, of drawing, or of applying paint? Or is his act as revolutionary as we are made to think on first reading Dust Muhammad’s preface?

Answers do not come readily from the narrative. Dust Muhammad lays out his chronology of painting with a broad brush, noting the passage of time and the visual traditions of the Cathayans and the Franks (i.e., the Chinese and the Europeans), without the slightest reference to painting’s early history in Iran or for that matter in the Arab world. He rushes to make the connection between Ahmad Musa and the Safavid tradition, neglecting to mention, even as an aside, the century of book painting practiced throughout Iraq and in western Iran, despite the illustrated books and fragmentary paintings, datable to between the middle of the thirteenth century and the early fourteenth that were stored in the Timurid and Safavid libraries. We begin to sense an exclusionary view of visual history, and so we return to Dust Muhammad’s words, “the depiction that is now current was invented by him.”

For Bahram Mirza’s album, Dust Muhammad selected a series of paintings depicting events and places in the Prophet Muhammad’s Miʿrāj (Night Journey), the story of Muhammad’s ascension from Jerusalem through the seven heavens to the throne of God.⁴

² The term tāṣūr does not distinguish between drawing and painting as modes of depicting or processes of depicting. The distinction is only made in specific references to materials or techniques in written sources. Moreover, context must be relied upon to determine whether it is being used as a noun or as a verbal noun.
³ Mūsā = Moses.
⁴ For general scholarship on the Miʿrāj and illustrated Miʿrāj-nāmas, see Marie-Rose Séguy, The Miraculous
Dust Muhammad ascribed many of the Mi'râj paintings in the album to Ahmad Musa (figs. 1–3) placing the attributions written in polychrome or gold nasta'liq on them, and arranging the paintings at intervals throughout the album’s 149 folios. Just as Muhammad journeys from Jerusalem through the heavens, so the paintings journey through the folios of the album. In the album the paintings attributed to Ahmad Musa represent what Dust Muhammad thought of as the origin of a tradition which would reach its culmination in the Safavid period. It is only possible, perhaps, to understand his perceived visual affinity, his history of art which links present to past through style, by examining the formal aspects of Ahmad Musa’s paintings, including their composition and format, spatial construction, quality of line, and handling of pigment. Such a stylistic affinity is suggested by Dust Muhammad’s placement of paintings by Ahmad Musa and the Safavid-period artist Ustad Dust on the two surfaces of a single folio (figs. 4–5 and 6). Their proximity allows for easy comparison.

In composing the preface and selecting the album’s contents, Dust Muhammad presumably ignored all those pictorial traditions for which he could see no connection to the Safavid style. Hence the album includes no paintings before Ahmad Musa’s time and no examples from the illustrated books of Arabic literary culture. Its corpus of calligraphies is equally selective. It contains calligraphies in nasta’liq but very few examples in any of the six scripts, despite the fact that Dust Muhammad describes this canon of practitioners and history in his preface. Examples of nasta’liq begin with specimens by Ja’far al-Tabrizi and Azhar, whose combined period of activity spanned the first half of the fifteenth century. Next comes a calligraphic exercise (mufradât) signed by Shah Mahmud (fol. 32b) out of chronological order. Shah Mahmud writes in his signature that his nasta’liq followed the method (tařîqa) of the “inventor of the archetype” (vâzi’ al-ashâr) Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi and of “the second inventor” (mukhtâr al-sânâ), Ja’far al-Tabrizi. The inventors are present through Shah Mahmud’s exercise in emulation. Subsequent examples of nasta’liq calligraphies in Bahram Mirza’s album illustrate the script’s history through the examples of some of its leading exponents from the fifteenth century to the contemporary nasta’liq calligraphers of Dust Muhammad’s time, many of whom he mentions in his preface.

By his selection of examples from the works of artists and calligraphers and by his writing of a history, Dust Muhammad evinces a singular view and seeks to advance specific claims, although what they are remains somewhat elusive. The example of Ahmad Musa

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Paintings with attributions appear on fols. 31b, 42a, 61a, and 121a; paintings without attributions occur on fols. 42b, 61a, 62a, and 107a.

TSK H. 2154, fol. 121a–b. Adle identified Ustad Dust as either Dust Musavvir or Dust Divana and not the Dust Muhammad who composed the preface (Adle, “Les Artistes nommés Dust-Mohammad,” esp. 264–67).

Specimens in the six scripts were available to Dust Muhammad. In fact, an entire album devoted to this canon of scripts and its major calligraphers was assembled for Bahram Mirza. The album, TSK B. 410, is in Istanbul. For a discussion of the album and its relationship to the album assembled by Dust Muhammad in 1544–45 (TSK H. 2154), see David J. Roxburgh, “Bahram Mirza and His Collections,” in Safavid Art and Architecture, ed. Sheila R. Canby (London: British Museum Press, forthcoming).

The calligraphies are arranged according to relative chronological order from the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. If calligraphies are out of order it was done deliberately to stress specific formal affinities and pedagogical filiations between calligraphers in the chain of practice.
and his connection to the Safavid tradition offers one caveat against treating Dust Muhammad’s preface as a normative history of art that can stand alone, above and beyond its author’s particular aesthetic constructs and historical conceptions.

Early in the twentieth century the preface attained the status of master narrative and the materials which preoccupy the historian of art today are still structured according to Dust Muhammad’s model. The absence of a critical analysis of this preface has resulted in its reproduction time after time in modern art history—Dust Muhammad’s skeletal framework of patron and practitioner has simply been fleshed out and matched to the corpus of extant manuscripts. It is important to state that Dust Muhammad’s narrative represents his view, although some of what he says—for instance, credit given to particular practitioners for inventing a technique or script, or specific master-student relationships—can be found in other examples. Ironically, comparison of his preface to nearly contemporary examples only brings out its very singularity, calling into question its reception and status as a normative history of art, but this is not entirely surprising given that his preface was the only preface available to scholars for quite a number of years. Its similarities to the late Timurid and Safavid prefaces are structural, thematic, and linguistic. It is also like other album prefaces at an epistemological level, in its comprehension of history in terms of a chain of practitioners.

Concerns particular to Dust Muhammad’s preface are both in degree and in kind. In degree, his preface exhibits one feature shared by others—for example, those by Malik Daylami and Mir Sayyid Ahmad (for Amir Ghayb Beg’s album)—that is, a concern with outlining an art tradition that would explain in a form of stylistic causality the outcome of contemporary Safavid aesthetics and practices by referring to its predecessors. This stylistic history was continuous within the limits of depiction first established by Ahmad Musa. Refinements were made to his system as a series of perfections within a universe, whose limits, terms, and values Ahmad Musa had already defined, and hence the process might be considered essentially conservative and not revolutionary. Such a conception of a history of depiction and the notion of a progress of perfection find parallels in both the practice and history of calligraphy and poetry. The impetus to explain the place of Safavid art and its practitioners in terms of their precursors finds parallels elsewhere, but the special resonance of Dust Muhammad’s preface lies in his selection of materials assembled in Bahram Mirza’s album. The album’s contents and its preface work together to shape a history of art in which particular practitioners were featured. Certain lines of artistic transmission were privileged over others just as certain materials from both past and present were included and others excluded from the album. In Bahram Mirza’s album, transmission becomes a subject that is described in the text and illustrated through a sequence of exam-

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9 The only modifications to Dust Muhammad’s text are taxonomic. Çağman, Tanrıdd, and Rogers redate the paintings by Ahmad Musa, for example, to a later period (ca. 1360–70) on the basis of their stylistic features, thereby altering Dust Muhammad’s chronology (see Çağman and Tanrıdd, The Topkapı Saray Museum, trans., ed. and expanded by Rogers, pp. 69–70). Dust Muhammad’s coverage which focused on courtly production has been expanded in modern scholarship by the analysis of the regional production of books and paintings—for example, the development of the Turkmen tradition under the Qaraqoyunlu and Aqqoyunlu dynasties, production in such regional courts as Gilan, and the so-called commercial production of Shiraz in the sixteenth century. Dust Muhammad is either silent about these practices or gives them cursory treatment.

10 For example, several preface writers credit ‘Ali b. Abi Talib with the invention of illumination and Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi as the creator of nasta’liq.
lifting the veil from the face of depiction

Of many examples, one can cite a black-ink drawing ascribed by Dust Muhammad to Shah Muzaffar, an artist contemporary to Bihzad (fig. 7) and praised by such figures as Muhammad Haydar Dughlat and Babur. Shah Muzaffar’s drawing depicts the Prophet Muhammad riding on Buraq and attended by the angel Gabriel, a composition whose iconography is shaped by the Mi’rāj-nāma. It is unlike any attributed to Ahmad Musa in the album, but the features of Shah Muzaffar’s figures and its elements are derived from fourteenth-century models, which he has recombined. The line technique is also characteristic of fourteenth-century drawings. Examples like this drawing by Shah Muzaffar established connections between individual works within the album, producing chains of interconnected examples that inferred a history of art.

But it is in its contents that Dust Muhammad’s preface is truly unusual. In contrast to other preface writers, Dust Muhammad fully exploited the preface’s inherent openness of structure to insert stories and anecdotes into a dominant historical narrative centered on transmission. In doing so, he relies on two forms of narrative for its emplotment: first, the dominant structure of transmission between master and student (suggesting the passage of time by a chronology implied through relation); and second, a less commonly used form that employs the sequencing of stories, each one of them functioning as a discrete moment. Stories are embedded within stories.

Dust Muhammad’s careful incorporation of anecdotes and their inflection and sequencing seem to have been designed to advance particular claims in accordance with specific authorial concerns; they acquired meaning, legibility, and coherence through the sequence of the preface’s storytelling elements in conjunction with well known cultural references and stories not in the preface. In Dust Muhammad’s references to the history of depiction, what seems at stake is not merely the desire to legitimate depiction, a goal that is immediately apparent from the very first reading of the text, but also to define the role of images and perhaps to distinguish specific forms of depiction over others (e.g., optical-naturalism/non-optical-naturalism), and to signal distinctions between the picture-making tra-

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11 The drawing is on fol. 40b. The illuminated ascription reads: kār-i nādir al-‘asrī Ustād Shāh Muzaffar siyāh qalam-i naqqāsh-i khurāsānī (“work of the rarity of the age master Shah Muzaffar. Black pen [drawing] of the Khurasani artist”). For more examples of self-referencing through repeated types and models, see Roxburgh, “Kamal al-Din Bihzad and Authorship,” esp. figs. 7 and 8, 9, and 10. It is also possible that siyāh qalam is part of the artist’s name. The same epithet was attached to an artist named Muhammad (the famous Muhammad Siyah Qalam), many of whose works are mounted in two of the Istanbul albums (TSK, H. 2153 and H. 2160).

12 A feature, in combination with other stylistic elements (e.g., the treatment of drapery) which has led one scholar to question Dust Muhammad’s attribution; see Soudavar, Art of the Persian Courts, p. 95. In n. 38, Soudavar qualifies the rejection, “These two drawings are so removed from the Herāt style of the 1470’s and 1480’s, that, unless, Shāh-Mozaffar was copying earlier subjects, the attribution to him must be disregarded. If they are copies of earlier subjects, then they are difficult to accept as representative of his painting style” (p. 123).

13 Soudavar quickly summarizes this major aspect of Dust Muhammad’s preface but only through the linkage forged between depiction and ‘Ali b. Abī Talib’s practice of illuminating Korans (Soudavar, “Between the Safavids and the Mughals,” p. 51).

14 The terms naturalism, realism, and mimetic have been avoided in favor of “optical naturalism” as the sense of an image approximating the visual perception of the phenomenal world, a way to order illusion. The term “optical naturalism” was first advanced by David Summers in The Judgement of Sense (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 3. The general misuse, or misunderstanding, of the term mimesis as imitation or representation is explained by Eva C. Keuls, Plato and Greek Painting (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), pp. 2 and 9.
ditions of Persia, Europe, and China. The question is how his preface produces and communicates this set of purposes.

Elsewhere in his preface, Dust Muhammad addresses the underlying principles of image making; he alludes to the processes of visual perception and creative conception using such phrases as “mirror of the mind” (āˈrīn-a-yi ‘aql), “eye of the imagination” (did-a-yi khiyāl), and “page of possibility” (safḥa-yi īmkan). Although these oblique references cannot be taken as an overt theory of art—for that was not a purpose of his preface—they raise critical questions about what have been long-standing priorities in the study of Persianate painting. From reading his preface one gains a sense of a theorized organization of art, of a distillation of creative principles and processes.

By stringing together in sequence stories about the history of depiction that appeared in other written sources but never together, Dust Muhammad produces a narrative whose dominant message concerns depiction and depicting, but which has many resonances. His mythos (i.e., narrative principle) is the prophetic origin of depiction, the first beginnings of a tradition of image-making continued up to his own time. As we look closer, the theme of revelation comes to the fore again and again. He moves from unobservable “historical” phenomena, like Daniel’s copying of the portraits in the Chest of Witnessing (sandūq al-shahāda), to those events that are potentially observable, and then to those that survive as a corpus of extant works made by practitioners active from the fourteenth century onward. Ahmad Musa inaugurates the new tradition in what might be understood as a renovatio, a rebirth of the arts of depiction, and his style is preserved through generations of artists and their works up to the Safavid era. Dust Muhammad’s insistent narrative of transmission, unlike any other before or after, establishes a support for this claim.

In what follows the preface section on the history of depiction is the focus: stories from Dust Muhammad’s preface are examined and their implications for the album proper, as well as the subjects of patronage, aesthetics, the art tradition and its creative processes are addressed. Propositions advanced by early scholars on the nature of depiction in Persianate art are returned to at the chapter’s end. Thus, Dust Muhammad’s preface here serves as a case study of interpretation and textual analysis. Three main stories form the focus: a scene from the courtly life of the Timurid prince Baysunghur, involving his artist Khalil; the Chest of Witnessing, a wooden box containing portraits of the prophets, created by God for Adam and copied by Daniel; and the false prophet Mani’s “Artangi Tablet” (law-i artangī). The order of the three stories has been rearranged here. The Baysunghur and Amir Khalil anecdote comes third in the preface but here its allegorical role of exemplarity is emphasized and it is placed first to highlight that theme, although, like the other two stories, it operates as an illustrative event in the history of depiction.

What is at stake in this analysis of Dust Muhammad’s preface? In the introduction it served as an example to highlight scholarly approaches to prefaces generally; the observations made were also valid for other prefaces and art historiographic texts of the Persianate literary tradition. Two interconnected observations emerged from that discussion. The first was that the language and structure of the preface had not been examined; the second was that the preface was not scrutinized closely, an unusual lacuna in scholarship given that

most scholars agree that the content of Dust Muhammad’s preface is particularly remarkable. Its turns of phrase and figures of speech were thought to be hackneyed (and incapable of signifying anything other than their life as literary devices), and the narrative content of its stories were considered topoi, the product of pure rhetoric, and never taken seriously.\footnote{For a review of this fate of metaphor, tropes, and figural language, see Paul de Man “The Epistemology of Metaphor,” in \textit{On Metaphor}, ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 11–28. Meisami has shown the power of the trope in Persian literature and how the metaphor transcends itself by becoming allegory, a powerful device for human comprehension (\textit{Medieval Persian Court Poetry}, p. 39).} Without thoroughgoing analysis of the preface, its immediate meaning—viz. the licitness of depiction—and rationale—a justification for depiction and explanation of Safavid art in the present—came across to some scholars as somewhat flimsy, perhaps even as anachronistic. One of the objectives here is to explain the construction of meanings and the layers of reference at work in the preface and to show how Dust Muhammad reinflected specific metaphors and stories current in other written sources.

Yet another point is important to make despite the fact that it does not involve an explicit criticism in the scholarship. It concerns the role performed by these stories and anecdotes in the prefaces that come across as mythical and legendary\footnote{For example, Porter speaks of “a mythology of the Persian painter that begins with Adam, continues with Mani, and includes even ‘Ali b. Abi Talib’ (Yves Porter, “From the ‘Theory of the Two Qalams’ to the ‘Seven Principles of Painting’: Theory, Terminology, and Practice in Persian Classical Painting,” \textit{Muqarnas} 17 [2000]: 109–18; esp. 110). Some scholars dispute the accuracy of the facts, even in a text like Vasifi’s \textit{Badā‘ī’ al-vaqā‘ī’}, catagorized as a memoir, because of its figurative language (Pistoso, “A Taste for Ambiguity,” p. 167). Pistoso goes so far as to describe it as a “work of fiction.” Scholars of other art historiographic traditions encounter similar problems regarding the rhetorical dimension of texts and the role of stories in them. Barolsky discusses these problems through a study of Vasari’s \textit{Lives}, referring to Pater’s concept of “historical verisimilitude.” He concludes that by dismissing such stories we fail “to comprehend the very poetry of historical imagination” and the role of poetry and literature in “the formation of what we might call historical vision” (Paul Barolsky, “Vasari and the Historical Imagination,” \textit{Word and Image} 15, 3 [July–Sept. 1999]: 286–91). Baxandall (“Doing Justice to Vasari,” p. 111) makes an insightful remark that uncovers one of the differences of practice between the modern art historian and a writer such as Vasari: “. . . of course, we are too shy to use many of Vasari’s tricks: one really cannot operate with critico-mythic anecdotes and moralistic tangents nowadays and keep one’s job. The point, I think, is rather that such things direct us to some areas of artistic meaning that we are neglecting to address at all.”} when measured against the standards of modern historical writing, whose beginnings can be located in late-eighteenth-century Europe and which define our response to pre-modern historical formations.\footnote{The nineteenth-century development can be understood as an attempt to come to grips with the literary and rhetorical dimensions of historical writing, a debate located in Aristotle’s \textit{Poetics}. Aristotle grouped history under rhetoric without prescribing particular methods or criteria for the historian. For the survival of classical rhetoric into the Middle Ages, see Partner, “The New Corfinicus,” esp. pp. 9–10. In the nineteenth century “history came to be set over fiction” and the “dream of a historical discourse that would consist of nothing but factually accurate statements about a realm of events which were observable in principle” came to pass (Hayden White, “Fictions of Factual Representation,” in \textit{The Literature of Fact: Selected Papers from the English Institute}, ed. Angus Fletcher [New York: Columbia University Press, 1976], pp. 21–44, esp. p. 25). A breathtaking study of changes in historical writing and theory during the nineteenth century is also by Hayden White, \textit{Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).} To explore this subject a detailed study of Persian historiography—at present sorely lacking for the later periods\footnote{The same cannot be said of Arabic sources, where the study of historiography has produced such landmarks as Rosenthal, \textit{A History of Muslim Historiography}; and recent refinements, for example, Khalidi, \textit{Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period}, and Tayyeb El-Hibri, \textit{Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Harūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). The systematic study}—would be required, but one would do well to begin with
Mirkhvand’s universal history *Rawżat al-ṣafā’* which moves seamlessly from the dawn of creation to the late fifteenth century. In composing his history, Mirkhvand applied rigorous standards to his sources in order to determine their veracity. In the preface he writes:

> If, however, some foolish opponent, taking into account the repetitions and amplifications which sometimes occur in the noble proofs and eloquent style of this science, should assert that history, for the most part, consists of fictions {muftaray}, contradictions {mawīt}, and ancient romances {asābī}, and is therefore unworthy of attention; besides, that discrimination becomes almost impossible when truth {ṣidq} and falsehood {ḵīzb}, rubbish and pearls, right {ṣāvāb} and wrong {ḵhatā’} are mixed up together, so that consequently no advantage can be connected with the study; such doubts may be removed in the following manner.  

Mirkhvand explains that past writers were concerned to “record truths and not falsehoods”;

he then outlines a list of qualities required for the historian, and ends with Arab and Persian historians and traditionists whose works he consulted. He also notes that the *Kalīla wa Dimna*, Ibn al-Muqaffa’s book of didactic tales centered on the actions of two jackals (named Kalīla and Dimna), was a work of “invention and imagination, yet the authors and readers, although none of the stories recorded had ever occurred, firmly believe them to be pregnant with incalculable benefits and advantages.” Thus, Mirkhvand distinguishes not only truth from falsehood but also fact from fiction.

Before his explication of method, Mirkhvand describes the numerous advantages (ten categories in all) of history, including obtaining knowledge about the world and its affairs through reflection and sensation; distinguishing truth from falsehood; acquiring perfection through reflection on occurrences; the exemplarity of men’s past actions; and the rewards of virtuous behavior. Clearly many of these benefits could be derived from reading stories whose actual occurrence was in question, like the didactic *Kalīla wa Dimna*.

In introducing his “historical” stories and anecdotes, Dust Muhammad refers only obliquely to his sources, identifying none by name, but relying on such phrases as “books of the great” (*kutub-i akābīr*) or “they relate” (*āvarda and*). But there is no reason to suppose that Dust Muhammad applied a different standard to the selection of his sources; and at any rate, several of them were culled from Mirkhvand’s history and had already been subjected to the historian’s stringent review. Indeed, some stories were incorporated into moralizing poetic works like Nizami’s *Khamsa*, a literary vehicle which allowed for a fuller development of didactic content, and these are sources to which Dust Muhammad also refers. Although there is no reason to question the factual occurrence of the stories and anecdotes—whether they occurred in prehistoric or historical time—it is their moralizing content that Dust Muhammad emphasizes. A historical dimension locates interest and significance in a pattern of events—unique, repeated, or continued—recorded in the preface through

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21 A related answer to the problem of verifying events which one did not observe is offered by al-Ghazālī. His notion of *taqwīm* (lit. recurrence), based the reliability of reports on their repetition by either speech or in written form. See Bernard Weiss, “Knowledge of the Past: Theory of Taqwīm According to al-Ghazālī,” *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985): 81–106; 89.


lifting the veil from the face of depiction

a series of stories. The preface achieves coherence, not at the level of words in sequence, or even in the stringing together of successive stories, but through metaphorical references that occur across the preface’s frame, hence a form of coherence through thematic correspondence in which creation and the anagogic dominate.²⁴ Allusions function across a body of interrelated stories, existing inside the prefatory frame and pointing outside it, each story referencing the other by substitution and repetition.²⁵

BAYSUNGHUR AND AMIR KHALIL: PATRON AND PAINTER

After sketching a history of painting and illumination from its prophetic beginnings, Dust Muhammad suspends his biographically structured narrative—an alternation between patrons and artists—in the time of Prince Baysunghur b. Shahrukh b. Timur (1397–1433). He opens with a description of a manuscript commissioned by Baysunghur for which the prince enlisted the talent of various practitioners from Tabriz: Sidi Ahmad the artist (naqqāsh), Khvaja ‘Ali the painter (muṣawīr), and Ustad Qiyam al-Din Tabrizi the bookbinder (mu‘ajjād). The book was to follow a specific model, an anthology (jung) made for the Jalayirid Sultan Ahmad b. Shaykh Uvays (r. 1382–1420), in its format, size, and the placement of its illustrations.²⁶ Two other artists engaged in the book project were the calligrapher Farid al-Din Ja‘far, otherwise known as Ja‘far al-Tabrizi, and the painter Amir Khalil who worked on the anthology’s decoration and painting (tāzīn va ṭayīr).

Dust Muhammad then moves seamlessly into a statement about Amir Khalil’s achievement in painting. “At that time,” he was considered without “equal in fortune and alone and incomparable in his style.”²⁷ Amir Khalil became the focus of Baysunghur’s patronage to such a degree that others became jealous. Before returning to the progress of Baysunghur’s anthology project, a long anecdote about an event at Baysunghur’s court follows in which Amir Khalil figures prominently. The setting is a garden and the players include Baysunghur, Amir Khalil, boon companions, attendants, and servants (khuddam va ḥushsham va sākinān). Hinting at the intimacy and relaxed protocol of the courtly gathering (majlis),


²⁶ qa‘ va mastār va mawāzī‘-i ṭayīr ba‘-‘aynāḥ.

²⁷ dar ān vaqt bi badal-i zamāna va dar ūrūq-i khud va yagānā būd.
which took place in the evening, Amir Khalil came sufficiently close to Baysunghur to cut the prince’s forehead accidentally. Fearing the consequences, Amir Khalil fled to the safety of the Chihil Sutun palace. Baysunghur’s first move was to close off all entrances and exit through the garden to prevent his mother from hearing about the accident. Of great interest here is Baysunghur’s concern that his mother, Gawhar Shad, would intervene in deciding Amir Khalil’s fate, anticipated to be a decision unfavorable to the painter.

Baysunghur’s next act was to order a search for Amir Khalil; since it was night, torches and lanterns were lit to aid in his discovery. Before too long it was determined that he had locked himself in the Chihil Sutun. As yet another sign of Baysunghur’s affection for the painter, the door was not knocked down, a dramatic act that would probably have terrified the palace’s occupant. Instead Baysunghur came to the palace door, Amir Khalil opened it and prostrated himself before the prince to beg for his mercy. Words of forgiveness would not suffice; a ceremony of gift giving was required to reinstate Amir Khalil fully in the “paradisiacal assembly” (majlis-i bihisht ā’lūn). A poem praising Baysunghur as a “manifestation of God’s clemency and benevolence” (mažhar-i īlim va lutf-i khudāy) concludes the anecdote. The section of the text that deals with the Timurid prince, his book project, and the artistic personality of Amir Khalil is finally brought to a close with Baysunghur’s death.

Continuity of patronage is effected through ‘Ala’ al-Dawla Mirza, Baysunghur’s son, who brings the anthology to completion. ‘Ala’ al-Dawla Mirza calls for the assistance of Khvaja Ghiyas al-Din Pir Ahmad Zarkub, a painter working in Tabriz. The patronage of a son who takes on his father’s unfinished projects is paralleled by an artistic one. When the anthology is finished, Amir Khalil examined those paintings touched up and executed by Khvaja Ghiyas al-Din Pir Ahmad Zarkub and declares that he will abandon depiction. Dust Muhammad then inserts a poem that amplifies the meaning of Amir Khalil’s decision, the old giving way to a new generation:

From a wise man impartiality is best,  
the wise man does not assume that boasting by him is good,  
So that the portrait of the beloved appears from the invisible world,  
like a mirror, the page of the pure heart is best.

(az pār-i khirad hamīsha insāf khush ast  
‘āqil na-barad gemān ki-az vāf ṭāf khush ast  
tā jīwā kunad šūrāt-i matālab zī ghayb  
ā’ma sifrat safāha-yi dil ūf khush āst)

The second couplet expands upon the first where aspects of the old man’s virtue are proclaimed. In the second couplet, the image of the pure heart speaks for the man’s perfected pietry as a surface that can reflect the invisible. The invisible and the visible and the mirror are recurring themes in Dust Muhammad’s preface.

Before bringing the reader into the latter half of the fifteenth century, and ultimately into the “modern” period, Dust Muhammad names Ulugh Beg as the next patron of significance. He defeated ‘Ala’ al-Dawla Mirza and returned to Samarqand with the entire

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28 ki shabī dar sūḥbat-i ṭāfīsh bā-ṭarīq-i nuddāmā mīzāhī āghāz kārd.
29 ‘That ‘Ala’ al-Dawla continued to support projects begun in his father’s kitābkhana is corroborated by an extant Koran’s colophon in which the calligrapher, Muhammad b. Husam (a.k.a. Shams al-Baysunghuri), notes that he started to copy the text during the reign of Baysunghur and completed it under ‘Ala’ al-Dawla (Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, no. K. 294, fols. 279a–80a).
staff of the Herat library. Despite the capricious fortune brought about by political change, artistic patronage and production continued.

The long section of text relating the event from Baysunghur’s court—it occupies two full pages, a lengthy diversion considering that the entire preface is only nineteen—was surely intended to provide Bahram Mirza with an example from the past. In the early Timurid court princes rubbed shoulders with artists, some of whom attained the status of boon companion. In the case of Amir Khalil, Baysunghur was lenient, and his choice defied the strict protocol of what was considered suitable and just conduct, a behavior patrolled by such figures as his mother Gawhar Shad. By his action, Baysunghur demonstrated his compassion and becomes an ideal model.

The story is a powerful example of the artist’s potential status at court, and one cannot help but detect Dust Muhammad’s admonitory tone. The story serves the dual function of illustrating the enlightened patron and the place of artists at the patron’s court, offering a mirror for the Safavid Prince Bahram Mirza. In this respect, the preface story highlights the didactic role of the entire album through its collection of works made by practitioners of high moral fiber. The “historical” calligraphies and paintings made the distant past a reality for the Safavid audience.

Another kind of prescriptive historical symmetry can be drawn between Baysunghur and Bahram Mirza through the social practice of courtly gatherings. It is in this category that Dust Muhammad may have been more explicitly admonitory. The Safavid sources rarely mention courtly pastimes, and those hosted by Bahram Mirza hardly at all. The Venetian envoy Membré, however, not only alludes to numerous evenings spent with Bahram Mirza feasting and talking, occasions when he was invited to suhbat (company, conversation, also feast, festivity, party), but he recalls one such meeting in detail. Evening gatherings of talking, eating, and drinking were accompanied by music played on a variety of instruments and by the singing of a handsome young male. Listed at one gathering were ten men of Bahram Mirza’s age or younger. In a second detailed recollection, Membré describes the seating arrangement and the excessive drinking that took place until after midnight. Some men stayed outside in a drunken slumber, and others retreated to the house

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30 Dust Muhammad’s remarks have given rise to all kinds of searches through manuscripts to find a Samarqand school, a pursuit made difficult by the almost complete absence of dated manuscripts, and indications in colophons that manuscripts were copied in Samarqand. A summary of the problem is presented by Robinson, *Fifteenth-Century Persian Painting*, chap. 3.

31 By the mid sixteenth century Baysunghur had been completely mythologized as a patron and arbiter of culture. The official and unofficial sources, which worked together to create this image of Baysunghur, are discussed by Thomas W. Lentz, “Painting at Herat under Baysunghur ibn Shah Rukh,” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1985, chap. 1. When Dust Muhammad composed the preface he had a variety of these stories at his disposal; Mirkhvand’s history, *Rauzat al-safâʾ*, contains numerous examples. One is the famous story of the calligrapher Mawlana Ma’ruf who was supplied paper by Baysunghur but failed to complete the task of copying only to return the blank sheets a year later. Mawlana Ma’ruf was later implicated in Ahmad Lur’s attempt to assassinate Shahrukh and ultimately imprisoned after several aborted trips to the gallows (Mirkhvand, *Rauzat al-safâʾ*, 6:692). The same story is told by Khvāndamīr, *Habib al-siyar*, 3:615–17. This story could have been used by Dust Muhammad to illustrate one of the low points in the relationship between practitioner and patron, but such a theme would hardly have served his purposes or the preface’s focus on praise and laudable actions.


33 Ibid., p. 39.
of Naranji Sultan. Bahram Mirza’s support of literati and artists was sufficient and needed no encouragement from Dust Muhammad—Bahram Mirza was a patron de facto and the implicit comparison to Baysunghur massaged Bahram’s ego. However, his conduct may have shown room for improvement.

Dust Muhammad also embeds a notion of bookmaking procedures during the Timurid period into his story. Baysunghur orders artists under his charge to create a new book following the model of Sultan Ahmad’s anthology (jang) in size, format, and choice of subjects for illustration. Here Dust Muhammad observes the close aesthetic and formal connections between discrete objects and the creative principle of referencing models from the tradition of the arts of the book. Another aspect to the process involved the continuation of incomplete books, Baysunghur’s anthology being the example offered in Dust Muhammad’s preface. In fact, the idea is consistent with the physical evidence of several books that were completed under a series of patrons and artists. Moreover, the visual continuity between Jalayirid and Timurid manuscripts stressed in modern literature on Persianate painting is confirmed by Dust Muhammad’s story about the anthology made for Baysunghur after Sultan Ahmad’s model.

In summary, the Baysunghur and Amir Khalil story provides several examples of symmetry between past and present, between courtly patronage and practices, the prince’s just behavior, and the artist’s status, while all the time arguing for continuity, that these cultural standards be upheld and furthered. The anecdote is a form of temporal ricorso, or recurring patterns in courtly practice, which uses history for the purpose of exemplarity.

THE CHEST OF WITNESSING

Dust Muhammad begins a subsection of the preface, called “Introduction to Depictors and Limners of the Past,” with the invention of depiction, and in so doing establishes the connection between the decoration of Korans (zinat-i maṣḥif) and design and drawing. Stating that ‘Ali b. Abi Talib was the first person to embellish Korans with design and illumination (ba-naqsh va taṣbih-i zinat), Dust Muhammad assimilates a line-based process (tarḥ

34 Ibid.
35 References to the artists’ status at the Safavid court, and of Shah Tahmasp’s treatment of them in particular, are provided in chap. 2.
36 See for example, Tannd, “Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts,” pp. 147–68.
37 Emphasis should be given here to cyclicity as recurring patterns in historical time and not of history itself; history had its beginnings in Creation and will end on the Day of Judgment. The point is made by Meisami, Persian Historiography, p. 11. On the exemplarity of history—which Meisami has defined as an “analogical method” which “treats events in the past as paradigmatic instances of recurrent situations which throw light on the present”—see Julie Scott Meisami, “The Past in the Service of the Present: Two Views of History in Medieval Persia,” Poetics Today 14, 2 (Summer 1993): 247–75; 270. For exemplarity in later periods, see John D. Lyons, Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); and Hampton, Writing from History, esp. chap. 1. Hampton observes, “For Renaissance humanism, idealism is structured historically, present action and the formation of the self take shape through constant glances to the past” (ibid., p. 10). The very same process occurs in the Perso-Islamicate context.
38 muqadima-yi naqṣāš-i va muẓāhibān-i māzī.
39 Dust Muhammad’s use of the term naqṣ to describe ‘Ali b. Abi Talib’s process is ambiguous. Naqṣ can mean “painting,” but this makes no sense in the context of a Koran. He probably meant “design.”
va raqam) to writing, the cause of the relationship being the instrument itself, the pen, the best thing that God had made. By doing so he gives sanction to other masters of the “noble craft” (fann-i sharif). According to Dust Muhammad, some pages decorated by Ṭāliḥ b. Albā kh started to his day and the term given to Ťāliḥ’s decorative elements was islāmī. The sequence of the preface’s separate sections underscores the conceptual and processual connections between calligraphy and drawing (the armature of painting), and it maintains the hierarchical relationship between calligraphy and depiction, with calligraphy remaining the most prestigious of the visual arts.

Immediately after the reference to the embellishment of Korans, Dust Muhammad relates a long story about the Chest of Witnessing, a chest containing portraits of the prophets who came after Adam; both the container and its contents were made by God. Dust Muhammad ultimately connects the chest of portraits to the invention of portraiture by the prophet Daniel through the chest’s sequence of ownership. He introduces the story by citing his source as the “writings of the great.” The source is, in fact, the Timurid historian Muhammad b. Khvandshah b. Mahmud (known as Mirkhvand), specifically his Rawżat al-ṣafā’ (Garden of Purity), completed before 1498. Mirkhvand identifies his source as a

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40 The term “design” (tark) also has the sense of a foundation, of a compositional component, and delineation (raqam) or the act of inscribing. Both processual aspects have obvious kinships to writing.


42 Other sources are more hesitant in ascribing prophethood to Daniel. Sometimes he is regarded as a prophet (although he is not mentioned in the Koran) or as an inspired man. See EI2, s.v. “Dāniyāl” (G. Vajda). In al-Kisâ’s Qisas al-anbiyâ, three Daniels are mentioned: Daniel, known as Og, son of Anak and Cain; Daniel the Wise, a contemporary of Nebuchadnezzar; and a prophet named Daniel who lived after the death of Solomon. See Wheeler M. Thackston, trans., The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisâ (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), pp. 251 and 320.

43 The full title of Mirkhvand’s history is Rawżat al-ṣafâ’ fi ṣurât al-anbiyâ’ wa al-nawlîk wa al-khulafâ’; he did not complete it by the time of his death on 2 Zu‘l-Qa’dâ 903 (22 June 1498). The seventh volume, a summary of Mirkhvand’s life and his history, see EI2, s.v. “Mirkhwánd” (A. Beveridge [Beatrice Forbes Manz]). Mirkhvand’s text is longer and describes the chest as being large, made of wood, and gilded (sandiqu hazury az châb va muzahhab). He lists a sequence of prophet portraits (Adam, Nuh, Ibrahim, Muhammad, Musa, Ishaq, Ya’qub, Isma’il, Da’ud, Sulayman, and ‘Isa) that had been painted on black and white silks, and he also describes their colors and features, and concludes by explaining a sequence of ownership that Dust Muhammad follows exactly. For text, see Mirkhvand, Rawżat al-ṣafâ’, 2:55–59.

An earlier related version of the story is found in al-Akhbâr al-tiwâl by Dinawari (d. 965). The story is related by ’Abd Allah b. al-Samit who was ordered by Abu Bakr al-Siddîq to visit Constantinople during the reign of Decinus. During an audience the emperor produced a receptacle (khatâ’ib) that contained many compartments (buyût kathîra), each one with a small door (bâb sâghîr). The emperor withdrew a dark-colored cloth/ scrap of paper (khâira sawâlî) from each compartment; portraits of the prophets were depicted on each piece (Adam, Nuh, Muhammad, Ibrahim, Musa, Da’ud, Sulayman, ‘Isa). Alexander had owned the receptacle, and it was passed on to other kings until the Byzantine emperor acquired it (Abî Ḥanîfa b. Dâ’îd al-Dinawarî, al-Akhbâr al-tiwâl, ed. ‘Umar Fârûq al-Ṭabîbî [Beirut: Sharîkat Dâr al-Arqâm, 1995], pp. 22–23). I would like to thank Nasser Rabbat for informing me about this source.

Still another related version of the story appears in ‘Arâ’î al-majlîsî fi qisas al-anbiyâ’ of Thâlabî (d. 1036). For an edition, see Ahmad b. Muhammad Thâlabî, Kithâb Qisas al-anbiyâ’ al-musammâ bi-l-‘arâ’î (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-‘Alâmîyya, 1929), pp. 177–79. For an analysis of Thâlabî’s book, see T. Nagel, Die Qisas al-anbiyâ’: Ein Beitrag zur arabischen Literaturgeschichte (Bonn, 1967), pp. 80–102. In Thâlabî’s book, God sends down a box (tâhîf) from heaven to Adam. It contained portraits of the prophets among Adam’s offspring (sawar al-anbiyâ’ min awwalîhî). The box contained a number of compartments equal to the messengers among them (wa fîhi buyût bi-zâdîd al-rusul minhum) and the last compartment contained a portrait of Muhammad. The children of Adam inherited the
tradition of Hisham b. Abi ‘Ass, who reported that he and one of the Quraysh had been sent to Byzantium at the request of Siddiq (i.e., the first caliph Abu Bakr), to meet with the Roman emperor Herakleios (575–641; r. 610–41) on a mission to spread Islam.

Dust Muhammad prefaches the story, “Although the masters of depiction are ashamed before the manifest of Muslim law, nevertheless what is learned from the books of the great is that the beginnings of this craft can be traced back to his lordship the prophet Daniel,” and then proceeds to set it up in the same way as Mirkhvand. After Muhammad’s death, some of his companions travel to Byzantium where they are granted an audience with the emperor Herakleios. During their meeting, the emperor brings a chest before the assembled company from which he withdraws a portrait (ṣūrat) of Adam. Herakleios then continues showing them portrait after portrait until the last one, depicting the Prophet Muhammad, moves the companions to tears, so close is it to the prophet’s likeness. Seeking an explanation from the emperor about how this collection of portraits had come to exist, Herakleios explained that Adam asked God to show him the prophets among his progeny. God’s response was to create the Chest of Witnessing—so-called because it came in evidence—containing several thousand compartments, each one of them holding a prophet’s portrait. Dust Muhammad concludes by explaining its sequence of ownership; Alexander (Zu’l-Qarnayn) took the chest from Adam’s treasury in the land of the west, and then it

box until Ishaq. Then it passed to Kedar (written Qayzār), son of Ishaq who was told that only prophets could open the box. Kedar carried it to Canaan where he met with Yaqūb. He gave the box to Yaqūb and ultimately it passed to Moses who put the Torah in it. Thālabi sketches out other owners and uses of the box until the time when angels carried it away to a place between heaven (al-samā’ī) and earth (al-‘ard).


The location of the chest is associated with the legend of Alexander’s journey to the place where the sun sets (or the place of darkness); Alexander also made a journey to the place where the sun rises. The two
passed to Daniel who made copies of the portraits with his miraculous brush/pen. Daniel’s copies were those owned by the Byzantine emperor.

One aspect of the story is conversion, a theme of the role or value of images that is picked up again in Dust Muhammad’s relation of the story about the false prophet Mani’s painted silk, the Artangi Tablet. In Byzantium, the emperor Herakleios participates in an exercise that proves the validity of Islam, for the sequence of portraits ends with Muhammad, the seal of the prophets. The painted portraits on silk, made by God at the beginning of creation, constituted a visual genealogy of prophethood, tracing its lineage from the first man to Muhammad. The sequence of images made by God showed His preordainment of Islam’s succession to the Jewish and Christian religions. The Prophet Muhammad’s companions act as witnesses, their responses to the painted image confirming its accurate depiction of Muhammad, and hence, his prophetic office and the mission of Islam.

More problematic from the standpoint of hermeneutics is the potential significance of the Chest of Witnessing as a relic and whether such a reading would have occurred to a Safavid audience—after all, Dust Muhammad identifies the chest by the term reserved in Mirkhvand for the Ark of the Covenant, also a container of revealed truth. It is not insignificant that (in Dust Muhammad’s telling of the story) the chest begins in limbo, recovered by Alexander from Adam’s treasury in the extreme western reaches of his travels. Alexander is also renowned for his quest for the Holy Grail and for being a destroyer of idols who helped to restore monotheism. His various missions are outlined in Nizami’s Khamsa, one of two poems treating the deeds of Alexander by the poet in the Khamsa. In Dust Muhammad’s preface, Daniel then acquires the chest from Alexander and he makes copies of the portraits on silk. As a relic made by God and owned by prophets and kings, the chest somehow ends up in Byzantine Constantinople, where it is preserved. Its full sig-

journeys are usually mentioned in histories which include accounts of Alexander’s life and journeys. The ur-source is the Koran which mentions the journey of Alexander (Zu’l-Qarnayn) to the rising and setting places of the sun (Koran 18:83–101). Such stories were elaborated in the Qisas al-anbiyâ’. The rationale for Alexander’s journeys to the far east and west is explained in some sources as having the objective of destroying pagan temples (see Milstein, Rührdanz, and Schmitz, Stories of the Prophets, p. 148). The Alexander in Nizami’s Khamsa, for example, is a destroyer of Zoroastrian fire temples (see Johann Christoph Bürgel, “Conquérant, Philosophe, et Prophète: L’image d’Alexandre le Grand dans l’épopée de Nezâmi,” in Pand-o Sökhan, ed. Christophe Balay, Claire Kappler, and Ziva Vesel [Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1995], pp. 65–78, 68).

The chronological sequence of Adam, Alexander, and Daniel depends on the identification of Alexander. Given that many Muslim commentators considered Alexander (Zu’l-Qarnayn) to be a contemporary of Abraham, it is entirely plausible (see Tabarî, The History of al-Tabarî, vol. 2, Prophets and Patriarchs, trans. William M. Brinner [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987], p. 23, n. 74). But such internal contradictions may have been of no concern to Dust Muhammad.


nificance is not understood until the arrival of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. Unexplained in the preface is the fate of the original chest and its portraits, presumably in occultation, as that copy faithfully made by Daniel but lost to Islam performs a crucial role in Christian Constantinople. Without this primal, God-sanctioned collection of images, knowledge of the truth and of the validity of image making was lost to Islam. 54

Dust Muhammad concludes the Chest of Witnessing story by stating that portraiture had continued since that time: “Unquestionably depiction is not without noble lineage, 55 and because of this the painter’s mind need not be scratched by the thorn of despair.” 56 His concluding statement alludes to the long-standing interdiction in Muslim religious tradition against the making of images, specifically against their use as idols. 57 The strategic use of the Chest of Witnessing story, nuanced by Dust Muhammad to lend it a charge slightly different from Mirkhvand’s version, reveals his concern for making figural depiction licit by tracing the genre’s prophetic origins to Daniel. 58 The origin of the Safavid tradition lay in the visual shift of Ahmad Musa.

MANI’S ARTANGI TABLET

After the conclusion of the Chest of Witnessing story, Dust Muhammad turns to Mani, founder of Manichaeism, false prophet and painter of extraordinary skill. Numerous stories about Mani were in circulation, the principal sources being Nizami’s Khamsa and Sa’di’s

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54 The stories included in Dust Muhammad’s preface and many of the wider concepts related to image and aesthetics have exciting parallels to discourses developed in Christianity, both in Byzantium and the medieval West. Exploring these cross-cultural/inter-cultural connections extends well beyond the limit of this book, but one study that would serve as a beginning is Sydney H. Griffith, “Theodore Abü Qurrah’s Arabic Tract on the Christian Practice of Venerating Images,” Journal of the American Oriental Society 105, 1 (January–March 1985): 53–73. Yet another avenue of inquiry would be to examine the continuity (and transformation) of late antique stories about images and artists in the early Islamic period, picking up where Franz Rosenthal’s pioneering research left off. See Franz Rosenthal, “On Art and Aesthetics in Graeco-Arabic Wisdom Literature,” in Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), pp. 1–19. Of equal interest would be an examination of continuities within the Islamic tradition itself, among the early works of Arabic literature and through the rise of Persian literature. One well-known story involves a contest between two painters, al-Qasir and Ibn ‘Aziz, described by Maqrizi. Several of these stories are mentioned in Arnold, Painting in Islam, chap. 1, but they have not yet been gathered in one place.

55 The term āßl can mean nobility, lineage, an exemplar, and an original copy. In this passage Dust Muhammad refers to Daniel as the originator of portraiture; in this context the word’s numerous meanings are all significant and appropriate.

56 pas tasvir niz b asli na-başhād va khātir-i musawir rā bu-khār-i nasa’īdī na-khārāshad.

57 The literature on the topic is extensive. For recent scholarship on the early traditions about the manifold aspects of images and a theoretized essay on Islam’s non-use of images (aniconism), see Daan van Reenen, “The Bilderverbot, a New Survey,” Der Islam 67, 1 (1990): 27–77; and Terry Allen, Five Essays on Islamic Art (Manchester, Mich.: Solipsist Press, 1988), chap. 2.

58 In Mirkhvand the story is used to show the predestination of Islam through the sequence of portraits—the presence of Muhammad’s portrait offers visual proof of his coming as God’s last messenger (rasūl) and of the final revelation. The same thread runs through Dust Muhammad’s work, but he emphasizes the prophetic origins of painting, a point not taken up by Mirkhvand. Rather, Mirkhvand concludes his story of the “prophet portraits” (swar-i anbiyā’) by relating a tradition attributed to Ka‘b al-Ahbar (d. ca. 652). On his deathbed, Abraham ordered either the ark of the covenant (ṣāhiṭ-i sakīna) or a chest (sandīq) brought before him and all of his children. They looked into the container and saw these compartments equal to the number of prophets (Mirkhvand, Rawżat al-safa’, 5:58).
Gulistān (Rose Garden, 1258). These stories focus on Mani’s consummate painting performances to illustrate his skill. In his Shāhnāma, Firdawsi gives a different version from Dust Muhammad, suggesting that Mani used a system of representation to trick his audience by its replication of visibilia. Dust Muhammad, drawing again on Mirkhvand’s Rawżat al-safā’, gives his own reading to one common story—Mani’s Artangi Tablet (lauch-i artangi).

Dust Muhammad begins by explaining that Mani used his paintings to facilitate his mission. When potential converts sought a miracle from Mani, the false prophet obliged by entering a cave with a span of silk where he remained for one year to paint the Artangi Tablet. When he emerged from the cave, he showed the people the silk on which he had painted humans, animals, trees, birds, and other forms (insula va hayvānāt va ashjār va ṭuyūr va amāl-i ashkāl). Dust Muhammad concludes:

Those short-sighted ones, the mirror of whose hearts could not manifest the light of Islam out of extreme mulishness were deceived by the figures on his plaything, and exhibited his painted silk, which was known as the Artangi Tablet, as their model of unbelief and perverseness, and strangest of all they held that that silk was equal to the Picture Gallery of China, which is famous, for it unites images of all of Creation’s forms.

Dust Muhammad’s refutation of the silk’s comprehensiveness stems, perhaps, from the passage in Mirkhvand’s account in which Mani claimed to have ascended to heaven for one year after being in the cave, and that after his “occultation” he reemerged and asserted that his silk was proof of his prophesy. After all, Muhammad had made a journey to the seven heavens in his mi’rāj, the subject of the paintings by Ahmad Musa which figure so prominently in the album.

The story about Mani reappears in Firdawsi’s Shāhnāma, where Mani introduces himself as the prophet through painting (ba-ṣūratgirī guft payghambaram); in Firdawsi’s text he is said to be a painter (muṣawvir) from China. The story recounts Mani’s attempt to convert King Shapur to his faith; he confuses Shapur to such a degree that the chief priest (mübad) is called in to interrogate him. The interrogation takes place around a painting that Mani considers proof (burhān) of his doctrines. After much discussion, the chief priest responds: “Even if you could make this picture move, is it proper to take the movement as proof?”

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59 Dust Muhammad refers to both texts in the album preface. He refers readers who would like to learn more about the painters Mani and Shapur to these versified sources.

60 Kutak nazavānī ka mir’āl-dī dil-i bāgh-ī-i ighān az ghayat-i kudīrat mahzhar-i nūr-i ʿislām na-mī-tavān ast hūd ba-

swar-i bāzīqa-yī yī firīfta shudand va hār-i muṣawarash rā kī ba-laugh-i artangi muwāsām ast sar mashq-i kūfr va ‘inād

namūndand va dū hārī rā az kamūl-i gharāʾīk dar barābar-i nīyārkhāna-yī chīn kī masīhīr ast kī jāmī’-ī jamī’-ī swar-i masjūddāt

ast nasal mi-dīshītand.

61 Mirkhvand, Rawżat al-safā’, 1:743–44. In Mirkhvand, Mani claims that he brought the tablet from heaven so that his miracle and manner of religion would be accepted.

62 Of interest here is the central role played by images in the practice and teaching of Mani’s religion and continued awareness of it through the passage of time. On the didactic function of images in Manichaeism, see Geo Widengren, Mani and Manichaeism, trans. Charles Kessler (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961), pp. 107–11. The Kēphalaia, transmitted in Coptic and in Greek translation, claims to record Mani’s doctrines (ibid., p. 82). One passage referring to images reads: “For the Apostles all, my Brothers, who before me came/ [Did not write down] their wisdom, as I wrote mine/ [Nor did] they paint their wisdom in pictures/ As [I did paint] mine” (ibid., p. 108).

In the end, Mani is judged to be an idolator (ṣūrat-parast); his skin is flayed, his body stuffed with straw and hung from the city’s gateway as a warning.64

Dust Muhammad regards Mani’s claim as both unacceptable and dishonest. First, the claim that Mani did his work in a cave would be bound to cause some consternation. The Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation from Gabriel in a cave at Mount Hira’, outside Mecca, where he went to perform taḥannuth,65 and during Muhammad’s flight from Mecca to Medina in 622, he and Abu Bakr sought refuge from their adversaries in a cave. Caves figure in other Islamic traditions as well for allegorical purposes, including Koranic chapter 18, “The Cave” (al-Kahf), which concerns the “Companions of the Cave” (aṣḥāb al-kahf).66 Nizami uses a cave in the Haft Paykar (Seven Portraits) to deal with events in King Bahram Gur’s life. In some traditions Daniel is said to have acquired his ability to prognosticate in the Treasure Cave.68 Abraham’s mother is believed to have hidden her infant in a cave to preserve him from Nimrod.69 For some, the cave symbolizes a place of proximity to God, of initiation.70

The various elements of Dust Muhammad’s story are also linked together: the false association of the cave with Mani is contrasted with its true association with Muhammad, which leads us to the eponymous Koranic chapter of which a segment deals with the “Companions of the Cave.” That same Koranic chapter, perhaps the most allegorical in the entire book of Muslim revelation, contains the longest passage on Alexander (Zu’l-Qarnayn). Because of its association with Alexander, the sura produces another form of self-referencing in the preface by invoking the Chest of Witnessing story, the link being Alexander and his travels to the rising and setting places of the sun.

A second unacceptable aspect is the use of the word lāwch to refer to the image made by Mani. The same word is used to refer to the preserved tablet (lāwch al-mahfūz), the slate inscribed with words that record the events of Creation in their entirety from the beginning until the last day. This leads to Dust Muhammad’s perplexity when confronted by the contention that Mani’s Artangi Tablet equaled the Picture Gallery of China in its comprehensiveness.71 How could Mani’s tablet begin to rival the all-encompassing tablet created

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64 Firdawsī, Shāhnāma, 4:1798, line 616.
68 The source is al-Biruni, al-Āhīr al-bāḥiya ‘an al-qurīn al-khaliya. For reference, see EI2, s.v. “Dāniyāl” (G. Vajda).
69 Raghibīzī, The Stories of the Prophets, p. 94. In al-Kisa’i, it is referred to as the “Cave of Light” and said to have been the birthplace of Idris and Noah. See al-Kisā’i, Tales of the Prophets, p. 137.
70 Meisami notes these symbolic dimensions for the futuwa (Nizāmī, Haft Paykar, p. xxxiiii).
71 The metaphor of the picture gallery of China (nīghākhāna-yi chīn/nīghāristān-i chīn) is used frequently in
by God when it could not even match a man-made, terrestrial collection of images? Indeed, the final passage of the sura al-Kahf—conjured up by the symbolism of the cave—emphasizes the impossibility of matching and comprehending God’s miracle of creation by using the imagery of writing:

Say: “If the ocean turned to ink for writing down the colloquy of my Lord, the ocean itself would be exhausted ere the words (and wonders) of my Lord come to an end, even if we brought another like it for replenishment.”

The third problematic aspect of the Mani story has to do with the use of the image and the specific visual mode employed by its painter. Dust Muhammad’s criticism was not only directed at Mani’s duplicitious representational mode but also at the immorality of his audience which was unprepared to understand his depiction for what it really was—optical-naturalism. By implying the Sufistic image of the heart polished through piety by invoking the opposite (“Those short-sighted ones, the mirror of whose hearts could not manifest the light of Islam out of extreme mulishness”), Dust Muhammad refers to modes of depiction and the claims made for images.

Despite his criticisms of Mani, there is room for some praise too. After mentioning Mani’s Artangi Tablet and a note to the effect that the false prophet went on to China, Dust Muhammad names another gifted painter, Shapur who appears in Nizami’s Khusraw va Shirin. Describing Mani and Shapur as peerless, no doubt referring to their technical skill, Dust Muhammad suggests that readers who want to learn more about the artists consult the Khamsas, almost certainly a reference to the volumes by Nizami and Amir Khusraw Dihlavi. Thus, although in his preface he does not mention other stories, to reduce its length and maintain the preface’s forward movement, he brings into play a wider pool of stories from the Persian literary tradition by his reference to the Khamsas.

One of the best known stories in Nizami’s Khamsa is in the Iskandar-nama (comprising two books dedicated to Alexander—the Sharaf-nama and Iqbal-nama) which concerns Mani’s mission

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72 One line of investigation would be to determine if the nigärkhāna-yi čhin is a reference to an actual place. The cave paintings at Dunhuang, numbering 492, would be the obvious choice; there are an unparalleled number of images, and it was well known through its location on a branch of the silk route.

73 Koran, 18:109.

74 A detailed explanation of the Sufi concept of the polished heart, specifically through Ibn ‘Arabi’s writings, is provided by Sells, Mystical Languages of Unsaying, chap. 3. Sells writes: “It is at the moment of mystical union, symbolized by the polished mirror, that . . . His/his image is constituted. The constitution of this image occurs within the heart of the ‘complete human’ (al-insān al-kāmil).” For this to occur, the ego-self must pass away (fanā). By this process, “divine names were actualized as ‘in-stantiations’ through the world that serves as a mirror for them, and through the human being who serves as a polishing of that mirror. . . . The real creates the world as its mirror and thus reveals to itself through the polished mirror its mystery” (ibid., pp. 66–73).

75 For further details about Shapur and his paintings, see Soucek, “Nizāmī on Painters and Painting,” pp. 11 and 15–18.
to China, alluded to by Dust Muhammad when he tails off with the Artangi Tablet story. On his way to China, where he hopes to gain new converts to his faith, Mani came to a pool. The Chinese, apprised of Mani’s proselytizing mission, had manufactured the pool in advance of his coming; it was made of crystal and painted with ripples on its surface and flowers along its edges. Impatiently, Mani ran toward the pool and threw his pitcher into the water: the pitcher shattered on impact, shards skimming across the pool’s obdurate surface (likened to stone, sang). A rare illustration to this story depicts Mani holding his “pen” as he contemplates the product of his labor, the depiction of the worm-infested corpse of a dog on the crystalline surface (fig. 8). Mani’s pictorial rejoinder to the Chinese trick was designed to negate its effect, preserving other travelers from a similar fate. Just as Mani duped his audience through his consummate painted performance on the Artangi Tablet, by its depiction of visibilia, the Chinese duped Mani by exploiting crystal’s inherent optical properties. Mani was fooled at his own game, the reflection of things seen in the world—and imitable—on a two-dimensional surface. Mani’s action was to paint a dog on this surface, responding to a trick on its own terms, offering a visual illusion of reflection to an optical illusion.

A second story from the Khamsas, Alexander’s judgment between the Greek and Chinese painters, offers yet another interweaving of the Chest of Witnessing and Artangi Tablet stories in Dust Muhammad’s preface. The sequence of stories in the preface allows him to oppose two art traditions and modes of representation: the first is given prophetic sanction through Daniel and is “licit”; the second is by the false prophet Mani and “illicit.” Such a paragone between modes of representation was not unfamiliar to a Persianate audience.

The fifth section of Nizami’s Khamsa, the Iskandar-nāma, contains the story of Alexander’s judgment. The story involves a contest to settle a dispute between Alexander and the Emperor of China over the relative excellence of the Greek (rāmī) and Chinese (chīnī) visual traditions. Teams of painters set to work on the opposite ends of a room after it had been divided in two by a curtain suspended across its middle (fig. 9). When they had finished, the curtain dividing the room was removed and Alexander was confronted by two identical wall paintings, described by Nizami as “two Artangis” (du artang). After some moments of confusion, Alexander ordered the curtain to be replaced. While the Greek painting remained, the Chinese one vanished only to be replaced by a reflection of the curtain (chu āmad hijābī miyān-i du kākh/ yākī tang-dil shud yākī nāfarākh/ raqamhā-yi rāmī na-shud zī āb va rang/ bar ā’na-yi chīnī ufūd zang). The Chinese artists had polished their wall to make a perfect reflective surface. Alexander’s technique for determining this was empirical. According to Nizami, Alexander judged the Chinese superior in polishing (miṣqal) and the Greeks in painting (ṣūratgarā), and concluded “both are an aid to vision” (ki hast az bāsar har du rā yāvarī).

As Soucek has noted, Ghazali and Rumi also refer to this story but judge it differently. 

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77 The term “illicit” is added to Bürgel’s notion of the “licit” in art. See Bürgel, The Feather of Simurgh, esp. chaps. 3–5, where he speaks of the arts of poetry, music, and painting as “licit” arts.
78 For the relevant passage, see Nizāmī, Iskandar-nāma, pp. 252–54.
79 An exceedingly clever phrasing that refers to one painting as illusory (optically naturalist) as in Mani’s Artangi Tablet and the reflection as an illusion of an illusion (and hence also like the Artangi Tablet).
They give precedence to the painters who polished the wall, interpreting their action as a metaphor for the Sufi whose piety polishes the heart so as to reflect God; the subtext is to compare the Sufi to members of the ulema, thereby contrasting the superiority of mystical experience over acquired knowledge. What the Alexander and Mani stories from the Khamsa share is the theme of visual trickery, a distinction between modes of representation that is also implied in the contrast between the Chest of Witnessing and the Artangi Tablet.

**IMAGE, REVELATION, CREATIVITY**

The preceding metaphors and allusions in Dust Muhammad’s preface are amphibologous and seem to counter attempts to derive and then fix a single meaning in the richly textured preface and album. The stories have a potentially wide range of meanings and their themes intersect. Such a range of equally viable interpretative “answers” was common in poetic practice of the day—for example, the trademark of the tuyûgh, a type of quatrain, was a multiple pun formed in the end-rhyme by homonymic words. Also belonging to this genre were poems that could be read simultaneously in several different meters and poems that contained chronograms. The riddle (му’аммад) preoccupied poets of the sixteenth century. Producing and recovering meanings from texts—and not only poetic forms—was an intricate process of mental gymnastics and required extensive glossing.

Dust Muhammad refers to other works of literature in his preface: the Khamsas, where stories about famous artists (Shapur, Mani) could be found in addition to tales of encounters with images (Alexander, Bahram Gur). And there are still more metatextual allusions at work in the preface, for example, the Koran and the Qiṣṣa al-anbiyāʾ. Events in the lives of pre-Islamic historical figures like Adam, Alexander, Daniel, and the Prophet Muhammad’s contemporary Heraclios, furthermore, were available in the classical Arab histories and their Persian translations and continuations. Themes (e.g., revelation, prognostication), places (e.g., caves), and concepts (e.g., licit and illicit image and depictive mode,

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82 Ibid. For the contrast between the two forms of knowledge—intellectual knowledge (‘ilm) and the “continually transformative knowing” of the heart (qalb)—and the need for both, see Sells, Mystical Languages of Unsaying, chap. 4, esp. pp. 91–92.

83 See Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” p. 74. Other complex poetic forms that demanded similar interpretation were the enigma (lughz), chronogram (ta’rīkh), and, of course, the riddle (му’аммад).

84 In some literary forms, for example, didactic poetic texts, the glossing was already added. For example, Rumi often comments on his didactic anecdotes to ensure or direct the correct interpretation. It is also the case in Sā’dī’s Gulistān and Bistān where the point of many of the morals at the end of the anecdotes is the same (personal communication William Hanaway).

85 In the Haft Paykar (of Nizami’s Khamsa), Bahram Gur enters a treasury where a magician has painted portraits of seven princesses with a likeness of Bahram Gur painted below. An inscription on the wall added that Bahram Gur would become king and then wed the princesses, “so much was ordained by the stars.” Nizami’s tale may have been inspired by stories like the Chest of Witnessing, for it too carried associations of images with prognostication and granted them a proleptic power.

86 The Chest of Witnessing story does not appear in the Qiṣṣa al-anbiyāʾ, and thus far is known only through Tha’labi’s work. The Qiṣṣa al-anbiyāʾ composed by al-Kisā’i refers to Adam’s book in several places and says that it was preserved in the first man’s sarcophagus (tābūt). Abrahah opened the sarcophagus and also found the books of Seth and Enoch and the names of every prophet. See al-Kisā’i, Tales of the Prophets, trans. Thackston, pp. 76 and 294. Subsequent prophets own the sarcophagus, a kind of heirloom, and put it to different uses (for summary, see ibid., p. xxiv).
visual trickery) activated a wider set of associations for the preface reader by drawing their expanded field of knowledge into play. Islamic tradition accorded figures like Adam, Alexander, and Daniel the capacities of prognostication, of restoring monotheism, and of revelation.

The stories also functioned metaphorically in relation to the album, for it too was a collection of images, albeit contained in a binding. Parallels were drawn between the album and other kinds of collections—the Chest of Witnessing, the Picture Gallery of China, the Artangi Table—especially in their broad claim to comprehensiveness. But some parallels were deemed more fitting than others, especially to the Chest of Witnessing. Like the chest, the Bahram Mirza album contained painted portraits, including depictions of the Prophet Muhammad—in the numerous illustrations to the Miḥrājnāma by Ahmad Musa—members of the Safavid royal house and its court (courtiers, musicians, artists, poets, dervishes), as well as famous rulers (e.g., Sultan Husayn Mirza and Muhammad Shaybani Khan), and courtiers of the late fifteenth century. The genealogical dimension of the Chest of Witnessing—portraits of a line of prophets—was also figured in the album through a pedagogical and stylistic history of calligraphy and the arts of depiction. By implication, the album’s visual realm was also morally correct and true, unlike the visual falsehoods perpetrated by the skilled Mani. Dust Muhammad suggests a recuperation of Daniel’s image-making, a lost aesthetic manifest in the personhood of Ahmad Musa and preserved intact through the transmission of his style since the fourteenth century. The conceit that he manufactures suggests the culmination of the arts of depiction in the Safavid period, according it a place similar to that occupied by Muhammad in the prophetic lineage.

There are still other implications in Dust Muhammad’s section on depiction, best treated through a series of interconnected themes. But here linearity becomes most irksome, for the themes are so interwoven as to defy their arrangement in a single order. In this way, the meaning of the text is paralleled structurally by the arrangement of paintings and drawings throughout the album; the images are not ordered by any overriding criteria in a linear fashion but make connections across a divide of folios by such features as the repetition of subject. The first theme expands the notion of the image as revelatory and concerns the motif of the mirror as a locus of vision and of image production (the mirror is referred to in the preface and invoked by Dust Muhammad’s references to well-known stories), in addition to cultural understandings of creativity. The second theme takes a slightly different turn by its focus on unmade images brought into existence by God and made images brought into existence by man and examines the implications of a God-derived aesthetic and its significance for current definitions of Persianate aesthetics. The third and final theme re-


88 Another line of interpretation would be to study other stories which appear in primary sources about collections of images. One well-known reference appears in Mas’udi’s history, Kitāb al-tanbih, where he refers to a collection of portraits of kings of the Sasanian dynasty that he saw in ca. 915. A noble family of Istakhr owned the book. For reference, see Arnold, Painting in Islam, p. 82.

89 Another association regarding the leitmotif of genealogy is the genealogy of the Safavid house and its connection back to the family of the Prophet and to ‘Ali b. Abī Talib. The genealogy is referred to briefly in the preface.
turns to the concept of the preface as a locus for the justification of the arts of depiction and an argument about the triumph of Safavid art.

THE MIRROR MOTIF

Dust Muhammad does not directly cite Mirkhvand; he leaves his use of Mirkhvand’s history implicit in his reference to “the books of the great.” It is possible to understand his “books” as referring not only to the nearly contemporary Mirkhvand but also to the much earlier Arab traditionists, one of whom Mirkhvand names in the introductory section of his history. Related stories that connect the first man to methods or devices for seeing his offspring are found in Arab literature and, like Mirkhvand, they cite Arab traditionists as authorities. Moreover, Adam’s prophetic abilities are a recurring theme in Islamic literature.

Two interrelated stories along this line are mentioned by Qadi b. al-Zubayr (in Egypt, 1053–71) in his encyclopedic Kitâb al-hadâyâ  wa al-tuhaf (Book of Gifts and Rarities). The first relates to a set of gifts—the main subject of Qadi b. al-Zubayr’s work—among which was a fragment (gît’â) of a mirror. The text is attributed to al-Waqidi (d. 823) from the Futâh bilâd al-Sind (Conquests of Sind) and reads:

Learned people say that Allah—the Powerful and Glorious—sent it [the mirror] down to Adam when his offspring multiplied and spread over the earth. Adam would look into it to see whomever he wanted in his present condition, good or bad. ‘Abd-Allâh b. Sawwâr sent the fragment to Mu‘âwiyyah, with whom it remained as long as he lived. Then it came into the possession of the Umayyad kings and stayed in their treasury until the time of the Abbasids, who acquired it along with whatever [else] they had taken from [the Umayyad] wealth.

Qadi b. al-Zubayr follows this text by citing a story related to that of al-Waqidi but transmitted by ‘Umar b. Shabba al-Numayri (d. 877). ‘Umar b. Shabba said:

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90 amnîa anchî az kutub-i akâbhî mustafaîd mi-gardad.
92 Daniel’s association with the Chest of Witnessing story is important and to be expected given that in Muslim legend he is “a revealer of the future and eschatological mysteries” (see EI2, s.v. “Dâniyâl” [G. Vajda]). Associations of Daniel in an Islamic setting derive from the Jewish tradition, particularly the stories and visions of Daniel recorded in the Book of Daniel, the twelfth book in the Hagiographa of the Hebrew Bible. I have not yet been able to find any references to Daniel as a painter.
93 Qâdi b. al-Zubayr, Kitâb al-hadâyâ  wa al-tuhaf. For English trans. and commentary, see Qaddûmî, Book of Gifts and Rarities. For a discussion of author and aspects of his manuscript, see ibid., pp. 3–34.
96 Abu Zayd ‘Umar b. Shabba b. ‘Abida b. Rayta al-Numayri was born in 789 in Basra and died in 877 in Samarra. He was a historian and traditionist. For a list of his works, see Sezgin, Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums, 1:345–46.
‘Īsā b. Abd-Allāh told me: My uncle ‘Abd-Allāh b. Umar told me that ‘Alī—peace be upon him—said, “When Adam was brought down from Paradise, Allah raised him to the top of [Mount] Abū Qubays and [gradually] lifted the whole for him until he could see it. Then He said [to him], ‘All this belongs to you and your children.’ Adam said, ‘O Lord, how may I know what is in it?’ So He created the stars for him, and said ‘If you see such and such a star, it means so and so.’” My uncle, [‘Abd-Allāh b. Umar] said, “Thus Adam used to know such things by means of the stars. Then that became too difficult for him; accordingly he complained about al-Madā‘in to his Lord. So He sent him a mirror (mir‘āt) from heaven through which he could see whatever he wished on earth. When Adam died, a devil called Faqtash sought out the mirror, broke it, and built over it a city in the east, called Jābrūq (Jablaqa).”

The story did not end there. Solomon, son of David, ordered the devil Faqtash to retrieve the fragments of the mirror that he had broken. Solomon reassembled it “piece by piece and strengthened it on all sides with a leather band (ṣawr). Then he looked into it and saw whatever he wanted.” After Solomon died, more devils stole it away. The Israelites inherited a fragment that was left behind, it ultimately reached the exilarch of the Jews, and then was given to the Umayyad caliph Marwan b. Muhammad b. Marwan (r. 744–50). He threw it away, and it was taken by a slave girl. When the Abbasid Abu Ja‘far al-Mansur (r. 754–75) became caliph, the mirror was sought out and found and kept in the caliph’s treasury for a long time before it was lost.

The traditions transmitted by al-Waqidi and ‘Umar b. Shabba al-Numayri are related to that of Hisham b. Abī al-Ass, the latter cited by Mirkhvand. Although it is not possible to demonstrate conclusively Dust Muhammad’s knowledge of a specific Arab traditionist or tradition—he rests content with Mirkhvand and his authoritative historical method as it is attested in Mirkhvand’s preface—it would not be a stretch to posit an awareness of the historical lore transmitted through Arab historiographers and indicated by Mirkhvand. Al-Waqidi’s and ‘Umar b. Shabbah al-Numayri’s stories both involve mirrors, a device used by Adam to “see whomever he wanted in his present condition,” and to “see whatever he wished on earth,” respectively. The Chest of Witnessing performed the same function.

In al-Numayri’s tradition the device of the mirror is preceded by the stars, first used by Adam as a way of seeing what was in creation through an interpretative technique; ultimately it was a technique too difficult for the first man to perform. In the tradition of Hisham b. Abī al-Ass, the mirror as a site for seeing Adam’s progeny is transformed into an immutable, physical container of portraits, and is made more selective by representing only the prophets descended from Adam. All of these traditions probably derive from a shared concept, that of Adam’s sadness and of his wish to see his progeny. In Mirkhvand99 and numerous versions of the Qiṣṣa al-anbiyā‘, for example, after performing circumambulation of the Ka‘ba in Mecca, Adam falls asleep near Mount Arafat; he awakens to find all his

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97 Qaddūmā, Book of Gifts and Rarities, p. 175, no. 203. The tradition is from the same chapter as the previous story. “Jablaqa” may be incorrect. According to tradition, Jabalka was one of two cities joining the mountain of Qaf.
98 Ibid., p. 175.
99 In an earlier portion of his historical work, Mirkhvand relates another story about the first man. It is a tradition attributed to ‘Imad al-Dīn b. Kathir (d. 1373) from the Bidāya wa al-nihāya, in which Adam has gone to Mecca, performed the circumambulation of the Ka‘ba, and then rested at a place called Wādī al-nu‘mān behind Mount Arafat. While asleep, God produced Adam’s entire progeny from his loins and placed them at Adam’s left and right sides. Those on the left were in darkness while those on the right would see paradise (Mirkhvánd, Rawżat al-safa‘, 1:31).
progeny lined up on his right and left sides.\footnote{In al-Tabari, Ibn Sa’d, and al-Tha’labi God rubs Adam’s back to make the progeny appear \textit{EI2}, s.v. “Adam” [J. Pedersen], The story of Adam’s progeny usually focuses on David and his brief life. In Raghubzī’s \textit{Qisas al-anbiyā}, “God brought forth Adam’s offspring from his spine in human form as small as ants” (\textit{Stories of the Prophets}, trans. Boeschoten, O’Kane and Vandumme, p. 27). God then explained to him how they would find sufficient room on the earth. Raghubzī also mentions Adam’s offspring in the context of the Day of the Covenant when Adam sacrifices a portion of his life to augment David’s 60 years (ibid., p. 48).} The source is Koran 7:171. The collection of portraits in the Chest of Witnessing might also be understood as an extension of Adam’s gift of knowing the names, a knowledge granted to him by God but kept from the angels.

The Chest of Witnessing story related by Mirkhvand and Dust Muhammad draws ultimately on a series of traditions associated with Adam found in the Koran and its exegetical literature, developed and transmitted in other texts, and fully developed in histories, the \textit{Qisas al-anbiyā} stories, and some works of ‘ajā‘ib down to the late fifteenth century.\footnote{For a brief examination of the philosophical and optical questions posed by the mirror and other issues, see \textit{EI2}, s.v. “Mir‘āt” (Ch. Pellat). For divination using mirrors, see Toufic Fahd, \textit{La divination arabe: études religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l’Islam} (Paris: Sindbad, 1987), pp. 47, 48, 49, and 406.} Reading the stars and looking into mirrors (\textit{mir‘āt}) were both techniques used in divination; like Adam, lecanomancers used mirrors to tell the future.\footnote{Ibn Khaldun’s assessment is consistent with the general understanding that what the subject saw in the mirror was an illusion. See \textit{EI2}, s.v. “Mir‘āt” (Ch. Pellat).} They would stare fixedly at a mirror until images and forms that they had wanted to see appeared before them. The manner of perception originates in them and, according to the fifteenth-century historian Ibn Kathir, it “operates not by means of vision, but in the psyche.”\footnote{For divination using mirrors, see Toufic Fahd, \textit{La divination arabe: études religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l’Islam} (Paris: Sindbad, 1987), pp. 47, 48, 49, and 406.} Although it is impossible to determine if this divinatory practice is alluded to in Dust Muhammad’s preface, later sections of it refer to the mirror as a site of vision and image production.

The reference appears in Dust Muhammad’s section where he mentions the painters and artists of the royal library.\footnote{For a brief examination of the philosophical and optical questions posed by the mirror and other issues, see \textit{EI2}, s.v. “Mir‘āt” (Ch. Pellat).} There he describes Bahram Mirza’s \textit{jamkhāna} and names Sultan Muhammad the painter. Both references offer another allusive pathway to the mirror and Chest of Witnessing, in yet another inwardly folding movement of the preface. Decorated with paintings by two Safavid court artists, a \textit{jamkhāna} (lit., room with mirrors) is described by Dust Muhammad as a “mirror showing the world” (\textit{a’ṣna-yi gūr-nāmā}) whose “mirrors have broken the beauty and power of the blue-green firmament.”\footnote{For a brief examination of the philosophical and optical questions posed by the mirror and other issues, see \textit{EI2}, s.v. “Mir‘āt” (Ch. Pellat).} The terminology implies a room whose walls are embedded with mirrors and decorated with paintings by Aqa
Jalal al-Din Mirak and Mir Musavvir. The room is described as “a heaven ornamented with stars and a place colorful with the reflections of people.” Presumably, the mirrors embedded in the room’s walls reflected whatever or whoever stood in the room, an optical phenomenon complicated by the reflections of the wall paintings and no doubt by the small size of the mirrors’ reflective surfaces. The effect must have been awesome, possessing the power to unite and juxtapose reflections of the living with the painted human figure. Dust Muhammad achieves yet another cunning metaphorical allusion, this time to Alexander’s dilemma when confronted by a painting and its reflection. The allusion is also signaled semantically by the choice of gīltī-namā, the term signifying a world-revealing mirror supposedly owned by Alexander.

Praising the contemporary painter Sultan Muhammad, Dust Muhammad asserts,

By the pen of his fingertips on the tablet of the eye [of vision],
he has drawn another design at every moment.
\( ba \text{ klik-i anāmīl ba lawh-i bāyah}
\text{ kashīd ast har lašqā tārīh-i digar} \)

His reference, we may surmise, is to a relatively narrow range of visual subjects given slightly different but significant variation through Sultan Muhammad’s inflections of preestablished types. Hence, the jāmkhānā as a locus of reflection and fracture parallels the creative process of Sultan Muhammad who stores images in his mind and gives them physical form in the act of depicting. A set of visual archetypes is multiplied by the subtle changes he makes between images in a sequence of interrelated types. Such a conception reverberates within the album proper, also a locus of reflection and multiplication through its contents, a series of closely interrelated visual types. The aesthetic effect of the albums’ pages, a complex collage of colored papers, pigments and inks that often arranges lines of calligraphy into gridded and staggered formats creates a further tension between disunity and unity. Techniques of recontextualization augment the perception of comprehensiveness, a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Integral to the contemporary Safavid culture was the understanding that by perception forms were transferred (by intromission) to the artists’s humor, which was thought to be a polished surface. In the act of perceiving, the image became impressed on the humor.

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106. *asmā‘ī ast muqayyan az anjum va makānī ast mulawvan az ‘aki-i mardum.*

107. One of the problems in ascertaining the exact material of the jāmkhānā is that nothing like it survives from the mid sixteenth century. It predates by many years extant dated examples of architecture in which mirrors are used. And yet the language used by Dust Muhammad does invoke a material with reflective properties. At this time only small mirrored surfaces would have been available, forcing the inlay of pieces across a wall surface.

108. It also refers to one of man’s creative powers, the ability to refashion traditional motifs ad infinitum and, by doing so, to perfect them. The creative process has been modeled for literature. See von Grunebaum, “Aesthetic Foundation of Arabic Literature,” p. 328.


110. The process was articulated by Ibn Sīnā. For references, see Soucek, “Niẓāmī on Painters and Painting,” p. 14, and nn. 50–53.

111. In Ibn al-Haytham’s *Kitāb al-manāẓir* (Book of Optics) the form is not comparable to a picture in the eye. Sabra writes: “Though it may be described as an optical array, a form in Alhazen’s sense is not a picture
In a second stage, the forms from both eyes were impressed on the composite sense, and in the third stage they were stored in the memory (khiyāl). In Ibn al-Haytham’s eleventh-century study of optics, a synthesis of investigations by natural philosophers and mathematicians, the optic nerves relayed “the visual spirit,” or the “bearer of visual impressions,” between eyes and brain. Sense perception of features like color and light were followed by judgments or inferences in which the visible properties of the object were determined. Glancing was followed by sustained scrutiny. Ibn al-Haytham counted some twenty-two properties. Thus, for Ibn al-Haytham seeing an object was not merely articulated through the study of physiological mechanisms (which he develops in book 1 of his optics), but amounted to a theory of visual perception (developed in book 2) that addressed the psychological dimensions of the perception process. As Sabra has noted, “Ibn al-Haytham insisted on the distinction between sensation and perception.” After the forms had been stored in the memory, they were relayed out of the body during the process of creative depiction. Dust Muhammad’s phraseology refers to these concepts of visual perception in such phrases as “mirror of the mind,” “tablet of vision,” and the “eye of imagination.”

It is a creative process to which Khvandamir/Amini also refers in the preface to an album assembled by Bihzad. Discussing the paintings bound into the album, Khvandamir/Amini writes: “Each figure, a memory from the depths of the artist’s mind copied from the tablet of his heart to the pages of this book, is a houri who profits the soul.” In the late thirteenth century, Ibn al-Haytham’s book of optics was translated and expanded with an extensive commentary by Kamal al-Din al-Farisi (d. ca. 1320) and was the text widely distributed throughout Iran. Such a theory was not challenged until the early seventeenth century, and then in a European context through experimental evidence.

There is also another way in which the jāmkhāna can be connected to Sultan Muhammad. In Dust Muhammad’s encomium to the jāmkhāna, he conveys the sense that it receives and depicted anywhere in the eye, and should not therefore be mistaken for the image produced in a pin-hole (or lens) camera, or the impression made by a material eidolon. As a representation of the object, it is perceptible only after it has been singled out from a multitude of confused rays on the crystalline-surface and transmitted to the brain; and it is perceptible only to the faculty of sense” (A. I. Sabra, “Sensation and Inference in Alhazen’s Theory of Visual Perception,” in Studies in Perception: Interrelations in the History of Philosophy and Science, ed. Peter K. Machamer and Robert G. Turnbull [Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978], pp. 160–85; esp. 169). Elsewhere, Sabra augments this definition: “To be sure, Ibn al-Haytham’s forms, including those produced in the eye, are not merely things of the mind; like the pictures on the paper, they truly exist as physical modifications or properties of parts of the eye. But unlike Kepler’s picturae, they are distinctly visible only to the mind of the perceiver” (A. I. Sabra, “Form in Ibn al-Haytham’s Theory of Vision,” Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften 5 [1989]: 115–40; esp. 129). And later, “The total image of the surface . . . is therefore an optical analogue or copy . . . and it is this quasi-pictorial form/image . . . that is finally presented to the brain” (ibid., p. 130).

113 A list of these properties is given in Sabra, “Sensation and Inference,” pp. 177–78.
114 Ibid., p. 131.
115 According to Nizamī ʿArūzi (Chahār maqāla, “Four Discourses”), the remembered forms were stored in the anterior portion of the brain. A commentary on Ibn Sīna indicates a comparable theory of image storage. For references and texts, see Soucek, “Niẓāmī on Painters and Painting,” p. 11, and nn. 28 and 29.
does not make images; in other words, it has agency only through reflection. He writes, “Like hearts of the enlightened it gazes with the eye of the heart in every direction, and like people of insight the pupils of the eyes are amazed and astounded by it.” The notion of the heart as a reflective surface is again invoked, but it is the perfected heart of the pious, and the reflection it gives is not the same as the reflection in Mani’s Artangi Tablet. The jāmkhāna has the potential to figure the here and the beyond, to put man in a liminal space between the terrestrial and the extra-terrestrial, a metaphor brought to the fore in Dust Muhammad’s clear praise of the mirrored and painted room.

References are made to the mirror in Dust Muhammad’s preface. The opposition between licit and illicit depictive modes, advanced in the contrast between the Chest of Witnessing and the Artangi Tablet, is followed by Dust Muhammad’s praise of Sultan Muhammad. Here the mirror motif crops up as a metaphor for visual perception just as it does in Dust Muhammad’s rebuttal of Mani; the potential converts sought a miracle and were tricked by Mani’s image—they could not see past what the image showed them. Here we need to separate the process of visual perception from the visual nature of the image and the image’s relationship to things in the phenomenal world. Something about the potential converts’ response was lacking in assessing the ontology of Mani’s Artangi Tablet. They were incapable of comprehending a reality that lay beyond the realm of sensory perception, a deficiency that confined their vision to the phenomenal world and to the image that showed it. The same flaw could not be ascribed to Alexander: he was able to distinguish the causes of visual phenomena and did not ascribe any power to the aesthetic phenomena of the depiction—the depiction’s reflection was its own undoing after all; just as the depiction was a reflection of the world, so it could be reflected. It gave itself away.

A contemporary, Mir Sayyid Ahmad, reiterates several of the themes raised by Dust Muhammad. The first involves the sense of rivalry between art traditions and is given expression in a poem about the artists of China. They had executed the first image, and their craving for minuteness became such that they made brushes of single hairs. “When the cycle of prophethood reached the Ahmad / the pen brought other religions to an end.” A competition ensued during which ‘Ali b. Abi Talib drew an islāmī motif (ragam) that astonished (hayrat) the people of China; “when that prototype came into their hands/ other

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118 Soucek observed that in the story of Alexander “active production of images and the passive reception of visual stimuli are both aspects of artistic creativity” (“Niẓāmī on Painters and Painting,” p. 12).
119 chun dil-i ra'ashan-dilān az dīda-ya dīl ba har su nigarān va chun mardumān-i dīda ba rī-yi ān mardum-i dīda muchūd ja va hayrān.
120 As in Plato’s parable of the bed summarized by Keuls, “God makes the form of the bed, the carpenter copies it, the painter copies its appearance.” In other words, the image is doubly removed (Keuls, Plato and Greek Painting, p. 26). Keuls writes that in Plato’s Republic X, Socrates maintained that “all mimetic acts are a plague only to those who do not possess an antidote to them in that they know them for what they are” (ibid., p. 41).
121 A poetic metaphor, pregnant with meaning, cast by Shah Isma’il some years before is apropos Dust Muhammad’s text to the “short-sighted in seeing.” Isma’il wrote about himself: “The garden of sanctity has produced a fruit/ How can it be plucked by a short-handed one?” (see V. Minorsky, “The Poetry of Shah Isma’il I,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 10 [1940-42]: 1006–53, esp. 1026).
122 Ahmad is one of the names of the Prophet Muhammad. Literally is means “most commendable.” The reference in the poetry is clearly to the rise of Islam.
123 chu dawr-i nubāva ba-Ahmad rasīd/ qalam bar sar-i digar adyān kashīd.
designs became lesser for them” (chu ān asl ʿulfād dar dast-īshān/ bashad naqshā-yi digar past-īshān). Just as a religion had canceled out all previous religions, the “Islamic” aesthetic abrogated the Chinese aesthetic.124

Mir Sayyid Ahmad next notes the practice of looking at painting and drawing, and observes the privileged status of some practitioners over others: “The form that shows itself in the tablet of the artist’s mind does not appear in everyone’s mirror of imagination.”125 It is here that the psychology of vision must be understood to supersede the physiological; otherwise there would be true equality in seeing and perceiving, and in the creation and discrimination of images. Mir Sayyid Ahmad, like Dust Muhammad before him, accords a creative power to select individuals who are more capable of seeing and making the beautiful and the true.126

This last concept is further developed in a long poem, its theme dominated by the story of a competition between two artists. One of the king’s artists is likened to Mani. One of the poem’s hemistiches alludes to the story of the Chinese attempt to trick Mani by polishing the stone. It praises the Mani-like artist thus, “When he drew water on stone/everyone who saw it broke his pitcher” (bar sang chu naqsh-i āb bastī/ har kis dīdī sabū shikastī). More couplets inform us that the artist’s pen possessed life (jān-i khud-i qalamash) and that “his depictions were an evil to religion” (sūratgirīyah bālā-yi din būd). The king, however, “looked upon his Mani with one eye” (mī-dīd ba-mānīyah bā-yak chashm). Another of the king’s intimates (qarīn) was similarly “Mani-like in pen” (mānī qalamā), and this second artist hated the first. The second artist “wanted to make a trick/to deceive him with an image” (mī-khvāst ki hīlā ba-sāzād/ bā vay naqshī ba-makār bāzād). The second painter, using his imagination (khīyāl), made an image of the king holding an arrow to the corner of his eye (ba-gūsha-yi chashm) to remove a bend from the arrow. One had to close one eye in order to do so. The painting made an allusion to the king’s attitude to the first artist—who he looked upon with one eye. The painting made a visual pun and it also referred to the image’s deceptive power by signaling the optical trickery of the bent arrow. Yet another inference is that the first artist was defective—the king looked upon both artist and arrow with one eye. The poem ends with praise of the second artist whom the king rewarded with two kingdoms—one for his skill (hunar), the other for his imagination (khīyāl). The first artist was outdone. Success lay not merely in an artist’s skilful performance but in the creative power of his imagination.

In the perceptual process alluded to by Dust Muhammad and Mir Sayyid Ahmad, there

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124 The contemporary Safavid poet ʿAbdī Beg Shirāzī wrote in his Rawżat al-sifāt (1559): “The Islamic brightness of the Muslims/has made manifest the faults of the Franks” (quoted in Porter, “From the ‘Theory of the Two Qalams’ to the ‘Seven Principles of Painting’,” p. 113).

125 paykarī kī dār lauf-i khāṭir-i naqqāsh chīha mī-kashāyād dar āʿinā-yi khīyāl-i har kās rāy na-namāyād.

126 The same distinction is made in Ghazālī’s writings on beauty, particularly in the Alchemy of Happiness where he writes, “He who lacks the inner vision cannot perceive the inner form and he cannot derive pleasure from it, love it and incline toward it. However, he who appreciates the inner values more than the outer senses, loves the inner values more than the outer ones. There is a great difference between him who loves the painted picture on the wall on account of the beauty of its outer form and him who loves a prophet on account of the beauty of his inner form.” Ghazālī also outlines the connection between the maker and his work: “The beautiful work of an author, the beautiful poem of a poet, the beautiful painting of a painter or the building of an architect reveal also the inner beauty of these men.” Ghazālī’s writings on beauty were compiled selectively by Richard Ettinghausen, “Al-Ghazzālī on Beauty,” in Art and Thought: Issued in Honor of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, ed. K. Baratha Iyer (London: Luzac and Co., 1947), pp. 160–65.
is no confusion between what is seen and what is made. In the process of perceptual scrutiny, as articulated by Ibn al-Haytham, the full properties of the object seen are assessed through “perception by recognition” and not merely through “perception by sensation.” Relying on the latter can produce visual error. In “perception by recognition,” the perceived quality is fitted “under a certain concept or ‘universal form,’ a cognitive operation which does not come into play in perception by pure sensation.”

The creative role accorded to the artist might be understood as the transformation of that which is seen into an absolute. The physiology of perception results in a reflection formed in the artist’s mind but one that is then filtered through his unique imaginative faculty in the act of making an image. Hence, the motif of the mirror, in its numerous appearances in Dust Muhammad’s preface and in other texts, requires distinction: it can be a site of illusory appearances, a surface that gives an optical reflection of the world that nearly replicates the effects of sensory experience. The mirror is only an intermediary to true perception, a notion given expression in perceptual theories; the mirror’s reflections (in the artist) are subjected to change in the creative process through his imagination.

This creative formulation is found elsewhere. Sixteenth-century authors are unanimous in their belief that the tenth-century vizier Ibn Muqla should be credited with the selection and proportional codification of the six scripts. Dust Muhammad attributes Ibn Muqla’s invention in calligraphy to a vision he had experienced. ’Ali b. Abi Talib came to Ibn Muqla and instructed him in three of the six scripts. The example is also one of many in which innate capacities are enhanced through supranatural intervention, usually in the practitioner’s dream state. One of the Bahram Mirza album paintings (figs. 10–12) was originally an illustration to a manuscript of the Three Maṣnavī by the poet Khvaju Kirmani. Dust Muhammad included the painting in the album and ascribed it to ’Abd al-Hayy. His selection of this painting over others appears to have been motivated by the belief that after ’Abd al-Hayy’s death “all masters followed his works,” which made it a crucial example in the history of stylistic transmission. When Bahram Mirza owned it, the manuscript was refurbished, provided with new margins, illuminated headings, and an ex libris. Presumably the painting was removed at that time.

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131 va ba’da az fa’wil i khvaja hama-yi ustādān tattahā’-i kārhā-yi ışhān kardand.
But why select this painting over one of the other nine illustrations in the *Three Magnáväs*? The answer may be found in the subject of the painting; it shows the book’s author Khvaju Kirmani lying asleep in his bed being visited by an angel, as a host of other angels wait outside. When the young poet awakes from his slumber, he finds “a new soul within his frame,” and the interpretation of the event is that the child will be “a renowned monarch in the realm of speech, and a poet known throughout the world.” A portion of the relevant text embedded in the painting explains in the poet’s voice that the angel “brought a message to me from the Exalted One.” The painting thus depicted a pivotal moment in the poet’s life that brought about his artistic perfection. In the album, the biographical moment is conflated with the artist’s life, and the painting becomes an allegory of a comparable shift in artistic production. As Dust Muhammad wrote, ‘Abd al-Hayy occupied a critical role as transmitter, and presumably perfected, of Ahmad Musa’s style.

In the preface, tacit comparisons are made between album and Chest of Witnessing, Creation, jāmkhāna. Cultural notions of the mirror used by Adam and lecanomancers for purposes of divination are also to be found in ideas about visual perception and the artist’s creative act. Dust Muhammad’s ultimate conceit may have been the claim that the album was a series of mirrored surfaces in which were reflected the invisible, its works done by specially gifted artists who were capable of unveiling something that remained hidden to most people. Just as specially gifted and inspired artists create artworks of amazing wonder, so only men of vision and perception can appreciate these works (hence the album). This brings us back to the social/performative context of album production and reception: the “intimates” who are involved in them are, like the painters, a specially privileged group. Artists, and patrons, and their collective milieu boast of specially endowed powers of visual perception. Another full circle is the prophetic origin of the practice of depiction and an aesthetic implication of Dust Muhammad’s story. If Daniel copied the portraits sent to Adam by God, could one consider them a form of acheiropoeta, duplicates of images not made by human hands, or what Hans Belting has called “unpainted painted images”? Two related elements—concepts of creativity and how the perceptual process is translated into creative action—are now developed and linked together by the visual and formal elements of depiction.

Dust Muhammad opens his preface with praise of God’s creation, a commonplace in all prefaces. God’s creation offered a rich metaphor for the album. Unlike other preface authors, Dust Muhammad more fully integrates the exordium into the preface by connecting its concepts to those developed in the section on the history of depiction. Key among

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132 Translations are from Teresa Fitzherbert’s study on Khvaju Kirmani. See Teresa Fitzherbert, “Khwājū Kirmānī (689–753/1290–1352): An Éminence Grise of Fourteenth Century Persian Painting,” *Iran* 29 (1991): 137–51; esp. 139–40. The relevant lines of poetry are missing from the London manuscript but are available in Khvansari’s edition of the text. For the edition, see ibid., n. 8. The codicological problem is explained in ibid., n. 40.

133 It is interesting that no attempt was made to claim divine inspiration for an artist through the dream anecdote. Divine inspiration is frequently claimed for poets and calligraphers, but not explicitly for practitioners of depiction.

the themes of the exordium is that God first inscribed, or wrote, the events of creation on the preserved tablet, the *lakb b-l-mahfīz*, with pen and ink. On the tablet were recorded, in Dust Muhammad’s words, “the united forms and dispersed models of the archetypes.” Thus, Creation is preceded by a text of words; Creation finds its preexisting analog preserved in heaven. God’s rationale is explained through common Arabic traditions—for example, that He “was a hidden treasure” that “wanted to be known”—that Dust Muhammad weaves into his preface. God made “the mirror of creation a locus of manifestation for names and traces” in a process likened to one of unveiling; “He seized with the fingers of predestination the veil of nothingness from the countenance of being.”

The world, viz. creation, is a manifestation of the other-worldly, each element of creation a sign that functions as a relay to its heavenly archetype, pointing toward it but not revealing it.

Dust Muhammad then pursues a metaphor of creation in which God is cast as a painter wielding a pen on the “tablet of existence” (*takhta-yi hast; takhta*, lit. board, plank, single sheet of paper). He uses terminology drawn from the arts of the book—pages, scripts, rulings, white, vermilion, black pens, an inkpot—to describe the process, and then, fearing the implications of such a metaphor, although he has already made it, holds back, asking, “Praise God! What am I saying?,” and uses a qualification which removes labor or manual agency from God’s creative process. God speaks creation out of time and in no time. By

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135 In some narratives of Creation, God is distanced from the act of process. In al-Kisa’i’s *Qisas al-anbiyā’,* for example, God orders the pen to write. The *Qisas al-anbiyā’* genre is among the richest sources for the creation narrative.

136 *śawr-i mu’talif va ṣawr-i mu’kalif-i a‘īn-rā. According to al-Kisa’i, Azrael (the angel of death) faces toward the preserved tablet—“He gazes on the Preserved Tablet and all creation is depicted before his eyes” (al-Kisa’i, *Tales of the Prophets*, trans. Thackston, p. 15).

137 *a‘īn-yi kārdār mażḫar-i aṣmā va a‘īn-i khud sākhī.

138 ba a‘īn-mīl-i taḏīr ṭarada-yi ‘adam az chihra-yi wujūd dar rubād.

139 Citing the Koranic verse The Cave (*al-Kahf*) in particular, Mottahedeh points out the “common Koranic theme of the world as replete with the signs of God present to make any aware person mindful of God,” and the distinction between such signs/exemplars (*ṣawr*) and wonders (*‘ajab*) (Roy P. Mottahedeh, “‘Ajā‘īb in *The Thousand and One Nights,*” in *The Thousand and One Nights in Arabic Literature and Society*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], pp. 29–39, esp. 30). The theme is reflected in Dust Muhammad’s preface.

140 Koran 2:117, “Creator of the heavens and the earth from nothingness, He has only to say when He wills a thing, ‘Be!’ and it is.” An immediate parallel in the Christian tradition can be found in St. Augustine who wrote that God spoke Creation. Camille interprets this as indicating a “strong phonocentric bias through which commentators expressed the force of the Logos in human society” (Michael Camille, “Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy,” *Art History* 8, 1 [March 1985]: 26–49; esp. 30). Another cross-cultural parallel would be to explore concepts of the revealed Word, and how it is or is not embodied in the two religious traditions. The Christian doctrine of the incarnation was avoided for its threat to the Muslim dogma of God’s indivisibility (*takhta*), one stated most forcefully in Koran 112:1–4, “Say: ‘He is God the one the most unique, God the immanently indispensable. He has begotten no one, and is begotten of none. There is no one comparable to Him.”’ Such fundamental differences have significant consequences. Although the Muslim God favored human kind above all other creatures, there are few references to Him making man in His image in contrast to the many in Christian theology. One of the risks in making such a statement was *tashbīh*, likening God to man and also of anthropomorphizing attributes and names of God. One hadith, “God created Adam in H[*h*]is form” (*ibqallaga Allāh ʾādām ’alā sūratāhī*), has been interpreted differently according to the third person suffix attached to form—thus, “God made Adam in Adam’s form,” or “God made Adam in His form” (see Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, p. 66). This hadith and a couplet of poetry appear at the beginning of Dust Muhammad’s preface. The poem is similarly ambiguous. It appears in the middle of the Chest of Witnessing anecdote: “O you are made better than any other form!/ God
these and other means, God’s creative act is distinguished from that of the human practitioner.

Articulations about sensory perception through vision and creative practices emphasize both the reflective element in the process of taking in forms, and the transformative act of bringing it out. The careful manipulation of the mirror motif in Dust Muhammad’s text and its repeated appearance throughout the preface drew out differences between passive reflection and active production. Certain principles about agency were developed to circumvent the artist’s potential challenge to God’s creative prerogative, a charge that had so frequently been addressed in traditions that countered idolatry, the claims made for images, and sometimes the practice of image making itself. Thus, in some traditions, an artist is called upon to breathe life into his creations and fails, also with dire consequences. In Dust Muhammad’s preface and elsewhere the distinction between passivity and activity (in perception and cognition) separates groups of human agents, although the role performed by cognitive activity is interpreted in sometimes opposite ways. One step beyond this is the notion of the privileged maker whose creative capacities are perfected by supranatural visitors who come to him in a dream or a waking state. Thus, special powers are accorded to man in the dream, or may be present in him at birth as naturally occurring abilities.

Some of these claims are paralleled in the religio-cultural sphere of the early Safavid period, where the dynasty’s founder Isma’il, for example, claimed quasi-divine status in his poetry, either directly or by allusion, the dream could confirm the presence of pro-

141 Bürgel traces the shift to mysticism’s development of the concept of the “the perfect man” (al-insān al-kāmil), when “the idea of power became spiritualized in a new sense and man became capable of participating in God’s mightiness in the spiritual sphere, even though this interior mightiness could also manifest itself in visible forms. . . . This belief promoted the arts, their mightiness now being comprehensible in the new light of man’s licit magic and of his cosmic mightiness” (ibid., pp. 2–3).

142 The most detailed and expanded treatment of this subject to date is Bürgel, Feather of Simurgh, especially the introduction and chaps. 1–3. Bürgel describes the artist’s agency as “mightiness” in conflict with God. Bürgel traces the shift to mysticism’s development of the concept of the “the perfect man” (al-insān al-kāmil), when “the idea of power became spiritualized in a new sense and man became capable of participating in God’s mightiness in the spiritual sphere, even though this interior mightiness could also manifest itself in visible forms. . . . This belief promoted the arts, their mightiness now being comprehensible in the new light of man’s licit magic and of his cosmic mightiness” (ibid., pp. 2–3).

143 Given that the typi-

144 For mystical writers, polishing the heart through piety and removing cognition serve as a way to annihilate self and gain proximity to God as an act of unquestioning faith; for theorists of perception, the mind’s mirror serves as an intermediary in the process of understanding the world but cannot be relied upon on its own. Senses of perception are checked and controlled by cognition.

145 Shi’ism connected the dream to notions of inner prophethood, believing that all infallible imams had true dreams. One manual on dream interpretation (iqāṣim) was widely attributed to the imam Ja’far al-Sadiq. See EIR, s.v. “Dreams and Dream Interpretation,” ii. in the Persian Tradition” (Hossein Ziai).

146 Shah Isma’il used poetry as a vehicle for inspiring support from his gizīlshāh followers. Isma’il’s poems provide evidence that he wanted his followers to consider him a divine incarnation. See EIR, s.v. “Esmā’il I Ṣafawī” (Roger M. Savory). In the introductory sections to the divān, Isma’il described ‘Ali as the “manifestation of God” (nāẓẖār al-haqiq) who embodied “God’s light” (nār-i īlahī). Isma’il claimed himself to be ‘Ali’s reincarnation. For analysis of Isma’il’s poetry, see Minorsky, “The Poetry of Shah Isma’il I,” p. 1026. Excerpts of his poetry are also translated and discussed by Wheeler M. Thackston, “The Diwan of Khātā: Pictures for the Poetry of Shah Isma’il I,” Asian Art 1, 4 (Fall 1988): 36–63. As late as 1629, Iskandar Beg Munshi noted...
phetic qualities in selected men just as it affirmed their politico-religious authority. In an account of Shah Isma’il’s life, the ‘Alam-ārā-yi Shāh Ismā’īl, a lengthy account explains Isma’il’s emergence as a divinely sanctioned and appointed vice-regent. The use of the term khurij to signify “emergence” possessed the resonance of the return of the occulted Twelfth Imam, the mahdi, conferring upon Isma’il the status of a prefigurement. Although such claims were toned down by the reign of Shah Tahmasp (that is, the extremist ghulavv, p. 54. Princes, Poets, and Paladins Sadiq and contained omens and their interpretations. For a brief summary of the manuscript, see Canby, n. According to Daniel, Muḥammad’s portrait as it had been made at the beginning of time and later copied by Daniel. Shahāda, the term used for the chest, also meant “evidence” and is used to refer to the Muslim declaration of faith. Both were collections and involved comprehensiveness (Mani’s audience proclaimed the Artangi Tablet to be complete; the Chest of Witnessing was unquestionably complete within the bounds of the Islamic faith). Mani had made his painted silk, despite his claim, whereas the Chest of Witnessing’s portraits survived as copies made by Daniel. Thus, God not only fashioned the subjects of the phenomenal world that would preoccupy painters, but He also brought paintings into existence, establishing a convention for two-dimensional image making. If Daniel copied these “unmade” images, arguably their system of depiction is traceable to a divine source. By hinting at the special power of such artists as Ahmad Musa, ‘Abd al-Hayy, and Sultan Muhammad, Dust Muhammad is able to imply an aesthetic connection between the God-derived aesthetic in two-dimen-

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149 Shāh Tahmāsp Šāfavi, Taṣkira-yi Shāh Tahmāsb. One dream, listed under events in 938 (1531–32), records a conversation between ‘Ali b. Abī Talib and Shah Tahmasp. On 18 Safar 961 (23 January 1554), at Nahkchivan, Shah Tahmasp dreamed (ba-khūb didān) that the sky in the direction of the qibla was inscribed with writing in ghābār, the color of the heavens. Also connected to onomancy is the large-format manuscript of the Fāl-nāma (Book of Divination) made for Shah Tahmasp in ca. 1530. The text was attributed to Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq and contained omens and their interpretations. For a brief summary of the manuscript, see Canby, Princes, Poets, and Paladins, p. 54.

150 Belting identifies two kinds of cult images used in Christendom. “One kind, initially including only images of Christ and a cloth imprint of St. Stephen in North Africa, comprises ’unpainted’ and therefore especially authentic images that were either of heavenly origin or produced by mechanical impression during the lifetime of the model. For these the term a-cheiro-poeton (’not made by hand’) came into use, in Latin non manufactum.” The second kind of image “appears to include only icons of the Virgin . . . but is believed to be the work of a painter” (Belting, Likeness and Presence, p. 49).
Lifting the Veil from the Face of Depiction

Ahmad Musa recovered. Expressed through an image comparable to—but not the same as—God’s act of creation, Ahmad Musa lifted a veil to fashion material. The creative concept of transforming what is seen into its absolute or trying to transform the phenomena in the visible world so that they point back toward some hidden form permeates Persian literature. Dust Muhammad describes creation as “a locus of manifestation of names and traces,” phenomena which pointed to their transcendent archetypes. His use of the ubiquitous veiling image invokes the mystical concept of the interior (bāṭin) and exterior (zāhīr), of esoteric and exoteric knowledge. Neoplatonic in origin, such theories of emanation and the correspondence of macrocosm and microcosm were absorbed into the Islamic world view in the eleventh century.

In some respects such theories go a long way toward rationalizing the formal and compositional values of the Persianate painting, and several scholars have done just that. Sayyid Hossein Nasr describes Persianate painting as “a reminder of a reality which transcends the mundane surroundings of human life,” and the space of the painting “is the space of the ‘imaginal world’”; the painting “reflects the sacred in this world.” In his analysis of the portrait through literary and visual sources, Yves Porter asserts that the use of the term “portrait” (whether paykar, chihra, or sūrat) cannot mean “a photographic reproduction, a double of the real image”; what is sought in the image is the original, “a vision superior to reality that transcends the object.” Studies of poetry have made similar inferences, as have considerations of non-mimetic visual modes such as geometry.

A critical difference between God and man’s creative powers was defined—God could bring matter into being whereas man could only fashion preexistent matter. See EI2, s.v. Kāhl (R. Arnaldez). The need to define man’s creative powers as different from God’s creatio ex nihilo is discussed by von Grunebaum, “Aesthetic Foundation of Arabic Literature,” pp. 333–34.

Many of these references are mentioned in Necipoglu (Topkapı Scroll, chaps. 10 and 11) where the philosophical underpinnings and aesthetic issues are also treated in full, but focusing mainly on geometry, not on figural art.

Bürgel, Feather of Simurgh, pp. 40–41. A convenient primer on Neoplatonic thought in Islam, specifically in the writings of the Brethren of Sincere Purity (Ikhwān al-Safā) is by Ian Richard Netton, Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Safā) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991). Necipoğlu summarizes the development, noting how the thought of Aristotle and Plato was reconciled in Islam and the philosophical sciences “disseminated between the ninth and late tenth centuries. . . . After the consolidation of the Sunni revival in the eleventh century, however, orthodox refutations of philosophy multiplied. Aesthetic theories tinged with Neoplatonism were revised according to dominant orthodox sensibilities, distilled into popular form through Sufism, and assimilated into the mainstream of medieval Islamic culture” (Necipoğlu, Topkapı Scroll, p. 186).


Chelkowski, Soucek, and Ettinghausen cite the words of the poet Nizami, “Poetry is the mirror of what is visible, and what is invisible . . . the curtain of mystery, the shadow of the prophetic veil” [Peter Chelkowski, Priscilla P. Soucek, and Richard Ettinghausen, Mirror of the Invisible World: Tales from the Khamsheh of Nizami [New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975], p. 9].

This is the interpretative vector which runs throughout Gülru Necipoğlu’s study of ornament in praxis...
In the medieval Christian West, which shared a philosophical heritage with the Islamic East, comparable explanations are suggested for the preferred aesthetic features of the symbolic or ideational in art. For example, Yves Bonnefoy asserts that “art must turn away from the material, or rather away from figurative constraints in order to grasp, through the fundamental sympathy that unites the image and its model, that reflection of the intellect, the Nous that is the only true reality.”\(^{158}\) Bonnefoy writes:

> André Grabar has demonstrated the close links between the ideas of Plotinus and early Christian art. He shows how, in late antiquity, certain techniques served to draw the absolute into the work: the denial of space, reversed or radiating perspectives, simplified modelling, the subordination of natural forms to regular geometric schema; all these were logically implied by the ideas of Plotinus. But the Middle Ages in their entirety, the whole of Italy until the time of Cimabue, drew on this art and its sense of the timeless.\(^{159}\)

Some of the dangers in these hypotheses reside in the values attached to formal elements and features (figuring again the formalist claim of universal attributives of form). The shared philosophical heritage at the root of Muslim and Christian aesthetics might explain commonalities between the art of the two traditions and therefore bridge the problem of an image’s formal values as culturally encoded. Connections between an image’s forms and the values ascribed to them were accepted conventions and not absolutes.\(^{160}\) However, Dust Muhammad’s articulations structured through complex extended metaphors and allusion help to answer this problem, not only as preface but also through the union of preface with physical examples of images.

Implicit in Dust Muhammad’s argument is that Persianate painting’s mode of depicting and its products (paintings or drawings) found a satisfactory solution to the problem of creating an image. He addresses this notion when he writes of depiction’s origin in Daniel, “because of this the painter’s mind need not be scratched by the thorn of despair.” Depiction (painting/drawing) was conceptually and practically linked to writing through ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, and Daniel vouchsafed the noble lineage of portraying. From reading Dust Muhammad, we sense that anything thought consonant with an optical naturalism, an image that produced an equivalent of what the sensory perceptions revealed in an initial act of gazing at phenomena (in an act comparable to the mirror’s reflection), was entirely unacceptable and suspect. It may have been partly because such visual elements of the image could suggest movement, changeability, flux, and duration, and hence create the illusion of a living and breathing sentient creature thereby arrogating a power reserved to God alone.\(^{161}\) This visual and theory in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Iran. Necipoğlu matches geometries to contemporary debates and theories of aesthetics and perception (Necipoğlu, Topkapı Scroll, esp. chaps. 10 and 11).


\(^{159}\) Ibid., p. 13.


\(^{161}\) This may be connected to theories of optical perception where the so-called common sensibles (motion, rest, shape, sizes, motions) were often thought to produce error in judgment about what is sensed. See Irving Block, “Truth and Error in Aristotle’s Theory of Sense Perception,” Philosophical Quarterly 11, 42 (January 1961): 1–9, esp. 1. The special sensibles—always true—included colors, sounds, tastes, smells, and tactile sensations.
phenomenon is referred to in Muhammad Muhsin’s preface as “Christian breaths” (<i>anfās-i masīḥā</i>), invoking a tradition about Jesus breathing life into clay birds that he had fashioned—the miracle occurred only because God allowed it to be so. 162 It takes us back also to Firdawsi and the chief priest’s request that Mani breathe life into his forms. This is yet another respect in which Dust Muhammad’s argument through metaphor and allusion cannot be compared to those of other preface writers, whether contemporaries or coming before or after. Sometimes writers praised artists because they had brought life to “inanimate forms,” a metaphor which risked the arrogation of illicit powers and claims to practitioners. One of the most common figures of speech in Persian literature compares an artist to Mani; it appears as a simile in Khvandamir/Amini’s preface and in Mir Sayyid Ahmad where an artist is likened to Jesus and the clay birds which he brought to life. Dust Muhammad uses neither of these.

At another level of metaphorical comparison, Dust Muhammad disparages Mani’s pathetic converts who, deceived by the artist’s trivial and playful images, accepted them as their model (<i>masḥq</i>), all the while contrasting them to Daniel’s better choice of model, the images brought into existence and sent by God to Adam. Because Dust Muhammad distinguishes between the forms of picture making (<i>rasm-i sīrāt-sāzī</i>) practiced in Europe, China, and Persia, it would seem reasonable to conclude that he and his contemporaries made such visual distinctions. The Persianate audience was very receptive to the Chinese aesthetic, but they had their preferences. Evidence of an interest in works associated with the sensibility and culture of the Chinese literati is entirely absent, assuming that such works in fact had been available to the Safavids or to the Timurids before them. 164 Numerous

162 In the extended <i>khatīma</i> of his preface, some of it culled from Kashīfī’s <i>Anwār-i suhaylī, </i>Muhammad Muhsin contrasts the form of “life” or “spirit” (<i>jān</i>) in calligraphy and what he refers to as “Christian breaths.” The segment reads:

Gazing at their calligraphies bestows life
and calligraphy offers protection from affliction and sadness.
No, no, each letter is like Christian breaths
When we look carefully at it, it bestows life.
Their calligraphies possess such grace
That His ink bestows light upon vision.
(<i>nizārā-yi khatt-i ishān va‘ān mī-bakhshad
va zi mīhnāt va gham khatt anān mī-bakhshad
na na ki chu anfās-i masīḥā har harf
chun nik nazir kanām jān mī-bakhshad
khatt-i ishān zi bas ki hast latīf
nīr bakhshad savād-i ū ba-bāsar</i>)

It is also possible that the breath is an allusion to God’s creation of Jesus and the Koranic verses 15:29 and 38:72 (used by Dust Muhammad) “And when I have made him and breathed into him of My spirit.” The words used for “to breathe” (<i>nafakha</i>) and “spirit” (<i>rūḥ</i>) are not used in the prefaces. The allusion would not be intended as a parallel, of course, but as another means of emphasizing the difference between God’s creative powers and those of man. Only God has the power to bestow life.

163 Sometimes Mani is mentioned as someone who could be outdone or duped by an artist (Mir Sayyid Ahmad).

164 The lure of Chinese art and responses to it had been ongoing since at least the Ilkhanid period in Iran. For a general discussion about the reception of Chinese painting and the types of materials found in a Persian context, see Toh Sugimura, <i>The Encounter of Persia with China: Research into Cultural Contacts Based on Fifteenth Century Persian Pictorial Materials</i> (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1986); Max Loehr, “The Chinese Elements in the Istanbul Miniatures,” <i>Ars Orientalis</i> 1 (1954): 85–89; and Basil Gray, “A Timurid Copy of a
works of Chinese origin, or made after Chinese models, were bound into the Bahram Mirza album. Although some of the subject matter (religious themes, birds, and flowers) and iconographic intricacies may have been lost on the Safavids, the album’s paintings tend to echo features that were known to the Persianate audience through their own tradition: boldly scaled and brightly colored works which combined flat fields of color with strong contours in line.

European art was another matter. Although the album does not illustrate Mani’s work, and it is not certain what someone like Dust Muhammad thought it looked like, it is tempting to identify one painting in the album that seems to offer an equivalent to such a duplicitous visual system as we understand it from exceptions taken in the Mani Artangi Tablet story. The European work datable to after ca. 1530 (fig. 13) is the only one in the album. It lacks any introductory caption, and is a portrait of a young man, either Venetian or Florentine, wearing a cloth hat with gold brooch, a dark jacket open at the neck to reveal a white undershirt with the top button undone; he stands in three-quarter pose, eyes wide open and lips slightly parted. His mouth, eyelids, lips, and ears are warmed by passages of red and pink, which counteract the youth’s otherwise ashen complexion. The modeled features of the face produce a web of shadows and light, patches of color arranged across the smooth two-dimensional surface of the painting disrupted only in a few passages by rougher brushstrokes. It is a wholly different visual effect from those pages of Safavid portraits mounted in the Bahram Mirza album, which are often inscribed with the name of the sitter. In them, pure fields of color dominate, figures are lit from a multiplicity of sources and not a single one, and line is not subsumed by color. In the European aesthetics of vision, represented by the portrait of the young man, devices are employed to bring the image toward the illusion of a reflection of things in the world, but the Persianate aesthetics of vision locates the creative act, the image, and goal at one remove beyond things seen.


A second example portraying a seated scribe was removed from the album in the early twentieth century. For the story, see Roxburgh, “Disorderly Conduct?,” esp. pp. 39–40, and fig. 14. The work, attributed in modern scholarship to Gentile Bellini or Costanzo da Ferrara/Costanzo da Moysis, bears an illuminated caption that names the artist as Ibn Mu‘azzin, “who is among the famous European masters” (‘amal-i Ibn Mu‘azzin ki az ustādān-i makhbūr-i farang ast). Shading is used in the painting to model the figure, especially visible on the furrowed sleeves and cloth turban, and stippling for the volumetric treatment of the face. The painting is currently in Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, no. P15e8.

And hence offering another parallel, this time to music. Writing about a tune he invented, Amir Khusraw Dihlavi (1253–1325) wrote: “It is in the main based on İḥâm and Khayāl, my own invention. İḥâm is consummated by use of words echoing each other in sound and sense or resembling each other in body and build. Khayāl is elaborated by letting the imagination go free among the objects and the phenomena around so as to hold a mirror to the universe and to populate the mind with dreams” (cited in Bürgel, *Feather of Simurgh*, p. 107).
One feature of Persianate painting acquires a particular charge in comparison to the European example: namely the suppression of traces of execution on the painted surface and an increase in the density and miniaturization of the visual information. Every element across the entire two-dimensional field surface is given equal weight. Persian painting may be regarded as a window on the world, but in its compositional elements are stacked vertically to convey relationships of figures to each other in space and not through a perspectival scheme. The suppression of evidence of manual presence intersects with a recurring emphasis in prefatory texts where achievement is described as miraculous, as something to marvel at and to wonder over. The artist's brush is hair-splitting (mā-shikāf). The artist's technical skill makes it impossible for the viewer to comprehend how an image has been made. It is as if the image were born into this world unmade. Another factor that prompted surprise and wonder were the new combinations or reworkings of motifs and themes, as in Sultan Muhammad's endless reworkings of designs (jārk). The suppression of evidence of manual presence intersects with a recurring emphasis in prefatory texts where achievement is described as miraculous, as something to marvel at and to wonder over. The artist's brush is hair-splitting (mā-shikāf). The artist's technical skill makes it impossible for the viewer to comprehend how an image has been made. It is as if the image were born into this world unmade. Another factor that prompted surprise and wonder were the new combinations or reworkings of motifs and themes, as in Sultan Muhammad's endless reworkings of designs (jārk).

The implications of this internal view of Persian aesthetics are far reaching, especially because scholarship to date has either doubted that the Persians had a developed aesthetic theory and a conscious understanding of an art history tradition or has chosen not to pursue those aspects of interpretation. Formal readings, either with or without sensitivity to written sources, have characterized the Persianate painting tradition as non-optically-naturalist but for the wrong reasons. Perhaps it has been difficult to escape the legacy of early scholars: writing in 1928, Arnold observed, "In Muhammedan literature no attempt has ever been made to work out any independent system of aesthetics or to arrive at an appreciation of art for its own sake." Binyon, Wilkinson, and Gray made similar remarks, asserting that no attempt was made to have an image "conform as closely as possible to visual appearances," that artists did not make painting a "voyage of discovery," but were content to "express themselves in an art without atmospheric effect, without light and shade, an art which owed nothing to the study of anatomy or the study of perspective." They concluded that "Persian painting betrays no intellectual grasp of the structure of things.

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168. The tenth-century writer Raghib al-Isfahani writes “‘ajab and ‘a‘ajab are states which come to a person at the time of that person’s ignorance of the sabab [cause] of something” (Mottahedeh, “‘Ajā‘īb in The Thousand and One Nights,” p. 30).

An extension of this response, or its adjunct, is often the statement in the Persian sources of the “reality” of the image. Grabar notes how this paradox has absorbed scholars of Persianate painting, especially Soucek and Golombek, who discussed “images which do not deal with spatial or physical verisimilitude and texts which almost always do” (Oleg Grabar, “Persian Miniatures: Illustrations or Paintings,” in The Persian Presence in the Islamic World, ed. Richard G. Hovanissian and Georges Sabagh [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], pp. 199–217, esp. p. 217). Cultural-encoding/convention might be one way to allow for the different formal languages to which “likeness” or “resemblance” to the referent is attributed except that in the Dust Muhammad album differences between visual traditions are expressed in words and shown by example. Thus, in Persian sources expressions of “reality” clearly cannot be taken literally. In his early study of responses to images, Sakisian talked of their “trompe l’œil effect” by reading the sources too literally (Sakisian, “Esthétique et terminologie persanes,” p. 144). The relationship between image and referent exists at the level of its being an absolute sign of the referent and thus as something that points beyond it. Soucek has recently developed this theory of the relationship between image and referent with specific regard to the portrait (Soucek, “Theory and Practice of Portraiture,” pp. 97–108, esp. 101).


The Persian outlook is essentially and incurably romantic. It enjoys what is marvelous, it is quite ready to believe the incredible.  \(^{172}\)

If a theory of art could be defined for Persianate painting of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries, it would be achieved only through a comparison with the canon of Western European art. Definition would be made through a structure of opposition. Binyon, Wilkinson, and Gray privilege the Western form of image-referent relationship, an optical-naturalism thought to produce a closer equivalent to reality. Their teleological concept of Western art is based on the progressive refinement of formal elements (shading, modeling, perspective)—a history of visual problem solving—and the result of the comparison is to characterize the Persianate painting tradition as static. Binyon, Wilkinson and Gray’s remarks would be less troubling if it were not for the fact that their descriptive language has retained its currency in many studies of Persianate painting up to the present day.

Further, given that the painting tradition was seen to exist in a predominantly aniconic culture that often disparaged image makers and was deeply concerned about image use, it was thought to be a covert activity. Cast in this light, the “fantastic” world of Persianate painting and its rebuttal of perceived reality were read as decorative (hence “romantic,” “marvelous,” “incredible”). The painters did not concern themselves with approximating optical experience because of their predilection for whimsy, in a kind of sentimental relationship to the world. But it is clear from Dust Muhammad’s preface that the history of depiction was understood and explained along different lines, pointing yet again to the problems inherent in the method of definition through sets of polarized traits. The painting tradition’s visual form avoided the problem of usurping God’s creative prerogative and was achieved in visual terms by turning away from an optical-naturalist mode of depiction, so that what was depicted could not be confused with its referent out there in the real world. In fact, approximating an illusion of optical perception had never been their objective in the opinion of Dust Muhammad. Moreover, artists worked within a tradition bound by convention, originating with Ahmad Musa and continuing until the Safavid period through a series of perfections, a heightened intensity and purity of color, a precision of line, the forging of compositional units that redesigned and perfected the subject. The place accorded to models and the role of copying in practice were repeatedly stressed, through Daniel’s first act of copying God-given painted models, through the creative process of Sultan Muhammad’s versions, and in the numerous slightly reworked visual models that are to be found in the album. In this way, Dust Muhammad also addresses the cultural encoding of a visual tradition, the fact that no maker operated freely within the field of practice. The depictor’s goal was to depict the meontic, “what is not there,” \(^{173}\) but to do so he turned to models of the art tradition traceable to Ahmad Musa and to the faculties of his imagination.

THE PREFACE AS JUSTIFICATION

The apologetic dimension of Dust Muhammad’s narrative on the origins and history of depiction strikes every reader. But it should now be clear that this surface reading floats

\(^{172}\) Ibid.

\(^{173}\) The term was used by Thomas McFarland and cited by Burwick, “Reflections in the Mirror,” p. 127. McFarland contrasts the mimetic from the meontic.
on a many-layered set of references that are pregnant with meaning. Dust Muhammad theorizes that Persianate depiction is a history of inherited graphic outlines, or a series of archetypes refined and perfected in the course of a visual tradition. The objective of the visual archetypes was to cut through or see past the appearance of the visible and to make a distillation of essential properties that would parallel heaven’s hidden or veiled archetypes, just as writing does. After all, God’s revelation came through the vehicle of Arabic script, and the history of calligraphy is explained as a process of perfecting the letters of the alphabet by continuous refinements, often helped along by the intervention of such figures as ‘Ali b. Abi Talib. Dust Muhammad’s assimilation of depiction to writing (a development he attributes to ‘Ali b. Abi Talib) reiterates ‘Abdi Beg Shirazi’s so-called “Theory of the Two Pens,” which occurs in a versified section on the “Excellence of Art” in his Ā’in-i Iskandari (Rules of Alexander). ‘Abdi Beg Shirazi composed the Ā’in-i Iskandari in 1543–44, one year before Dust Muhammad’s preface.174 The idea was a pervasive one, and two subsequent authors refer to it, to make depiction licit. Qutb al-Din Muhammad quoted from ‘Abdi Beg Shirazi in a preface he composed in 1556 for an album to be examined at royal assemblies; 175 Mir Sayyid Ahmad also referred to the concept in the preface he composed for the Amir Ghayb Beg album compiled in 1564–65.

‘Abdi Beg Shirazi and Dust Muhammad’s assimilation of depiction to writing may have been in response to Shah Tahmasp’s growing indifference to painting. This loss of interest is usually dated to ca. 1544–45,176 also the date of Bahram Mirza’s album. Moreover, scholars maintain that by 1556, Shah Tahmasp’s rejection of painting was so complete that it led him to issue the edict of Sincere Repentance, prohibiting the secular arts in Iran.177 Recently, Soudavar argued that Shah Tahmasp had already repented in 1534 but made no mention of painting or calligraphy when he did so.178 Moreover, he tolerated the infractions of the decree by his painters when they engaged in irreligious vices, such as drinking.179 Soudavar moves the debate outside the framework of religious exception, suggesting that Shah Tahmasp’s increased indifference to painting applied equally to calligraphy180 and that the cause may have been a hereditary ophthalmic disorder, which not only made it hard for him to see and appreciate small-scale detail work in painting and calligraphy but also might even have been painful.181 Evidence of the arts of the book, notably the Fāl-nāma (Book of Divination, ca. 1550), and architectural decoration at Qazvin shows that projects for Shah Tahmasp were continued and suggest that efforts were made to com-

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174 For a recent analysis of the text, see Porter, “From the ‘Theory of the Two Qalams’ to the ‘Seven Principles of Painting’,” pp. 109–18.
176 Welch, Artists for the Shah, p. 4. During the same year (1544), the Mughal emperor Humayun visited the Safavid court and left with two artists, Mir Sayyid ‘Ali and ‘Abd al-Samad, from the royal kistākhāna. See Soudavar, “Between the Safavids and the Mughals,” p. 49, and pp. 50–51. According to Welch, Shah Tahmasp’s interests in the arts were at a “low ebb” by the 1550’s (ibid., p. 5).
177 Dickson and Welch, Houghton Shahnameh, 1:45.
179 Ibid.
180 Ibid. His interpretation is founded in references in Budaq Munshi Qazvini’s Javāhir al-ḥabār where distinctions are not made between calligraphers and painters.
181 Ibid., pp. 51–52.
pensate for the limitations imposed by his failing eyesight.\textsuperscript{182} Shah Tahmasp’s withdrawal as a patron increased the likelihood that other patrons of lesser rank could attract talented practitioners to work on their commissions.

What immediate events prompted individuals like ‘Abdi Beg Shirazi and Dust Muhammad to explain depiction, whether its prophetic origins, its God-derived aesthetic, or the fundamental origin of depiction in writing is ultimately not completely ascertainable. But these expressions reveal a set of shared beliefs about the nature of depiction. Thus, the commonly held opinion that Dust Muhammad’s preface and other writings are merely “ex-post facto justifications” for depiction, “and little better anyway than high-flown gush”\textsuperscript{183} requires revision. A concurrent examination of preface and album indicates a conception of art history that is far from superficial.\textsuperscript{184} Preface and album constitute a remarkably self-referential system that puts Dust Muhammad’s conception of art theory and artistic transmission into action. His demonstration and explanation of the morality of depiction ultimately put it on a par with calligraphy. A person’s application to the study of calligraphy promised great rewards. Collections of calligraphies by famous masters of the past offered access to those people, the collection acting as an aesthetic moralia: study of the traces of great men of the past offered models of ethical behavior. In the Bahram Mirza album, depiction—painting and drawing—could now claim a status approaching that of calligraphy.

\textsuperscript{182} The evidence of Qazvin is less compelling given the long tradition of wall painting in Iran, one known quite well from the Timurid period onward.

\textsuperscript{183} The statement was made by Rogers in his additions to the Turkish text by Çağman and Tanrıdd, trans., edited and expanded by Rogers, \textit{The Topkapi Saray Museum: The Albums and Illustrated Manuscripts}, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{184} A positive role was accorded to Dust Muhammad’s explanations about depiction by Soucek. She proposed that it came about as a desire “to make painting an intellectual activity” (idem, “Niẓâmi on Painters and Painting,” p. 12).
Fig. 1. The Prophet Muhammad riding on Gabriel's shoulders; painting from the Mi'raj-nāma. Ascribed to Ahmad Musa by Dust Muhammad. Opaque pigment on paper, 295 × 232 mm (painting). Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 42a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

Fig. 2. Upper painting: The Prophet Muhammad and Gabriel arrive at the Gates of Paradise where they are greeted by the angel Rizvan; painting from the Mi'raj-nāma. Opaque pigment on paper, 220 × 235 mm. Lower painting: Gabriel and the Prophet Muhammad gazing at the Sidrat al-muntahā from the Bayt al-ma'mur, 117 × 235 mm. Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 61a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 3. Prophet Muhammad and the angel Gabriel standing before a giant angel; painting from the Mi’raj-nāma. Ascribed to Ahmad Musa by Dust Muhammad. Opaque pigment on paper, 282 × 238 mm (painting). Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 31b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 4. Angel Gabriel carrying the Prophet Muhammad over water; painting from the Mi’raj-nāma. Ascribed to Ahmad Musa by Dust Muhammad. Opaque pigment on paper, 196 × 240 mm (painting). Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 121a (upper half). (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

Fig. 5. Gabriel and the Prophet Muhammad gazing at the Sidrat al-muntahā; from the Bayt al-ma‘mūr, painting from the Mi’raj-nāma. Opaque pigment on paper, 157 × 241 mm (painting). Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 121a (lower half). (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 6. Royal couple in a landscape. Painting ascribed to Ustad Dust (Dust Divana/Dust Musavvir) by Dust Muhammad. Opaque pigment and gold on paper, 255 × 186 mm (painting). Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 121b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 7. The Prophet Muhammad riding on Buraq attended by Gabriel. Drawing ascribed to Shah Muzaffar by Dust Muhammad. Ink on ivory paper, 328 × 209 mm (drawing). Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 40b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 8. Mani paints the dead dog on the crystal pool; painting from a *Khamsa* of Nizami, ca. 1455–60, Turkmen. Opaque pigment and ink on paper, 353 × 251 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, *Khamsa* of Nizami, H. 753, fol. 305a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul).

Fig. 10. Angel of inspiration visiting the sleeping poet Khvaju Kirmani; painting from a manuscript of the *Three Magnāts* of Khvaju Kirmani (manuscript dated 1396 at Baghdad). Ascribed to 'Abd al-Hayy by Dust Muhammad. Opaque pigments, gold, and ink on paper, 313 × 195 mm (painting and caption). Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 20b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

Fig. 11. Angel of inspiration visiting the sleeping poet Khvaju Kirmani; painting from a manuscript of the *Three Magnāts* of Khvaju Kirmani (manuscript dated 1396 at Baghdad). Detail showing the angel and poet. Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 20b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

Fig. 12. Angel of inspiration visiting the sleeping poet Khvaju Kirmani; painting from a manuscript of the *Three Magnāts* of Khvaju Kirmani (manuscript dated 1396 at Baghdad). Detail showing angels and the starry sky. Opaque pigments, gold, and ink on paper, 313 × 195 mm (painting and caption). Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 20b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Fig. 13. Portrait of a young man. Painting attributable to Florence or Venice and after Bronzino, ca. 1540. Oil pigment on paper(?), 365 × 240 mm (painting). Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 115a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
CHAPTER SEVEN

EPILOGUE

“Books smile as pens shed tears”

al-‘Attabi

“Books are the shells of wisdom,
which are split open for the pearls of character”

Buzurgmihr

“A black object unveils its opposite
As night the uncovering of the dawn.
I have sent you this, and though dumb
It holds conversation with the eyes about that with which it is entrusted
Silent it is if its veil be clasped;
Sparkling when it is opened for enjoyment.”

al-Sari b. Ahmad al-Kindi

These three quotations—two aphorisms and a poem—that extol the virtues of books are among the numerous examples gathered by Ibn al-Nadim in his tenth-century survey of Muslim culture.1 His *Fihrist* also contains a section on the virtues of calligraphy comprising a list of sayings of wise men from the pre-Islamic period up to his own time. Ibn al-Nadim was not alone. Other authors both then and after recorded a rich body of sayings about books and calligraphy. Some of these collections—one example is by Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi (d. after 1009–102)—were prefaced by discourses on technical matters and some by glosses on terms commonly used to refer to the formal features of calligraphy. Sayings about calligraphy often constituted the content of calligraphic specimens and collectively became the lore about the practice that was transmitted by the calligraphers themselves and was thus not only limited to works of belles-lettres.

Literature on the value of calligraphy, the preeminent art form of Islamic cultures, grew rapidly during the period of the Abbasid caliphate and continued until the sixteenth century. The arts of depiction, however, were much less frequently discussed in the early literary tradition, which only yields occasional references to artists and images. The most complete development of a written tradition about art, incorporating calligraphy, depiction, and allied practices of the arts of the book, emerged in the album preface around the middle years of the sixteenth century. By the later years of the fifteenth century, works of history and biography contained references to calligraphers, artists, and other practitioners at renowned courts; in the sixteenth century the custom of writing biographical sketches centering on the practice of art became axiomatic. Following developments in late fifteenth-century historical and biographical works, calligraphers inserted narrativized lists of makers into their technical treatises on calligraphy. It was also in the transition from the fifteenth

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to the sixteenth century that the earliest prefaces were composed for albums. Written by members of the Persian bureaucratic class these first album prefaces consisted of themes culled from the literary tradition that would remain constant in all album prefaces of the sixteenth century with two major additions: a narrativized list of sequential biographical sketches and anecdotes. It was left to the calligrapher to institute these additions and to present the preface as a history of art.

The idea of adding a preface to albums no doubt had its precedent in prefaces to books. This already established genre dictated the general framework of the album preface by providing its themes, its lexicon of terms, and its poetic images which were not merely surface ornament but extended into the deep structure of the text. Rhetoric also offered a means of organizing aesthetic experience and notions about art into language. In the tradition of prefatory genres, those written for albums had two unique characteristics: its narrativized list and its attempts to mold the hybrid contents of the new literary form into a single topic—art.

Knowledge about the history of art and artistic practices was expressed through biography, an episteme of linked, sequential practitioners, a method also widely applied to the histories of other pursuits. Similarities between the historical dimension of the preface and those of other disciplines extended to the conceptual relationship of the work as a trace of its maker, a concept that finds its analogue in historical and biographical writing generally. The production of history and biography was driven by a desire for remembrance, a concern also expressed in the album’s preservation of works by masters of the art tradition. The language and criteria of judgment used in the preface find their parallel in an ethical literature concerned with mankind’s potential for perfectability. Some persons were more perfect than others, or so the prefaces proclaim, and practitioners were accorded a privileged status among the most perfect. The practitioner not only increased his skill through painstaking effort but also possessed innate capacities that distinguished him from other people. Venerable practitioners were models for the preface reader and album viewer to follow. The preface also accords this distinction to the viewer, building on a concept of the morally and spiritually developed person fully incorporated into the Perso-Islamicate literary tradition.

By the sixteenth century, the functions of art, architecture, and literary endeavor and what such pursuits promised to the patron had been fully articulated. Cultural practices and their sponsors formed an image of the ideal court and generated a courtly ethos inherited and reproduced over time and from court to court. This continuity of practice and ethos was ensured by a class of courtiers who could be counted on to guard their heritage despite changes in the political order. Although the album was a relative newcomer to the court’s cultural forms and activities, it easily fitted into preexisting practices by being organized according to the epistemes of history-biography and ethics. The recent achievements of the Timurid court in Herat offered the most powerful and appealing model for the Safavid courtiers.

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3 For a detailed study of the early development of these notions, see Oya Pancaroğlu, “‘A World Unto Himself’: The Rise of a New Human Image in the Late Seljuk Period (1150–1250),” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2000.

4 Looking, in particular, at Fakhri Haravi’s Javāhir al-ʿajāʻib (Wonderous Jewels), a biography of women poets, Szuppe writes: “It seems that the cultural and intellectual life of Herāt was more intense than pre-
All these factors came into play in generating the album preface’s particular literary tone and texture. The stylized rhetoric of official courtly Persian literature, including its etiquette, exemplarity, and willful intricacy of words and layering of meanings that had then to be excavated were the textual priorities of the preface writer. It became art historical, presented the way responses to art were articulated, and how word, image, and maker were to be judged. More prescriptive than descriptive, the preface represented a cluster of social expectations and formal conventions. In writing the preface, the calligrapher was demonstrating his acumen, integrating knowledge, and showing his command over the requisite language. In short, the calligrapher was following the courtly behavior that earlier authors like Murvarid and Khvandamir/Amini had followed before him.

The ultimate progeny of the sixteenth-century prefatory tradition is Qazi Ahmad’s *Gulistan-i hunar* written between 1596 and 1606. The all-encompassing dimension of Qazi Ahmad’s text is figured by the hundreds of biographies of practitioners that he inserts into it. It contains information derived from written sources of the sixteenth century interwoven with passages composed by Qazi Ahmad himself and excerpts culled from such sources as Budaq Munshi Qazvini’s history and the prefaces by Qutb al-Din Muhammad, Mir Sayyid Ahmad, and Shams al-Din Muhammad. In literary form, rhetoric, and organization of information about the tradition it replicates, the album preface is best exemplified by those of Dust Muhammad, Malik Daylami, Qutb al-Din Muhammad, and Mir Sayyid Ahmad. The only differences between Qazi Ahmad’s text and the album preface proper lie in the addition of a technical treatise—Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi’s *Sirāt al-suṭūr* (1514)—and a conclusion (really an appendix) with recipes and instructions for making ink and pigments. The overbuilding of contents in the *Gulistan-i hunar* sealed its fate. Although generically similar to the album preface, it far exceeded it in length, making it overly long for an introductory text. Arguably, the fullness of Qazi Ahmad’s text was possible because it was freed from the literary challenges imposed by the preface.

After reading this book, those familiar with the art histories of pre-modern Europe and China may have found similarities to the Persian tradition of the sixteenth century. Points of similarity include the methodological challenges posed by the written sources when coming...
to grips with their literary dimensions; the literary texture of the written source;\textsuperscript{10} historical parallels, including features of the sociocultural networks and contexts in which the texts were produced;\textsuperscript{11} interrelated aesthetic conceptions;\textsuperscript{12} methods used to organize a tradition and its impact on the formation of a canon; and the folding together of history, aesthetic theory, and criticism into written sources.\textsuperscript{13} A detailed analysis of these points of similarity and difference extends beyond the framework of this study.\textsuperscript{14} That noted, several points of difference can be identified and discussed here, especially those that have a direct bearing on the understanding of the nature of Persianate art historiography during the sixteenth century.

The first point of difference involves the notion that the increased prominence of the artist’s biography in particular is evidence of his rising status. Despite the problems inherent in gauging the nature of this change over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the fact remains that references to depiction and to artists occur with increasing frequency in biographical and historical works and in album prefaces. It is not until the very end of the sixteenth century, however, that a text written by an artist surfaces, Sadiqi Beg Afshar’s \textit{Qānūn al-suwar}.\textsuperscript{15} Until Sadiqi composed his treatise on the practice of depiction, treatise literature had been the exclusive domain of the calligrapher (working in the context of the \textit{kitābkhāna} and/or chancellery) and prefaces written only by calligraphers or bureaucrats of noble families who moved in court circles.

Recently J. Michael Rogers questioned the status of album prefaces as history of art; of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{10} From a large body of literature on this subject the following three studies can be singled out, Michael Baxandall’s \textit{Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350–1450} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Rubin’s \textit{Giorgio Vasari: Art and History}, esp. chap. 4; and Maguire’s \textit{Art and Eloquence in Byzantium}. All three examine literary traditions on art in relation to rhetoric. A slightly different tack is taken by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, \textit{Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment} (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), who examine the recurrence of conceptions about the artist in biographical forms from the Hellenistic period to the Renaissance, specifically the persistence of leitmotifs and the artist anecdote.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Such a study could examine the constitution of the court in various cultural settings and the social contexts, for example the literati gatherings, in which art was viewed and discussed. For the latter, see Deborah Del Gais Muller, “Hsia Wen-Yen and His T’u-Hui Pao-Chien (Precious Mirror of Painting),” \textit{Ars Orientalis} 18 (1988): 131–48.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} The most obvious parallel is the central place accorded to calligraphy in both the Islamic and Chinese traditions and the relationship between calligraphy and the representation of forms other than written characters. Painting was theorized along the same lines as calligraphy and literature in pre-modern Iran, just as it had been in China. Comparative analysis could draw on a rich body of literature written in China that combines technical advice with the history of tradition and that also expresses aesthetic concepts. For examples of the Chinese treatise literature, see Chang Ch’ung-ho and Hans H. Frankel, \textit{Two Chinese Treatises on Calligraphy: Treatise on Calligraphy (Shu Pu) Sun Qianli; Sequel to the “Treatise on Calligraphy” (Xu shu pu) Jiang Kui} (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995); and Susan Bush, \textit{The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037–1101) to Tang Chi-ch’ang (1555–1636)} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971). For similarities in training by use of models and the calligrapher’s relationship to tradition in particular, see Lothar Ledderose, \textit{Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).
  \item \textsuperscript{13} All three are combined in Vasari (Rubin, \textit{Giorgio Vasari: Art and History}, p. 2) and would not be separated out until the eighteenth century.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} One study that deals in part with a cross-cultural analysis of artistic traditions, focused on the central theme of collecting, is Alsop’s \textit{Rare Art Traditions}. Art history is one of what he terms “linked phenomena” in a collecting culture.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} For a translation, see Dickson and Welch, \textit{Houghton Shahnameh}, 1:259–69. Dickson and Welch date the \textit{Qānūn al-suwar} to the period between 1576 and 1602. The treatise was included in a gathering of texts written by Sadiqi Beg during his lifetime (ibid., 1:259).
\end{itemize}
their authors, he remarked: “Their treatises are not art-historical works but addresses to patrons: if they were practitioners themselves their works could be cited to ennoble the craft of painting; but the patron-dedicatee, even of the finest illustrated manuscript, never gave way to the connoisseur—commissioner—any more than it has ever done in any other culture.” Rogers, perhaps including texts such as that by Qazi Ahmad and not just the prefaces exemplified by Dust Muhammad, notes the formality of the relationship between the author and the primary reader he is addressing (i.e., ruler, prince). He also seems to propose that such texts would have been different had artists written them, in that they would have incorporated more references to painting and drawing. Such a proposition that the author’s primary profession determined the content of the text raises the question about the intended role that the written source, including the preface, was meant to play. It suggests that the preface was used to bring about change, that it had the power to persuade its reader to act in a certain way or to think about depiction in particular terms. It also claims that the incorporation of references to depiction in the sixteenth-century context was in part intended to enhance the status of the practice, even to intellectualize it. In the Renaissance context, the same intention has been ascribed in the artist’s turn to the writing of literature, Vasari being its most famous proponent. By writing about depiction in a specific language, the artist could show his verbal acumen and visual knowledge, and thereby bring the art form into the center of an intellectual discourse where it had not had a place before.

But what we know of the artist’s status at the Safavid court suggests an altogether different rationale for the preface. Sketchy as they are, references in a range of sources indicate the potential for an intimate relationship between selected artists and the august patron of royal or high-ranking non-royal status. The artist—and calligrapher, of course—not only worked for the patron but participated in courtly activities. Moreover, the arts of depiction occupied a central, unquestioned role in the cultural pursuits of the court, in the production of illustrated and unillustrated books (in the latter through techniques such as illumination and marginal schemes), single-page images, and découpage. Patronage was court-centered and there existed no craft or trade-guild structure for painters (or calligraphers) beyond this economic framework. Depiction needed no text to argue either for its need or its merits; its high status was a given. If the preface had any kind of agency, it was to provide examples of the patronage of artists, in addition to calligraphers, to structure a relationship between contemporary and past patrons.

A second issue is the nature of responses to art outlined in the preface and whether or not the prefaces might be understood as embodiments of theoretical notions. It is clear that the prefaces were subject to certain structures of literary expression developed in courtly

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17 Soucek suggested this for Dust Muhammad (“Nizāmī on Painters and Painting,” p. 12).

18 See Rubin, Giorgio Vasari: Art and History, esp. p. 5; and Rossi, “Sprezzatura, Patronage, and Fate,” p. 60. Rossi provides examples of condescension to artists in the face of their attempts to be “remembered as gentlemen and literati” (ibid., pp. 60–61). See also Francis Ames-Lewis, The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000). By the end of the sixteenth century a literature had developed in which the artist’s relationship to the patron was described along with the abilities the artist should possess (Robert Williams, “The Vocation of the Artist as Seen by Giovanni Battista Armenini,” Art History 18, 4 [December 1995]: 518–36).
literature and that it was desirable that those structures be retained; they controlled the preface’s content and were the reason behind the absence of lengthy descriptions of works of art. The Persianate art historical tradition did not develop a rhetorical genre of ekphrasis, the description of a work of art commonly found in Western art literatures. But it would be incorrect to deduce that the habit of description did not exist, even though textually recorded descriptions of paintings are rare and the descriptive aspect of the text requires definition.

'Abdi Beg Shirazi, the Safavid court poet who flourished in the middle years of the sixteenth century, composed a Khamsa, titled Jannāt al-'adān (The Gardens of Paradise) at Shah Tahmasp’s request. In its poems the gardens and palaces of Qazvin form the central subject. One of the Khamsa’s poems, the Dawlat al-azhār (The Blazing Tree), includes descriptions of paintings in addition to its main focus on the iwan of the Chihil Sutun and two other palaces. The poetic framework and the descriptions express similar concerns and exhibit similar results to those encountered in the prefaces: a marked preference for structure and for prescribing the viewer’s affective responses in the aesthetic experience and not to articulate the image’s minutiae of form and content. The language of the preface does not attempt to produce a semblance of the absent, or removed, object present in the viewer’s mind. Despite this similarity, however, it should be remembered that the preface accompanied an album, an object which had been constructed to allow visual examination of collected calligraphies, paintings, and drawings. The union between text and image obviously made lengthy description redundant. For similar reasons, prefaces were not vehicles for developing a theory of aesthetic effects and principles of practice, although they contain allusions to both. But from all of these allusions, inferences, and hints we may not assume that theoretical notions were absent or technical knowledge scarce. The text operates within a tradition of discursive representation that seems to us wilfully obscure but which was actually conventional. This coyness of the text engages the reader in the mental


20 For an edition of the text, see ‘Abdi Beg Shirāzī, Dawlat al-azhār, ed. Abū al-Fażl Hāshim Ev-Oghli Rahimov (Moscow: Dānish, 1974).


22 In this respect it is comparable to Roger de Piles abbreviated Lives of Vasari (1697–99). Alpers notes a shift of emphasis in his book to a “viewer’s experience of painting rather than the explication of a picture” (Svetlana Alpers, “Roger de Piles and the History of Art,” Wolfenbüttler Forschungen 48 [1991]: 175–88; esp. 180).

23 Although the individuating power of ekphrasis has been questioned in the European context; see Alpers, “Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari’s Lives,” esp. p. 191.

24 Comparable in balance and focal points are written sources of the medieval West. Noting these features, Barret comments on the puzzle that the tradition “should have left virtually no criticism of individual works and hardly any speculation on the nature of art.” He then provides a useful summary of the types of texts that are available and what they include. See Cyril Barret, “Medieval Art Criticism,” British Journal of Aesthetics 5, 1 (January 1965): 25–36; esp. 25. Focusing on art historiography of the same historical context is E. F. Van Der Grinten, Elements of Art Historiography in Medieval Texts (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).
gymnastics of a literary complex, perhaps to reflect the contemporary belief in the dissimilarity of words and images and that words were inadequate for conveying visually perceived phenomena.  

Numerous social and cultural factors worked together in the sixteenth century to crystallize a series of developments, most of which had taken place by the final years of the fifteenth. These developments were critical to the articulation of the history of a tradition and its masters in a new literary form that found its primary context in the album. At the end of the century came texts like Qazi Ahmad’s monumental biography and Sadiqi Beg’s Qānūn al-ṣawwar. Inspired by his encounter with a certain Qutb al-Din Muhammad in Baghdad, Mustafa ‘Ali went on to write his Menākib-i hünververān in 1587 at a time when he lamented the absence of a patron in Istanbul equal to the likes of Sultan Husayn Mirza or Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i. It is not surprising that the fullest text—Qazi Ahmad’s—and the one that broke the mold—Sadiqi Beg’s—should have appeared at a time when everything was changing.

Although Shah ‘Abbas’s cultural projects replicated the long-standing idea of the court and its cultural prerogatives, the disruption created during the years when Shah Isma’il II and Muhammad Khudabandā ruled and the later years of Shah Tahmāsp’s reign had brought about an entirely new context for the production of art. The execution of single-sheet paintings and drawings was now integrated into an economic structure that supported speculative production, effectively freeing the practitioner from the need for a patron. It may well be that larger social and economic reforms played a major role in transforming the nature of the relationship between court patronage and production. Whatever the precise causes of the change, the dense and rich output of art historiographic literature in the sixteenth century—especially its cluster of album prefaces—was such as we have not seen in Iran at any time since. In hindsight the court formation of the sixteenth century appears to have been quite fragile, subject to a slow erosion. Its tightly drawn elite circle of participants and players was scattered and unable to reunite by the century’s end, a fact of critical consequence to the dissemination of knowledge. But it was also a time of new aesthetic priorities in the visual and literary arts for which the old court-centered model was no longer of use.

25 Scholars of Renaissance art literatures have framed the same question even if they have not pursued it. Commenting on the better understanding of the debt of Renaissance art literature to Classical rhetoric, Goldstein (“Rhetoric and Art History in the Italian Renaissance and Baroque,” p. 643) goes on to remark: “What has not been shown, or not with equal clarity, is how the language-based system is to be understood in relation to the visual arts it purports to define and evaluate.” Moreover, noting the problems of connecting ekphraseis to the works of art they purportedly described, James and Webb (“‘To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places’,” p. 9) suggest a shift of focus, that “ekphraseis should be used to examine perceptions about art rather than particular works.”

26 Several years after Qazi Ahmad and Sadiqi Beg, Iskandar Beg Munshi would sit down to compose his Tārīkh-i ‘alāmarā-yi ‘Abbāsī (completed by 1629). Dating to several years after the last preface studied in this book (1609), his history contains numerous biographies of calligraphers and artists that are very much the same as the model developed by Khvandamir for the practitioner’s taṣkīra. But as Savory has noted, Iskandar Beg Munshi’s history is “perhaps the last in the chain of great Persian medieval histories” (History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great, trans. Savory, 1:xvii).
APPENDIX 1. DESCRIPTION, LITERATURE, AND RECENSIONS

MURVARID'S PREFACE TO THE ALBUM FOR MIR 'ALI SHIR NAVA'I

Description. The recensions of Murvarid’s preface included in his inshâ’, known as the Sharaf-nâma, are usually copied in a script that combines features of naskh and nastalîq in black ink with red ink used for transitional phrases and to introduce poetic segments.

Literature. Murvarid’s preface has been published twice: Roemer, Staatschreiben der Timuridenzeit, pp. 131–35, no. 74, German translation, and Persian facsimile (fols. 74a–76a); and Mâyîl Harâvî, “Muraqqa’ sâzi dar dawra-yi Timûrân,” Hunar va mardum 143 (1305): 32–36. Haravî includes a Persian edition of the preface.

Recensions. Roemer notes the likelihood that other manuscripts of Murvarid’s Sharaf-nâma exist in Istanbul collections. To his list (see ibid., pp. 24–25) the following two manuscripts should be added: (1) Munsha’ât-i ’Abîd Allâh Mûrvarîd (Istanbul, TSK H. 828), copied by Muhammad Muhîni in Egypt, Ramadan 962 (20 July–18 August 1555), the preface covers fols. 135b–137a, and it is given a slightly different title, Inshâ’-yi muraqqa’-i Haţrat Amîr Nizâm al-Dîn ‘Ali Shîr. For a general description of H. 828, see Fehmi Edhem Karatay, Topkapı Saray Müzesi Kütüphanesi Farsça Yazmalar Kataloğu (Istanbul: Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Yayınları, 1961), no. 328. (2) The Süleymaniye Library (Hüsrev Paşa 515, titled Majmû’a, fols. 123b–260b). The preface is called Inshâ’-yi muraqqa’-i Haţrat-i Mîr (fols. 228b–230b) and varies only slightly from the other known recensions. The Persian text reproduced in Roemer’s facsimile is in Istanbul, IUL F. 87 and is dated 958 (1551). Still other recensions are listed in Dânînishpazhûh, “Dâbîrî va nîvîsandagî,” no. 8, Hunar va Mardum 111 (January 1972): 48–56; 53.

KHVANDAMIR/AMINI’S PREFACE TO THE ALBUM COMPILED BY BIHZAD

Description. Khvandamir/Amini’s preface, included in Khvandamir’s inshâ’ manual called the Nâmâ-yi nâmî, is usually copied in black ink in nastalîq with titles in red ink. The edition of the preface examined here is from the Paris manuscript of the Nâmâ-yi nâmî (Paris, BN, supp. persan 1842, fols. 118b–120a; 187 fols., 240 x 130 mm, ink on colored papers). Muhammad b. Malik Muhammad al-Ustadi finished copying it during the second ten-day period of the month of Sha’ban 1020 (19–28 October 1611).


Recensions. Several manuscripts of the inshâ’ are referred to in published catalogues, but a

**DUST MUHAMMAD’S PREFACE TO THE BAHRAM MIRZA ALBUM**

The preface is a unicum and exists as an autograph in Istanbul, TSK H. 2154 (album, 149 fols., 484 x 345 mm; preface text, fols. 8b–17b). The album was probably assembled in Tabriz, and the preface is dated 951 (1544–45).

Description. The preface lies between fols. 8b and 17b of the album in an uninterrupted sequence. It is written in *nasta’līq* in black, gold, and colored inks (white, red, blue, light green, lapis-lazuli and pink), selected to contrast and harmonize with an equally wide variety of colored papers. The color of paper used is typically contrasted with that of the paper margin; each margin is in a single unmodulated color and is sprinkled with gold. The text pages are enlivened by the use of differently colored inks that highlight words, Koranic quotations, and the titles of rulers. Poetry is placed in intercolumnar rulings inscribed in black and gold to distinguish it from the prose. All of the preface folios are marked with catchwords to aid collation.

As in other album prefaces, an elaborate double-page illuminated frame marks the beginning. These first two pages (fols. 8b–9a) are sumptuous; written in blue and white inks on a solid gold ground, the text panels are enshrined in a double-page illuminated frame. These frames are ubiquitous in Islamic books and follow the structure and layout developed for both Korans and secular manuscripts, where they served either to magnify important points in the book or to signal their subdivisions.

In part because of preconceptions about the appropriate location of a preface, some scholars have suggested that the integrity of the beginning folio sequence (fols. 1b–7b) in the Bahram Mirza album has been compromised. A survey of the location of other sixteenth-century prefaces in the albums they accompany yields various possibilities. The Bahram Mirza album’s fourth folio (fol. 4a–b) is certainly not part of the original as demonstrated by its anomalous decorated paper margins and by the style of illumination used to decorate its calligraphic specimens. A codicological examination of the remaining folios in this sequence (fols. 1a–8a) reveals that in the unlikely event that some of them had been taken from later points in the album, the preface could never have followed immediately after the ex libris
on fol. 1a, a conclusion established principally from two fixed points in the sequence (fol. 1a–b and fol. 8a–b) and supported by auxiliary evidence.

The first point (fol. 1a–b) is the opening medallion; it is followed by facing pages (fols. 1b–2a) assembled from paintings and drawings. The second fixed point (fol. 8a–b) is a calligraphy by Princess Sultanum, followed by the first page of the album preface. Sultanum’s calligraphy on fol. 8a faces another (fol. 7b) executed and signed by her. With only one exception (fol. 7a), the pages between these points—that is, fols. 2b–7a (fol. 4a–b is not included)—are composed of specimens by calligraphers who were either exact or near contemporaries of Bahram Mirza and were employed by Safavid patrons.

Facing the preface’s epilogue (fol. 17b) is a page assembled from three calligraphies signed by Bahram Mirza, Baysunghur, and Khalil Allah. This calligraphic page is numbered fol. 17a (two folios were given the number 17 during the album’s modern pagination). The reverse side of this page is composed of a painting depicting a falcon, which faces another painting of the same subject (on fol. 18a). The second falcon leads on to a calligraphic page with works by Muhammad Rahim and Navruz Ahmad (fol. 18b), and a run of pages signed by the Uzbek ruler ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (fols. 19a–20a). The next two pages (fols. 20b–21a) pair a late-fourteenth-century Jalayirid painting ascribed by Dust Muhammad to the master ‘Abd al-Hayy with a Chinese bird-and-flower painting on silk.

**Literature.** The first complete publication of Dust Muhammad’s preface in Persian was undertaken by M. Abdullah Chaghtai (*A Treatise on Calligraphists and Miniaturists: Ḥālāt-i Humārvarān* [Lahore: Chabuk Savaran, 1936]). The text has numerous errors but most are minor. Bayani’s subsequent publication of the preface in Persian (Bayānī, *Akvāl va ẓāgār*, 1, 1, pp. 192–203, no. 317) is useful but it also contains errors, and he does not always indicate where he has omitted passages. A third transcription was published by Fikri Saljuqi (*Ẓikr-i barkhā az khushnivān va hunarmandān* [Kabul: Anjumān-i Tārikh va Adab, 1349/1970], pp. 4–20). It is little more than a reiteration of Chaghtai, but without the preface’s introductory remarks (not included are TSK H. 2154, fols. 8b, 9a, 9b, 10a, 10b, and 11a up to line 3). Saljuqi provides notes and a commentary. The most recent Persian transcription of the preface is Mayīl Haravī (“Dībācha-yi Dūst Muḥammad Gavashānī Haravī,” in *Kitāb ārā’t dar tamuddan-i islāmī*, pp. 259–76). It is also incomplete and does not systematically indicate lacunae.

Dust Muhammad’s preface attracted scholarly attention in the West after its abridged translation—which reads more like a summary in places—appeared in 1933 (Binyon, Wilkinson, and Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting*, pp. 183–88, app. 1). Thackston produced the first unabridged English translation (Thackston, *A Century of Princes*, pp. 335–49). Extensive notes accompany it and provide information on the historical personages cited by Dust Muhammad, the years when the artists and calligraphers were active (established from signed and dated manuscripts), and notes on art terminology.

**SHAH QULI KHALIFA’S PREFACE TO THE SHAH TAHMASP ALBUM**

The preface is a unicum and exists as an autograph in Istanbul, IUL, F. 1422 (album, 89 fols., 318 x 187 mm; preface text, fols. 1b–4b, 21b, 27b). The preface is undated but was probably completed before 1558.

**Description.** At present the Shah Tahmasp album preface runs from fol. 1b to fol. 4b; the
album begins with an ex libris on fol. 1a, and the preface opens with an illuminated heading on fol. 1b. The next two pages of the preface are located on fols. 21b and 27b and are integral to the folios to which they are attached. The a sides of fols. 21 and 27 are composed of paintings from a fourteenth-century Kalila wa Dimna manuscript. Although the album opened with the preface (following immediately after an illuminated ex libris on fol. 1a) and ran until fol. 4b, fols. 21b and 27b indicate that it was not arranged in a continuous sequence when the album was compiled; rather, it was interspersed with folios on which paintings were attached.

The text is written in black ink in nasta’liq on smooth ivory paper with blue and gold inks highlighting transitional segments, names, and Arabic quotations. Small dots of gold serve as punctuation marks and to divide couplets of poetry (absent from fol. 21b). The margins are of different colors and are sprinkled with gold.

**Literature.** The preface is unpublished. Edhem and Stchoukine used it for their brief description of the album, noting that Shah Quli Khalîfa assembled it for Shah Tahmasp (Fehmi Edhem and Ivan Stchoukine, *Manuscrits orientaux illustrés de la Bibliothèque l’Université de Stamboul* [Paris: E. de Boccard, 1933], pp. 40–43, cat. no. 34). Based on his reading of the preface, Morton took issue with Shah Quli Khalîfa’s role in the album’s formation, stating that it was made for him and not for Shah Tahmasp (Morton, “The Chûb-i Ţarîq and Qizilbâsh Ritual in Safavid Persia,” p. 228, n. 9).

**MALIK DAYLAMI’S PREFACE TO THE AMIR HUSAYN BEG ALBUM**

The preface is a unicum and exists as an autograph in Istanbul, TSK H. 2151 (album 104 fols., 506 x 345 mm; preface text fols. 1b, 2a–b, 74a–b, 25a–b, 23a–b, [lacuna] 98a–b, 33a–b, [lacuna?], and album H. 2161, fol. 2a). The preface was probably composed in Qazvin and is dated 968 (1560–61).

**Description.** The complexity of the Amir Husayn Beg album’s codicology equals that of album H. 2156 and the Amir Ghayb Beg album (TSK, H. 2161). One of the folios from the Amir Husayn Beg album is misbound into the Amir Ghayb Beg album, and the latest dated calligraphy in the album (fol. 29a, 992/1584–85) was done 24 years after Malik Daylami’s preface. This chronological discrepancy and the extremely wide variety of marginal schemes in the Amir Husayn Beg album indicate a misbinding of folios, which resulted from several albums being rebound and repaired, probably in Istanbul in the late nineteenth century.

The Amir Husayn Beg album is currently in a late-Aqqoyunlu-period binding which names Yusuf Bahadur, son of Uzun Hasan, in an inscription on its endcap (ba-rasm-i kutubkhâna-yi hażrat shâh va shâhzâda-yi ‘alamiyân Abû al-‘Izz Yüsuf Bahâdur khallada Allâhu mukhâl), “By order of the library of his highness the king and son of the king of the world, Abû al-‘Izz Yusuf Bahadur, may God extend his dominion”). This binding, made decades before Amir Husayn Beg’s album, was reused for the purposes of containing the album’s folios at a later time, perhaps as late as the nineteenth century. Some of the album’s folios may have been trimmed down to fit the binding. Several of the Safavid-period albums contemporary to that made for Amir Husayn Beg have lacquered covers, for example, the Shah Tahmasp album (IUL, F. 1422), the Amir Ghayb Beg album (TSK, H. 2161), and a second album...
made for Bahram Mirza (TSK, B. 410). These three are examples of lacquered bindings for albums during the middle years of the sixteenth century. The Amir Husayn Beg album may once have been bound between such lacquered covers.

The current collation of folios in Amir Husayn Beg’s album disperses the preface folios throughout; their original order of reading was first established by Bayani. Fols. 1b–2a are contained in illuminated frames with elaborate painted margins. It is not possible at present to say whether the remaining preface folios (after fol. 2b) followed in an unbroken sequence. If they did, the arrangement would have been like that in the Bahram Mirza album and the Amir Ghayb Beg album, where adjacent paper margins were not matched by color, but where the album preface’s folios were gathered together as a unit and placed at the beginning.

The preface is written in a black ink in nasta’liq—some words (introductions to poetry, personal names, sayings in Arabic) are highlighted in colored pigments—over sheets of gold-sprinkled ivory paper. Occasional bands of gold and polychrome illumination are used to highlight poems that are also set off by gold rulings edged in black. In the dramatic opening pages the text is in illuminated frames, and the margins are extensively decorated in polychrome and gold. Washes in gold augment the sumptuousness of the pages done in inked line and fields of rich polychrome pigment. The margins are filled with a landscape of flowers, rocks and wispy trees, inhabited by groups of animals: lions and tigers attack deer, a lion attacks an ox, a dragon fights a bixie, pairs of deer and cloud bixies recline free from molestation. Also to be seen are plumed birds in the tree and a jackal. The animals are arranged in the margin around the double-page illuminated frames. Subsequent margins are equally elaborate but in different techniques. Several of them treat the margin as a landscape populated with animals and plants, rendered in gold line and wash over variously colored papers, and others pass over figural elements for a pattern of floral motifs. Contrasting the opening pages, polychrome elements in subsequent preface folios are restricted by and large to the color of the margin and to colored inks used for copying selected portions of the text. A few margins use colored pigments for their decoration: one shows a patterned arrangement of interconnected lozenges and cartouches, each containing animals rendered in gold against polychrome garlands of flowers. Intervening spaces are filled with subsidiary geometric shapes containing flowers, and the ground is completed by cloud bands reserved in the color of the margin surrounded by gold. The seam rulings concealing the join of the preface inset and the paper margin are done in gold guard stripes with variously colored lines.

In his preface to the album, Malik Daylami identifies three practitioners—Muzaffar ‘Ali, Mulla Masih Allah, and Jalal Beg—as the ones who decorated, illuminated, and arranged the album’s folios. Malik Daylami notes that some of the folios were decorated and illuminated by Muzaffar ‘Ali and attributes the organization of the album and its elements to Mulla Masih Allah and Jalal Beg. Muzaffar ‘Ali’s handiwork can be associated directly with some of the margins of the album preface and others throughout the album.

MIR SAYYID AHMAD’S PREFACE TO ALBUM H. 2156

The preface exists as an autograph copy in Istanbul, TSK H. 2156 (album 100 fols., 459 x 305 mm; preface text fols. 1b, 44a, 44b, 30a, 30b) signed by Ahmad al-Husayni al-Mashhadi, who probably copied the preface in Qazvin. It is dated 971 (1563). The album’s margins are inscribed with the years 980 and 982 (1572 and 1575).

Description. Although the preface is currently interspersed throughout the album, its five pages of text originally ran consecutively at the very beginning. Fol. 1b has an illuminated heading, and catchwords connect it to fol. 44a–b, followed by fol. 30a–b. The margins framing the album text pages are yellow and decorated with gold lotus-variant flowers and other floral motifs. Seam rulings inscribed around the text pages follow a standard pattern (lapis lazuli, gold outlined in black, light blue, purple, and green), and these were completed after the trimmed sheets of text had been positioned and glued in place over the bilaminate yellow folios. The album text pages are of a dark ivory color and the text is written in black nastā’iṣ. Gold ink is reserved for Arabic quotations. The decoration on some pages is augmented by painted gold floral motifs executed around and between the lines of script.

The identity of the patron and recipient is unknown; the chances of finding it out were hindered by the album’s rebinding, when library seals or endpapers bearing notations were removed. The contents of album H. 2156 and therefore its shape as a collection result from the rebinding sometime in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century under the Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II. At that time folios from three separate albums, and possibly a fourth, were rearranged and bound. Album H. 2156 was bound in a new Hamidian-period binding (red leather with “Victorian”-style gold stamping).

Originally fol. 1b was located at the album’s opening and this placement survived the rebinding; however, its a side bears no traces of an illuminated ex libris in which a patron might have been named, as is the case in other albums. There is only a brief notation describing the album’s contents added by a librarian during the Ottoman period and four Ottoman seal impressions, two identifiable as seals of Ahmed I (r. 1603–17), and Ahmed III (r. 1703–30), and the other two not identified. Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s preface is almost certainly one of the stenciled folios decorated with cartouches that contain poems and dates because the composite seam ruling inscribed on the folios of both groups is identical. The preface margins are much simpler than the stenciled ones. All are of yellow paper decorated with gold lotuses, rosettes, buds, and leaves on stalks.

MIR SAYYID AHMAD’S PREFACE TO THE AMIR GHAYB BEG ALBUM

The preface is a unicum and exists as an autograph in Istanbul, TSK H. 2161 (album 192 fols., 461 x 344 mm; preface text fols. 7a–16b; chronogram fols. 186b–190a), signed by Ahmad al-Husayni al-Mashhadi (his signature appears at the conclusion of the preface and the chronogram). The preface is dated 972 (1564–65) and the chronogram was completed in Herat in 973 (1565–66).

Description. The preface runs continuously between fols. 7a and 16b. The text is written in black ink in nastā’iṣ on ivory paper decorated with interlinear gold lotus-like flowers. Other colors are used to highlight key phrases, words, and transitional passages. The catchphrases
found on some of the album preface’s text pages indicate that an attempt was made to maintain the correct textual sequence in the process of transforming loose, single sheets into finished album folios. The margins, stunning examples of stenciled ornament superimposed with drawing in gold, exhibit great variety, but they were not arranged so that facing pages would match.

The chronogram has features that make it consistent with those of the preface (its calligraphy and paper). However, these folios remain incomplete. All of the margins have only the first application of pigment, for which a stencil was used, without any of the drawing in gold or the addition of secondary colors characteristic of the preface’s other folios. Furthermore, the chronogram text pages lack the gold flowers (lotus variant) found on the preface’s pages. This characteristic treatment of interlinear decoration is also found in some of the album’s arrangements of calligraphies and paintings. The incompleteness of the chronogram pages, dated one year after the preface, suggests that the album may never have been completed.

In the analysis of album H. 2156 and the Amir Husayn Beg album, it became clear that their codicology had been disrupted and altered by rebinding and the rearrangement of groups of folios. The same is also true of Amir Ghayb Beg’s album. In its present incarnation, it too would appear to be a late-nineteenth-century recombination of two separate albums plus some folios added from others. Analysis of its Safavid-period lacquer binding shows that its envelope flap was widened sometime in the late nineteenth century, probably during the reign of Abdulhamid II (r. 1876–1909), and a new leather endcap was attached to the binding’s upper and lower covers. In the process, the Safavid fore-edge flap was disassembled and its lacquered inner and outer surfaces removed and reattached to a wider pasteboard strip. This made it some two centimeters wider, allowing the binding to hold about forty folios more than the original Safavid one. The current block of folios combines the original Amir Ghayb Beg album with folios from the Amir Husayn Beg album, four folios from the 1544–45 Bahram Mirza album, and others from still other albums. The most plausible explanation is that the folios now in the Amir Ghayb Beg album were put together during a massive album and manuscript rebinding in the reign of Abdulhamid II.

It is possible, however, to make some preliminary observations about the preface’s location in the Amir Ghayb Beg album. The current sequence (fols. 7a–16b) is continuous, and there are no lacunae in the text. The first page of the album’s preface is on the a side of fol. 7, and it is placed in an illuminated frame. Usually prefaces begin on the b side of a folio, and are thus arranged as two facing pages (b side facing a side of the next folio). By beginning a preface on the a side, the Amir Ghayb Beg album departed from the practice of other examples, a feature that shows that it must have been preceded by at least one folio. Thus, although the beginning sequence of the Amir Ghayb Beg album folios still needs to be reconstructed, it is unlikely that it began with the preface. Instead, a series of large illuminated rosettes, circles, and panels in the album (some of them are on fols. 29a–b, 30a–b), may originally have formed the opening folios. The illuminated pages correspond to each other by establishing relationships of composition—playing on symmetry—design and palette, and it is not inconceivable that they were matched on facing pages. If this was the case, the album’s beginning sequence developed a standard feature of the luxury book, namely the illuminated frame (used to mark beginnings and subdivisions), and/or ex libris.
But they indicate changes when compared to the luxury book through the magnification of scale and decoration and the removal of textual elements that tied such features to a specific function. The mirroring relationships—which are always denied perfect symmetry through the alteration of some small element of structure or a change in palette—referred to the practice of double-page compositions and played on the wider cultural allusion of the mirror.

**Literature.** Scholarly references to Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s album preface are included here because Mir Sayyid Ahmad excerpted segments from it as well as reorganizing the sequence of its parts. Persian editions of Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s preface were published by Husayn Khadiv Jam, “Risâla-i dar târîkh-i khaṭṭ va naqqâshî az Qutb al-Din Muhammad Qiṣṣa-Khvān,” *Sukhan* 1716–17 (1346/1967): 666–76; Mahdí Bayânî, *Akvāl va āqār*, 1:50–54; and Māyil Hāravī, “Dībāchā-yi Qutb al-Din Muḥammad Qiṣṣa Khvān,” in *Kitâb ʿaraʾī dar tamuddan-i islāmī*, pp. 278–88. Their notes refer to other manuscript recensions. Dickson and Welch noted the relationship between Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s preface and Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s, describing the latter as a “plagiarized version” (Dickson and Welch, *Houghton Shahnameh*, 1:281). The preface is mentioned briefly in Dānishpazhûh, “Muraqqa’ sâzî va jung nivâš,” p. 195, no. 20, with notes on other recensions.

**Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Vasfî’s Preface to the Shah Ismâ’il II Album**

The preface is a unicum and exists as an autograph in Istanbul, TSK H. 2138 (album 68 fols., 357 x 235 mm; preface text fols. 2b–8b). The album was begun in Mashhad and the preface is dated 976–84 (1568–77).

**Description.** The preface is arranged as an uninterrupted block of text pages at the front of the album. The album’s first two pages (fols. 2b–3a) are enclosed by a symmetrical illuminated frame executed in lapis lazuli, gold, pale blue and orange, with additional colors used for the florals. Small gold cartouches arranged at the upper and lower center of each illuminated page contain inscriptions in a white *thuluth* script. The *thuluth* text records the dates of the album’s inception and completion and identifies the current ruler as Shah Ismâ’il al-Safavi al-Husaynî.

The preface is written in a black ink in *riqāʾ* on ivory paper; red, gold, pink, magenta, and blue pigments are used to highlight names, Koranic verses, poetry, and transitional segments. The text pages are framed by tinted borders, gold seam rulings, and colored margins decorated with gold floral designs and medallions arranged along the outer edges of the page. Like numerous folios throughout the album, some of the preface’s margins are stenciled (e.g., with a lotus-variant pattern).

**Literature.** Unpublished. The preface is included in the list of Safavid sources compiled by Ḥabhîbî, “Literary Sources for the History of the Arts,” Safavid Sources, no. 46; and mentioned in Dānishpazhûh, “Muraqqa’ sâzî va jung nivâš,” p. 182, no. 15.
MUHAMMAD MUHSIN’S PREFACE TO ALBUM H. 2157

The preface is a unicum and exists as an autograph in Istanbul, TSK H. 2157 (album 71 fols., 349 x 232 mm; preface text fols. 2b–8b, 19a, 65a–68b, 69b–71a), signed by Muhammad Muhsin. The preface was copied in Herat and is dated 990 (1582–83).

**Description.** The preface is written in black ink in nastāʾīq on sheets of ivory paper. Some of the lines of text are punctuated by gold circles outlined in blue and peppered with black dots. The first two album pages are contained in an illuminated frame executed in lapis lazuli, gold, black, red, and other pigments. Gold cartouches outlined in white at the upper and lower center areas of each page have no text. The ivory margins are decorated with gold florals; the text pages have a vibrant interlinear decoration of gold floral sprays of lotus variants. The seam rulings are a standard type; only the color of the ruling’s outermost line has been varied. The margins are of a single color decorated with a simple sprinkling of gold. Adjacent pages are contrasted by color. Some pages have blocks of illumination executed on them, filling spaces left over by sections of poetic text, giving visual emphasis to the text’s staggered relationship to the page.

As in some other examples, the preface was arranged across the album’s folios. Most of its pages are clustered in two principal sequences, fols. 2b–8b and 65a–71a, with three folios having preface text attached only to one side (fols. 19a, 69b, and 71a), and paintings or calligraphies attached to the reverse. Thus, the preface is integrated into the album, with two main sequences bracketing the collection at the beginning and end.

**Literature.** The preface is included in the lists of Safavid sources compiled by Danishpazhuh and Habibi (Dānishpazhūh, “Ṣar guzasht nāmahā-yī khushnīvīsān va hunarmandān”; Ḥābībī, “Literary Sources for the History of the Arts,” Safavid Sources, no. 29), and mentioned in passing in Dānishpazhūh, “Muraqqaʿ sāzī va jung nīvīš,” p. 200, no. 27. For an abridged version of the preface, see Bayānī, Akhūl va āḡār, 2, 3, pp. 834–35, no. 1234.

MUHAMMAD SALIH’S PREFACE TO THE VALI MUHAMMAD KHAN ALBUM

The preface is a unicum and exists as an autograph in Istanbul, TSK H. 2137 (album 39 fols., 388 x 285 mm; preface text fols. 1b–5a), signed by Muhammad Salih. The preface was possibly copied in Bukhara and is dated 1018 (1609).

**Description.** The preface is arranged as an uninterrupted block of text pages at the front of the album. The album’s first two pages (fols. 1b–2a) are enclosed by a lavish illuminated frame executed mainly in a palette of lapis lazuli and gold, with numerous pastel and primary colors used for florals, cloud bands, palmettes, and to accent internal divisions and borders. Small gold cartouches arranged at the upper and lower center of each illuminated page contain inscriptions written in nastāʾīq in white. The outer edges of the illuminated frame are punctuated by large complex medallions that break into the decorated margin. The ivory-colored paper is painted with a dense pattern of lotus-variant flowers, sāz leaves, and cloud bands.

The text is written in black ink in nastāʾīq on ivory paper, with blue, red, and gold used to highlight key words and Arabic quotations. The text pages are often decorated with illumination, around and between the lines of text, as well as elaborate illuminated frames.
marking the transition from text to margin. The margins exhibit a wide variety of decoration, mainly effected through color harmony, within an essentially circumscribed repertoire of ornament and composition. Their colored surfaces are either painted with dense patterns of animals and birds, flowers, or pairs of animals in combat (lions, deer, qilins, dragons, simurghs), all done in gold. Some have medallions arranged along the page’s outer edges, painted in polychrome or illuminated.

_Literature._ Unpublished. The preface is included in the list of Safavid sources compiled by Danishpazhuh and Habibi (Dānishpazhūh, “Sar guzasht nāmahā-yi khushnivīsān va hunarmandān”; Ḥābībī, “Literary Sources for the History of the Arts,” Safavid Sources, no. 30), and is mentioned in passing by Dānishpazhūh, “Muraqqā‘ sāzī va jung nivīsī,” p. 204, no. 36. Bayānī briefly mentions the album and preface, and discusses their dates in his biographical entry on the calligrapher Muhammad al-Salih (Bayānī, _Aḥvāl va āgār_, 2, 3, p. 777, no. 1117).
APPENDIX 2. PREFACES IN OTHER LITERARY GENRES

Comparing album prefaces to prefaces in books is instructive. A few synopses of prefaces from a range of literary texts indicating organization, theme, and some elements of language will suffice for the purpose. Every example balances prose with poetry, both Arabic and Persian, and inserts Koranic quotations and traditions appropriate to a theme. The selection is drawn from the thirteenth to the early sixteenth century to show shared practices and continuity of language and content across a broad literary tradition over time.

NASIR AL-DIN TUSI, AKHLĀQ-I NĀṢĪRĪ (NASIR’S ETHICS, 1235)

Tusi begins his volume on ethics with praise of God, His Creation, and the creation of man. God kneaded the clay for Adam forty times until “He clothed it, all at once . . . by ‘Be!,’ and it is’ and ‘As the twinkling of an eye or closer, in the garment of human form, which bore the pattern of the world of command.” God made the form ready to receive the divine deposit. Tusi next praises the Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions.

The next theme is a critique of an earlier preface he had written for the book and the circumstances of its production. Given the circulation of his first recension and his dissatisfaction with it, he resolved to rewrite the preface “which was [written] in an unacceptable manner, thus to avoid the disgrace of anyone’s hastening to disapprove and revile [me] before being aware of the truth of the situation and the necessity that impelled such a discourse.” He next explains the reasons for composing the book and the models upon which it was based, particularly Ibn Miskawayh. He notes the alterations he made to the model, then explains the meaning of philosophy, an endeavor which he divides into theory and practice. Categories of speculative and practical philosophy are reviewed. The table of contents is then listed, and the preface concludes with a methodological statement that the book is a gathering of sources which he has not attempted to prove or disprove, nor does the selection lean in favor of one school of thought over another.

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1 Four extremely useful resources are available for the comparative study of prefaces. The first is an analysis of the Arabic preface across different genres which examines aspects of structure, organization, theme, and language from the ninth to the thirteenth century. See Peter Freimark, “Das Vorwort als literarische Form in der arabischen Literatur,” Ph.D. diss., Westfälischen Wilhelm-Universität zu Münster, 1967. The second is a digest of prefaces culled from works on topics such as history and geography, exegesis, religion and ethics, science, and poetry. See Sajjadi, ed., Diḥāḥahā Nīqūr dar Dāh Qarn. He begins his compilation with a short essay on recurring features and aspects of language. The third focuses on prefaces to collections of Turkish poetry. See Tahir Uzgör, Türkçe Divân Dibâceleri (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1990). The final study is Quinn, “Historiography of Safavid Prefaces,” where she compares prefaces in histories of the Safavid period.


3 Ibid., p. 23.

MIRKHVAND, RAWZAT AL-ŠAFĀ’ (GARDEN OF PURITY, COMPLETED BEFORE 1498)5

Mirkhvand divides his preface to a universal history into two parts. In the first part he introduces God and His creation, stating the impossibility of describing them in words. God is the “mighty speaker.” Mirkhvand then turns to how God granted glory and distinction to the human race:

He is the mighty one, who, in producing and perfecting His creatures stood not in need of instruments and tools: neither was He in want of help and co-operation, when He determined on the creation and perfection of all existences. He is the Supreme Artist, who, with the pencil of delineation, when portraying the form of man, the object of His gracious regard, traced His portrait with the consummate perfection of wisdom; agreeably to this declaration, “We have truly created man in the most perfect of forms” ([Wa ša’warakum fa ahlersa ša’warakum] [Koran 40:64]).6

Mirkhvand describes how mankind was divided into “innumerable species, by reason of their variety in natural ability and their difference in innate faculties.”7 God decided to distinguish some by making them prophets “of sublime dignity” and messengers “distinguished for miraculous powers.” He then praises the Prophet Muhammad.

Mirkhvand then turns to what prompted him to write the book. After a period of reading and talking with “enlightened figures,” he shelved the project until ‘Ali Shir Nava’i came along to support him. Nava’i is then copiously praised. In seclusion, Mirkhvand thought how best to begin writing the book “in such a manner that not even the Celestial Scribe himself can draw his obliterator pen over its phrases, nor the storms of Heaven scatter its pages.”8 Nava’i approved the project, giving advice about its style and other matters. It would have a preface, seven sections, and a conclusion. He then summarizes the parts of the history.

In the second part of the preface, Mirkhvand lists the ten advantages of history including the knowledge and pleasure derived from reading historical records. History develops the faculties of discrimination, morality, and ethical conduct. For the ruler history has the potential of making him aware of the impermanence of life, and this in turn causes him to turn to God and to lead a virtuous life to the obvious advantage of his subjects. In a methodological turn, Mirkhvand introduces the notion of rigor required by the historian to evaluate the reliability of his sources. He also lists five qualities that the author must possess to finish a work. The second part of the preface concludes with a long list of the Arabic and Persian histories and their authors that he has consulted.

MIR ‘ALI SHIR NAVA’I, MUḤĀKAMAT AL-LUGHATAYN (JUDGMENT OF THE TWO LANGUAGES, 1499)9

To open his treatise exposing the virtues of Turkish over Persian, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i praises God and His Creation, an act accomplished “all with one word,”10 and focuses on God’s

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6 Ibid., p. 3.
7 Ibid., p. 4.
8 Ibid., p. 17.
10 Ibid., p. 1.
gift of speech to man. He adduces Koranic verses that articulate mankind’s special status and praises the Prophet Muhammad. His next topic is the power of language and how words are manipulated “according to the skill of the speaker” and how they express ideas through the agency of the tongue. First he extols Arabic and then Persian and Turkish, followed by mention of other languages. He explains the occurrence of different languages by the dispersal of Noah’s sons after the flood. He then turns to his principal subject, the superiority of Turkish over Persian for literary expression. In the body of the treatise (risalā) he gives his reasons, including the richness of the Turkish lexicon and its implications for punning and subtle gradations of meaning, Turkish vowels and rhymes, the economy of verbs that take two objects, and how the addition of suffixes in Turkish can further enrich meaning, adducing copious examples as explanation and evidence.

KASHIFI, MAKHZAN AL-INSHA’ (TREASURY OF COMPOSITION, 1501–2) 12

Kashifi’s preface to one of his two inšā’s, the Makhzān al-inšā’, begins with a dedication to God in Arabic, “He is the first and the last and the manifest” (Huwā al-awwal wa al-khir wa al-í’íhir); it then continues with a Persian verse (na’m): “First of all I sing the praise of God/ until this book was completed by His name/ Revealer of the depicting pen/ Inscrber of valuable wisdom/ Writer who with His writing/ One figure from the pen is a representation of Him” (amd-i khud vand sar yam nu-khust/ tashdîn nma ba-namash durust/ chihraghush-â-yi qalam naqsh band/ law ehv nvoś-i khird-â-i arjmand/ khâma-i gardün ka ba-tahrîr-i û ast/ yak raqam az khâma tašrîr-i û ast). More praise of God follows with inserted Arabic quotations from the Koran and Persian poetry; that man was favored by God is emphasized. In another poem Kashifi writes:

The secretary of the workshop of knowledge
source of the secret of Koranic knowledge
Unlettered but an eloquent writer, elect of the slate of being
like a pen, upright and sincere in speech
Kâf and Nûn are one letter of his age
the preserved tablet is beneath his pen
Mustafa knows the secrets of the invisible realm
[he is] the treasurer of the infallible treasure-book.
(munshî-â-yi kârkhâna-yi ‘irfân
mansh-â-yi sirr-i ‘ilm al-qur’ân

11 Ibid., p. 2.
12 The Makhzan al-insha’ was one of two insha’s compiled by Husayn b. ‘Ali al-Kashifi (Husayn Va’iz Kashifi) (d. 1504); he completed it in 1501–2 in the name of Sultan Husayn Mirza and his patron Mir ‘Ali Shîr Nava’î. A summary of Kashifi’s biography and a list of his works can be found in EI2, s.v. “Kashifî” (Gholam Hosein Yousofi); and Browne, Literary History of Persia, 3:441, 442, and 503–4. Kashifi’s second insha’ is titled Sahif-â-yi shâhî. I consulted a recension of the Sahif-â-yi shâhî in Istanbul (TSK A. 2365). For a description of it, see Fehmi Edhem Karatay, Topkapı Saray Müzesi Kütüphanesi Farsça Yazmalar Kataloğu, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Yayınları, 1061) 1: cat. no. 327. For lists of recensions of both insha’s, see Dânishpazhûh, “Dâbîrî va nivâsandâkî,” no. 6, p. 46.
13 The following examination of Kashifi’s preface to the Makhzan al-insha’ is based on one recension copied by a certain Ahmad b. Muhammad in nasta’lîq and completed on 10 Jumada II 964 (10 April 1557). The manuscript is in Istanbul, Sulaymaniye Library, Aya Sofya 4262 (fols. 1b–5a). For another recension (undated), see Karatay, Farsça Yazmalar, cat. no. 326 (Istanbul, TSK R. 1049).
14 Unmî, “illiterate,” is an allusion to the unlettered Prophet Muhammad.
After praising the Prophet Muhammad and his family the author introduces the transitional phrase *ammā ba’du* and then proceeds to a long passage that treats the Koran and the faculties of discourse and reading written characters. Quotations are drawn from the Koran and poems praise the benefits of discourse (*suhun*) and writing (*khaṭṭ*). In subsequent passages he continues the same themes leading up to praise of Sultan Husayn Mirza. The title of the work is introduced, its parts described, and the reason for compiling it explained.
APPENDIX 3. MASTER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Dust Muhammad

Early History of Calligraphers, Scripts, and History of the Six Scripts to the Early Sixteenth Century

Adam (1)* (first person to write and to use pen)
Enoch (2)
all other prophets and sages (3)

Ya’rub b. Qahtan (4)
(derived Kufic from maqfi; invented Kufic)

‘Ali b. Abi Talib (5) (perfected Kufic)

AQLĀM AL-SITTA, “SIX SCRIPTS”

‘Ali b. Muqla (6)
(a.k.a. Ibn Muqla; vizier to al-Muqtadir, r. 908–32; ‘Ali b. Abi Talib instructed him in thuluth, muhaqqaq, and naskh)


Shaykh Jamal al-Din Yaqut (9)
(lived at time of al-Mustansir, r. 1226–42)

| Mawlana Sa’d al-Din ‘Iraqi (25) | Shaykh Muhammad Bandgir (18) (nephew of 16) | | | |
| Mawlana Ma’ruf (24) | Mawlana Sa’d al-Din Tabrizi (19) |
| Mawlana Shams al-Din Qattabi (a.k.a. Shams Sufi) (20) | Mawlana Farid al-Din Ja’far Tabrizi (21) |
| Mawlana ‘Abd Allah Tabbakh (22) |

Mawlana Muhammad b. Husam (23)
**TA’Liq**

Khvaja Taj al-Din Salmani (27)  
(invented ta’liq, codified its rules)

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Khvaja Shihab al-Din ‘Abd Allah Bayani (26)  
(learned basic scripts from Tabbakh; ta’liq from Salmani)

Khvaja Nur al-Din Muhammad Mu’min (28)  
(son of Shihab al-Din ‘Abd Allah Bayani; supervised and directed Shah Tahmasp’s library)

Mawlana ‘Abd al-Hayy Munshi (29)  
(secretary of Timurid ruler Abu Sa’id; direct student?, perfected ta’liq)

Mawlana Mu’in Isfizari (30)

Mawlana Darvish ‘Abd Allah Munshi (31)

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* nos. = order in which calligraphers are named by Dust Muhammad

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**Dust Muhammad**

*Nasta’liq* Calligraphers, Late Fourteenth Century to 1544–45

Khvaja Zahir al-Din Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi (1)*  
(invented nasta’liq)

Khvaja ‘Abd Allah (2)  
(son of Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi)

Mawlana Farid al-Din Ja’far (3)

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Mawlana Kamal al-Din Shaykh Mahmoud Zarin Qalam (4)

Mawlana Ja’far Khalifa (6) (son of Ja’far, and his pupil)

Mawlana Zahir al-Din Azhar (5)

Hafiz Hajji Muhammad (8)

Mawlana Miraki (7)  
(son of Azhar, and his pupil?)

Mawlana Nizam al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahim Khvarazmi (10) (a.k.a Anisi; worked for Turkmen)

Mawlana Sultan ‘Ali (9)

Mawlana Sultan ‘Ali Qaymini (11) (worked for Turkmen)

Mawlana Kamal al-Din Mir Jan (16) (a.k.a. ‘Ali al-Husayni)

Mawlana Muhammad Abrishami (15)

Mawlana Muhammad Qasim (17)

Mawlana Muhammad Abrishami (15)  
(Sultan Muhammad Khandan (14)  
Khvaja Ibrahim (18)

* nos. = order in which calligraphers are named by Dust Muhammad
Dust Muhammad

Depictors and Limners of the Past

MASTERS OF THE PAST (*mutaqaddimin*)

'Ali b. Abi Talib (1)*
(first person to decorate Koran with designs and illumination, invented islami)

Daniel (2) (originated portrayal; Chest of Witnessing story)

Mani (3) (Artangi Tablet story)

Shapur (4)

Ustad Ahmad Musa (6)
(between 1317–35 invented depiction that is now practiced; taught by his father; contemporary of calligrapher Mawlana 'Abd Allah Sayrafi; paintings by him in Abusa'id-nama, Kalila wa Dimna, Mi'rây-nama)

Amir Dawlatyar (7)
(famed for pen and ink drawing; slave of Abu Sa'id)

Ustad Shams al-Din (8)
(worked for Jalayirid Sultan Uvays 1356–74; contemporary of inventor of nastaliq)

Mawlana Farid al-Din Jalal al-Din Ja'far copied text; Mir Khalil (16) directed decoration and depiction.

(Mir 'Ali, illustrations for a Shihnama)

Ustad Junayd of Baghdad (11)
Khwaja 'Abd al-Hayy (9)
(worked for Jalayirid Sultan Ahmad until taken to Samarqand by Timur; after his death “all masters imitated his works”)

Pir Ahmad Baghshimali (12)
Sultan Ahmad (10)
(learned qalamsiyah; illustrations in Abusa'id-nama)

LATTER-DAY MASTERS (*muta'akkhirin*)

Ustad Kamal al-Din Bihzad (20)
(pupil and son of Mirak Naqqash; “pride of the past masters in illumination and outlining,” and “most excellent of the latter-day masters in depiction”; attached to Shah Tahmasp's library; d. 942/1535–36)

* nos. = order in which depictors named by Dust Muhammad
Calligraphers Working in Royal Library

Mawlana Shah Mahmud (1) (from Nishapur; student of his maternal uncle Mawlana 'Abdi Nishapuri [2])
Mawlana Kamal al-Din Rustam 'Ali (3)
Mawlana Nizam al-Din Shaykh Muhammad (4)
Mawlana Nur al-Din 'Abd Allah (5) (from Shiraz)
Dust Muhammad (6)

Contemporary Painters and Limners

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<th>Portraitists and Depictors of the Royal Library</th>
<th>Limners of the Sublime Library</th>
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<td>Ustad Nizam al-Din Sultan Muhammad (1)</td>
<td>Mirak al-Muzahhib (1)</td>
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<td>Aqa Jalal al-Din Mirak al-Husayni al-Isfahani (2)</td>
<td>Qiwam al-Din Mas'ud (2)</td>
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<td>Mir Musavvir (3)</td>
<td>Ustad Kamal al-Din 'Abd al-Vahhab (a.k.a. Khvaja Kaka) (3)</td>
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<td>Mawlana Muhammad (a.k.a. Qadimi) (4)</td>
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<td>Ustad Kamal al-Din Husayn (5)</td>
<td>Mawlana Muhsin (leatherworker) (4)</td>
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<td>Ustad Kamal al-Din 'Abd al-Ghaffar (6)</td>
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<td>Ustad Hasan 'Ali (7)</td>
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* nos. = order in which practitioners are named by Dust Muhammad
Prelude: Amir Husayn Beg (1)* practiced *nasta’liq*; mention of Malik Daylami (2) and figures involved in production of album, including Muzaffar ‘Ali (3) (relative of Bihzad), Mulla Masih Allah Muzahhib (4) (illuminator), and Jalal Beg Afshangar (5) (gold-sprinkler)

Khvaja Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi (9)
(inventor of *nasta’liq*)

Ja’far al-Tabrizi (8)

Shaykh Mahmud Zarin Qalam (36)
Mawlana Azhar (7)

‘Abd al-Rahim Khvarazmi (30)
(a.k.a. Anisi)

‘Abd al-Karim Khvarazmi (31)

Sultan ‘Ali Qayini (32)
Sultan ‘Ali Sabz Mashhadi (33)
Mawlana Sultan ‘Ali (comp. to Yaqut)
Shaykh Muhammad Ghayb Imami (34)
Shaykh Muhammad Imami (35)

Mawlama Sultan ‘Ali (15)

Muhammad Mahmu (12)
Damad (13)
Muzahhib (17)

Ayshi Haravi (28)

Shah Mahmud Nishapuri (16)

Mir ‘Ali (14)

Sayyid Ahmad Mashhadi (26)
Khwaja Mahmud b. Ishaq Shihabi (27)

Muhammad Abrishami (18)
Muhammad Qasim Shadishah (19)
Shams al-Din Muhammad Kirmani (20)

Yari Haravi (29)

Hafiz Baba Jan Udi (23)
Malik Daylami (24)
Muzaffar ‘Ali (25)

Section on other students of Azhar is added at the end (after line through Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi is completed), with special reference to alternate style of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi introduced by ‘Abd al-Rahim Khvarazmi.

* nos. = order in which calligraphers are named by Malik Daylami
Mir Sayyid Ahmad

History of Kufic and the Six Scripts

KUFIC

‘Ali b. Abi Talib (1)*

*KHUTŪT-I SITTA/ SHISH QALAM* (Six Scripts)

Ibn Muqla (2)
(in 310/922 derived them from Kufic)

‘Ali b. Hilal (3)
(a.k.a. Ibn Bawwab)

Yaqt al-Musta‘simi (4)

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<th>Shaykhzada</th>
<th>Arghun Kamili (6)</th>
<th>Nasr Allah Tabib (7)</th>
<th>Mubarakshah</th>
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<th>Sayyid Haydar</th>
<th>Zarin Qalam (8)</th>
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<th>Gundanivis (9)</th>
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<td>Hajji Muhammad Bandgir (13)</td>
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<td>Shams al-Din Qattabi (14)</td>
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| (son of 14) | (son of 14) | |
| Ni‘mat Allah Bawwab (19) | ‘Abd Allah Tabakkh (18) | |
| (alludes to other masters of Khurasan) | |
| Shams al-Din Sani Tabrizi (20) | |

Alludes to other masters of Iraq, Khurasan, Fars, and Kirman at the end.

* nos. = order in which calligraphers named by Mir Sayyid Ahmad
Mir Sayyid Ahmad

History of *Nasta‘liq* and *Ta‘liq*

Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi (1)*
(inventor of *nasta‘liq*)

‘Ubayd Allah (2)
(son of 1)

Ja‘far (3)

Azhar (4)

Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi (5)

Muhammad Abrishami (6)  Sultan Muhammad Khandan (7)  Sultan Muhammad Nur (8)  Zayn al-Din Mahmud (9)

Sayyid Mir ‘Ali (10)
(on par with Sultan ‘Ali)

Sayyid Ahmad Mashhadi (14)

Sultan ‘Ali Qayini (11)
Sultan ‘Ali Sahz Mashhadi (12)
Shah Mahmud Nishapuri (13)
Sayyid Ahmad Mashhadi (14) (student of Mir ‘Ali)
Malik Daylami (15) (student of Mir Jan [16])

IN STYLE OF SULTAN ‘ALI MASHHADI

Sultan ‘Ali Qayini (11)
Sultan ‘Ali Sahz Mashhadi (12)
Shah Mahmud Nishapuri (13)
Sayyid Ahmad Mashhadi (14) (student of Mir ‘Ali)
Malik Daylami (15) (student of Mir Jan [16])

ALTERNATE STYLE FROM SULTAN ‘ALI MASHHADI

‘Abd al-Rahman Khvarazmi (17)
‘Abd al-Rahim (a.k.a. Anisi) (18) (master of father’s method, 17; scribes of Shiraz follow him)
‘Abd al-Karim (a.k.a. Padishah) (19) (master of father’s method, 17)

*Ta‘liq*
(taken from *riqq*’)

Khvaja Taj al-Din Salmani (1)  ‘Abd al-Hayy Astarabadi Munshi (2) (two styles from him)

1. *nihayat-i ruštbat va ḫarakat*  
(at the extremity of freshness and movement)

2. *kamāl-i istihkām va ḫukktağī va uṣūl va chāshnī*  
(perfect in firmness, maturity, essentials, and taste)

* nos. = order in which calligraphers are named by Mir Sayyid Ahmad
Mir Sayyid Ahmad

Hair Pen

Manichaeans Magicians (1)*

Sorcerers of China and Europe (2)

‘Ali b. Abi Talib (3)
(Korans copied by him decorated with illumination)

Haft ašl (seven modes)

Masters of Fars and Iraq
Master Darvish (4)
Khalifa Muhammad Hayat (5)
Mir Musavvir (6)
Mir Sayyid ‘Ali (7) (son of 6)
Khvaja ‘Abd al-Razzaq (8)
Khvaja ‘Abd al-Vahhab (9)
Khvaja ‘Abd al-Aziz (10) (son of 9)
Sayyid Mirak (11)

Masters of Khurasan
Khvaja Mirak (12)
Hajji Muhammad (13)
Ustad Qasim ‘Ali Chihragushay (14)
Ustad Bihzad (15)

* nos. = order in which practitioners are named by Mir Sayyid Ahmad
Shams al-Din Muhammad

Vegetal Pen: Basic (asl) and Subsidiary (far') Scripts—thuluth, muhaqqaq, naskh, rayhän, tawqé', riqé', ta'liq and naskh-ta'liq

**KHUTUT-I SITTA, “SIX SCRIPTS”**

Yaqut al-Musta’simi (1)*
(master of asl)

‘Abd Allah Sayrafi (2)
(master of asl, especially thuluth and muhaqqaq)

‘Abd Allah Tabbakh (3)
(praised for asl and far')

**NASTALIQ**

Mīr ‘Ali Tabrizi (4)
(invented nastaliq)

Khwaja ‘Abd Allah (5)
(son of 4)

Ustad Jafar al-Tabrizi (6)
(master of asl and far')

‘Abd Allah Tabbakh (7)
(thuluth)

Azhar (8)
(nastaliq)

‘Abd al-Hayy Munshi (9)
(ta'liq)

Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi (10)

Sultan Muhammad Nur (11)
Sultan Muhammad Abrishami (12)
Sultan Muhammad Khandan (13)
Muhammad Qasim Shadishah (14)
Zayn al-Din Mahmud (16)
(son-in-law of Sultan ‘Ali [10])
Mīr ‘Ali (15)

Amir Sayyid Ahmad Mashhadi (16)
Najin al-Din Mahmud Ishaq al-Shihabi (17)
Mir Muhammad Baqir (18) (son of 15)
Mir Husayn Kulangi (19)

OTHER MASTERS

Malik Daylami (20)
Shah Mahmud Zarin Qalam (21)
‘Abdī Katīb Nishapuri (22) (taught Shah Mahmud)
Anisi Badakhshi (23)
Amir Sayyid Mu’izz al-Din Muhammad al-Kashi (24)
BASIC SCRIPTS

‘Abd al-Haq Sabzavari (25) (master in Khurasan and Iraq; student of ‘Abd Allah al-Haravi)
Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari (26)
Shams al-Din Muhammad Vasfi (27)

MASTERS OF SHIRAZ AND KIRMAN

Amir b. Husayn al-Sharifi al-Mashhadi (28)
Azam Nassakh Shirazi (29)
Shams al-Din al-Kirmani (30)
Ikhtiyar al-Munshi (31)
Ayshi (32)
Muhi (33)
Yari Haravi (34)
Shaykh Muhammad Musavvir (35)
Mahmud Muzahhib (36)
Muhammad Husayn Tabrizi (37)
Asa Beg (38)
‘Ali Beg Sabzavari (39)
Shaykh Puran (40)
Mir Husayn Katib (41)
Muhammad Salih Dardmand (42)
Sangi ‘Ali Badakhshi (43) (découpeur of calligraphy)

* nos. = order in which practitioners are named by Shams al-Din Muhammad

Shams al-Din Muhammad

Animal Pen

Hair-splitting Manichaean (1)*
Sorcerers of China and Europe (2)
Ustad Mani (3)
Ustad Bihzad (4)
Muzaffar ‘Ali (5)
Mawlana ‘Ali Musavvir (6)
Mawlana Kepek (7)

MASTERS WITH WORKS IN THE ALBUM

Mawlana Muhammad Riza Mashhadi (student of Mir Sayyid Ahmad) (1)*
Mawlana ‘Ali Riza (2)
Mawlana ‘Abd al-Rahim (3)
Mawlana Hasan ‘Ali Mashhadi (4)

* nos. = order in which depictors are named by Shams al-Din Muhammad
Muhammad Muhsin

History of Calligraphy from Kufic to Nastāʿīq

KUFIC

‘Ali b. Abī Talib (1)*
(first to record writings of Prophet Muhammad)

KHUTṬĪT-I SITTA, “SIX SCRIPTS”

Ibn Muqla (2)
(invented them in 310/922; derived from Kufic)

Ustad ‘Ali b. Hilal (3) (a.k.a. Ibn Bawwab)

NASTAʿĪQ

Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi (4)
(invented nastāʿīq)

‘Abd Allah (5)
(son of Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi)

Mawłana Ja’far (6)

Mawłana Azhar (7)

Mawłana Sultan ‘Ali (8)

Mawłana Sultan Muhammad Nur (9)

Mawłana Sultan Muhammad Abrishami (11)

Mawłana Muhammad al-Din Mahmud Qasim Shadishah (12)

Mawłana Zayn al-Din Mahmud (13)

Mawłana Mir ‘Ali (14)

Muhammad Baqir (19)

Khvaja Mahmud Ishaq al-Shihabi (20)

Mawłana Mawlana Shah Mahmud Nishapuri (17)

Mawłana ’Abdi Nishapuri (18)

Mawłana Sultan ‘Ali Qayini (15)

Mawłana Sultan Ali Sabz Mashhadi (16)

FOLLOWERS OF MAWLANA SULTAN ‘ALI’S STYLE

Mawłana Muhammad al-Rahman al-Khwarazmi (25)

‘Abd al-Rahim Anisi (26) (son of 25)

‘Abd al-Karim Padisha(h) (27) (son of 25)

Anisi and Padishah followed their father’s style

* nos. = order in which calligraphers are named by Muhammad Muhsin
The glossary includes terms commonly used in the prefaces and its function is to define the senses of words in the context of writing about art. Many have special or technical meanings that differ from conventional or dictionary meaning.

Key: Mur = Murvarid; Kh= Khvandamir/Amini; MSA1= Mir Sayyid Ahmad, H. 2156; Dust= Dust Muhammad; SQ= Shah Quli; Malik= Malik Daylami; MSA2= Mir Sayyid Ahmad, H. 2161; Shams= Shams al-Din Muhammad; MM= Muhammad Muhsin; Salih= Muhammad Salih.

abr
one of the “seven modes” (MSA2)

afşhângar
gold-sprinkler (Malik)

‘aks
reverse, reflected image, transposing, the use of a stencil (Shams)

taşvîrât va khuṭbâ‘i ‘aks
stenciled depictions and calligraphies (Shams)

‘alâmat (pl. ‘alâmât)
sign, mark (Shams)

aqlâm al-sîta
six scripts (naskh, muhaqqaq, rayhâni, thuluth, riq‘, tawqî) (Dust)

andâza
specimen, copy (MSA2)

aṣar (pl. āsar)
trace, footprint, sign, memorial (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust, MSA2, Shams, MM, Salih)

aṣl (pl. ṣâdî)
basic, principal, root, source, prototype (Dust, Shams, MSA2)

haft aṣl
“seven modes,” comprising islâmî, khaṭâ‘î, fa-langî, fa-sâli, abr, girih, vâq (MSA2)

ā‘în
mode, form, manner (MSA2)

ā‘îna
mirror (Kh, Dust, SQ, MSA2, Shams)

ā‘îna-yi khîyâl
mirror of the imagination (MSA2)

ā‘îna-yi khâṭîr
mirror of the mind (Shams)

barg
leaf, sheet of paper (Dust, Shams, MM)

chihra
countenance, face, portrait (Dust)

chihra-gushâ (pl. gushâyân)
portrait painter (MSA2, MM)

chihra-gushâ‘î
display (Dust, MSA2)

chihra gushâd
appeared, became visible (Kh, Salih)

dibâcha
preface, illuminated frontispiece (Dust, SQ, Malik, MSA2)

far‘
subsidiary, branch of tree, derivative (Shams [contrasted with aṣl])

farangî
one of the “seven modes” (MSA2)

faṣâli
one of the “seven modes” (MSA2)

fân (pl. funûn)
art, manner, artifice (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust, Malik, MSA2, Shams)

fân-i hunarvarî
the art of skill (Kh)

funûn-i faṣâli
the arts of virtue, the arts of excellence (Malik)

ghubûr
small writing, lit. dust or vapor (Dust, SQ, MSA2, Shams, MM)
girih
one of the “seven modes” (MSA2)

ålā kārī
work in gold, illumination (Malik)

bāshīya (pl. havāshī)
margin, border (Malik)

hayvānī
animal, living, sensual (MSA2)

hunar
art, skill, ingenuity, virtue, excellence (Mur, Kh, Dust, Malik, MSA2, Salih)

hunarmānd (pl. hunarmāndān)
learned, skillful, artist (MSA2)

hunarvar (pl. hunarvarān)
skillful, clever (Kh, Dust)

ikhtirā
invention, inventing (Dust)

inshā'
epistolography, composition (Dust, SQ, Malik)

islāmī (also istimī)
one of the “seven modes” (haft āl) associated with illumination and the arts of the book (Dust, MSA2)

jadval (pl. jadvāl)
ruling, i.e., ruled line, column, table (Malik, Shams)

jamʿ
collecting, compiling, assembling; a compilation, assemblage, aggregation (SQ)

jilmī
assembler, gatherer, compiler, collector (Kh, Malik)

jild
binding, cover (Mur, MSA1, Salih)

jung
anthology (Dust)

kāghāz/ kāghad
paper (Kh, Salih)

kārgāh
workplace (MSA2)

kārgāh-i ʿalam
workplace of creation (i.e., the world) (MSA2)

kārkhāna
workshop (Kh, Dust, MSA2, Salih)

kārkhāna-yi būqalamūn
workshop of various hues (changeable, i.e., creation) (Kh)

kārkhāna-yi davārī
workshop of (changing) fortune (Dust)

kārkhāna-yi kun fayākūn
workshop of “‘Be!,’ and it is” (Salih)

kārkhāna-yi qaṣāʾ
workshop of destiny (MSA2)

khātārī
one of the “seven modes” (MSA2)

kātīb (pl. kutāb/ kātibān)
scribe, copyist (Dust, MSA1, Malik, MSA2, Shams, MM, Salih)

khātima
conclusion

khaṭṭ (pl. khūṭāt)
calligraphy, script (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust, SQ, Malik, MSA2, Shams, MM, Salih)

khaṭṭ-i mayl
script of benevolence (Shams)

khaṭṭ-i muʿjīz
miraculous script (MSA2)

khaṭṭ-i muskhūn
musk-scented calligraphy (Dust, SQ, Salih)

khūṭāt-i ʿśl
basic scripts (MSA2)

khaṭṭ-i sittā
the six scripts (naskh, muḥaqqaq, rayḥānī, thuluth, riqāʾ, tawqī) (MSA2, Shams, MM)

khaṭṭ shināsān
those who are knowledgeable about calligraphy (MSA2)

khaṭṭāt (pl. khāṭṭātān)
calligrapher, scribe, copyist (Dust, Salih)

khażāna-yi hunarvari
treasury of skill (Dust)

khazān
autumn; allusion to red and yellow leaves (MSA2, Shams, MM)

khizāna
treasury (Dust)

khizāna-dārī
the office or practice of treasurer; usually khizāna-dārī, treasurer (Malik)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>khizäna-yi kutub</td>
<td>book treasury (Mur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kîlki</td>
<td>pen, hollow reed (Mur, Kh, MSA1, SQ, MSA2, Salih)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kîlki mushk</td>
<td>musk-scented pen (Salih)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kîlki qazâ‘</td>
<td>pen of judgment, pen of destiny (Salih)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitâb</td>
<td>book (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Malik, MSA2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hitâbat</td>
<td>writing, inscription (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust, MSA2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitâbdîr</td>
<td>librarian (Dust)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitâbkhânâ</td>
<td>workshop-cum-library (Dust, SQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kûft</td>
<td>Kufic script (Dust, MSA2, MM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khusnivisân</td>
<td>calligraphers (Dust, MSA2, Shams, MM, Salih)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lâwîh</td>
<td>tablet, slate (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust, SQ, Malik, MSA2, Shams, MM, Salih)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lâwîh-i khatîr</td>
<td>tablet of the mind/memory (MSA2, Shams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lâwîh-i khvâzîr</td>
<td>tablet of thoughts (SQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lâwîh-i mahfûz</td>
<td>the preserved tablet (Dust)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lâwîh-i vujûd</td>
<td>tablet of existence (SQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lâwîh-i qamîr</td>
<td>tablet of the heart/mind (MSA2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lâwîh va qalam-i vujûd</td>
<td>tablet and pen of existence; reference to Koran (Shams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma‘âṣîr</td>
<td>signs, memorials (Mur, Kh, MM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maḥârat</td>
<td>excelling in an art or profession (Kh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mîhîrîn</td>
<td>those who excel (MSA1, Dust)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>majlîs (pl. majâlîs)</td>
<td>assembly, gathering, poetic institution (Dust, SQ, MSA2, Salih)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>majlîs-i taṣîrî</td>
<td>assembly of image (Salih)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>majlîs-i taṣîrît</td>
<td>assemblies of images (paintings/drawings) (MM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>majmû‘a</td>
<td>anthology, assemblage, gathering (Dust, SQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manshîr (pl. manâshîr)</td>
<td>mandate (Mur, MSA1, Malik, MSA2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manzär</td>
<td>looking, beholding; countenance, face; object of sight (MM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mashq</td>
<td>practice exercise in calligraphy, model (Malik)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma‘qîlî</td>
<td>type of script (Dust)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mastâr</td>
<td>places where lines are drawn (mistar: board) (Dust)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mastîr</td>
<td>written, delineated (Kh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma‘nî</td>
<td>meaning, idea (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siṣrat va ma‘nî</td>
<td>form and meaning (Kh, SQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>midād</td>
<td>ink (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust, Salih)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>midâd-i mushkîn</td>
<td>musky ink (MSA1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>midâd kârî</td>
<td>work in ink (Shams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misâl</td>
<td>example, model, figure, mode, archetype (Dust, MSA2, MM, Salih)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misâl (pl. amîsâl)</td>
<td>similitude, equal (Kh, Dust, Malik, MSA2, Shams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mû</td>
<td>hair (Kh, Shams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mûbtdîr</td>
<td>originator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mufradît</td>
<td>exercise sheet in calligraphy comprising single letters (murakkabât, exercise in which the letters are joined) (Malik, Shams)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
muhaqqaq  
muharrar  
muharrir (pl. muharrirân)  

mujallid  
mukhtari  
mulavvan  
munabhat-kârî  
muqaddimma  
muraqqî  

muraqqî-i gardûn  
muraqqî-i jahân  
muraqqî-i mulamma‘  
muraqqî-i mulamma‘-i zaman  
muraqqî-i rûzgâr-i büqalamîn  
muraqqî-i samâwât  
muraqqî-i sipîhr  
muraqqî-i zamâ‘ir  
murattab  
musânnâ  
muşâvar  
muşâvîr (pl. musâavîrân)  
mû-shikâf (pl. mû-shikâfân)  
mushk  
muta‘âkkhîrîn  
mutaqaddimîn  
muzâhhab  
muzâhhib (pl. muzâhhibân)  
muzâyân  
nabî  
nâdîr al-‘âsr  
nâql  
nâql kardan  
nagqâsh (pl. nagqâshân)  
nagqâsh-i azal  
nagqâsh-i chihra  
nagqîsh (pl. nagqîsh)  
nâsîkh  
naskh  
naskh-ta‘lîq

one of the six scripts (Mur, Dust, SQ, MSA2, Shams, MM)  
inscribed, written (Salih)  
outliner (refers to practice of outlining calligraphy, drawing, illumination, and painting in ink) (Dust, Malik, MM)  
bookbinder (Dust, Salih)  
inventor, author, founder (Dust, MM)  
painted (Salih)  
filigree work in cut leather or paper; inlay (Dust)  
painted, speckled (Dust, Malik)  
introduction (Kh, Dust)  
album (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust, Malik, MSA2, Shams)  
album of heaven (Salih)  
album of the world (MM)  
album of different colors (Salih)  
variegated album of the age (MSA2, MM)  
variegated album of time (Shams)  
album of the heavens (SQ)  
album of the firmament (Dust)  
album of memories (SQ)  
arranged (Kh)  
duplication or possibly mirror-reversed calligraphy (Salih)  
artist (Kh, Dust, Malik, MSA2, Shams, MM)  
hair-splitting; in plural, hair-splitters (Kh, MSA2, Shams)  
musk (Dust, SQ, Salih)  
latter-day (Dust, MSA2)  
old, of the past (Dust)  
illuminated, ornamented (Salih)  
illuminator (Dust, MSA2, Shams, Salih)  
decorated, ornamented (Kh, Malik, MSA2, Shams, MM)  
sugarcane (MSA2, Shams)  
“wonder of the age” (Malik, Shams)  
copy, transfer (Kh)  
to make a copy, to transfer (Dust)  
artist (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust, MSA2, Shams, MM)  
eternal artist (Kh, Dust)  
portrait painter (MSA2)  
painting, drawing, inscribing; an image (i.e., painting or drawing) (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust, Malik, MSA2, Shams, MM, Salih)  
one who cancels out, abrogates, erases (SQ)  
one of the six scripts (Kh, Dust, SQ, MSA2, Shams, MM)  
alternate spelling for nastâlîq (SQ, Malik, MSA2, Shams, MM)
nasta'īq  

hanging script (Dust)

nazār  

looking at, beholding, sight, vision, look (Kh, Dust, Malik, MSA2, MM, Salih)

nīzāra  

looking, seeing (MSA2)

nāzir (pl. nāzīrān)  

seer, observer, spectator (Malik)

nazzāragīyān  

spectators, beholders (SQ, MM)

nigar  

behold, look (imp. nigarīstan) (Kh)

nigār  

portray, paint, depict (imp. of nigāshtan or present stem) (Salih)

nigāristān  

picture gallery or book of Mani (MM)

nigārkhana  

picture gallery (Dust)

nigārkhana-yi chīn  

picture gallery of China (Dust, MM)

nigārkhana-yi ma’nī  

picture gallery of meaning (Dust)

nishān  

sign (Mur, Dust)

nishāna  

mark, impression (Dust, MSA2)

nūk  

point, tip, nib (Kh, MSA2)

nūk-i qalam  

nib of the pen (MSA2)

nuqâla  

point, dot (Malik)

nuskhat  

exemplar, prototype, copy or model (Mur, SQ, Malik, MSA1, MM, Salih)

paykar  

portrait, countenance (Kh, Dust, MM)

qalam  

pen or brush (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust, SQ, MSA2, Shams, MM, Salih)

qalam-i ḥayvānī  

animal pen, i.e. brush (Shams)

qalam-i sihr  

magic pen (Kh, Dust)

qalam-i mūhi  

hair pen, i.e. brush (MSA2)

qalam-i mushkīn  

musky pen (Kh, Malik, Salih)

qalam-i muʿjīz  

miraculous pen (MSA2, Shams)

qalam-i du zabān  

pen of two tongues (Dust)

qalam tarāsh  

pen cutter;

qalam tarāshī  

pen cutting (Dust)

qāṭ  

format; cutting; a section or piece; a shape (Dust, Malik, Salih)

qāṭ-i ḥattaṣ  

calligraphy découpeur (Shams)

qīlā (pl. qīlāʾāt)  

single-sheet calligraphy (Malik, MSA2, MM)

qīlāʾāt-i rāngīn  

colored specimens (Salih)

rang  

color, pigment (Kh, Dust, MSA2, MM)

bāī-rang  

without color, monochrome (Kh)

nī-rang  

without color, monochrome (Dust)

rangī âmikht  

lit., “[a] mixed color,” or “he mixed a color”; rang âmikhtan, mixing colors/pigments (MSA2)

rang âmīzī  

mixing colors (Dust)

rang nīvisī  

writing in color (Dust)

rangīn  

colored, polychrome (Mur, MSA1, MM)

rāqīm (pl. rāqīmān)  

writer, inscriber (Malik, MSA2, Shams)
<table>
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<th><strong>Glossary</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>rāqim al-kāf wa al-nūn</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>raqam</strong> (pl. ruqūm)</td>
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<td><strong>rasm</strong></td>
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<td><strong>rayhān</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ravish</strong></td>
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<td><strong>safha</strong> (pl. safahāt)</td>
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<td><strong>safha-yi davvān</strong></td>
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<td><strong>safha-yi ʿayād</strong></td>
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<td><strong>safha-yi kāfīr</strong></td>
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<td><strong>safha-yi kawān</strong></td>
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<td><strong>safha-yi rūzgār</strong></td>
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<td><strong>safha-yi zamān</strong></td>
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<td><strong>safha-yi zamīr</strong></td>
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<td><strong>safina</strong></td>
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<td><strong>sahīfa</strong> (pl. sahīf)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>sahīf-ī aflāk</strong></td>
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<td><strong>sahīf-ī ayyām</strong></td>
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<td><strong>sahīf-ī falāk</strong></td>
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<td><strong>sahīf-ī rūzgār</strong></td>
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<td><strong>sahīfa-yi ʿalām-i kun</strong></td>
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<td><strong>sahīfa-yi davvān</strong></td>
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<td><strong>sahīfa-yi khāṭīr</strong></td>
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<td><strong>sahīfa-yi nūn wa al-qalam wa mā yāṣṭārānā</strong></td>
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<td><strong>san</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ṣanāʾī</strong></td>
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<td><strong>sar āmad</strong></td>
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<td><strong>sar-i laqāḥ</strong></td>
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<td><strong>satr</strong> (pl. suṭūr)</td>
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<td><strong>sawād</strong></td>
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<td><strong>shāgird</strong> (pl. shāgirdān)</td>
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<td><strong>shājara-yi khūṭūt-i sītta</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>shakl</strong> (pl. ashkāl)</td>
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<td><strong>shamsa</strong></td>
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shikasta basta  type of script (Malik, Shams)
shish qalam  six pens (i.e., six scripts) (MSA2)
silsila  chain (Dust, MSA2)
šinā'at  profession, art (Dust)
šuḥbat  conversation, feasting, gathering (Dust, Malik, MSA2)
šūrat (pl. šuwar)  form, image (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust, SQ, Malik, MSA2, Shams, MM, Salih)

šūrat-i khaṭṭ  form of calligraphy/writing (Kh)
šūrat va ma'ni  form and meaning (Kh, SQ)
šūrat-gushā'ī  portraying a form (MSA2)
šūrat-sāzī  picture-making (Dust)
šūratkhanā  picture-house (MSA2, MM)
tafriḥ  recreation, amusement (Kh)
tahār  outlining (Kh, Dust, Malik, Shams, MM, Salih)
taksirāt  pieces (MM)
ta'liq  script used especially in chancellery documents (Mur, MSA1, Dust, MSA2, Shams, MM)

tārīh  design, compositional unit, foundation (Dust, MSA2)
tārīh-i bid'ī  new design, original design (MM)
tārīf  praise, commendation, description (Salih)
ta'rikh  chronogram
tarkīb  composition, plan (MSA2)
tarrāh (pl. tarrāhān)  designer, draftsman (Dust, Shams, MM)
tartīb  arrangement, organization, order, plan (Mur, Dust, SQ, Malik, MSA2, Shams, MM, Salih)

ṭarz  style, manner, mode (MSA2)
taṣvīr (pl. taṣāvīr or taṣvārāt)  image, picture; depicting, depiction (Kh, Dust, SQ, Malik, MSA2, Shams, Salih)
taqwīm  one of the six scripts (MSA1, Dust, SQ, MSA2, Shams, MM, Salih)
taqwil  description (Kh, Dust, SQ, Malik, Shams, Salih)
taqwilī (pl. taqwīlī)  illumination (Kh, Dust, Malik, MSA2, MM)
taqzīra  biographical notice, remembrance, biography
taẓyīn  ornament, decorate (Dust, SQ, MSA2, MM, Salih)
tījī  knife, blade (SQ, MSA2)
timgāl  image, portrait, semblance (Dust)
thulūth  one of the six scripts (Dust, SQ, MSA2, Shams, MM)
ūnān  illuminated heading in a book
uslīb  manner, mode, form, way (Dust)
ustād (pl. ustādān)  master (Kh, Dust, MSA2, Salih)
vāq  one of the “seven modes” (MSA2)
varaq (pl. awrāq)  folio, page, sheet (Mur, Kh, MSA1, Dust, SQ, Malik, MSA2, Shams, MM, Salih)

awrāq-i falak  pages of heaven (MM)
awrāq-i jahān  pages of the world (Salih)
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<th>Arabic Word</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>awrāq-i muraqqā'-i siphr</td>
<td>pages of the album of the firmament (MM)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awrāq-i zamān</td>
<td>pages of time (Salih)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>vassālān</td>
<td>rebinders, margin setters, patchworkers (MM)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vassālī</td>
<td>margin setting (Mur, MSA1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vāẓī'</td>
<td>inventor (Dust, MSA2, Shams, MM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>vāẓī'-al-āṣl</td>
<td>inventor of the archetype (Dust, Malik)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>vāẓī'-i asās</td>
<td>inventor of the foundation (Dust)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>vāẓī'-i miṣāl</td>
<td>inventor of the prototype (Shams)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>yāqūt</td>
<td>ruby (SQ, Malik)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>zīb</td>
<td>ornament, beauty (MM)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>zīn</td>
<td>adorning, ornamenting (Kh)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>zīnat</td>
<td>ornament, decoration, beauty (Kh, Dust, Malik, Shams, Salih)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zīnat-i masāhif</td>
<td>ornamenting Korans (Dust)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>zībā</td>
<td>beautiful, elegant, arranged, ornamented (MSA2, Shams, MM)</td>
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