

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

¹ For an analysis of the factors which may have caused the so-called “Timurid Renaissance,” see Maria Eva Subtelny, “Socioeconomic Bases of Cultural Patronage under the Later Timurids,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20 (1988): 479–505; and idem, “Centralizing Reform and Its Opponents in the Late Timurid Period,” *Iranian Studies* 21, 1–2 (1988): 123–51.

² The most comprehensive study of Aqqoyunlu history is still John E. Woods, *The Aqqoyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire: A Study in 15th/ 9th Century Turko-Iranian Politics* (Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1976).

³ For a synopsis of court culture under Ya‘qub Beg, see *ibid.*, chap. 5.

by the last remaining Aqqoyunlu, Murad, nicknamed “the unsuccessful” (*na-Murād*) in early sixteenth-century chronicles.⁴

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 1506.⁵ 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 Muzaffar 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.⁶ 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.⁷

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.⁸ In 1512, a caravan

⁴ Khvāndamīr, *Habibu’s-siyar. Tome three, The Reign of the Mongol and the Turk*, trans. and ed. Wheeler M. Thackston, 2 vols., Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures, no. 24, ed. Şinasi Tekin and Gönül Alpay Tekin (Cambridge, Mass.: Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1994), 2:577.

⁵ Roger M. Savory, “The Struggle for Supremacy in Persia after the Death of Tīmūr,” *Der Islam* 40 (1964): 35–65; 43–54.

⁶ For a summary of the Safavid campaigns in the first decade of the sixteenth century, see Roger M. Savory, “The Consolidation of Şafawid Power in Persia,” *Der Islam* 41 (1965): 71–94.

⁷ For an excellent study focused on the examination of one city—Herat—under successive dynasties, and questions of continuity and change, see Maria Szuppe, *Entre Timourides, Uzbeks et Safavides: Questions d’histoire politique et sociale de Hérat dans la première moitié du XVI^e siècle*, Studia Iranica, suppl. 12 (Paris, 1992).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

of some five hundred *littérateurs*, poets, and artists left Herat having received permission from the Safavid governor of the city.⁹ 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).¹⁰ This exodus of figures is attributable both to material conditions and to the tentative adoption and promotion of culture by the Safavid *qizilbāsh*.¹¹ 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 1523.¹² 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.¹³

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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

⁹ Ibid., p. 140. Some of the literati and intellectuals headed in the direction of India, where they sought patronage at such courts as the Arghun rulers of Sind. See Maria Szuppe, “The Female Intellectual Milieu in Timurid and Post-Timurid Herāt: Faxri Heravi’s Biography of Poetesses, Javāher al-‘ajāyeb,” *Oriente Moderno* n. s. 15 (76), 2 (1996): 119–37; 120.

¹⁰ As observed by Maria Subtelny, “Art and Politics in Early 16th Century Central Asia,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 27, 1–2 (1983): 121–48; esp. 147–48.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 138.

¹² Savory, “Consolidation of Şafawid Power,” p. 93. For the ongoing struggles between the Uzbeks and Safavids in Khurasan, see Martin B. Dickson, “Shāh Tahmāsb and the Ūzbeks (The Duel for Khurāsān with ‘Ubayd Khān: 930–946/1524–1540),” Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1958.

¹³ Shah Isma‘il assigned Tahmasp to Herat. After Shah Tahmasp’s accession, Bahram Mirza and Sam Mirza both served as governor of Herat, but in name only: power was held by their guardians. That Herat supplied the dual cultural function of instruction and formation of aesthetic preferences is a reasonable deduction in the absence of an explicit statement to this effect. It remained an important cultural center after the demise of the Timurids despite Uzbek incursions.

¹⁴ Roger M. Savory, “The Principal Offices of the Şafawid State during the Reign of Ismā‘il I (901–30/1501–24),” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 23, 1 (1960): 91–105, esp. 91. For an overview of Ottoman-Safavid relations ca. 1500–50, see Jean-Louis Bacqué Grammont, “Les Ottomans et les Safavides dans la première moitié du XVIe siècle,” in *Convegno sul tema la Shi‘a nell’impero ottomano, Roma 15 aprile 1991* (Rome, 1993), pp. 7–24.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 95. Savory notes that in the years between 1516 and 1522, Khurasan was ruled by Amir Khan Turkman who ignored Shah Isma‘il’s direct orders. The challenge to the shah’s authority was not addressed.

When Tahmasp acceded to the throne in 1524, he was only ten years old and thus incapable of exerting his authority over the *qizilbāsh* amirs. His atabeg, Div Sultan Rumlu, ruled over the Safavid polity in accordance with Shah Isma‘il’s wishes.¹⁶ A series of amirs from the various *qizilbāsh* 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.¹⁷ The years between 1524 and 1533 are generally referred to as the “*qizilbāsh* interregnum.”¹⁸

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 1555.¹⁹ 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 *qizilbāsh* 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 ‘Abbas. Shah ‘Abbas (r. 1588–1629) finally managed to break the destabilizing power of the *qizilbāsh* 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.²⁰ Both were in part due to changing cultural prerogatives and

Furthermore, Balkh (1516–17) and Qandahar (1522) were taken by the Mughals. On Shah Isma‘il’s debauchery, see references cited in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* [henceforth *EI*], *s. v.* “Esmā‘il I Ṣafawī, I. Biography” (Roger Savory).

¹⁶ Roger M. Savory, “The Principal Offices of the Ṣafawid State during the Reign of Ṭahmāsp I (930–84/1524–76),” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 24, 1 (1960): 65–85; esp. 65.

¹⁷ This was already noted in the synthetic study of early Safavid history presented by H. R. Roemer, “The Safavid Period,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, *The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), chap. 5, pp. 189–350, esp. p. 233. For detailed studies, see Savory, “The Principal Offices of the Ṣafawid State during the Reign of Ismā‘il I”; and Jean Aubin, “Études safavides. I. Šāh Ismā‘il et les notables de l’Iraq persan,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 2, 1 (January 1959): 37–81.

¹⁸ For a summary of this period, see Savory, “The Principal Offices of the Ṣafawid State during the Reign of Ṭahmāsp I,” pp. 69–70.

¹⁹ A permanent residence was built for Shah Tahmasp in 1557. See Michele Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia (1539–1542)*, trans. with introduction and notes by A. H. Morton (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1993), p. xxiv.

²⁰ Anthony Welch describes these changes succinctly: “The dispersal of royal talent during Shāh Ṭahmāsp’s reign and the broader diffusion of wealth from ‘Abbās’s economic reforms increased the numbers of patrons from the lesser aristocracy, official and military classes, professionals, and merchants. Many of these new patrons appear to have bought, rather than commissioned, works of art, so that the production of less expensive single-page drawings and paintings flourished” (*EI*2, *s. v.* “Ṣafawids, v. Arts and Architecture” [A. Welch]). Two studies about the single-sheet painting and drawing around the turn of the sixteenth century and into the early seventeenth century are available. See Sheila R. Canby, *The Rebellious Reformer: The Drawings and Paintings of Rīza-yi Abbāsī of Isfahan* (London: Azimuth Editions, 1996); and Massumeh Farhad, “Safavid Single Page Painting 1629–1666,” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1987.

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)²¹ composed the earliest album preface to come down to us.²² Called the *Inshā'-yi muraqqa'-i Mīr 'Alī Shīr* (lit. "Composition for an Album for Mīr 'Alī 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 Mīr 'Alī Shir Nava'i (1441–1501).²³ 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 Mu'min, as an exercise in *ta'līq* (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.²⁴ The calligrapher Mir Sayyid Ahmad al-Husayni al-Mashhadi also copied Murvarid's preface in *nasta'līq* for an album that was compiled ca. 1572–75.²⁵

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

²¹ Hasan Beg Rūmlū, *Ahsan al-tavārīkh*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusaynī Navā'ī (Tehran: Bābak, 1357/1978), p. 213.

²² See Hans Robert Roemer, *Staatschreiben der Timuridenzeit: Das Šaraf-Nāmā des Abdallāh Marwārid in Kritischer Auswertung* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1952), pp. 131–35, no. 74; and Persian facsimile fols. 74a–76a. Roemer suggests that the *Sharaf-nāma* was compiled in 1506 after the death of Sultan Husayn Mirza (ibid., p. 26).

²³ For biography see *EI2*, s.v. "Mīr 'Alī Shīr Nawā'ī" (M. E. Subtelny); the essay is accompanied by an extensive bibliography. For a reassessment of some of the conceptions of Mīr 'Alī Shīr Nava'i, formulated by such scholars as Barthol'd, Bertels, and Semenov, see Maria Eva Subtelny, "'Alī Shīr Navā'ī: *Bakhshī* and *Beg*," in *Eucharisterion: Essays Presented to Omeljan Pritsak on his Sixtieth Birthday by His Colleagues and Students*, ed. Ihor Ševčenko and Frank E. Sysyn, Harvard Ukrainian Studies 3–4 (Cambridge, Mass., 1979–80): 797–807. Subtelny describes Mīr '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, *Staatschreiben 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 (*Muzahhib*).

ruler Sultan Husayn Mirza (d. 1506) as vizier before he retired to become a dervish,²⁶ and the sultan appointed him custodian of the shrine of Khvaja ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari at Gazurgah, where he made improvements and repairs.²⁷ 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 (*manṣab-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.²⁸

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.”²⁹ When Shah Isma‘il seized Herat in 1510 poor health prevented Murvarid from leaving the city.³⁰ Although the shah showed favor toward him, he “decided to enter the treasure-house of retirement.”³¹ In retirement he wrote a *divān* of qasidas and ghazals; the *Tārīkh-i shāhī* (a history of Shah Isma‘il’s reign); a collection of *Munsha‘āt* (correspondence); the *Tārīkh-i manzūm* (Versified History); and a *Khusraw va Shirīn*. Khvandamir names two of the works—the *inshā’* compilation and the divan titled *Mu’nis al-ahbāb* (Lovers’ Companion)³² and, commenting on Murvarid’s literary output, remarks: “His prose writings are like the words of Saḥbān [a poet and orator of proverbial eloquence]³³ 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 Samarqandī’s *Tazkirat al-shu‘arā’* (Biography of Poets), completed in 1487,³⁵ 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 Yaqut,³⁶ his skill in *inshā’*, and his closeness to the Timurid sultan.³⁷ Similar details are provided in Zahir al-

²⁶ For a review of his career, see Khvandamir, *Dastūr al-vuzarā’*, ed. Sa‘īd Nafīsī (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1317/1938 or 1939), pp. 394–97.

²⁷ Khvandamir, *Habību’s-siyar*, trans. and ed. Thackston, 2:515.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:513.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:513–14. For additional biographical details, see *ELr*, s.v. “‘Abdallāh Morwārīd” (P. Soucek).

³⁰ Sām Mirzā Šafavī, *Tuḥfa-yi sāmī*, ed. Vahīd Dastgirdī (Tehran: Armaghān, 1314/1935), p. 64.

³¹ Ḥasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh*, p. 213. The phrase he uses is *dar ganj-i inzīvā’ qarār girifta*. Sām Mirza uses similar phrasing (*dar ganj-i inzīvā’ girifta ba-kitābat-i muṣḥaf-i majīd muvaffaq gardīd*), adding that his seclusion was for the copying of Korans (Sām Mirzā, *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 64).

³² The *Mu’nis al-ahbāb* 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. Sām Mirza (*Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 64), however, refers to the poetry collection by the same title (*Mu’nis al-ahbāb*) but one comprising qasidas, ghazals, and *rubā‘īs*.

³³ Saḥban Wā’il flourished during the early eighth century. He was still alive during the caliphate of al-Walid (r. 705–15). See *EI2*, s. v. “Saḥban Wā’il” (T. Fahd).

³⁴ *Manṣūrāt-i mu‘allafātash miṣāl-i suḥnān-i saḥbān ba-zīvar-i javāhir ārasta va manzūmāt-i munsha‘ātash mānand-i la’āl-yi baḥr-i ‘umān az shavā‘ib-i ‘ayb va manqāṣat pīrāsta*. Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn b. Humām al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī Khvandamir, *Habīb al-siyar fī akhbār-i afrād-i bashar*, ed. Jalāl Humā‘ī, 4 vols. (Tehran: Khayyām, 1333), 3:325.

³⁵ Dawlatshāh Samarqandī, *Tazkirat al-shu‘arā’*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abbāsī (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Bārānī, 1337/1958), pp. 582–84.

³⁶ The use of the word *yāqūt* is ambivalent, meaning “pearls” and referring also to Yaqut al-Musta‘simi. Sām Mirza makes the same comparison. He notes that “the pen of his calligraphy in the scripts of *naskh*, *riqā‘* and *tawqī‘* continued [exhausted] those of the golden-penned masters” (*kilk-i khaṭṭātash raqam dar naskh va riqā‘ va tawqī‘-i ustādān-i zarīn qalam kashīda*). To magnify the statement he inserts the *miṣrā‘*, “no one has written *thuluth* the likes of his except for Yāqūt” (*ba-sulus-i ū na-nivāsad kasī magar Yāqūt*) (Sām Mirzā, *Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 63).

³⁷ *taqarrub-i dargāh-i sultān-i gū‘ī 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 (*ichki*) of the sultan.³⁸

Ghiyas al-Din b. Humam al-Din 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 Taqi Danishpazhuh, 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-Din 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" (*dībācha-yi muraqqa'-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

³⁸ For notice, see Zāhir al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur, *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, trans., ed. and annotated W. M. Thackston (Washington, D.C., New York, and Oxford: Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 218. Babur's final assessment of Murvarid is scathing.

³⁹ Danishpazhuh is the only scholar to question its authorship. He remarks that every scholar followed Qazvini and Bouvat's attribution to Khvandamir, but concludes "To whatsoever extent, the preface to Bihzad's album is from Amīnī" (*dar har ḥāl dībācha-yi muraqqa'-i Bihzād az Amīnī ast*) (Dānishpazhūh, "Muraqqa' sāzī va jung nivīsī," pp. 187–88).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁴¹ Sām Mirzā Ṣafavī, *Tazkira-yi tuhfa-yi sāmī*, ed. Rukn al-Dīn Humāyūnfarrukh (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Kutub-i Īrān, 1347/1968), p. 46.

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 Mīr 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, *Bihzad: 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‘il for his son Tahmasp though not finished until after Shah Isma‘il’s death.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ 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‘il’s rule. A second edition was completed in India, which allowed him to display his pro-Timurid sentiments.⁴⁶ In ca. 1527 he journeyed to Agra via Qandahar, where

⁴⁴ The generally accepted scholarly argument about patronage and production is presented in Martin B. Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, 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.

⁴⁵ Khvandamir’s entry on Bihzad in the *Habīb al-siyar*, at the end of the section dealing with Sultan Husayn Mirza’s rule, describes him in no uncertain terms as a master, and it is entirely consistent with his praise of the artist in the Khvandamir/Amini album preface: “Bihzad is a creator of marvelous pictures and rare artistic manifestations. Wielding his brush {*qalam*} like Mani, he has abrogated the monuments of mortal painters {*āsār-i muṣavvirān-i ‘ālam*}, and his miraculous hands have effaced the depictions of human artists {*taṣvīrāt-i hunarvarān-i banī ādam*}. // The hair of his masterful brush has imparted/ life to inanimate forms.// This master owes his rise to fame to Amir Nizamuddin Ali-Sher’s patronage, and the emperor himself also favored him with much patronage. This rarity of the age even now enjoys the favor of sultans and rulers, and without doubt he will continue so to do” (Khvāndamīr, *Habīb al-siyar*, 4:362; *Habīb al-siyar*, trans. and ed. Thackston, 2:531).

⁴⁶ Szuppe, *Entre Timourides, Uzbeks et Safavides*, p. 56. Khvandamir edited two versions of the *Habīb al-siyar*. 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‘il.

he met with the Mughal ruler Babur (r. 1526–30)⁴⁷ and became a courtier both to Babur and his successor Humayun.

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

Amir Sadr al-Din Sultan Ibrahim Amīni. Amīni (b. 1477–78; d. 1535) was one of Herat's most important notables and an exact contemporary of Khvandamir. The most comprehensive biographical notice about Amīni appears in Khvandamir's *Ḥabīb al-siyar*,⁴⁹ where he begins by recounting Amīni's descent from the grandees of Transoxiana, Shaykh Zahir al-Din Abu al-'Ala', author of the *Hidāya* and renowned among the ulema, who counted among the members of Amīni's family tree. Amīni's mother's father Mawlana Jalal al-Din '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 *naqīb* of Mashhad. According to Khvandamir, Amīni was not only "adorned with noble ancestry"⁵⁰ but possessed "complete learning, polite behavior, and hereditary and acquired perfections."⁵¹ He is praised for works of both prose and poetry.

In listing Amīni's appointments, Khvandamir begins with his service (*malāzamat*) to the Timurid prince Muzaffar Husayn Mirza. In 910 (1504–5), Amīni came to the attention of Sultan Husayn Mirza who granted him the office of comptroller of the royal estates (*manṣab-i ṣadārat-i khāṣṣa-yi 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 Amīni's arrest. When he was released he retired, and in 1510–11, the Safavid Shah Isma'il came to Khurasan and granted him fiefs. In 1520 Shah Isma'il commissioned a history of his conquests from Amīni, called

⁴⁷ Bābur, *Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur*, trans. Thackston, p. 403. For summary of Khvandamir's biography, see Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* 1, 1, no. 125; *EI2*, s.v. "Khvāndamīr" (H. Beveridge–J. T. P. de Bruijn); *Islām Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. "Hāndmīr" (Zeki Velidi Togan); and Khvāndamīr, *Habibu's-Siyar*, trans. and ed. Thackston, "Translator's Preface," 1:ix–xii.

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 *Nāma-yi nāmī* appears in *EI2*, s.v. "Khvāndamīr" (H. Beveridge–J. T. P. de Bruijn). Perhaps based on internal textual evidence, Storey notes that Khvandamir's *inshā'* manual was begun after the author's forty-sixth birthday (ca. 1520) and that it was not completed before 1523 (Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, 3, 2, p. 269).

⁴⁹ Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, 3:326–27.

⁵⁰ *sharaf-i nasab ārāsta ast*.

⁵¹ *ba-vufūr-i faẓl va adab va kamālāt-i mawrūṣ va muktasab pīrāsta ast*.

the *Futūhāt-i shāhī* (Royal Conquests). Khvandamir also mentions a treatise and quatrains by Amini who translated ‘Ali b. Abi Talib’s *ḏiḡān*. 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 (*manṣab-i ta’līm*) in 1531–32,⁵³ and may even have served as vizier in 1535.⁵⁴ He also participated in the war assembly held by the *qizilbāsh* 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 (*khātima*) is written in poetic form and its last couplet is a chronogram. The chronogram is highlighted in gold and reads, *Abū al-faṭḥ Bahrām-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-kātib*) 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

⁵² Ibid., 3:326. Additional works by Amini are listed in Sām Mīrzā, *Tazkira-yi tuḡfa-yi sāmī*, ed. Humāyūnfarrukh, p. 46.

⁵³ Qāzī Aḡmad, *Khulāṣat al-tavārīkh*, ed. Iḡsān Ishrāqī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānīshgāh-i Tehrān, n.d.), 1:217.

⁵⁴ Szuppe, *Entre Timourides, Uzbeks et Safavides*, p. 100.

⁵⁵ Qāzī Aḡmad, *Khulāṣat al-tavārīkh*, 2:240–41; also see Ḥasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḡsan al-tavārīkh*, pp. 344–45.

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,⁶⁰ 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,⁶¹ 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.⁶²

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.⁶³ Sam Mirza also refers to Dust Muhammad "Gavashvan," stating that he wrote *nasta'liq* well, that he excelled in poetry, prosody/metrics (*'arūz*), and riddles (*mu'ammā*), and that his pen name (*takhalluṣ*) was "Kāhī."⁶⁴

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 Shāh Tahmāsp I (1524–1576)," *Islamic Studies* 2, 3 (September 1963): 343–52. To date, the only published edition of the *Javāhir al-akhbār* is incomplete, focusing on the Turkmen portions of the history. See Budāq Munshī Qazvīnī, *Javāhir al-akhbār*, ed. Muḥsin Bahrāmīnīzād (Tehran: Ā'īna-yi Mirās, 2000).

⁶⁰ Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, p. 259, n. 74. For a list of Dust Muhammad's attributive captions, see David J. Roxburgh, "'Our Works Point to Us': Album Making, Collecting, and Art (ca. 1427–1565) under the Timurids and Safavids," Ph.D. diss., 3 vols., University of Pennsylvania, 1996, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 800; and separate entries in the catalogue of H. 2154 under fol. 121b, no. 1; fol. 138b, no. 1; and fol. 140b, nos. 2–3.

⁶¹ Adle established that Dust Muhammad b. Sulayman was distinct from Dust Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah. See Adle, "Autopsia, in Absentia," pp. 219–56, n. 20. Another article which examines Dust Muhammad's identity is by Yahyā Zokā, "Dūst Muḥammad-i Muṣavvir, Dūst Muḥammad-i Kātib, Dūst-i Muṣavvir," *Ayanda* 8, 5 (1361/1982): 244–53.

⁶² For a shorter version of Dust Muhammad's vita, see *EIr*, s. v. "Dūst-Moḥammad b. Solaymān Heravī" (Chahryar Adle).

⁶³ For references and complete text, see Chahryar Adle, "Les artistes nommés Dust-Moḥammad au XVIe siècle," *Studia Iranica* 22, 2 (1993): 219–96; esp. 227–28, and 287. Many of these items are repeated by Qāzī Aḥmad, *Gulistān-i ḥunar*, 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 Tajlu Begum), daughter of Mehmed Beg Bektash (a Mawsillu Turkman), to Shah Isma'īl. 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]: 211–58; esp. 234, table no. 5). Hasan Beg Rumlu describes Sultanum as a *hamshūra*, 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 Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tavārīkh*, 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 Sophy of Persia*, trans. Morton, pp. 80–81.

⁶⁴ Sām Mirzā, *Tuḥfa-yi sāmī*, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 83. Adle points out an anachronism in Sam Mirza's account

Qutb al-Din Muhammad “*Qissa Khvan*.” In 1556–57, Qutb al-Din Muhammad composed a preface for an album to be made for Shah Tahmasp. It is not known if the album itself was ever even begun. The preface is included among a compilation of texts (*majmū‘a*),⁶⁵ but it is also found in an album preface signed by Mir Sayyid Ahmad al-Husayni al-Mashhadi, who composed it for an album for Amir Ghayb Beg in 1564–65.

In his preface Qutb al-Din Muhammad notes that he had been charged by Shah Tahmasp with overseeing the production of an album assisted by others. Qutb al-Din Muhammad 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.”⁶⁶ The choice of the words, *qiṣṣa-khvānī*, referred to Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s title of “story-teller.” 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.”⁶⁷ The phrase “assembling words” partially reproduces his name and title. The chronogram in the final hemistich consists of the word *farkhundagī* (“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 Tahmasp and that he was also a calligrapher. Scholars have identified him with Qutb al-Din Muhammad Yazdi, whom Mustafa ‘Ali, 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*).⁶⁸ During that period, Mustafa ‘Ali obtained a copy of a text that he identifies as the *Risāla-yi qutbiyya* (the Qutbiyya treatise, i.e., written by Qutb al-Din Muhammad Yazdi), and remarks that he referred to it when composing his own work, the *Menākib-i hünerverān*.⁶⁹ The relationship between Qutb al-Din Muhammad Yazdi’s treatise, which comprises the biographies of some

where he refers to Dust Muhammad as a “young man.” Dust Muhammad was approximately twenty years older than Sam Mirza; see Adle, “Autopsia, in Absentia,” p. 227.

⁶⁵ *Majmū‘a*, Tehran, Kitābkhāna-yi Millī-yi Īrān, no. 691, fols. 393–406. The *majmū‘a* is dated Muharram 1057 (1 February–7 March 1647), and was copied by Muhammad Riza, son of Hajji Tahmasp Quli Beg. Catalogue information and an edition of the text are provided by Husayn Khadiv Jam, “Risāla-ī dar tārikh-i khaṭṭ va naqqāshī az Qutb al-Dīn Muḥammad Qiṣṣa Khvān,” *Sukhan* 1716–17 (1346/1967): 666–76. For other editions of the preface, see Appendix 1 under Mir Sayyid Ahmad (preface to the Amir Ghayb Beg album).

⁶⁶ *chun maqṣūd az īn qiṣṣa-khvānī zikr-i ba‘zī az ustādān būd ki yādgār-i īshān dar īn muraqqa‘ ast.*

⁶⁷ *zī qutb-i qiṣṣa-khvān dar rasm-i ta’rikh.*

⁶⁸ Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 121, 123–24. While he was on his way to Baghdad to take up his post, it was given to another man. Mustafa ‘Ali only learned of his replacement when he arrived in the city. He did, however, perform the duty of finance director for an interim period.

⁶⁹ See Huart, *Les calligraphes et les miniaturistes de l’Orient musulman*, pp. 6–7. Huart describes the text by Qutb al-Din Muhammad Yazdi outlining the biographies of fifty-two calligraphers completed in 994 (1586) (*ibid.*, p. 235). He also claims that the treatise (*risāla*) was translated into Turkish by Mustafa ‘Ali at the order of Sultan Murad III, and it thus formed the core of the *Menākib-i hünerverān*. For other references to the *Risāla-yi qutbiyya*, see *ibid.*, pp. 86–87. Huart adds several points of interest for Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s biography, including the names of his masters—Malik Daylami among them—but because they are not supported by references, I have omitted them (*ibid.*, p. 235). Fleischer (*Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 123, n. 36) has also discussed Mustafa ‘Ali’s contact with Qutb al-Din Muhammad; he suggests that Mustafa ‘Ali was even inspired to write his *Menākib-i hünerverān* under Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s influence. Danishpazhuh (“Muraqqa‘ sāzī va jung nivīsī,” p. 195) also accepted the identity of Qutb al-Din Muhammad Qissa Khvan with Qutb al-Din Muhammad Yazdi, mentioning his presence in Baghdad and his connection to Mustafa ‘Ali.

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 *inshā’* 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.”⁷⁰ 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.⁷¹

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 zamīr*). 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.⁷² 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 rasīd*). 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*.⁷³

Because the preface does not contain a chronogram for the year of its compilation, it

⁷⁰ . . . *bā vujūd-i istijmā’-i faẓā’il va dānish dar fann-i inshā’ va sukhan pardāzī sar āmad-i munshiyān-i balāghat-i shī’ar va dar shīva-yi ‘ibārat āvā’i muqtadā-yi sukhanvarān-i faṣāḥat āsār . . . ba-pīsh-i shāh-i dīn panāh taqarrub-i bisyār dāsht* (Hasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tavārīkh*, p. 539).

⁷¹ A second Safavid-period historian, ‘Abdi Beg Shirazi, names Qutb al-Din Muhammad Baghdadi. See ‘Abdi Beg Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhbār*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Navā’ī (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1369/1990 or 1991), p. 121. He gives the date of death as 27 Rajab 970 (22 March 1563) and notes that he was the son of a supreme judge (*qāẓī-yi a’lā*) appointed by Shah Tahmasp.

⁷² This is perhaps what led Morton to conclude that the album was not made for Shah Tahmasp but for Shah Quli Khalifa. See Alexander H. Morton, “The Chūb-i Ṭarīq and Qizilbāsh Ritual in Persia,” in *Études Safavides*, ed. Jean Calmard (Paris and Tehran, 1993), pp. 225–45; esp. 228, n. 9.

⁷³ At this time manuscripts made for Shah Quli Khalifa, attributable to his patronage through ex libris or internal notations in manuscripts, are unknown.

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.⁷⁴ 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.⁷⁵

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 (*muhurdār*) under Shah Tahmasp. By 1533 he had been appointed chief guard of the royal harem (*īshīk-āqāsī-bāshī*)⁷⁶ 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 qabaq-bāzī*).⁷⁷ He is frequently mentioned in all of the sixteenth-century and early-seventeenth-century Safavid chronicles, especially in Hasan Beg Rumlu's *Aḥsan al-tavārīkh* (Best of Chronicles), completed in 1577,⁷⁸ 'Abdi Beg Shirazi's *Takmilat al-akhbār* (Perfection of Chronicles), not completed before 1571–72, and in Iskandar Beg Munshi's *Tārīkh-i 'ālamārā-yi 'Abbāsī* (History of Shah 'Abbas the Great), completed by 1629.⁷⁹

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,

⁷⁴ Dickson and Welch, *Houghton Shahnameh*, 1:20.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:238, n. 5 (notes to pt. 1, chap. 3).

⁷⁶ Morton has discussed the different functions signaled by the title and how these changed over the course of the sixteenth century and later. In the sixteenth century the *īshīk-āqāsī* referred to the chief guard of the royal harem and the person responsible for organizing and requesting the shah's audiences (Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia*, trans. Morton, p. 89).

⁷⁷ 'Abdī Beg Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhbār*, p. 74.

⁷⁸ Only two volumes survive. Volume 12 covers the period 900–985 (1494–1577), spanning the demise of the Timurids and the beginnings of the Safavids.

⁷⁹ For entries, see Iskandar Beg Munshī, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great (Tārīkh-e 'Ālamārā-ye 'Abbāsī)*, 3 vols., trans. Roger M. Savory, Persian Heritage Series 28 (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978–86), 1:108, 116, 123, 129, 138, 163, 225, and 499. Most details of Shah Quli Khalifa's life mentioned by Hasan Beg Rumlu are duplicated by Iskandar Beg Munshi.

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.⁸⁰ 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 (*qurchīs*). 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 Khalifa'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 1540,⁸¹ 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.⁸² Not long after his arrival in Tabriz in the winter, Membré was put under Shah Quli Khalifa's care. He remained in Persia for nearly a year, and during that time he was the guest of many high-ranking courtiers.⁸³

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.⁸⁴ Later, he mentions somewhat equivocally, that one of Shah Quli Khalifa's wives was a sister (or cousin) of Shah Tahmasp.⁸⁵ During Membré's stay, a Turk from Adana came to the house and implored Shah Quli Khalifa 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 Khalifa 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.⁸⁶ Alexander Morton notes that the title *khalīfa* meant that Shah Quli's position in the Sufi hierarchy was that of head of *qizilbāsh* 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-khulafā*.⁸⁷ This title is in fact

⁸⁰ Iskandar Beg Munshi's text reads: “When Homāyūn was only a *farsak* from the royal camp, the Shah sent a party to meet him. This party consisted of the Shah's brothers, Bahrām Mīrzā and Sām Mīrzā; Qāzī Jahān the *vizier*; Sevendūk Beg Afšar the *qūrčībāš*; Badr Khān Ostājilū; Šāhqolī Kalīfa Zu'l-Qadar the *mohrdār*; and other emirs and principal officers of state” (ibid., 1:163). During Prince Bayezid'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.

⁸¹ Michele Membré, *Relazione di Persia (1542)*, ed. Giorgio R. Cardona, introduction by Gianroberto Scarcia (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1969); Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia*, trans. Morton.

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 Khalifa, 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 Khalifa (Morton, “The Chūb-i Ṭarīq and Qizilbāsh 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 1560–61.⁸⁸ 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 year of the album’s completion names “Malik” as its writer (*kard mālīk bahr-i ta’rīkhash raqam*, “For its chronogram Malik wrote. . .”). The chronogram reads “a garden of ravishing pieces” (*gulshanī az qitā’ hā-yi dil-gushā*), 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 *Gulistān-i humar*.⁸⁹ Qazi Ahmad begins with Malik Daylami’s early training in the six scripts (viz., *naskh*, *muḥaqqaq*, *rayḥānī*, *thuluth*, *riqā’*, *tawqī’*) 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 Yaqut al-Musta’simi. 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’liq*.⁹⁰

Qazi Jahan Qazvini, Shah Tahmasp’s grand vizier (also given the position of *vakīl*)⁹¹ 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.⁹² 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),⁹³ his composition

⁸⁸ Istanbul, TSK, H. 2151. In his Safavid history, ‘Abdi Beg Shirazi gives Amir Husayn Beg’s year of death as 967–68; the same date is provided in the album preface (968) (see ‘Abdī Beg Shīrāzī, *Takmilāt al-akhbār*, 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.

⁸⁹ Qāzī Aḥmad, *Gulistān-i humar*, trans. Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, pp. 33, 64, 75, 141–45, 148, 154–55, and 167.

⁹⁰ For a list of dated and undated manuscripts as well as calligraphic specimens signed by Malik Daylami, and their description, see Marianna Shreve Simpson, *Sultan Ibrahim Mirza’s Haft Awrang: A Princely Manuscript from Sixteenth-Century Iran* (Washington, D.C., New Haven, and London: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, and Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 411–17, and 284–93; and Bayānī, *Aḥwāl va āsār*, 2, pts. 3–4, pp. 599–601 and 607–9.

⁹¹ Shah Tahmasp praises Qazi Jahan Qazvini in his memoirs, the *Tazkira-yi Shāh Tahmāsp*, for his knowledge of science and excellence in calligraphy, *inshā’*, and *adab* (Tahmāsp Ṣafāvī, *Tazkira-yi Shāh Tahmāsp*, ed. Amr Allāh Ṣafarī [Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sharq, 1363/1984 or 1985], p. 3). A biographical summary for Qazi Jahan is available in Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia*, trans. Morton, pp. 74–76.

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 Sadiqī Beg Afshar in his biography of poets composed ca. 1592 (Ṣādiqī Beg Afshār, *Tazkira-yi majma’ al-khavāṣṣ*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rasūl Khayyāmpūr [Tabriz: Chāpkhāna-yi Akhtar, 1327/1948], p. 208, no. 184).

of a *Gūy va Chawgān* (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‘liq*. Hasan Beg Rumlu also writes that Malik Daylami studied religious sciences (*‘ulūm*) under Mawlana Jamal al-Din Mahmud Shirazi.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 Khalifa, 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-Husayni al-Mashhadi the scribe, may God forgive his sins and conceal his faults.”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-khwānī . . .*), 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 reorders 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.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

⁹⁴ Hasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tawārīkh*, p. 184; trans. and ed., C. N. Seddon, *Chronicle of the Early Safawīs, Being the Aḥsanu’l-tawārīkh of Ḥasan-i-Rūmlū*, 2 vols., Gaekwad’s Oriental Series 69 (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1931–34), p. 67.

⁹⁵ *katabahu al-‘abd al-faḡīr al-ḥaḡīr al-muznīb Aḥmad al-Husaynī al-Mashhadī al-kātib ghafara Allāh zunūbahu va satara ‘uyūbahu*.

⁹⁶ Qāzī Aḥmad, *Gulistān-i hunar*, trans. Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, pp. 10, 16, 32–33, 138–141, 147, 151, 165–166, 168, 170, and 173. Qazi Ahmad adds that he studied with him in Mashhad and that “the Mir deigned to write for this humble one an album (*muraqqa’*), several [samples] of single letters (*mufraadāt*) and many specimens of calligraphy (*qiṭa’*),” 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‘il II (r. 1576–78). Shah Isma‘il 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‘il 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 mīr’s place.”⁹⁷

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).⁹⁸ 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.”⁹⁹ He does not say what these might have been.

Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Vasfi. 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‘il 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‘il 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”¹⁰⁰ and informs us that his teacher was Mawlana Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari.¹⁰¹ He also notes that his master composed the *Tazkirat al-kuttāb* (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-Vasfi 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 *muraqqa’* of Shah Isma‘il I, who died in 1524.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 141.

⁹⁸ Iskandar Beg Munshī, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, trans. Savory, 1:266.

⁹⁹ For text, see *ibid.*, 1:266–67.

¹⁰⁰ *kātib al-ḥaqīr va aqall al-kātibīn*.

¹⁰¹ Qazi Ahmad informs us that Mawlana Shaykh Kamal al-Sabzavari was a student of Mawlana ‘Abd al-Haq 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 (Qāzī Ahmad, *Gulistān-i hunar*, trans. Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, pp. 75 and 187).

¹⁰² Habībī, “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 Dānishpazhūh, “Muraqqa’ sāzī va jung nivīsi,” p. 182, no. 15.

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 (*mavājib*) and was given a land grant (*tuyūl*).¹⁰³ 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).¹⁰⁴ 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 calligraphies and paintings to which it belongs contains specific information about a patron or recipient. Study of the calligrapher is based on a corpus of calligraphies signed by him. His use of the *nisba* al-Haravi suggests that he might have been born in Herat.¹⁰⁵ One author describes him as being a student of Mir Muhammad Baqir b. Mir ‘Ali Haravi.¹⁰⁶ ‘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, *muraqqa’-i khūb* “beautiful album,” which yields 1018 (1609).¹⁰⁷ Mahdi Bayani, however, reads the poetic chronogram as *khūb raqam*—excluding the word *muraqqa’*—with a total numerical value of 948 (1541–42).¹⁰⁸ 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.¹⁰⁹

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.¹¹⁰ With some assistance from Shah ‘Abbas I, Vali Muhammad regained control over Bukhara on 17 Jumada II 1020 (26 Au-

¹⁰³ Qāzī Ahmad, *Gulistān-i hunar*, trans. Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 170.

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 Munshī, *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.

¹⁰⁵ Bayānī, *Ahvāl va āṣār*, 2, 3, pp. 833–35, no. 1234.

¹⁰⁶ Bayani remarks that this had been proposed by Mirza Habib Isfahani, 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 *hijrī* year is given as 1081 and not 1018.

¹⁰⁸ Bayānī, *Ahvāl va āṣār*, 2, 3, p. 777, no. 1117.

¹⁰⁹ Huart makes a reference to a Mawlana Salih, active in Bukhara during the reigns of ‘Abd Allah Khan and Iskandar Khan, that is, in the late sixteenth century. He adds that Salih was trained by Mahmud Shihabi, 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).

¹¹⁰ Iskandar Beg Munshī, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, trans. Savory, 2:1044–48.

gust 1611).¹¹¹ 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).¹¹² 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.¹¹³ 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.

THE TIMURID ACHIEVEMENT AND THE SAFAVID TRANSITION¹¹⁴

The cultural achievements of the Timurid dynasty in literature, art, and architecture and the fame of the Timurid courts in cities such as Herat, Samarqand, and Shiraz are now well enough known to obviate the need for lengthy repetition.¹¹⁵ 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.¹¹⁶ Aesthetic departures from the Timurid artistic tradition by their contemporaries and successors have already been described in the scholarly literature,¹¹⁷ as have general aspects of continuity and change between the Timurids and the Safavids in the realms of political history¹¹⁸ and religion.¹¹⁹ 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.

¹¹⁵ The principal sources are Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (Los Angeles and Washington, D.C.: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1989); Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); and Lisa Golombek and Maria E. Subtelny, ed., *Timurid Art and Culture: Iran and Central Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture 6 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).

¹¹⁶ See Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, chap. 5; and Stephen Frederic Dale, "The Legacy of the Timurids," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 8, 1 (1998): 43–58. For the Ottoman context in particular, see Gülrü Necipoğlu, "From International Timurid to Ottoman: A Change of Taste in Sixteenth-Century Islamic Tiles," *Muqarnas* 7 (1990): 136–70; and idem, "A Kânûn for the State, A Canon for the Arts: Conceptualizing the Classical Synthesis of Ottoman Art and Architecture," in *Soliman le magnifique et son temps*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Documentation française, 1992), pp. 194–216. For the Mughal context with regard to painting, see Soudavar, "Between the Safavids and the Mughals," pp. 49–66.

¹¹⁷ For example, the concept of two traditions, the Turkmen and Timurid, fuses in the paintings of the Safavid *Shāhnāma-yi Shāhī* (Dickson and Welch, *Houghton Shahnameh*), and epigraphic shifts of form and content in Safavid metalwork (A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "The Transition to the Safavid Period: The Evidence of Metalwork and Its Epigraphy," in *Transition Periods in Iranian History*, Actes du Symposium Fribourg-en-Brigau, 22–24 May 1985, in the series Cahiers de Studia Iranica 5 [Leuven: Peeters, 1987], pp. 181–203).

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.

¹¹⁹ The propagation of Shi'ism as the official religion of the Safavid polity is a major focus in addition to the development of Shi'ite rituals. Recent studies from this rich and extensive literature include Jean Calmard, "Les Rituels Shi'ites et le Pouvoir: L'imposition du Shi'ism safavide, eulogies et malédictions canoniques," in *Études Safavides*, ed. Jean Calmard (Paris and Tehran, 1993), pp. 109–50; Kathryn Babayan, "The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi'ism," *Iranian Studies* 27, 1–4 (1994): 135–61; Said Amir Arjomand, "The Clerical Estate and the Emergence of a Shi'ite Hierocracy in Safavid Iran," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 28 (1985): 169–219; and Erika Glassen, "Schah Ismā'īl I. und die Theologen seiner Zeit," *Der Islam* 48, 2 (February 1972): 254–68. For a useful overview of Shi'ism in the Safavid period, see Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), chap. 4.

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-ta'liq* 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,

¹²⁰ Muḥammad Haydar Dughlāt, *Tārīkh-i rashīdī*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston, *Mirza Haydar Dughlat's Tarikh-i Rashidi: A History of the Khans of Moghulistan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1996), p. 182.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 128–31.

population, and culture of Khurasan in general and the reputation of Herat in particular were of the degree mentioned in the summary.”¹²² 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-ṣafā’*. 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 efulgent 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

¹²² Ibid., pp. 125–32, esp. p. 132.

¹²³ Ibid., pp. 129–30.

¹²⁴ Their comments are provided in Subtelny, “‘Alī Shir Navā’ī: *Bahkshī* and *Beg*,” p. 797.

¹²⁵ Bābur, *Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur*, trans. Thackston, p. 221.

¹²⁶ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, p. 70. Mustafa ‘Ali’s remark is consistent with what Fleischer describes, in general, as his “perception of an Ottoman world in decline” (ibid., p. 191). For a critique of this aspect of Fleischer’s book, see the review article by Rhoads Murphey, “Mustafa Ali and the Politics of Cultural Despair,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21, 2 (1989): 243–55.

¹²⁷ Muḥammad b. Khvāndshāh, known as Mīrkhvānd, *Rawżat al-ṣafā’*, 10 vols. (Tehran: Markazī, 1338–39/1959–60), 1:1–8 and 9–13. For translation of preface, see Mīrkhvānd, *History of the Early Kings of Persia*, trans. David Shea (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1932), pp. 1–43.

¹²⁸ Mīrkhvānd, *History of the Early Kings of Persia*, trans. Shea, p. 10.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

favor) of the arts (*ri'āyat-i jānib-i hunar*) is incumbent upon all discerning persons (*aṣḥāb-i baṣar*).¹³⁰ 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 insistent 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 Tunī's proposal to return to Herat where the advice of doctors could be sought, and accompanied the ailing amir back there.¹³¹ He then succeeded 'Ali Shir Nava'i as keeper of the seal at the great council of amirs.¹³²

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

¹³⁰ For discussion of the decree, its context, and other sources for Mansur Musavvir, see Kambiz Eslami, "Maṣṣūr Muṣavvir, 'the Pride of the Painters' and His Son Shāh Muṣaffar', 'the Rarity of the Age'," in *Iran and Iranian Studies: Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar*, ed. Kambiz Eslami (Princeton: Zagros, 1998), pp. 58–73.

¹³¹ Khvandamir, *Habīb al-siyar*, 3:254–55; *Habibu's-Siyar*, trans. and ed. Thackston, 2:479. Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i died 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 Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tavārīkh*, 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, "'Alī Shīr Navā'ī: *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 Khvandamir, *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.¹³³ 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.¹³⁴ 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 sāmī*) after Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i's *Majālis al-nafā'is* (Assemblies of Precious Things), a monumental biography of poets who flourished in the late fifteenth century.¹³⁵ Another example is Durmish Khan, Sam Mirza's guardian, who ordered a Persian translation of the *Majālis al-nafā'is* from its original Turkish (Fakhri Haravi's *Laṭā'if-nāma*).

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.¹³⁶ “Turk” referred to the *qizilbāsh*, a group of tribes (*ymāq*, pl. *ymāqāt*) 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 *ymāq* “formed a closed group with special privileges and duties revolving mainly about their military functions and their special proximity to the Safavid house.”¹³⁷ He also notes the elusiveness of the history of the separate *ymāqs* (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.¹³⁸

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

¹³⁴ Muḥammad Ḥaydar Dughlāt, *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, trans. Thackston, pp. 131–32.

¹³⁵ See *EI2*, s. v. “Sām Mīrzā” (B. Reinert).

¹³⁶ This problematic aspect of the terms “Turk” and “Tajik” is discussed by R. D. McChesney, “The Conquest of Herat 995–6/1587–8: Sources for the Study of Safavid/Qizilbash-Shibanid-Uzbek Relations,” in *Études Safavides*, ed. Jean Calmard (Paris and Tehran, 1993), pp. 69–107, esp. 74.

¹³⁷ Dickson, “Shah Tahmasb and the Duel with the Uzbeks,” p. 7.

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 *nasta‘liq*. 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 Khalifa. 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 (*muhrdār*, *īshik-āqāsī-bāshī*, governor). Chronicles are replete with references to his various activities in the service of Shah Tahmasp. He also held the position of *khalīfat al-khulafā’*. 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 Khalifa), 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” (*khiẓānadār*) and also notes that he was the son of Amir Hasan Beg the centurion (*yūzbāshī*).¹⁴¹ When his father passed away,

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 Šafawid State during the reign of Ismā‘īl I”; Aubin, “Études Safavides. I. Šāh Ismā‘īl 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 divānī* (responsible for Turkic or military affairs, in contradistinction to *Sart divānī*, responsible for non-Turkic and financial affairs). See Subtelny, “Alī Shīr Navā‘ī: *Bakhshī* and *Beg*,” pp. 803–4.

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

¹⁴¹ Iskandar Beg Munshi writes, “The chief of the Ostājlu emirs at court was Hōseyñ Beg the centurion, son of Hasan Beg. Hōseyñ Beg held the status of emir in place of his uncle, Naẓar 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-qavā'id*) and reaping its benefits (*al-favā'id*) to such good effect that he "caused astonishment in men of experience."¹⁴² 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.¹⁴³ He is mentioned in connection with various military maneuvers, mainly on the western front, where the Safavids faced repeated attacks from their Ottoman neighbors.¹⁴⁴ 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 study¹⁴⁵—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 Ibrahim 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

guardian to Sultan Moṣṭafā Mīrzā and acquired great power and political influence" (Iskandar Beg Munshī, *History of Shah 'Abbās the Great*, trans. Savory, 1:223). Numerous other references are made to Husayn Beg in Iskandar Beg Munshī's history, listing the viziers who served him, a party he held at his house for Prince Sultan Husayn (appointed to his guardianship), his patronage of the calligrapher Mawlana 'Abd al-Jabbar Astarabadi, his support of Sultan Haydar, the looting of his house following the failure of the pro-Haydar faction, and his subsequent imprisonment under Shah Isma'īl II. He died of dysentery in jail. Based on Iskandar Beg Munshī's references to Husayn Beg, he would also appear to have held the rank of *yūzbāshū*. The earlier Safavid source, 'Abdi Beg Shirazi, *Takmilat al-akhbār* (p. 117), makes scant reference to Amir Husayn Beg, but several to his father Amir Hasan Beg (ibid., pp. 80, 83, 114, 116). 'Abdi Beg Shirazi identifies Amir Hasan Beg's brother as Habib Beg Ustajlu. Several references to his father, Hasan Beg "Yuzbashi," are made in Hasan Beg Rumlu's *Aḥsan al-tavārikh*. See Ḥasan Beg Rūmlū, *Chronicle of the Early Safawis*, trans. Seddon, pp. 156 and 178–79.

¹⁴² *mūjib-i ḥayrat-i arbāb-i khibrat mī-shūd*.

¹⁴³ References to Amir Ghayb Beg Ustajlu are made by Hasan Beg Rumlu. See Hasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tavārikh*, pp. 425, 448, 465, 484, 524, 534, 551, 561, 563, and 579; and idem, *Chronicle of the Early Safawis*, trans. Seddon, pp. 164, 167, 179. Also see Iskandar Beg Munshī, *History of Shah 'Abbās the Great*, 1:179, 187, 190, and 261. Iskandar Beg Munshī identifies him as a governor of Damghan and also of Bistam, while Hasan Beg Rumlu identifies him as governor of Tabriz in 966 (1558–59).

¹⁴⁴ The only reference to him in 'Abdi Beg Shirazi, *Takmilat al-akhbār*, is as governor (*hākīm*) of Mashhad in 972 (1564–65), when Herat was also under his control (ibid., p. 125).

¹⁴⁵ Other members of the non-royal patronage group include Shah Tahmasp's grand vizier, Qazi Jahan (served until 1550), although it is not possible to identify specific manuscripts with his patronage. For other sixteenth-century non-royal patrons, including Turkman and Tajik, see Anthony Welch, *Artists for the Shah: Late Sixteenth Century Painting at the Imperial Court of Iran* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 171–75. Perhaps the best-known *qizilbāsh* practitioner of the arts (active during the late sixteenth through early seventeenth centuries) is Sadiqi Beg Afshar. For discussion of *qizilbāsh* involvement in the arts, see Roger M. Savory, "The *Qizilbash*, Education and the Arts," *Turcica* 6 (1975): 168–76.

court,¹⁴⁶ 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 Khalifa. 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 *īshīk-āqāsī-bāshī* which gave him access to the shah's private quarters and an important position at audiences.¹⁴⁷ 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'īl and sister of Bahram Mirza and Shah Tahmasp; two of her calligraphies are mounted in Bahram Mirza's album. Malik Daylami taught Prince Ibrahim Mirza, son of Bahram Mirza. Muhammad Mu'min, the son of Murvarid, taught Sam Mirza.¹⁴⁸ Rustam 'Alī taught Bahram Mirza.¹⁴⁹ As mentioned above, Malik Daylami comments on Amir Husayn Beg's patronage of him as well as of the artist Muzaffar 'Alī, and writes that Amir Husayn Beg himself practiced *nasta'liq* 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 Muzaffar.¹⁵⁰

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-

¹⁴⁶ With the very important exceptions of two sixteenth-century texts, comparable in form to memoirs: Zāhir al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur, *Bāburnāma*; and Zayn al-Dīn Maḥmūd Vāṣifī Haravī, *Badā'ī al-vaqā'ī*, ed. A. N. Boldyrev, 2 vols. (Tehran: Bunyād Farhang-i Īrān, 1349/1972). From these texts we gain some feeling for the daily life and events at royal courts. For a distillation of some of these, excerpted from Vāṣifī, see Subtelny, "Art and Politics," pp. 121–48; and idem, "Scenes from the Literary Life of Timurid Herat," in *Logos Islamikos: Studia Islamica in honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens*, ed. Roger Savory and Dionisius A. Agius, Papers in Medieval Studies 6 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984), pp. 137–55.

¹⁴⁷ In this respect the Safavid post of *īshīk-āqāsī-bāshī* was comparable to the Ottoman *kapıcıbaşı* 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.

¹⁴⁸ See Roemer, *Staatsschreiben der Timuridenzeit*, p. 23. Sam Mirza notes this himself in his biographical notice for Muhammad Mu'min (*Tuḥfa-yi Sāmī*, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 66). The same affiliation is recorded in Khvāndamīr, *Tārīkh-i Shāh Ismā'īl va Shāh Tahmāsp-i Ṣafavī: Zayl-i Tārīkh-i Ḥabīb al-Siyar*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī Jarrāhī (Tehran: Nashr-i Gustarah, 1991), p. 119.

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

¹⁵⁰ Muḥammad Ḥaydar Dughlāt, *Tārīkh-i rashīdī*, trans. Thackston, p. 131.

brarians. References in the sources suggest that courtiers—calligraphers and artists included among them—could even become intimates or boon companions (*muqarrab*, *ichki*, *naḏīm*) 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 Mīrak 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.”¹⁵¹ Dust Muhammad also describes Aqa Mirak as an intimate of Shah Tahmasp and writes that another contemporary, Ustad Kamal al-Din ‘Abd al-Vahhab, was excellent as an intimate companion.¹⁵² All of these references suggest that painting and drawing were activities of the innermost court circle of intimates.¹⁵³

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 Munshī, *History of Shah ‘Abbās the Great*, trans. Savory, 1:270. A segment from Hasan Beg Rumlu’s *Aḥsan al-tavārikh* 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 ‘Būqu’l-‘ishq’ wrote that writers and painters, and Qazwīnīs and asses, flourished without trouble” (Hasan Beg Rūmlū, *Chronicle of the Early Ṣafawīs*, trans. Seddon, p. 208).

¹⁵² *dar naḏīmī bī-ham-bāz ast.*

¹⁵³ An important parallel is offered by the Ottoman setting. The painter Nigari was a boon companion (*naḏīm*) 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 *inshā'* 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 (*tazkira*) in histories. Late-fifteenth-century histories, like Khvandamir's *Ḥabīb 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, *ṣadrs*, 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 (*Aḥsan al-tavārikh*),¹⁵⁴ Budaq Munshi Qazvini (*Javāhir al-akhbār*),¹⁵⁵ Iskandar Beg Munshi (*Tārikh-i 'ālamārā'-yi 'abbāsī*),¹⁵⁶ and Qazi Ahmad (*Khulāṣat al-tavārikh*, The Conclusion of History),¹⁵⁷ continuing the practice first discernable in Khvandamir. Biographical notices and miscellaneous references also abound in the memoirs of Babur and Muhammad Haydar Dughlat.¹⁵⁸ 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.¹⁵⁹ To support this interpretation, evidence of an increased

¹⁵⁴ Hasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tavārikh*, pp. 183–86; trans. Seddon, *Chronicle of the Early Ṣafawīs*, pp. 65–67.

¹⁵⁵ Ms. copied in 1576, State Public Library, St. Petersburg, Dorn 288.

¹⁵⁶ Iskandar Beg Munshī, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, trans. Savory, 1:266–74.

¹⁵⁷ Qāzī Aḥmad, *Khulāṣat al-tavārikh*, ed. Iḥsān Ishrāqī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tehran).

¹⁵⁸ Muḥammad Ḥaydar Dughlāt, *Tārikh-i rashīdī*, trans. Thackston, pp. 128–31.

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 *‘Arżadāsh*t, a document that informs an unidentified patron, most likely Baysunghur, of the status of projects in the *kitābkhāna*.¹⁶³ This

less Islamic art adorned their own compositions with some regularity and were recorded in the histories and biographical compilations of the period, thus conferring on their profession a status traditionally reserved for calligraphers” (“Art and Politics,” p. 125). Bernard O’Kane (*Timurid Architecture in Khurasan* [Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda, 1987], p. 41, n. 103) observes a similar change in architecture, drawing a comparison between the incidence of “signatures” in the Seljuq and Mongol and the Timurid periods. Balancing factors of survival and a shorter timeframe into his analysis, O’Kane concludes that the increased frequency of signatures during the Timurid period “certainly reflects the growing prestige of the craftsman and calligrapher.”

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.

¹⁶³ A facsimile of the document, with accompanying transcription and commentary, was published by Aḥmad Pārsā Quds, “Sanad-ī marbūṭ ba fa‘āliyyaṣā-yi hunarī-i dawra-yi Tīmūrī dar kitābkhāna-yi Baysunghurī-yi Harāt,” *Hunar va mardum* 175 (1977): 42–50. For English translation, see Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, app. 1, trans. Thackston.

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.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 period¹⁶⁵ 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 'Ali Shir Nava'i's *Majālis al-naḫā'is*, translated into Persian in 927 (1520–21) by Fakhri b. Amiri Haravi (under the title *Laṭā'if-nāma*, Book of Graces). Sam Mirza's biography of poets, *Tuḫfa-yi sāmī* (completed

¹⁶⁴ Istanbul, TSK, H. 2152.

¹⁶⁵ There are still more sources to examine, for example, documents relating to artists found in *inshā'* 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 faẓā’il*).¹⁶⁶ 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., *nasta’līq*, *ta’līq*) in which the poet excelled, or one that the poet had invented.¹⁶⁷ Mawlana Shah Mahmud is identified as a master of *nasta’līq* and student of ‘Abdi, and ‘Abdi as a student of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi.¹⁶⁸ In the case of Anisi,¹⁶⁹ his *nasta’līq* 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*, *taṣvīr*, and *tazhīb*),¹⁷⁰ Aqa Mirak Naqqash (in the service of Shah Tahmasp and master of *ṭarrāhī* and *taṣvīr*),¹⁷¹ Malik Qasim,¹⁷² Qadimi Naqqash,¹⁷³ Hafiz Charkin,¹⁷⁴ Vassali Tabrizi,¹⁷⁵ and Nabati Tabrizi.¹⁷⁶ 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.¹⁷⁷ Still other avocations are mentioned by Sam Mirza. Mir Ibrahim Qanuni specialized in calligraphy (*khattī*), harp (*qānūn*), and songs (*naghmāt*);¹⁷⁸ Mir Sana’i in the science of prosody (*ilm-i ‘arūẓ*), calligraphy, social grace (*adab*), and conversation (*muḥāvarāt*);¹⁷⁹ Mulla Ibrahim in calligraphy, music (*musīqī*), and riddles (*mu‘ammā*).¹⁸⁰ The artist Malik Qasim is praised for the fact that he wrote well in all scripts, for his *inshā’*, riddles, and prosody (*‘arūẓ*).¹⁸¹

The widened professionalization of poetry evidenced in Sam Mirza and in the earlier biography of Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i¹⁸² is matched by a broadening in the practice of paint-

¹⁶⁶ It appears in the notice about ‘Abd Allah Shihabi (Sām Mīrzā, *Tuḥfa-yi sāmī*, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 136).

¹⁶⁷ He refers to two inventions: Majnun Chāpnivīs who invented *tuāmān*; and Mulla Jan Kāshī who invented *shikasta-basta* (Sām Mīrzā, *Tuḥfa-yi sāmī*, 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 *muṣavvīr*.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 138. Referred to by the term *muṣavvīr*.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84. Made numerous designs (*naqshhā*) and paintings (*ṣūrathā*).

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143. Employed in making designs (*naqshhā*) and literary compositions (*kārḥā-yi taṣnīf*).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145. Sam Mirza notes that he spent some time in design (*naqqāshī*) and washing lapis lazuli (*lājvard shū’ī*) to prepare the material for pigment production.

¹⁷⁷ For example, Sayyid Husayn Va’iz (*ibid.*, p. 42), Maqṣud 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), Muḥammad 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 (*inshāʿ*, 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. Mīr ʿAlī Shīr mentions poets who were potters, drum-players, spinners, tent-makers, bag-sweepers, binders, and simple soldiers. He even characterizes two poets as *ʿāmī* 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).