

CHAPTER THREE

COMPOSITION AND CONTEXT

Most album prefaces mention the patron who issued the order for the album and the person charged with its compilation, but there seems to have been no uniform model of production. In some cases—for example, the Bahram Mirza album and the Shah Tahmasp album—the author of the preface also functioned as album compiler. In others—for example, the album assembled by Bihzad, and those commissioned by Amir Ghayb Beg and Amir Husayn Beg—the preface author was not named as being the compiler, although he may have participated in what amounted to a collaborative process of production. What emerges is that the patronage structure that lay behind an album's production was extremely complex, particularly the role played by the patron. It is important further to refine the concept of the patron. Several prefaces suggest that the album was commissioned by a patron to hold materials he had collected. Equally possible is that some albums contained materials acquired by the album compiler not owned by the patron. Still another possibility is that the album was commissioned and then given to someone else who had neither collected its materials or been involved in its production. After the album had been ordered, he could be involved in its production or hand that responsibility over to the person he had chosen to write the preface. Only two prefaces, Mir Sayyid Ahmad's for Amir Ghayb Beg and Malik Daylami's for Amir Husayn Beg, directly mention the patron's involvement in the album's production. Although it is not always clear how active this involvement was, the features of some albums suggest that individuals entrusted with their compilation enjoyed a fair degree of latitude. This is especially true in the case of the albums made for Bahram Mirza and Shah Tahmasp.

This last scenario runs against most patronage models adduced by scholars of Persianate art, which tend to see the patron's role as that of arbiter in the description of, and refinements to, the specifications of a commission, despite the lack of clear statements that might support such a role. Emphasis on the patron results from an uncritical acceptance of the official historiographic and biographic sources that stress the patron's knowledge, insight, and vision in all things cultural. Paradigms tend to replicate these portrayals,¹ and there is, of course, an element of truth in all of them—princely patrons did compose poetry and learn calligraphy,² and some even took up the brush to paint, as examples of paintings in albums signed by princely figures attest. When we try to imagine how this patron-focused decision process might have worked, especially considering all the instructions, precise descriptions, innumerable approvals, and disapprovals that would have been needed as the specifications for the project developed, we end up with a rather cumbersome result.

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

² Although some scholars question the authorship of these productions, mainly in poetry. See V. Minorsky, "Jihān-Shāh Qara Qoyunlu and His Poetry," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 16 (1954): 271–97; esp. 283.

Contemporary book production offers a plausible alternative model. Under the direction of a controlling figure, a group of practitioners, some of them specialists in techniques such as illumination, ruling, and pigment preparation, worked under the album compiler.³ Shorthand commands and directives among this network of experienced practitioners were readily understood. Such a framework could easily follow the patron's directives and desiderata.⁴

COMPOSING THE PREFACE, MAKING THE ALBUM

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

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

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

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

⁴ And thus like the commissioning of historical works where the patron served as a programmer and the historian as an executor. A good example is the reference in Qazvini's *Lubb al-tavārikh* (composed for Bahram Mirza) to Timurid prince Ibrahim Sultan's commissioning of a history from Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi. The patron could also issue general directives about the literary style of the work, its scope and content. A cross-cultural paradigm is the Italian Renaissance context in which labor was divided between a programmer and executor. See Martin Kemp, "From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia': The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 8 (1977): 347–98; esp. 358.

exposure and use. By its mobility, the single-page image (painting or drawing) allowed for an expansion in the social contexts for viewing. Less ambitious and less labor intensive, these single pages could be made speculatively for ad hoc purposes, such as gift-giving, and could presumably be tailor-made for specific occasions.

Instructive with regard to the personal associations attached to the contents of the album is Qazi Ahmad's account of the fate of an album of Prince Ibrahim Mirza (d. 1577),⁵ son of Bahram Mirza. After a description of the album and an encomium to it, Qazi Ahmad writes:

This album, with other treasures, fell to the lot of the late Princess Gauhar-Sultān khānum, one of the daughters of the late Shah Tahmāsp, at the moment of the wedding of that shining luminary with Ibrāhīm-mīrzā. When the latter was killed, she washed out the album with water, although no one had seen a similar one and its price was tantamount to the *kharāj* [land tax] of a whole clime.⁶

Another manuscript recension of Qazi Ahmad's treatise provides a motive for the widow's act, to wit, "that it should not fall under the eyes of Shāh Ismā'īl."⁷

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

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

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

⁵ On aspects of Ibrahim Mirza's vita, including the problem of determining his date of birth, see Farhad and Simpson, "Sources for the Study of Safavid Painting and Patronage," esp. pp. 287–88.

⁶ Qāzī Aḥmad, *Gulistān-i hunar*, pp. 143–44; trans. Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, pp. 183–84.

⁷ *ān muraqqā' rā ba-āb kashīd ki ba-naẓar-i Shāh Ismā'īl na-rasad*. Minorsky informs us of this textual variant in a note (*ibid.*, p. 184, n. 648). This segment of text is included in Khvansari's edition of Qazi Ahmad's *Gulistān-i hunar*.

⁸ Two problems presented by Murvarid and Khvandamir/Amini's prefaces are common to many materials contained in *inshā'* manuals. The first is whether or not the texts were composed with a specific object in mind or as a sample (see Felix Tauer, "Persian Learned Literature from Its Beginnings up to the End of the 18th Century," in *History of Iranian Literature*, ed. Jan Rypka and Karl Jahn [Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968],

suggests that it is all that remains of an album made for Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i. Murvarid sketches a scenario for its assembly, beginning with the collector’s order to place some materials he had gathered into a binding for their preservation.⁹ Khvandamir/Amini’s preface also refers to an actual album, but one that is lost to us. Perhaps its folios were reincorporated into later-sixteenth-century albums, or destroyed, as was the case with Prince Ibrahim Mirza’s *muraqqa’*.¹⁰ Khvandamir/Amini introduces his preface as “an appropriate description of the album, whose compiler (*jāmi’*) is the manifestation of proper guidance and righteousness, Master Bihzad,” a description which served as a rubric for the preface in the *inshā’* manual. In his preface, Khvandamir/Amini refers more than once to an album containing calligraphies, paintings, and drawings assembled by the artist Bihzad.

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

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

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

pp. 419–82, esp. p. 433). The second is the historian’s reluctance to use documents in *inshā’* manuals, given that some may have been invented. Thus, Roemer remarks, “since both authentic and fabricated examples of style are produced at random and without any distinguishing indication, careful verification is needed in each case as to whether a given text is authentic or not” (*EI2*, s.v. “*Inshā’*” [H. R. Roemer]).

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

¹⁰ Qāzī Ahmad, *Gulistān-i hunar*, pp. 143–44; trans. Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, pp. 183–84.

¹¹ *ki awrāq-i parīshān-i ustādān-i māzī va muta’ākhkhirīn rā az hayz-i parīshānī dar silk-i jam’iyyat āvard.*

serving of one hundred cheers, nay, every one of its specimens is worthy of one thousand bravos!¹²

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

A comparable motive and sequence is outlined in Murvarid's preface that he composed for the album for Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i. After gathering (*jam' gashta būd*) a mass of "precious things and jewels," the collector ordered the works assembled (*mujma' gashta*) in a binding to preserve and protect them so that "those who seek will experience exceeding pleasure from them."¹³

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

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

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

¹² *ba-dast-i faqīr-i du'ā-gū-yi shāh-i jahān Amīr Ghayb Beg uftāda būd va hamvāra dar majālis-i bihisht ā'in va mahāfil-i falak tazyīn ki zikr-i khuṭūt va suvar mī-raft ba-muṭāla'a va mushāhada-yi ṣahā'if va qīṭā'āt-i mazkūra iḥtiyāj rūi mī-namūd va binābar ānki tartīb va tarkībī na-yāfta būd va paydā kardan-i matlūb muta'assir balka muta'azzir būd vājib dīd ki īn muraqqa' rā tartīb dahad tā ba-sabab-i tartīb-i ān az īn daghdagha ba-kullī ba-rahad chandī ba-dast-yārī-yi ustādān-i nādir va hunarmandān-i qādir va khaṭt-shināsān-i bī badal va khushnīvisān-i bī maṣālī ba tartīb-i ān qiyām namūda dar vāq' tartībī rūi namūd va muraqqa'ī chihra gushūda ki har ṣafhayash saẓāvār-i ṣad taḥsīn balka har qīṭā'ash lā'iq-i ṣad hizār āfarīn ast.*

¹³ *jālibān rā az ān ḥazzī mu'tadd ba ḥāṣil bāshad.*

¹⁴ *mudattī ba-sā'y va iḥtmām-i du nādīra-yi fann-i khud ḥāfiz-i kalām-i mawjūd Mullā Masīh Allāh Muzahhib va Jalāl Beg Afshāngar averāq-i īn muraqqa' bihtar az ānka dar ā'ina-yi khiyāl murtasam buvad šūrat-i tartīb yāft va akṣar-i ḥavāshī-yi ān averāq muzayyan va muzahhab ba-hālkārī-yi Ustād Muzaffar 'Alī mushār ilayhi shud.*

¹⁵ *jamī'-i manāṣib va ulkā va mulāzimān.*

Knowing of the amir's interest in calligraphies and paintings, every "sincere friend" (*mukhlīṣān-i ṣādīq*) and "agreeable companion" (*yārān-i muvāfiq*) brought him specimens from which he could practice and were amply rewarded with robes of honor. After some time, Amir Husayn Beg had gathered numerous fragments (*qīṭa' hā-yi nafīs*)—each one comparable in value to a specimen by the famous calligrapher Yaqut al-Musta'simi—treatises on and examples of beautiful writing, and the precepts of Muhammad of ineffable ornament,¹⁶ sheets of beautiful images,¹⁷ presumably drawings and paintings, and praiseworthy decorated pages,¹⁸ each one of which had been produced by an uncontested master. Amir Husayn Beg then decided to have an album assembled from these "precious jewels" (*javāhir-i nafīsa*), viz. calligraphies, paintings, and drawings. Every folio of the album would be like a robe woven from gold and encrusted with jewels and pearls; every page of it would be like a garden. More praise of the album ensues before Malik Daylami brings us back to its function: "Just as in the assembly of that generous and benevolent man the taste of connoisseurs would experience complete pleasure from the collection of desirable things, so would the sight of those with understanding and insight find complete enjoyment from the contemplation of the elegance of calligraphic forms in gazing upon the beauty of images."¹⁹

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

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

¹⁶ *rasā'il-i ḥusn al-khaṭṭ va al-musā'il ki bā zīnatī mā-lā-kalām būd ba-ham rasīd.*

¹⁷ *ṣafahāt-i ṣuvar-i ḥasana.*

¹⁸ *avraq-i nuqūsh-i mustaḥasana.*

¹⁹ *hamchunānki dar majlis-i ān šāhib-i murūvat va iḥsān zawq-i arbāb-i shawq az jam' -i marghūbāt-i ḥissī lazzatī kāmīl dārad hamchunīn baṣar-i ahl-i fahm va baṣīrat az mulāḥaza-yi luff-i ṣūrat-i khaṭṭī va mushāhada-i ḥusn-i ṣūrat ḥazzī shāmīl yābad.*

²⁰ *ba-nazar-i arbāb-i baṣar va baṣīrat.*

²¹ *al-ḥaqq muraqqā'ī ṣūrat-i itmām yāfta ki agar nāqidān-i khazā'in-i khuṭūṭ va ṣuvar hamīsha manzar-i nazar daqīq sāzand ravā ast.*

concluding section, where he expresses his hope that if any fault is found in his compilation it will be forgiven.

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

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

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

Certain lines of transmission from master to student, or particular praise for one individual, can be reflected in the emphasis on works by particular artists and calligraphers gathered in the album. When these are absent, the preface's relationship to the album is of a different kind. The preface then focuses on praise of God's creation and the album. Often comparisons are drawn between the two, and some statement made about the benefits that accrue from art. The preface's flexibility of structure, allowing discussions of key themes to be shortened or lengthened, permitted its insertion into albums for which it had not been composed including its adaptation to later albums. Lists of practitioners could

also be inserted between thematic elements. In short, the function of a preface vis-à-vis the album it accompanied differed according to what the author set out to do: recount a history of art, gloss the album's contents, or have the preface function as an encomium to the album and its owner. The use of prefaces composed in the recent or distant past led to a chronological gap and potential contextual discrepancies between preface and album, but this was not regarded as a problem.

A second kind of context resulted from the location of the preface in the album.²² It was generally placed at the beginning, preceding the folios assembled from single-sheet calligraphies, paintings, and drawings, a place that makes perfect sense for a prefatory text, and the place where prefaces in other kinds of collections—for example, *inshā'*, *dīvāns*, biographies, and histories—are to be found. As in books, the opening pages of the album preface had frames illuminated in polychrome and gold. The beginning of the prefatory text was thus visually enshrined for the viewer as a signal used to mark a beginning. In Shah Tahmasp's album, the initial page was an illuminated ex libris followed by the first page of the preface (fig. 1); it received a relatively modest broad band of illumination across the top of the page. Subsequent text pages relied on the power of the *nasta'liq* script alone to animate them with the occasional use of colored inks and pigments to highlight key phrases and names, or to introduce poetry (fig. 2). This basic scheme of using only the single band of illumination could be augmented. In album H. 2156 (fig. 3), the opening text which is full of Arabic quotations, uses outlined gold for the Arabic and black ink for the Persian. Small flowers in gold pepper the background, and a broad margin is filled with lotus flowers and rosettes washed in gold and a thinning and thickening line.

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

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

²² The specific details of each preface's physical context are provided in Appendix 1, where problems related to each album's codicology are also discussed.

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

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

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

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

The Bahram Mirza album is a rare example of a Safavid album that has survived nearly untouched, and thus we are able to draw firm conclusions about the location of its preface. The beginning folios bracketed the preface between two sequences of calligraphies, paintings, and drawings that provided an *avant-goût* for the album. The placement of these works is not chronological but oscillates between present and past, a portent of things to come in the album's later folios. Thus, the works not only announce the chronological boundaries of the album's collection at the very beginning, but encapsulate a range of techniques, subjects, and styles. In essence, the first few folios form a visual preface that precedes the textual preface. The textual preface is sandwiched between the *avant-goût* and a vast array of collected materials, its calligraphies arranged according to a chronology that spans the period between the late fourteenth century and the album's year of completion in 1544–45. Unlike the calligraphies, the arrangement of paintings and drawings in the album does not observe this chronology.

A conceit of a different order may have been manufactured in Amir Ghayb Beg's album. Mir Sayyid Ahmad's preface is divided into two parts, a preface and a chronogram. Unlike the preface's folios, the chronogram was not completed. Its folios of text have been mounted in their margins (figs. 13–14), but the final additions of illumination to the sheets of paper, the seam rulings between text page and margin, and the final drawings in the margins are missing. Only the first stage of stenciling can be seen. The unfinished state is difficult to explain. Although a final determination of the Amir Ghayb Beg album's sequence seems beyond reach because its folios have been reordered and combined with folios from other albums, some tentative observations are still possible. The attachment of the preface's first page to the *a* side of a folio meant that its beginning was not structured as a double-page arrangement, a departure from the practice of all other albums.²³ This feature indicates that the preface must have been preceded by at least one folio, and probably more. A sequence of illuminated and drawn panels, roundels, and frames is scattered throughout the album's corpus of folios (mainly monumental illuminated frames, 'unvāns, and rosettes or *shamsas*). As a group they show a degree of consistency in material, support, and aspects of their design and execution. These elements play with aspects of symmetry of composition, motifs, and color, and, arranged on facing pages, they would have established mirroring relationships. In form they are related to traditional components of the luxury volume, the illuminated double-page frames that mark the beginning of a book, as well as subdivisions (marking chapters or separate texts) within books. Some are formally connected to ex libris by their rosette (*shamsa*) form. In each case, however, their relationship to parallel forms in manuscripts is subverted. For example, illuminated *shamsas* do not fulfill their original function because they do not contain the ex libris. It is possible that some of these double-page arrangements preceded the preface.

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

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

²³ Because the preface begins *in medias res*, it is possible that some folios are missing. The beginning passage Qutb al-Din Muhammad's preface, upon which Mir Sayyid Ahmad based his own, comprises fairly extensive sections before he gets to the point where Mir Sayyid Ahmad's preface takes off in the Amir Ghayb Beg album. This subject is discussed in chap. 4.

as such they represent a rare focus for an album. In the albums of Bahram Mirza and Shah Tahmasp, for example, illumination is used to bring cohesion to the assembly of separate items on each page, to accent the formal composition of calligraphy, and to frame a painting or a drawing. Larger fields of illumination are limited to the double-page frontispiece, to a *shamsa* containing an *ex libris*, or an '*unvān*, elements characteristic of luxury Korans and other manuscripts. The beginning materials of the Amir Ghayb Beg album similarly follow the structural components of a book, but in the album their expanded presence speaks of the full deployment of illumination as a category and technique of art. In Amir Husayn Beg's and Amir Ghayb Beg's albums, the technique of illumination becomes a central theme of the collected materials, showing the illuminator's technical mastery. Illumination also had its masters.

CONTEXTS OF USE

It is strange that after a century of studying the arts of the book and in the wake of social history, so little has been written about the social context of Perso-Islamicate books and about where and how readers used them. Patterns of exchange by gift, acquisition through inheritance and booty, and the social groups that had access to books are now attracting greater attention,²⁴ but modalities of reading texts—reading to oneself, or aloud before an audience of one or more—have been largely ignored, even though the act of reading to a listener is frequently depicted in book paintings.²⁵ The paucity of studies about where and how literature was read and listened to and of how books were used contrasts sharply with

²⁴ Recent studies have paid greater attention to non-royal patrons, operating inside or outside the court (Lâle Uluç, "Selling to the Court: Late-Sixteenth-Century Manuscript Production in Shiraz," *Muqarnas* 17 [2000]: 73–96). Codicological examination of manuscripts and marks on their endpapers—seals and notations—has uncovered the successive owners of books by recording their transfer. Articles from this growing literature include, Filiz Çağman and Zeren Tanındı, "Remarks on Some Manuscripts from the Topkapı Palace Treasury in the Context of Ottoman-Safavid Relations," *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 132–48; John Seyller, "The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts in the Imperial Mughal Library," *Artibus Asiae* 57, 3–4 (1997): 243–349; and Soucek and Çağman, "A Royal Manuscript and Its Transformation."

All of these efforts will be further enriched through the patient and systematic analysis of written sources. References to high-ranking courtiers owning books as well as exchanging them as gifts are found in Khvandamir. Khvandamir tells of an Amir Kamal al-Din Husayn of Abivard who was sent on behalf of Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i to the Aqqoyunlu ruler Sultan Ya'qub. "It was decided that, along with other precious books from the royal library, he would take the complete works of Mawlana Abdul Rahman Jami to present to Qazi Isa and Sultan Ya'qub" (Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, 4:350–51; trans. Thackston, *Habibu's-siyar*, 2:525–26). But the librarian gave him the wrong book, mistaking a copy of the *Futūḥāt-i makkī* for Jami's complete works. In his meeting with Sultan Ya'qub, Kamal al-Din Husayn told him that he consulted the book during his travels, which he had not (otherwise he would have learned of the librarian's error). When Sultan Ya'qub opened the book, Kamal al-Din Husayn's lie was revealed. As a result he lost the respect and favor of Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i. Vasifi records the presentation at court in Bukhara of a copy of Katibi's *Kullīyat* (complete works) copied by Sultan Muhammad Khandan. He emphasizes that Sultan Muhammad Khandan was the leading student of Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi (*ki az sar āmad-i shāgirdān-i Mawlanā Sultān 'Alī Mashhadī ast*). The book was presented to the Uzbek ruler 'Ubayd Allah Khan as a gift (see Vāṣifī, *Badā'ī al-vaqā'ī*, 1:165–66).

²⁵ Of numerous examples one can cite the paintings in a *jung* of poetry copied by Mir 'Ali al-Husayni al-Katib al-Haravi in Bukhara in 1529. See Oleg F. Akimushkine, Anas B. Khalidov, and Efim A. Rezvan, *De Baghdad à Ispahan: Manuscrits islamiques de la Filiale de Saint-Petersbourg de l'Institut d'Études orientales, Académie des Sciences de Russie*, Musée du Petit Palais 14 October 1994–98 January 1995, exhib. cat. (Lugano: ARCH, Paris-Musées, and Electa, 1994), cat. no. 40, pp. 198–201.

the extensive literature on Koranic recitation and the role of reading and audition in learning and scholarly transmission.²⁶ Rather, it is the book's visual dimensions—painting and the techniques of bookmaking—that have garnered the greatest share of scholarly interest. The range of impulses that made images in books desirable has been outlined, but the forms of interaction between text and image are only now being refined.²⁷

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

The arrangement of an open album allowed several people to gather, look, read, and discuss its contents, and the multidirectional organization of the materials provided several legible vantage points around its edges. Close scrutiny of some detail in a painting, calligraphy, or drawing which was upside down from one side could be made right side up by rotating either the viewers or the album. Of course, the album could also be examined alone by a single person. Although many elements of the book carried over into the album—the often similar scale of execution in calligraphy and painting,²⁸ the horizontal viewing format of an object laid flat or slightly tipped, and a sequence of folios protected between covers—other elements of the album established a new form of relationship between person and object and an altered phenomenological experience.

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

²⁶ For Koranic recitation, see Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985). For transmission, see Johannes Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*, trans. Robert Hillenbrand (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), chap. 3; and Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). The historical focus of these three studies falls outside the sixteenth century and hence they are of potentially reduced value.

²⁷ For a summary of the study of text and image and hypothesized functions of paintings in books, as well as key bibliographic references, see David J. Roxburgh, "The Study of Painting and the Arts of the Book," *Muqarnas* 17 (2000): 1–16; esp. 2–3 and 6–7. Interactions between text and image are the subject of recent essays in a volume of *Princeton Papers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, ed. Oleg Grabar and Cynthia Robinson (Princeton, 2000).

²⁸ There are a few exceptions in the sixteenth-century albums, especially the large-format Chinese paintings on silk found in Bahram Mirza's album. Other large format works include calligraphies. For the most part, however, the paintings, drawings, and calligraphies are of the same size and scale as the illustrated book.

in one of the six scripts were mainly didactic. In other words, the album's textual dimension was not governed by a linear sequence like a manuscript, nor did it have a dominant narrative pursued from beginning to end. Its short texts on single pages, sometimes comprising as little as two or three couplets of verse, could be read rapidly, the eye roving over the page from calligraphic specimen to specimen or across the gutter of the album to the adjacent page. Albums could be opened at any point, its pages turned over in any sequence, backward or forward. It allowed the user considerable freedom. Even in those examples where the album's textual materials were arranged according to an ordering principle, it did not reside in the text's contents,²⁹ and was one route of approach to the object and its use. The album's textual character and the reader's experience of it are similar to poetic anthologies or digests or compendia. These manuscript forms are also collections of texts of various lengths and could be structured to accommodate two texts by dividing the central field (*matn*) from the margin (*hashīyat*). Like albums, these collections arranged materials in a non-linear sequence—although certain principles did govern the overall arrangement of some³⁰—and united different literary genres in a single place.

Just as the album's textual domain is distinct from a book's, so the album's paintings and drawings acquire a different agency from those in illustrated books. The works embody the history of a past tradition and its practitioners, as a collection of valued materials that makes a potent *lieu de memoire*. They exist at a place beyond text, although some of their subjects and themes conjure up recollections of written stories, and are offered up for the eye's contemplation, for sustained scrutiny and critical appraisal. The primary role accorded to discerning visual phenomena (e.g., line, interval, composition, monochrome, polychrome) foregrounds the visual experience of those images bound into the album.³¹ Most prefaces refer to the visual study of the album's materials: Shams al-Din Muhammad went so far as to say that "even those people who are incapable of reading and writing are inclined to look at calligraphy and to persevere at it,"³² a remark that underscores the perception of the visual aspects of calligraphy, seeing writing without reading what it says.

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

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

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

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

³² *va nīz ān kasānī ki az khvāndan va nivīshān 'ārī and ba-ravīyat-i khaff va mahāfazat-i ān mayil mī-namāyand.*

implied), and settings (*majālis*, *maḥāfil*, *ṣuḥbat*) of the album as an object are mentioned in several prefaces.

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

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

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

³³ Sixteenth-century Safavid court ceremony is a topic that requires more attention. A comparative analysis of Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal palaces and their court ceremonies, especially the formation of the ruler's image, is discussed by Gülru Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 303–42. For sources on late-sixteenth-century through early-seventeenth-century Safavid palaces, see Robert D. McChesney, "Four Sources on Shah 'Abbas's Building of Isfahan," *Muqarnas* 5 (1988): 103–34.

³⁴ See description of a majlis in Maria E. Subtelny, "The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan Husain Baiqara and Its Political Significance," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1979, pp. 162–63.

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

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

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

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

³⁵ For a study of Babur's text, in particular, and the questions of autobiography, personal recollection, and self, see Stephen Frederic Dale, “Steppe Humanism: The Autobiographical Writings of Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur, 1483–1530,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22 (1990): 37–58. For a qualification of the notion of autobiography attached to the books of Babur and Vasifi, see Subtelny, “Scenes from the Literary Life of Timūrid Herāt,” pp. 138–39.

³⁶ Including Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i's close friend Mawlana Sahibdara, a relative of Vasifi. Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” p. 157.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 161. Additional information about Vasifi, his text, and the context in which he wrote it is available in Giorgio Rota, “Vāṣefī e i Suoi Tempi: Uno Sguardo alle Badāye‘ o'l-Vaqāye‘,” *Oriente Moderno* n. s. 15 (76), 2 (1996): 139–64; and Maurizio Pistoso, “A Taste for Ambiguity: Reconsidering Maḥmūd Vāṣefī's Memoirs,” *Oriente Moderno* n. s. 15 (76), 2 (1996): 165–72.

³⁸ Safavid written sources are less explicit in general and only hint at aspects of Bahram Mirza's predilections. Thus, Sam Mirza talks of how Bahram Mirza “turned to carnal pleasures and in nature inclined to sinful behavior” (*ḥaṣūṣāt-i naḥsānī maṣrūf būd va ṭab‘ī ba-ghāyat-i mutaṣarraf*) (Sām Mirzā, *Tuḥfa-yi sāmī*, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 9). In a Safavid context such a phrase could refer to homosexuality and pedophilia, as noted by Adle (“Autopsia, in Absentia,” p. 233).

³⁹ Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia*, trans. Morton, p. 25.

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Also attested in Sām Mīrzā’s *Tuhfa-yi sāmī*, ed. Dastgirdī, p. 179.

⁴² Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia*, trans. Morton, p. 39.

⁴³ See Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” esp. chap. 3. Subtelny provides the first systematic analysis of the economic, social, and cultural contexts of poetry and the political implications of sponsoring court and cultural activities. For her analysis of the majlis, see *ibid.*, chaps. 3 and 4. Subtelny pursued her analysis in the article, “Scenes from the Literary Life of Tīmūrid Herāt.”

⁴⁴ Subtelny, “Art and Politics in Early 16th Century Central Asia”; and *idem*, “Scenes from the Literary Life of Tīmūrid Herāt.”

⁴⁵ A comparative analysis of Timurid and Safavid literary values tends to argue for continuity but to cast it as a decline.

⁴⁶ Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” p. 162.

⁴⁷ Several anecdotes are translated and discussed in detail by Subtelny, “Scenes from the Literary Life of Tīmūrid Herāt,” esp. pp. 140–50.

tury sources are replete with references to occasional verse that acquired status as a memorable performance tied to an event in time.⁴⁸ One example is a *qasida* (panegyric) written by Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i and presented to Sultan Husayn Mirza. Khvandamir introduces the event after describing the patrons for whom Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i worked before his propitious meeting with the Timurid sultan:

On the eve of Id al-Fitr he paid homage to the khaqan, and Sultan Husayn, delighted to see him after so long a time, showered him with favor. The next day, the day of the festival, he presented at his court his “Halaliyya” *qasida*, every line of which was a gem. This only increased the khaqan’s good opinion of him, and his rank and station with the emperor grew day to day until in the end all important affairs of the kingdom were submitted to his opinion, as will be described.⁴⁹

Muhammad Haydar Dughlat also mentions a poem composed by Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i, but this time for ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i’s spiritual guide. Nava’i joined the Naqshbandiyya Sufi order in 1476–77, presumably with Jami’s encouragement.⁵⁰ When Jami returned from a journey to the Hijaz, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i sent a quatrain to welcome him, and Muhammad Haydar Dughlat cites the poem in full.⁵¹ Later in his biographical sketch of Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i, Muhammad Haydar Dughlat recounts an exchange between the Timurid statesman and the poet Banna’i, who had been one of the leading figures in Nava’i’s poetic circle.⁵² Although the witty and pithy exchanges between Nava’i and Banna’i were an inevitable feature of the *majlis* routine, they assumed such a scathing and nasty tone that Banna’i left for Tabriz where he worked with the Aqqoyunlu ruler Sultan Ya‘qub (r. 1478–90). Banna’i ultimately returned to court in Herat, and the rivalry between him and Nava’i continued.

The power of extemporaneous verse beyond the *majlis* framework, in response to some event, action, or speech, is also mentioned in the sources. For example, Khvandamir tells an amusing tale about the poet Mawlana Hasanshah, a witty figure who found favor in his old age with Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i.⁵³ After a “wicked woman” (*zā‘ifa-yi bad kardār*) named Blue Indigo (*vasmah-yi kabūd*) had been removed from her house, a lutanist named Khvaja Mutahhar went to Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i to request her property. Mawlana Hasanshah arrived immediately after the lutanist had made the request for the house, piped at the post in his mission to obtain the house for himself. He “instantly uttered this quatrain,”⁵⁴

In a city where Mutahhar the lutanist is,
No one can close the gates of debauchery.
Every time a whore {*qahbah*} is driven out of town,
This pimp comes and sits in her place.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Some of these verses are quoted verbatim as abridgments, or in extenso, but without reference to a specific event. Numerous examples appear in Sam Mirza’s *tazkira* (*Tuḥfa-yi sāmī*), for example, a poem composed for Bahram Mirza by Hajji Aqa (ibid., p. 187).

⁴⁹ Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, 4:137–38; *Habibu’s-siyar*, trans. and ed. Thackston, 2:422.

⁵⁰ *EI2*, s.v. “Mīr ‘Alī Shīr Nawā’ī” (M. E. Subtelny).

⁵¹ Muḥammad Ḥaydar Dughlāt, *Tārīkh-i rashīdī*, trans. Thackston, p. 126.

⁵² Ibid., p. 128.

⁵³ Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, 4:344–45.

⁵⁴ *fī al-ḥāl īn rubā‘ī bar zabān āvard*.

⁵⁵ Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, 4:345; *Habibu’s-siyar*, trans. and ed. Thackston, 2:523.

Numerous occurrences of daily life were immortalized in poetry, where similar personal slights and criticisms are couched in witticisms and satire.

The funeral was another occasion for the recitation of occasional verse. Poets composed panegyrics to honor the deceased. For Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i’s funeral,⁵⁶ Khvandamir cites one verse composed by Amir Sadr al-Din Sultan Ibrahim Amini, and adds his own (the concluding segment is a chronogram for the year of Nava’i’s death). He refers to them as elegies (*qaṣā’id*) and versified short poems (*muqaṭṭa’āt-i manzūm*).⁵⁷ The death of the Timurid Prince Baysunghur occasioned Mirkhvand to remark upon his patronage of various practitioners, especially calligraphers, before describing the period of mourning and the burial.⁵⁸ Poets, among them Sayf al-Din Naqqash whose *maṭla’* is quoted, recited dirges (*marāṣīd*).

References to books in this rich anecdotal literature of courtly life are rare, but one, made in passing by Muhammad Haydar Dughlat, is especially telling because it refers to the use of books at the majlis. Muhammad Haydar Dughlat praises Sultan Sa‘id Khan’s “good qualities,” his handwriting and orthography in Turkish, Persian, and Arabic, and his exceptional ability to read difficult handwriting. He then remarks, “{Sultan Sa‘id Khan} never composed poetry by pondering over it, but in gatherings and assemblies, no matter what divan was opened and regardless of the meter and rhyme that came up, he could compose extemporaneously.”⁵⁹ Sultan Sa‘id Khan became angry when majlis participants tried to write down the poetry he had recited. The anecdote indicates that at least at some majlises, books were at hand for reference purposes and from which to recite lines. The line of poetry recited from the book established the foundation for an extemporaneous response.⁶⁰ The response could be a witty comment on some aspect of the poem, an intelligent critique of the poetry, or a refashioning according to a dictated rhyme.⁶¹

Just as there was occasional poetry, so was there also occasional art. Many paintings, drawings, and calligraphies bound into albums may have been inspired by specific events, although few are inscribed in a way that records their original impetus. Several works in the Bahram Mirza album were executed by high-ranking Safavids—Shah Tahmasp, Bahram Mirza, and Sultanum.⁶² One, a humorous painting of the palace staff (fig. 17), with which the album opens, has inscribed below it, “I was made for [my] beloved brother Bahram Mirza.”⁶³ Shah Tahmasp’s signature appears at the top of the painting at the conclusion

⁵⁶ Ibid., 256; *Habibu’s-siyar*, trans. and ed. Thackston, 2:480.

⁵⁷ The Persian has layers of meaning that can scarcely be contained in a cursory English translation. The noun *muqaṭṭa’āt* also has the sense of a silk garment and the adjective *manzūm* can mean threaded, arranged in a line, and ordered. Analogies between poetry and textiles are commonplace in Persian literature.

⁵⁸ Mirkhvānd, *Rawzat al-ṣafā*, 6:704–8.

⁵⁹ Muḥammad Ḥaydar Dughlāt, *Tārīkh-i rashīdī*, trans. Thackston, pp. 76–77.

⁶⁰ In studying poetic response, emphasis resides in the analysis of the literary artifact and not in the contexts in which response occurred. A detailed analysis of specific examples of poetic response is presented by Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality*, chaps. 5 and 6. For different forms of response, see Losensky’s index entry for “imitation,” where the technical terms are listed (ibid., p. 383). Also see Ricardo Zipoli, *The Technique of Ġawāb: Replies by Nawā’ī to Ḥāfiẓ and Ġāmī*, Quaderni del dipartimento di Studi Eurasiatici 35 (Venice: Università degli Studi di Venezia, 1993).

⁶¹ For a lengthier discussion of this topic and specific examples, see Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” pp. 165–69.

⁶² Their works appear on fols. 1b and 2a (Shah Tahmasp); fol. 85a (Bahram Mirza); and fols. 7b–8a (Sultanum).

⁶³ *jihat-i barādar-i ‘azīz Bahram Mīrzā sākhṭa shūdām*.

of a list that identifies the six figures depicted in the painting.⁶⁴ It is a painting full of humor, of rotund figures engaged in merriment, wine drinking, music making, and dancing, all the while scrutinized by a man leaning on a stick. The parodic nature of the image is exposed by the amusing names (e.g., the master of ceremonies is named “Watermelon Sultan” [Qarpuz Sultan]), the anti-ideal of corpulence, and the almost subversive attire of its figures. At the opening of the album, the painting introduced several aspects of the album—it was a personalized image made by a ruler for his princely brother that portrayed the form of social activity in which the album would have been made; and it memorialized what may have been a specific event. Perhaps it portrayed an event from Qarpuz Sultan’s life, of his haughty attitude, or offered a parody of courtly gatherings that went on without the ruler’s or prince’s presence. Another study of Qarpuz Sultan signed by Shah Tahmasp, rendered in a simple ink line, is among a collage of materials on the facing page. Depicting Qarpuz Sultan standing and holding a tray of elegantly stacked fruit, his head slightly lowered, and wearing significantly less ornate clothing, the drawing underscores the humor of the majlis-group painting on the facing page. In this way, the album is able to structure its materials so as to enhance some of their inherent meanings and associations.⁶⁵

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

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

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

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

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

⁶⁶ Muhammad Haydar Dughlāt, *Tārīkh-i rashīdī*, trans. Thackston, p. 84.

⁶⁷ For a study of the social contexts of viewing images that can be gleaned from a range of Ottoman written sources, see Banu Mahir, “A Group of 17th Century Paintings Used for Picture Recitation,” in *Art Turc/Turkish Art, 10th International Congress of Turkish Art, Geneva, 17–23 September 1995* (Geneva: Fondation Max van Berchem, 1999), pp. 443–55.

Mawlānā Ṣāhibdārā . . . said, “I too had the same desire, but [then] it occurred to me that if I stretched out my hand, all the birds would fly off the trees.”

Mawlānā Burhān . . . said, “When I looked at [it], I held back my hand and my tongue and I kept silent for fear that his Excellency the Mīr might become angry and frown.”

Mawlānā Muḥammad Badakhshī . . . said, “Mawlānā Burhān, if it were not unseemly and impudent, I would take that stick out of His excellency the Mīr’s hand and hit you over the head with it.”⁶⁸

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

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

In some instances the viewer’s response to images was structured using forms familiar to us in the poetic response of the majlis context or as a witty literate exchange also characteristic of the majlis—the response quoted from Vasifi is one such example. There is no corpus of descriptions of visual phenomena and elements of a literary practice analogous to ekphrasis (the verbal description of a work of art), but such a practice would seem redundant in the case of the album anyway. After all, one of the album’s functions was to provoke responses from its viewers within a social context. These conversations were not written down, unlike the occasional anecdotes about the poetic majlis. But the literary majlis setting is illustrative of the social context in which albums were viewed. Albums were probably examined in a comparably discursive and performative setting by a small group of culturally gifted participants. Several prefaces refer to the album’s context of study by using like or related terms (*majlis*, *maḥfil*, *ṣuḥbat*). In Malik Daylami’s preface, he notes how Amir Husayn Beg practiced *nasta’līq* calligraphy: “At intimate gatherings of people of virtue, they chose highly-skilled people and during these conversations sometimes they would be engaged in practicing precise *nasta’līq*.”⁶⁹ This Amir Husayn Beg did despite the fact of his important offices (*manāṣib*) and affairs (*mahāmm*), marks of his high social status. Malik Daylami also recalls that he was called upon to explain the rules (*qavā’id*) of calligraphy and to write practice

⁶⁸ Trans. in Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” p. 209. For Persian text, see Vaṣīfī, *Badā’i’ al-vaqā’i’*, 2:149–50. Some of these figures are mentioned in other anecdotes told by Vasifi and in the *tazkira* of Sam Mirza.

⁶⁹ *bar majālis-i arbāb-i faḍl va mu’ānasat-i ahl-i hunar va kamāl mī-gumārānd va dar aṣnā-yi ṣuḥbat gāhī mashghūlī ba-mashq-i khaṭṭ-i daqīq-i naskh-ta’līq.*

lines of calligraphy (*nivishtan-i suṭūr-i mashqī*) at assemblies (*majlis*), and was thus favored among his peers (*aqrān*). The reference to peers, or equals, may be to other calligraphers present at the assembly.

Ultimately, many of the works introduced at assemblies as single sheets, or perhaps made in that context, found their way into albums. Such occasional paintings, drawings, and calligraphies or those made for ad hoc purposes were gathered by a collector, combined with older specimens from the art tradition, and transformed into an album.

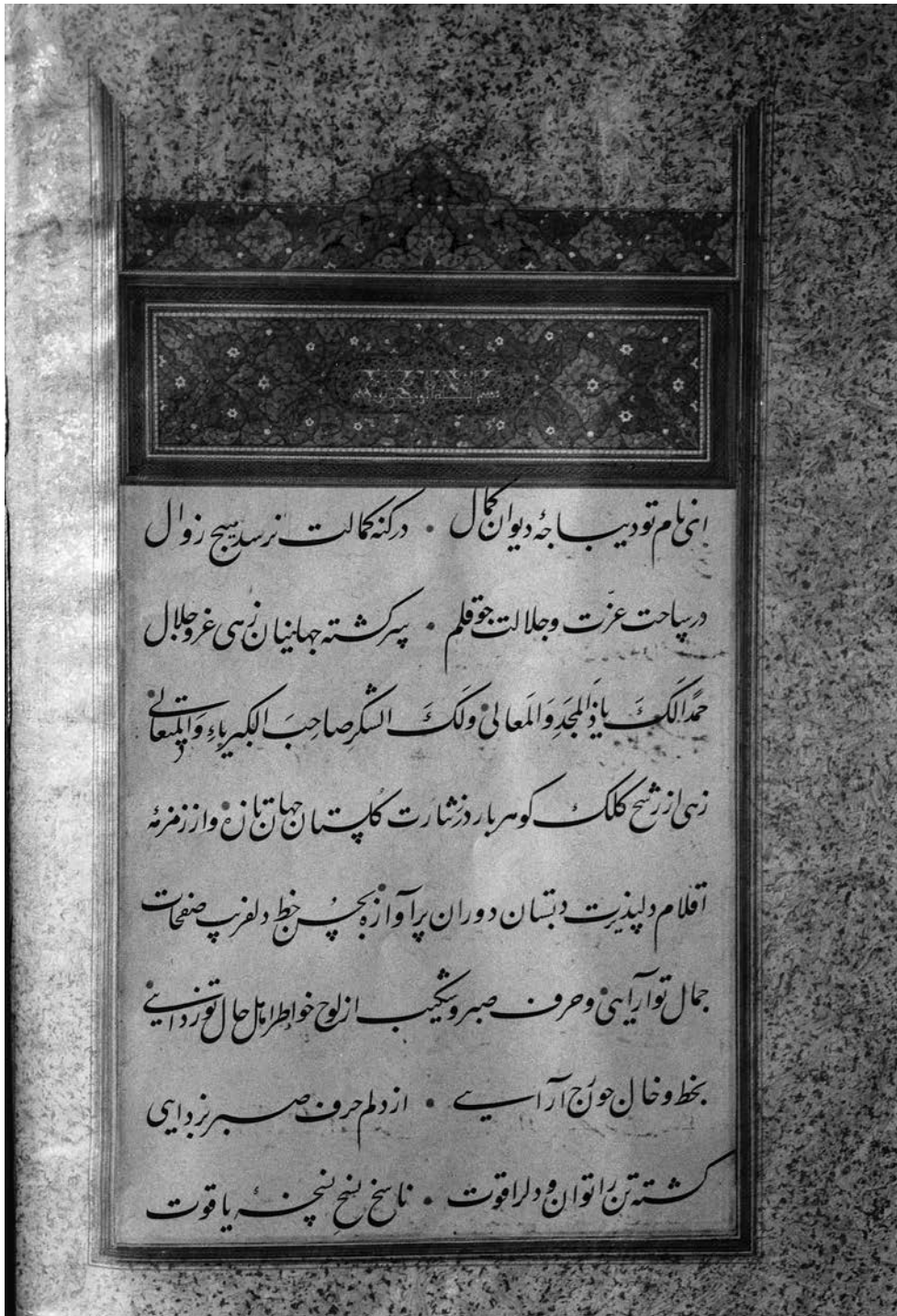


Fig. 1. Opening folio of the preface with illuminated 'unwān'. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 476 x 340 mm (folio). Istanbul University Library, Shah Tahmasp album, F. 1422, fol. 1b. (Photo: Istanbul University Library and Documentation Center, Istanbul)

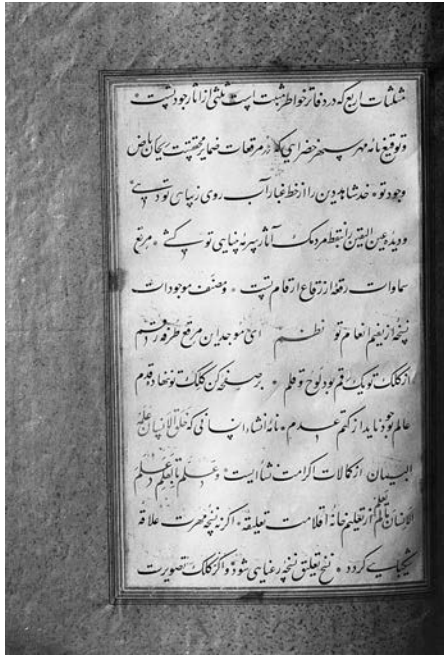


Fig. 2. Text page copied in *nasta'liq*. Rendered in black and colored inks, 476 x 340 mm (folio). Istanbul University Library, Shah Tahmasp album, F. 1422, fol. 2a. (Photo: Istanbul University Library and Documentation Center, Istanbul)

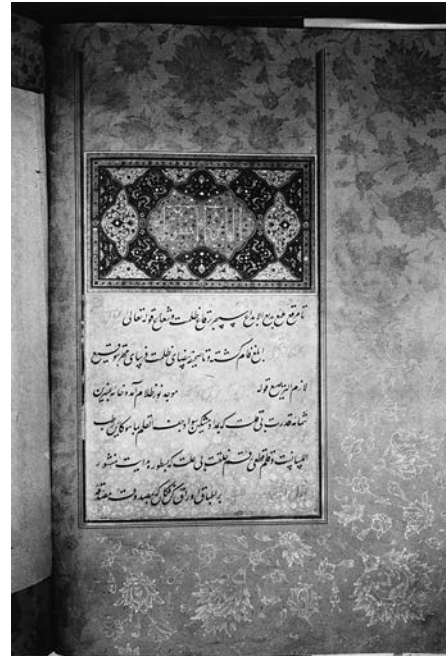


Fig. 3. Opening folio of the preface with illuminated 'unvān. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 459 x 305 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, album H. 2156, fol. 1b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

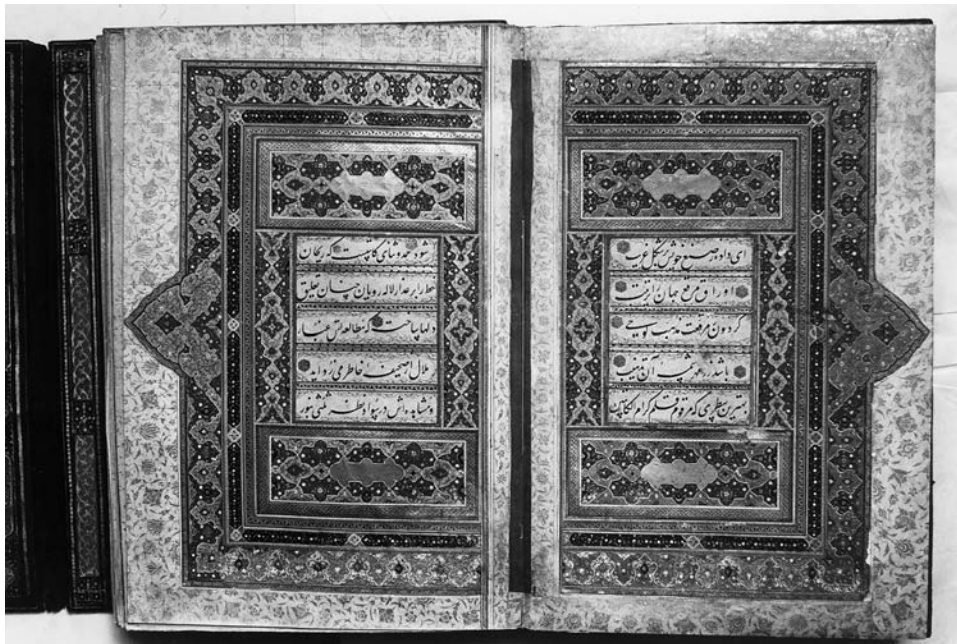


Fig. 4. Double-page illumination. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 349 x 232 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, album H. 2157, fols. 2b–3a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

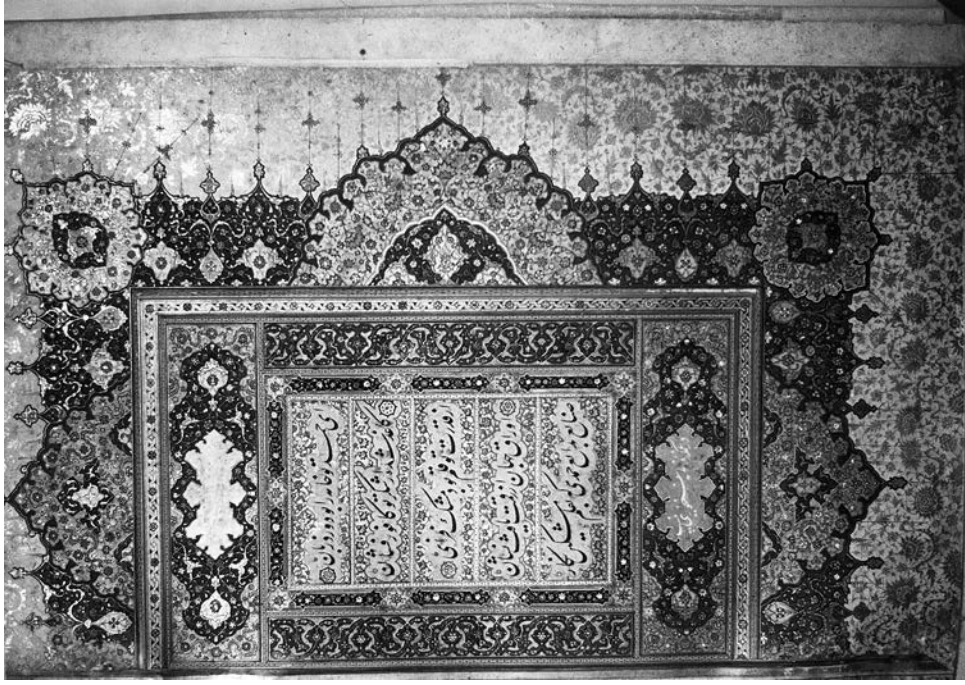


Fig. 6. Page from a double-page illumination. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 388 x 285 mm (folio). Topkapı Palace Library, Vali Muhammad Khan album, H. 2137, fol. 1b. (Photo: Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul)



Fig. 5. Page from a double-page illumination. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 388 x 285 mm (folio). Topkapı Palace Library, Vali Muhammad Khan album, H. 2137, fol. 2a. (Photo: Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul)



Fig. 7. Text page from preface framed in painted margin. Opaque pigment, gold, silver, and ink on paper, 393 x 338 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album, H. 2151, fol. 2b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)



Fig. 8. Text page from preface framed in painted and stenciled margin. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 393 x 338 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album, H. 2151, fol. 23a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)



Fig. 9. Text page from preface framed in stenciled and inscribed margin. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 461 x 344 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Ghayb Beg album, H. 2161, fol. 10b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

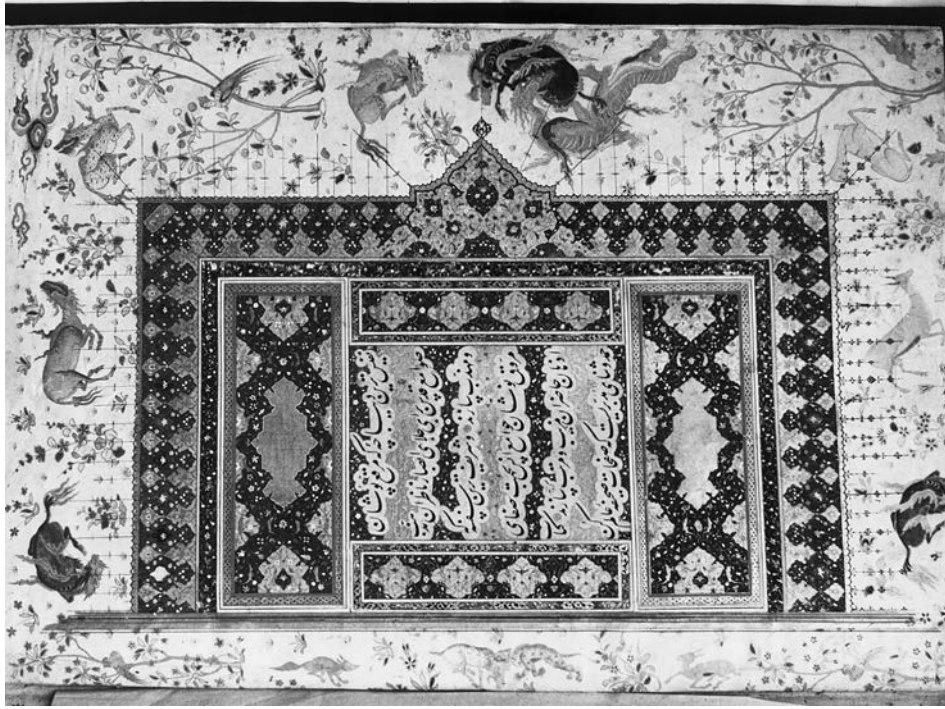


Fig. 11. Page from double-page illumination with decorated margin at beginning of preface. Margin possibly executed by Muzaffar 'Ali. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 393 x 338 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album, H. 2151, fol. 1b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

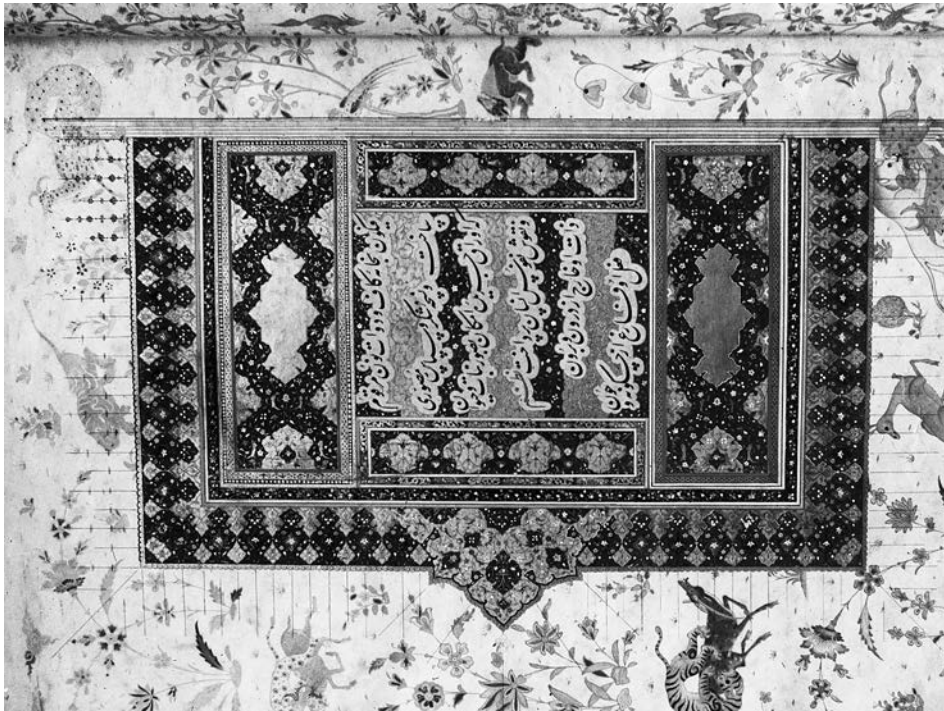
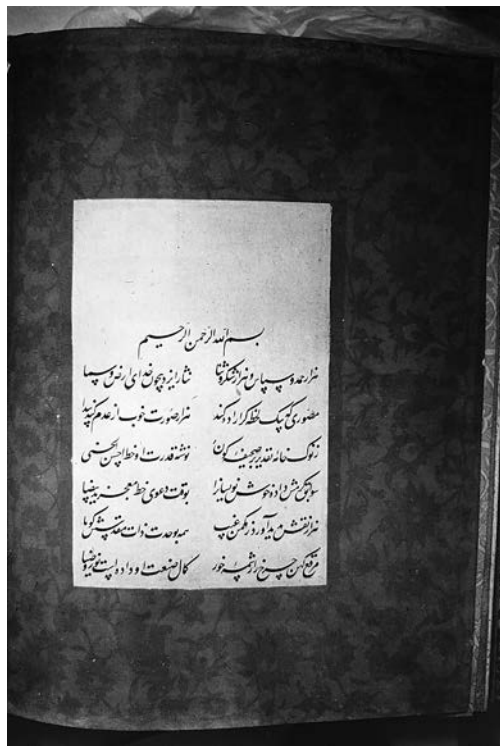


Fig. 10. Page from double-page illumination with decorated margin at beginning of preface. Margin possibly executed by Muzaffar 'Ali. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 393 x 338 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album, H. 2151, fol. 2a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)



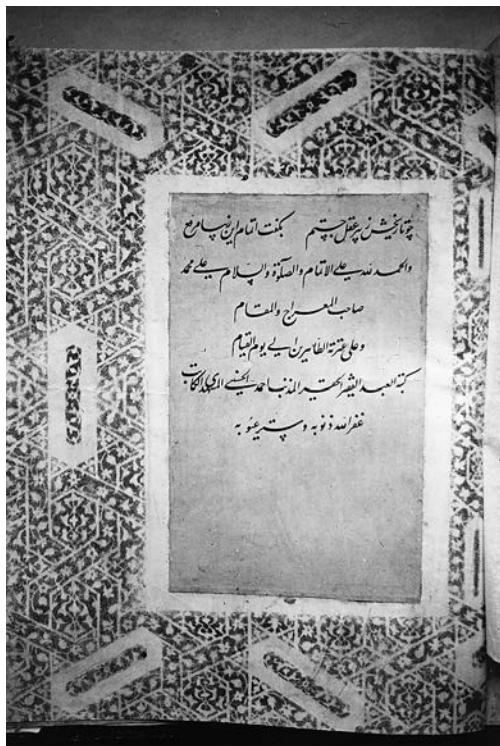
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Fig. 12. Concluding page of preface with illuminated bands. Opaque pigment, gold, and ink on paper, 461 x 344 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album [misbound in the Amir Ghayb Beg album, H. 2161, fol. 2a]. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)



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



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Fig. 14. Last page of chronogram framed in a margin with signature of Ahmad al-Husayni al-Mashhadi al-Katib. Opaque pigment and ink on paper, 461 x 344 mm (folio). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Ghayb Beg album, H. 2161, fol. 190a. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

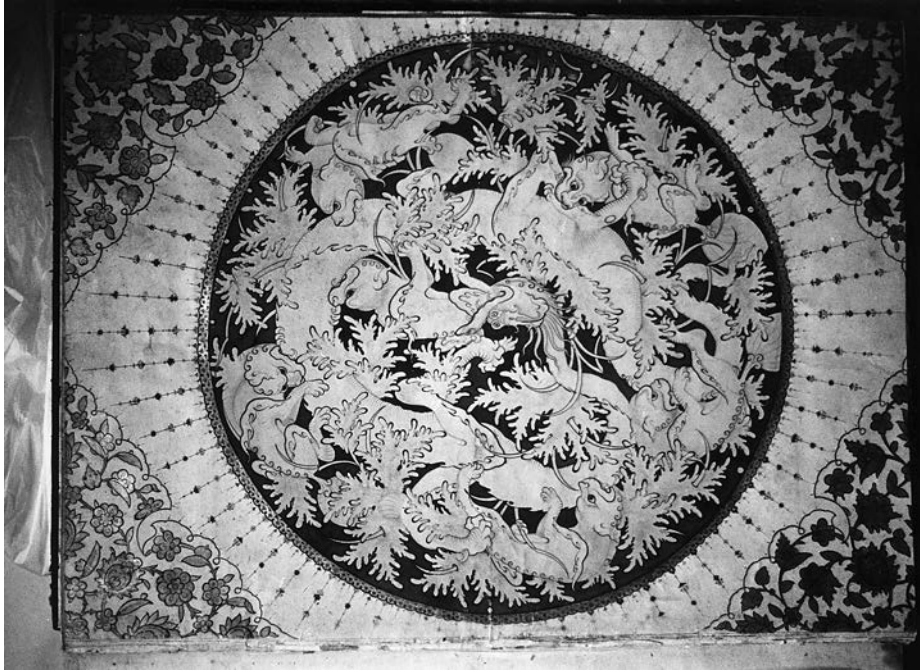


Fig. 16. Roundel depicting dragon attacked by qilins; mounted on an album page. Drawing datable to mid sixteenth century, Safavid milieu. Ink on ivory paper, 317 mm (diameter of roundel). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album [misbound in the Amir Ghayb Beg album, H. 2161, fol. 4b]. (Photo: Topkapi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



Fig. 15. Roundel depicting dragon attacked by qilins; mounted on an album page. Drawing datable to the late fifteenth century through early sixteenth century, possibly from a Turkmen milieu. Black ink on ivory paper, 313 mm (diameter of roundel). Topkapi Palace Library, Amir Husayn Beg album [misbound in the Amir Husayn Beg album, H. 2161, fol. 3a]. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)



Fig. 17. Scene from a Safavid majlis. Painting signed by Tahmasp al-Husayni and made for Bahram Mirza. Opaque pigment and gold on paper, before 1545, 251 x 241 mm (painting). Topkapi Palace Library, Bahram Mirza album, H. 2154, fol. 1b. (Photo: Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)