

CHAPTER FIVE

ART IN HISTORY AND PRACTICE

The writing of history using biography, where chronology is expressed through genealogy, is a feature that developed early on in Islamic historiography.¹ Specialized biographies compiled according to profession of the “restricted” type, to use Wadad al-Qadi’s term,² developed as a literary genre in the first centuries of Islam.³ General biographical dictionaries made up of compilations of notices about exemplary and famous figures are a much later development. The first example is probably the *Wafayāt al-‘ayān* of Ibn Khallikan (d. 1282),⁴ who, like many authors before him, introduced it as “a concise work in the science of history.”⁵

The origin of the division into “classes” (*ṭabaqāt*), which lies at the foundation of Islamic biography, is thought to be an outgrowth of hadith. According to this notion, the principles of spiritual genealogy were applied to the organization of intellectual endeavors; the application was also regarded as a manifestation of a more general Arab concern for genealogy.⁶ Others have explained it as connected to the “Muslim concept of the history of salvation, with the succession of pious men, beginning with the prophets, whose characters were so many models to be imitated.”⁷ By the end of the ninth century, *ṭabaqāt* had become “part of a global preoccupation of all scholars in different fields: to give to society the canons for transmitting knowledge, whether sacred or secular, . . . by means of a biographical tool.”⁸

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

Both types of biography—specialized and general—were prevalent in the late fifteenth century: ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami’s *Nafahāt al-uns min ḥaṣarāt al-quds* (Sweet Scents of Intimacy from

¹ Malak Abiad, “Origine et développement des dictionnaires biographiques arabes,” *Bulletin d’Études Orientales* 31 (1979): 7–15; esp. 9–10. For a detailed study of this aspect of historiography, see Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968). For a discussion of the list in early histories, found first in the *maghāzī* literature (lists of martyrs) and then *ṭabaqāt*, see Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source Critical Study*, 2nd ed. in collaboration with Lawrence Conrad (Princeton: Darwin Press Inc., 1994), esp. chap. 2.

² Wadād al-Qāḍī, “Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance,” 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. 93–122, 95.

³ For early biographies, see Ilse Lichtenstadter, “Arabic and Islamic Historiography,” *The Moslem World* 35, 2 (April 1945): 126–32; Ibrahim Hafsi, “Recherches sur le genre ‘Ṭabaqāt’ dans la littérature Arabe, pt. 1,” *Arabica* 23, 3 (September 1976): 227–65; and idem, “Recherches sur le genre ‘Ṭabaqāt’ dans la littérature arabe, pt. 2,” *Arabica* 24, 2 (June 1977): 150–86.

⁴ Al-Qāḍī, “Biographical Dictionaries,” p. 95.

⁵ As noted by al-Qāḍī in *ibid.*, n. 3.

⁶ See *EI* suppl., *s.v.* “Ṭabaqāt” (W. Heffening). For an example, see Muhammad Hamidullah, “Le ‘Livre des Généalogies’ d’al-Balāḍirī,” *Bulletin d’Études Orientales* 13 (1949–51): 197–211.

⁷ See *EI2*, *s.v.* “Ṭabaqāt” (Cl. Gilliot).

⁸ *Ibid.*

the Presences of the Pure), commissioned by Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i in 1476–77 and completed in 1478–79, is a collection of notices of five hundred and sixty-seven saints; Khvandamir’s *Dastūr al-vuzarā’* (1509–10) is a compendium of biographies of viziers from the Umayyad through the Timurid dynasties; and Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i’s *Majālis al-nafā’is* (begun 1490–91), provides biographies of contemporary poets who wrote in Persian and Chaghatay. Also from the late Timurid period is Dawlatshah Samarqandi’s *Tazkirat al-shu‘arā’* (Biography of Poets), completed 1487, which he dedicated to Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i.⁹

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

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

⁹ For summary of Dawlatshah’s biography, description of the book, recensions, and scholarly literature, see Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, 1, 2, no. 1093.

¹⁰ *Khaṭṭī ki az mushāhada-yi šūratash bašar-i ahl-i bašīrat ḥazzī-yi kāmīl yāftī dar rishta-yi ikhtirā’ muntaẓam gardānīd va ba-qalam-i gawharbār-i mu’jiz āsār raqam-i naskh ba-riqā’-i khuṭūt-i khush-nivīsān-i aṭraf-i jahān kashīd* (Khvandamīr, *Dastūr al-vuzarā’*, pp. 78–80, esp. 78).

¹¹ *dastī rā vāzī’-i khaṭṭ ast va chand muṣḥaf nivishta chīrā mī-burīd* (ibid., pp. 79–80).

¹² *dar ayyām-i ḥayāt sih muṣḥaf dar qalam āvard* (ibid., p. 80).

¹³ Losensky, “‘Welcoming Fighānī:’ Imitation, Influence,” p. 151.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 151 and 138.

¹⁵ The same categories of information are given in poets’ biographies in Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i’s *Majālis al-nafā’is*. For a summary of them, see Subtelny, “The Poetic Circle at the Court of the Timurid Sultan,” pp. 28–30.

before 1560–61, and Sadiqi Beg Afshar (*Maḡmaʿ al-khavāṣṣ*, The Concourse of the Elite) compiled in the 1590's.

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

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

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

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

¹⁶ Dawlatshāh Samarqandī, *Tazkirat al-shu'arā'*, p. 295.

¹⁷ *va dar anwā'-i hunar chun taṣvīr va tazhīb va qavāṣī va sihāmī va khātim-bandī va ghayr zalika ustād būdī va shish qalam-i khaṭṭ nīvishī* (ibid., p. 342).

¹⁸ *agar ān 'aṣabīyat dar īn rūzgār būdī khāṭir-i nuqqād jawharīyān-i bāzār-i faẓl-i īn rūzgār ki 'amr-shān ba-khulūd payvasta bād rāh-i tarjīh namūdandī va raf'-i ishtibāh kardandī* (ibid., p. 267).

¹⁹ One example of a calligrapher's biography placed in a historical narrative is that of Mawlana Ma'ruf whom Khvandamir names as the master of Mawlana Shams al-Dīn (a.k.a. Muhammad b. Husam or Shams

In his earlier history, the *Khulāṣat al-akhbār fī bayān ahvāl al-akhyār* (1500), Khvandamir completed the work with an epilogue comprising biographical notices of some of Sultan Husayn Mirza's contemporaries.²⁰ In the *Habīb al-siyār* he increasingly emphasizes artists and calligraphers beginning with the reign of Shahrukh. Two entries about artists active during Shahrukh's rule show a historical and genealogical conception that suggests a consciousness of a history of art, though not expressing it as such. The first entry is on Mawlana Shams al-Din al-Haravi, a student of Mawlana Ma'ruf. Working under Baysunghur's patronage, "he signed many of his calligraphic specimens in the name of Yaqut al-Musta'simi and the quick-sighted ones who appreciate subtleties accepted this situation."²¹ Mawlana Ja'far Tabrizi is praised for his excellence in all scripts, especially *nasta'liq*. Three of his students—Mawlana Azhar, Mawlana Shihab al-Din 'Abd Allah Ashpaz, and Mawlana Shaykh Mahmud—are the Ibn Muqla, Sayrafi, and Yaqut of the age.²²

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

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

al-Baysunghuri). He is discussed at length in the narration of events that followed the plot to assassinate Shahrukh in 830 (1427), because of his suspected collusion with Ahmad Lur (Khvāndamīr, *Habīb al-siyār*, 3:615–18). Khvandamir's biography of Mawlana Ma'ruf is made up of a series of anecdotes strung together. He begins by tracing his movements between successive patrons, including Sultan Ahmad Jalayir and Iskandar Sultan. As a direct result of his failure to conform to the requirement of writing five hundred couplets per day in Iskandar Sultan's workshop—Mawlana Ma'ruf did not write anything for two whole days—he was brought before his patron to offer an explanation. In the ensuing narrative the problem is resolved. A tent is pitched for Mawlana Ma'ruf, he is provided with an assistant to trim his pen, and he makes up for the lost two days' production before afternoon prayer. After Iskandar Sultan's fall from power, Mawlana Ma'ruf is uprooted by Shahrukh and moved to Herat where his talent is appreciated, but he is soon in trouble again because of his "self-confident" and haughty attitude; he kept paper supplied to him by Baysunghur to copy a *Khamsa* for more than a year, only to return it to the prince still unused. Khvandamir suggests that irritating Baysunghur did not help promote sympathy for him when he was accused of conspiring with Ahmad Lur to murder Shahrukh.

²⁰ The conclusion lists monuments and gardens of Herat and biographical notices divided according to shaykhs, sayyids, and nobles; grantees of the state and members of the ulema; calligraphers of the royal library; artists and engineers; musicians. For the epilogue, see Khvāndamīr, *Mā'aṣir al-mulūk ba-ẓamāma-yi khātima-yi khulāṣat al-akhbār va qānūn-i humāyūnī*, ed. Mir Hāshim Muḥaddaṣ (Tehran: Rasā, 1372), pp. 183–245.

²¹ *bisyrān az khuṭūṭ-i khvīsh rā ba-nām-i Yāqūt al-Musta'simī kard va mubaṣṣirān-i nukta-dān in mā'nī rā qabul farmūdand* (Khvāndamīr, *Habīb al-siyār*, 4:19).

²² Ibid.

²³ *ki khuṭūṭ-i ustādān-i mutaqaḍdimīn va muta'ākhhirīn rā mansūkh sākt* (ibid., 4:351–52).

²⁴ *va dar khaṭṭ-i nasta'liq sar āmad-i khush-nivīsān* (ibid. 4:618–19).

quickly. Mawlana ‘Abd al-Hayy Munshi, Mawlana Mu‘in al-Din Muhammad Isfizari, and Amir Nizam al-Din ‘Abd al-Hayy Munshi are among those mentioned. To some extent the groupings indicate a separation between practitioners who specialized in *ta‘liq* and those who specialized in *nasta‘liq*. Khvandamir also distinguishes between the “six scripts” and the more recently invented *ta‘liq* and *nasta‘liq*. Discussing Khvaja Muhammad Mu‘min (b. Khvaja Shihab al-Din ‘Abd Allah Murvarid), Sam Mirza’s tutor, he says that “in the delineation of the basic scripts he has risen to such a height that in Iraq and Khurasan today he is considered the most accomplished calligrapher of that region.”²⁵ His statement is doubly “historical” in its separation of a canon of scripts from more recently developed and perfected ones and its promotion of Muhammad Mu‘min as a repository of an aesthetic dating from the late thirteenth century to a contemporary setting.

Some of Khvandamir’s biographical notices are humorous, others judgmental in tone. His entry for Mawlana Simi Nishapuri revolves around an anecdote about two men placing a bet on how many *mawnds* of dates the bulimic calligrapher could eat.²⁶ Of Mawlana Sultan Muhammad Khandan, he notes his predilection for the good life: living in Herat, he “sometimes deigns to produce examples of calligraphy.”²⁷

Notices on court painters sponsored by Sultan Husayn Mirza and Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i accompany the entries for learned men. He writes of Mawlana Hajji Muhammad Naqqash that he “constantly delineated strange things and wonderful forms with the pen of thought on the pages of time”²⁸ and was complete in his mastery of depiction and illumination. Khvaja Mirak Naqqash, also a calligrapher, was peerless in depiction (*tasvīr*) and illumination (*tazhīb*).²⁹ Mawlana Qasim ‘Ali, a member of the ulema, was “in the craft of making gold leaf and gilding . . . likewise at the limit of experience.”³⁰ Khvandamir’s notice on Bihzad is entirely consistent with the praise of the artist in the Khvandamir/Amini preface:

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

[couplet]

He took one hair from his brush
he gave life to inanimate form.³¹

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

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

²⁵ *dar taḥrīr-i khuṭūṭ-i uṣūl ba-darajāt rasīda ki ḥalā dar ‘Irāq va Khurāsān tamāmī khushmivīsān ān janāb rā musallam mī-dārānd* (ibid., 4:616).

²⁶ Ibid., 4:62.

²⁷ *va gāhī himmat bar kitābat-i nusakh-i sharīfa mī-gumārād* (ibid., 4:363).

²⁸ *payvasta ba-qalam-i andīsha umūr-i gharība va ṣuvar-i ‘ajība bar ṣaḥā’if-i rūzgār taḥrīr mī-namūd* (ibid., 4:348).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *az ṣan’at-i zar-kūbī va zar-kashī nīz ba-ghāyat ṣāhib-i vuqūf ast* (ibid., 4:358–59).

³¹ *muzhir-i badā’i-i ṣuvar ast va mazhar-i navādīr-i hunar qalam-i mānī raqamash nāsikh-i āṣār-i muṣavvirān-i ‘ālam va banān-i mu’jiz shams māhī taṣvīrāt-i hunarvarān-i banī ādam [bayt] mī-yi qalamash zi ū sitādī/ jān dāda ba-ṣūrat-i jumādī* (ibid., 4:362).

scope and language,³² but the biographical notices at the conclusion of regnal periods seem to have been his own idea. Mirkhvand's volumes, covering the Ilkhanid and early Timurid periods, contain no biographies, and it is not until the seventh volume, in a summation of the cultural and intellectual achievements of Sultan Husayn Mirza's rule written by Khvandamir as a continuation of Mirkhvand's history, that biographies appear.³³ In large measure they are the same as those found in the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* though slightly rearranged. Anecdotes and brief notes about artists and calligraphers also occur in the body of Mirkhvand's history, but they are integrated into that history as noteworthy events.³⁴

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

Dawlatshah and Khvandamir both had a clear conception of the history of depiction and calligraphy that emerges from reading their work. They also believed that the arts had been further perfected in their own time. Their history of depiction, in particular, parallels the historical and genealogical conception of the *tazkira*: the search for origins is often incorporated into other works on poetry. For example, the preface to Mawlana Sayfi 'Aruzi Bukhari's *'Arūz-i sayfi* (Metrics of Sayfi), completed in 1490–91, a treatise on poetic meter and rhyme, presents a series of arguments and opinions by various writers as to who was the first poet to write in Persian—Bahram Gur, Abu Hafs Sughdi, or Rudaki.³⁵ Pinning the origin of a technique or practice on a historical individual had long belonged to the Islamic intellectual tradition, motivated in part by the need to explain precedents for customs.³⁶ The earliest known practitioner of the genre, which came to be referred to as *awā'il*, is Abu Bakr b. Abi Shayba, whose *Muṣannaf* (literary work) written in the ninth century³⁷ contained a section on "firsts." The earliest monographic treatment of "firsts" was Abu Hilal al-Askari's *Kitāb al-awā'il* (Book of Firsts, before 1005); one of the best known was Tha'alibi's *Latā'if*

³² Quinn, "Historiography of Safavid Prefaces," pp. 3–6.

³³ See Mirkhvānd, *Rawzat al-ṣafā*, 7:242–304.

³⁴ The densest group of references to calligraphers is prompted by Baysunghur's death (Mirkhvānd, *Rawzat al-ṣafā*, 6:704–5).

³⁵ For references to treatise, see Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, 3, 1, no. 292.

³⁶ See *EI2*, s.v. "Awā'il" (F. Rosenthal).

³⁷ Listed in *ibid.* Shortly after the *Muṣannaf* were works entirely devoted to the topic by al-Kalbi, al-Mada'ini, and al-Hasan b. Mahbub.

al-ma'ārif (Subtleties of Knowledge, before 1038).³⁸ Tha'alibi's work includes several "firsts" for writing and materials: Idris (Enoch) "was the first to use writing"³⁹ and to write with a pen,⁴⁰ and Joseph was the first to use papyrus (*al-qarāfīs*).⁴¹ Elsewhere we learn that Samarqand is famed for its paper "which has driven out of use the Egyptian papyrus and the parchment which previous generations employed; this is because it looks better, is more supple, is more easily handled and is more convenient for writing on. It is only made in Samarqand and China."⁴²

Other works of belles-lettres (*adab*) contained chapters about language and writing. In his late-tenth-century *Fihrist* (Canon) Ibn al-Nadim began with a section on "the languages of the peoples, Arab and foreign, the characteristics of their methods of writing, their types of script and forms of calligraphy."⁴³ He cited numerous traditions which attributed writing to different men, among them one from Ka'b (al-Ahbar) saying that Adam was the first person to write in the Arabic and Persian scripts,⁴⁴ explaining later that Adam wrote on clay before other supports came into use, including copper, stone, wood, leaves, bark, tanned hides, silk, parchment, and paper.⁴⁵

As Khvandamir's history moves further into the sixteenth century, biographical notices become more numerous but the same is not the case for the histories of Babur (*Bāburnāma* [Book of Babur], before 1530),⁴⁶ and Muhammad Haydar Dughlat (*Tārīkh-i rashīdī*, 1546),⁴⁷ which are more circumscribed in scope chronologically and geographically. Because of Babur's narrower focus, biographical notices were confined to celebrated people at Sultan Husayn Mirza's court. The last Timurid ruler's death in 1506 occasioned a long biographical sketch, followed by notices for his children, wives, concubines, amirs (the longest on Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i), ministers, viziers, learned men, poets, artists, and musicians. His list of artists—Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi, Bihzad, and Shah Muzaffar—is thus surprisingly brief.⁴⁸

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

³⁸ 'Abd al-Malik b. Muḥammad Tha'alībī, *Laṭā'if al-ma'ārif*. For a translation, see C. E. Bosworth, *The Book of Curious and Entertaining Information: The Laṭā'if al-ma'ārif of Tha'alībī* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968). The first chapter, "Concerning the First Occurrences of Various Things and the First Persons to Do Various Things," is an excellent example of the scope of such works and of the pleasure to be derived from reading them.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39. For identification of Enoch with Idris, see n. 5. In an addendum, Bosworth notes how Idris was "associated or identified with Hermes Trismegistus, the founder of hermetic philosophy who, according to the . . . Epistles of the tenth-century Basran group of the *Ikhwān as-Ṣafā'* . . . journeyed to Saturn and spent thirty years there learning the secrets of the heavens before bringing them down to mankind" (*ibid.*, p. 147).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 140. He adds the story that knowledge of paper-making was derived from captured Chinese prisoners brought to Samarqand (see *ibid.*, n. 143).

⁴³ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, trans. Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, 1:2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:39–40.

⁴⁶ For notes on the composition of the text, its cultural context, and a translation, see Thackston, *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur*, pp. 9–31. As it survives today the history covers the periods 1494–1503, 1504–20, and 1525–30. For an explanation about the lacunae, see *ibid.*, p. 11. Babur's history is an often personal account of events that he experienced during this period.

⁴⁷ For a translation of the text and commentary, see Thackston, *Mirza Haydar Dughlat's Tarikh-i Rashidi*. The history covers the period between ca. 1329 and 1543.

⁴⁸ The notices were published as excerpts by Muḥammad Shaffī, "Iqtibās az vāq'iat-i Bāburī," *Oriental College Magazine* 10, 3 (May 1934): 140–49.

notables of Sultan Husayn Mirza's time, another testament to the fame of the Herat court. The occasion used to introduce his biographical notices is a trip that he made to Khurasan. He organizes the notices into separate categories—mystics, learned men, poets, calligraphers, painters, illuminators, singers, and musicians—before returning to his narrative.⁴⁹ The section on calligraphy includes references to practitioners and their students, scripts and their inventors, arranged into a narrative that traces a history of calligraphy from the late fourteenth century into the sixteenth century. We are treated to a passage on Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi, with an excerpt from his treatise inserted into it. An anecdote tells how Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi learns an important lesson, when he was asked to complete an unfinished *Khamsa* copied by Ja'far al-Tabrizi. On his way to court to seek approval for the section he had completed he was greeted by the calligrapher Azhar, who disapproved of what he had written and punished him by locking him up in his house for two days. When Azhar released Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi, he told the young calligrapher that he was talented but that he lacked technique and furnished him with samples to study and copy. Muhammad Haydar Dughlat closes with biographies of Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi's students and their followers.

Muhammad Haydar Dughlat's treatment of painters is not strictly chronological.⁵⁰ He begins with Shah Muzaffar and his father Master Mansur, making detailed comments about quality and technique of their works and noting that Shah Muzaffar died young and therefore left few examples. Next Bihzad is discussed briefly, mainly in comparison to Shah Muzaffar.⁵¹ Then Muhammad Haydar Dughlat jumps back to the time of the Ilkhanids (r. 1256–1353) and writes about 'Abd al-Hayy, noting that contemporary practitioners thought he was a saint and that in later years he attempted to destroy his own works. Returning to the late fifteenth century, he mentions students of Bihzad—Qasim 'Ali Chihragushay and a second Qasim 'Ali—and Bihzad's master and father Mawlana Mirak Naqqash, whom he describes in detail. He comments briefly on Ustad Baba Hajji, his brother Ustad Shaykh Ahmad, Mawlana Junayd, Ustad Husam al-Din Ghadaragar, and Mawlana Vali. He mentions another pupil of Bihzad's, Mulla Yusuf, and ends with Mawlana Darvish Muhammad, the master of Muhammad Haydar Dughlat. It is at this point that one realizes why he devoted so much attention to Shah Muzaffar, who had trained Mawlana Darvish Muhammad, making him Muhammad Haydar Dughlat's artist-grandfather. The section on illuminators is brief: only Yari and Mawlana Mahmud are mentioned. In both the sections on painters and on illuminators Muhammad Haydar Dughlat notes that there were many more, but that he has limited himself only to the masters.

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

⁴⁹ See Thackston, *Mirza Haydar Dughlat's Tarikh-i Rashidi*, pp. 117–32. The biographical notices were published as excerpts by Muhammad Shaf'i, "Iqtibās az tārikh-i rashidi," *Oriental College Magazine* 10, 3 (May 1934): 150–70.

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

⁵¹ An intelligent discussion of the terminology and the points of comparison was made by Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, pp. 95–97.

in his biography of poets. But only Muhammad Haydar Dughlat provides a section on calligraphers in narrative form, and it comes some two years after Dust Muhammad's preface, the earliest known example. Thus, although events in artists' lives figure in the history proper and as strings of biographical notes at the end of regnal periods, he does not form a history of art as a narrative although he certainly shows a historical sense of past and present.

In the aftermath of the album preface, several Safavid-period histories contain narrative accounts, including those of Hasan Beg Rumlu, Budaq Munshi Qazvini, and Iskandar Beg Munshi. For example, in his *Aḥsan al-tavārīkh* (completed 1577),⁵² Hasan Beg Rumlu traces a history of calligraphy amid his necrology for the year 919 (1513–14), the year in which Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi died, thus providing the rationale for a historical account.⁵³ More developed is the narrative in Budaq Munshi Qazvini's *Javāhir al-akhbār*, completed around the same time (1576–77).⁵⁴ His account of calligraphy and the arts of depiction was prompted by the naming of Caliph al-Muqtadir (r. 908–32), whom Ibn Muqla had served as vizier, in the historical section on the Abbasid caliphs. Qazvini's text is full of intriguing asides, and he divides the narrative into separate parts according to medium (calligraphy and depiction) and divisions by script.⁵⁵ Iskandar Beg Munshi's section on calligraphers, painters, and other practitioners inserted at the end of the narrative of Shah Tahmasp's rule is longer but comprises sequential biographies of the kind found in Khvandamir's *Ḥabīb al-siyar*.⁵⁶ We can conclude from these three examples that after the middle years of the sixteenth century an art historical narrative or biographical component was a required element in any history.

Another category of source that offers evidence of an art historical sense is the technical treatise. Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi's *Širāṭ al-suṭūr* (Way of Lines of Writing, 1514)⁵⁷ contains a

⁵² Hasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-tavārīkh*, pp. 173–76.

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

⁵⁴ St. Petersburg, State Public Library, Dorn 288, fols. 105–13.

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

⁵⁶ Iskandar Beg Munshī, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, trans. Savory, 1:266–74.

⁵⁷ For a brief description of the text, also titled *Risāla-yi manzūm dar 'ilm al-khaṭṭ* (Versified Treatise on the Art of Calligraphy), and a list of recensions, see Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, 2, 3, no. 645; and Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, "Sar guzasht-i nāmāhā-yi khush-nivīsān va hunarmandān,"

section on the origins of *nasta'liq*, in which he names Khvaja Mir 'Ali, a calligrapher whose lineage went back to 'Ali [b. Abi Talib],⁵⁸ as its inventor.⁵⁹ The connection to 'Ali signified Mir 'Ali's exalted place in the history of calligraphy. According to Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi, "scribes old or new/are gleaners in his field,"⁶⁰ and Mir 'Ali held his own against the extraordinary talent of Ja'far and Azhar. The beginning section of the treatise deals with the origins of writing. Before 'Ali b. Abi Talib "laid the foundations of the Kūfī script,"⁶¹ people wrote in *ma'qilī* and Hebrew scripts. 'Ali b. Abi Talib developed Kufic (*aṣl-i khaṭṭ-i Kūfī*), from which all other scripts are derived. Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi's treatise was written before the album prefaces that contain lists of practitioners and narrative histories of art. In its naming of select individuals from the history of calligraphy it resembles the histories and biographies composed in the late fifteenth and into the sixteenth century, where a chronology of calligraphy is implied but is not given a detailed exposition.

Other treatises of the sixteenth century contain chapters, or sections (*bāb*), on masters (*ustādān*) and inventors (*mukhtaṭarī*) or originators (*mubtadī*). Mir 'Ali Haravī, in his second chapter of the *Midād al-khuṭūṭ* (The Model of Scripts, 1519–20),⁶² listed masters of the six scripts (*shish qalam*) from Ibn Muqla to Yaqut (instructed by 'Ali b. Abi Talib in his sleep) and his students, stopping in the middle of the fifteenth century, and he attributes the inventions of *ta'liq* to Khvaja Taj al-Salmani and *nasta'liq* to Khvaja Mir 'Ali Tabrizi. The most recent *nasta'liq* calligrapher that he mentions is Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi.⁶³ He then adds some general comments about all their achievements. Majnun Rafiqi follows an identical chronological scope, arrangement by categories of scripts, and list of masters in his *Khaṭṭ va savād* (Script and Ink, 1533–34).⁶⁴ Majnun Rafiqi, in the first chapter of *Ādāb al-mashq* (The Good Manners of Practice, ca. 1533–34),⁶⁵ includes a "mention" (*zīkr*) of inventors

pp. 31–43, no. 9. Qazi Ahmad inserted the treatise in his *Gulistān-i hunar*, ed. Khvānsārī, pp. 64–78; trans. in Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, pp. 106–25. For a Russian edition of the treatise and a commentary, see G. I. Kostygova, "Traktat po kalligrafii Sultan-'Ali Meshkhedi," *Trudy Gosudarstvennoi Publičnoi Biblioteki im. M. E. Saltykova-Shchedrina* 2, 5 (St. Petersburg, 1969): 103–63.

⁵⁸ *nisbatash nāz mī-rasad ba-'Alī*.

⁵⁹ *vāzī' al-aṣl*. See Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 116; Persian edition in Khvānsārī, *Gulistān-i hunar*, p. 72.

⁶⁰ Trans. in Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 116.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁶² For an edition of the treatise, see Māyil Haravī, *Kitāb ārā' dar tamuddan-i islāmī*, pp. 87–101; esp. 93–94. The date is listed in Iraj Afshar, "Risāla-yi khaṭṭ-i Khalīl Tabrīzī," in *Pand-o Sokhan*, ed. Christophe Balay, Claire Kappler, and Živa Vesel (Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1995), pp. 302–28, esp. 327. Afshar notes that the calligrapher lived until ca. 950.

⁶³ The list of masters arranged by script includes the following: six scripts (1) Ibn Muqla, Ibn Bawwab, Yaqut Musta'simi, Khvaja Arghun, Khvaja 'Abd Allah Sayrafī, 'Abd Allah al-Haravī (a.k.a. Tabbakh); *ta'liq* (2) Khvaja Taj al-Salmani, Mawlana 'Abd al-Hayy; *nasta'liq* (3) Khvaja Mir 'Ali Tabrizi, Mawlana Hakim Ja'far, Mawlana Mulla Azhar, and Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi.

⁶⁴ Two edited sources are available for the study of Majnun Rafiqi's treatise, Yasīn Khān Niyāzī, "Risāla-yi khaṭṭ va savād," *Oriental College Magazine* 11, 2 (February 1935): 46–74; and Māyil Haravī, *Kitāb ārā' dar tamuddan-i islāmī*, pp. 185–206; 189–90. Excerpts from the treatise and a discussion of the author may be found in Muḥammad Shafī, "Khaṭṭ va khaṭṭān," *Oriental College Magazine* 10, 4 (August 1934): 3–72; 4–18.

⁶⁵ For an edition of the treatise, see *ibid.*, pp. 209–36; 213–14. Māyil Haravī provides no date. In the essay by Afshar ("Risāla-yi khaṭṭ-i Khalīl Tabrīzī," p. 326, and n. 10) a treatise by the same title is given to Baba Shah Isfahani, following Bayani. Muḥammad Shafī had previously attributed it to the calligrapher Mir 'Imad Qazvini. In Afshar's list of treatises he does not mention Majnun Rafiqi's *Ādāb al-mashq* (p. 326), although it appears in Māyil Haravī's listing, and he dates Baba Shah Isfahani's text by the same name to 940 (1533–34).

and masters in verse. The poetic framework allows an extraordinary economy: the identities of a sequence of calligraphers are conveyed by a single word. They are arranged according to period of activity beginning with ‘Ali [b. Abi Talib] who introduces Kufic after *ma‘qilī*, and leading from Ibn Muqla to Ahmad Rum (a.k.a. Shams) in the six scripts, to Khvaja Taj [al-Salmani] in *ta‘liq*, and from Sayyid ‘Ali [Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi] to “Mashhad” [Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadī] in *nasta‘liq*.⁶⁶ Specific aspects of their technical contributions are not mentioned, although a comparison between calligraphers of present and past emerges as a leitmotif. Qualities of their calligraphy are cited in their praise.

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

The six students of Yaqut are the subject of the next major section in the history of the six scripts, followed by their students, including Khvaja ‘Abd Allah Sayrafī. Here we learn that Sultan Abu Sa‘id went to the khvaja’s house for instruction in calligraphy. Calligraphers of the fifteenth century, identified as calligraphers of Khurasan, are treated in equal detail. An anecdote about Mawlana Ma‘ruf’s prodigious acts of copying (1,500 couplets in one day) is culled from the *Maṭla‘ al-sa‘dayn*,⁶⁸ as is the note that Ma‘ruf signed his pieces with Yaqut’s name and those “sharp-eyed [cognoscenti] of the world accepted them as Yaqut’s calligraphy.”⁶⁹ Then the chronological sequence is broken, for he next deals at length with Muhammad Mu‘min, known as Khvajagi Murvarid. We learn here that at royal majlises⁷⁰ he offered instruction in the rules and canons of calligraphy,⁷¹ presumably by demonstration. Mahmud b. Muhammad notes that he came to the attention of Muhammad Mu‘min in 935 (1528–29) after he had spent time copying from his specimens. Finally he says that Muhammad Mu‘min left for Hindustan in the later years of his life where he died in 950

⁶⁶ The list mentions: ‘Ali [b. Abi Talib] for Kufic; for the six pens, Ibn Muqla, Ibn Bawwab, Yaqut, Shaykh Suhrawardi, [Pir Yahya] Sufī, [‘Abd Allah] Sayrafī, and Ahmad Rum; for *ta‘liq*, Khvaja Taj [Salmani] and ‘Abd al-Hayy; for *nasta‘liq*, Sayyid ‘Ali [Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi], Ja‘far, Azhar, and “Mashhad” [Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadī].

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

⁶⁸ The historical work is Kamal al-Din ‘Abd al-Razzaq b. Jalal al-Din Ishaq Samarqandi’s *Maṭla‘ al-sa‘dayn va majma‘ al-bahrayn*, a history of the Timurids from 1304 to 1470.

⁶⁹ *mutabaṣṣirān-i jihān ba-khaṭṭ-i Yāqūt qabūl kardand.*

⁷⁰ *dar badu-yi ṭulū‘-i nayyir-i salṭanat navāb-i kāmyāb ba-majlisāt-i bihishṭ ā‘rīn sar farāz gashta.*

⁷¹ *qavā‘id va qavānīn-i khuṭūṭ ma‘rūz mī-dāshṭ.*

(1543–44). More calligraphers follow including those of Fars, among them the Timurid prince Ibrahim Sultan b. Shahrukh.

The next section covers the masters of *nasta'liq*, beginning with its inventor Khvaja Mir 'Ali Tabrizi who is "of the rank of Ibn Muqla."⁷² Mir 'Ali Tabrizi taught this script to a group of students, among them Mawlana Ja'far Tabrizi. Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi's relationship to his master Azhar is compared with that between Ibn Bawwab and Yaqut. Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi's year (919/1513–14) and place (Mashhad) of death are recorded, one *matla'* of his poetry is cited, and an excerpt from his treatise on calligraphy is quoted. A quatrain sent to Bihzad by Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi concludes the notice. The detailed entries on Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi's six students follow.

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

THE ALBUM PREFACE: WRITING HISTORIES OF ART

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

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

⁷² *ki ba-manzila-yi Ibn Muqla ast.*

of history-as-biography found in the preface is related to the *isnād* (lit. leaning against),⁷³ a chain of authorities essential to the reliable transmission of a tradition or report,⁷⁴ and to the *silsila* (lit. chain; the word *silsila* is used for chains of practice in the album prefaces). *Silsila* implied a continuous sequence of individuals and referred specifically to a chain of spiritual descent within the Sufi orders, tracing a master back to the order's founder, and even back to the Prophet Muhammad.⁷⁵ In the Naqshbandi Sufi order, the *silsila* was also a means of tracing the transmission of divine grace (*fayz*) and blessing (*baraka*) from God. As Arthur Buehler observed, the *isnād* and *silsila* "are based on a more encompassing principle: the personal encounter between two reliable transmitters."⁷⁶ Ideally, transmission of knowledge should be made to the student by a spiritually perfected master, a direct communication often described by the word *ṣuḥbat*, companionship.⁷⁷ A similar authority was invested in some of the practitioners of the arts of calligraphy and depiction. The language of the preface claims moral perfection and purity for select practitioners, and notions of transmission give emphasis to direct training, although in theory some of the master's moral qualities were deposited in their work and could be experienced through it.

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

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

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

⁷³ See *EI2*, s.v. "Isnād" (J. Robson).

⁷⁴ The system, originating in the treatment of hadith, was applied to other disciplines including other religious sciences (*fiqh*, *tafsīr*), history, and geography among others. For an overview of the *isnād* system, see Muḥammad Zubayr Ṣiddiqī, *Hadīth Literature: Its Origin, Development, and Special Features* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), chap. 5. Siddiqi explains how the *isnād* was also applied to the hadith collections themselves—and the books of other disciplines—as a means of laying out the transmission of the book as a collection (*ibid.*, p. 81). These authenticating certificates were called *ijāza*. For the classifications of hadith, see John Burton, *An Introduction to the Hadīth* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), chap. 6.

⁷⁵ See *EI2*, s.v. "Silsila" (Ed.). For the *silsilas* of some Sufi *ṭarīqas*, see J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), chap. 2.

⁷⁶ Arthur F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shākhyh* (Columbia, S. C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), chap. 4, esp. pp. 83–85.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

how its information is arranged. The second involves the biographical framework, the practitioner, and the modes and techniques of his practice. The third turns to the forms of response mentioned in the preface and to the basis of judgment.

THE ORIGINS OF PRACTICE

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

Following the long-standing tradition of *avā'il*, or “firsts,” the identity of several of the first makers included prophets and other significant sources of prestige and authority.⁷⁸ The most fastidious recorder of firsts was Dust Muhammad. He asserts that Adam was the first to form characters (*tarḥ-i khatt nivisī*) and to make ink (*midād sākht*);⁷⁹ Ya'rub b. Qahtan derived Kufic from *ma'qilī* script⁸⁰ and thus was the inventor of Kufic (*vāzī'-i khatt-i Kūfī*); three of the six scripts (*thuluth*, *muḥaqqaq*, *naskh*) were introduced by Ibn Muqla after 'Ali b. Abi Talib appeared to him and instructed him in them;⁸¹ Khvaja Taj al-Din Salmani “invented the foundation of *ta'liq* script and contrived to codify its rules”;⁸² Khvaja Zahir al-Din Mir 'Ali Tabrizi was the inventor (*mukhtari'*) of *nasta'liq*; 'Ali b. Abi Talib was the first to ornament Korans with designs and illumination. Daniel originated portraiture by copying images of

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

⁷⁹ Dust Muhammad introduces the source of the claim as “in the opinion of the lords of history, the masters of biographies of happy traditions, and followers of the traditions of the best of mankind” (*nazd-i arbāb-i tavārikh va aṣḥāb-i siyar-i farkhunda-aṣar va ahālī-yi ḥadīṣ-i khayr al-bashar*).

⁸⁰ *az uslub-i ma'qilī ba-Kūfī āvard.*

⁸¹ *Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī rā . . . dar vāqī'a dīd ki khatt-i sulūs va muḥaqqaq va naskh rā badū farmūdand.* Although the late-tenth-century writer Ibn al-Nadīm discusses Abu 'Ali Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Muqla (885–950), and his brother Abu 'Abd Allah al-Hasan b. 'Ali [b. Muqla], he does not attribute the invention of the six scripts to either of them. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, trans. Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, 1:17–18.

⁸² *vāzī'-i asās-i khatt-i ta'liq-and tadvīn-i ikhtirā'-i īn va'z' farmūda-and.*

the prophets sent to Adam by God; Ahmad Musa introduced the style of depiction that continued into the Safavid period; and Ustad Qivam al-Din invented (*ikhtirā*) inlay work in bindings (*munabbat-kārī dar jild*).

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

SILSILAS AND MECHANISMS OF TRANSMISSION

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

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

⁸³ *āṣār-i vaḥī al-hayy va avāmīr va navāhī-yi ḥaẓrat-i risālat panāhī*.

⁸⁴ *khuṭūṭ-i sitta ki . . . istikhraj az khaṭṭ-i Kūfī namūda ast*.

⁸⁵ See W. Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss der arabischen Handschriften*, 10 vols. (Berlin: Schade, 1887–99), p. i, no. 7.

⁸⁶ Yasser Tabbāa, “The Transformation of Arabic Writing: part 1, Qur’anic Calligraphy,” *Ars Orientalis* 21 (1992): 119–48; esp. pp. 120–22.

⁸⁷ See Elaine Wright, “The Look of the Book: Manuscript Production in the Southern Iranian City of Shiraz from the Early 14th Century to 1452,” Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1997, chap. 4.

“first” and of successive change to inherited practice dominated any other form of historical representation. History was driven by the episteme of genealogy and heredity, which explains the impetus for attaching a name to an “invention”; the founder occupied the essential position of first source.

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

Many of the prefaces, however, do clearly lay out pedagogical relationships, especially in calligraphy, removing the potential for ambiguity and deepening the historical conception. Relationship to an acknowledged master was the principal means of organizing the history of art. In general, such relationships were expressed through the use of the terms “student” (*shāgird*) and “master” (*ustād*), hence, “so and so was the student of master X.” A more emphatic phraseology, “without intermediary” (*bilā vāsīṭa*), is sometimes employed. It is a phrase rife with the sort of metaphorical meaning we encounter elsewhere in the preface because the noun *vāsīṭa* also refers to the largest pearl or jewel strung on a necklace (and therefore at its center). This phrase thus conferred great prestige on the student, who was favored not only by direct tutelage but also by being the preeminent student to have received that teaching. Links forged by pedagogy were often combined with family ties, either as a son, daughter, son-in-law, or maternal uncle.⁸⁸

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

The importance of the early-fifteenth-century masters for the transmission of scripts, especially *nasta‘līq*, is often represented by a shorthand listing of names. However, Dust Muhammad is careful to trace the connection of Ja‘far and Azhar to the calligrapher Hafiz Hajji Muhammad, who then trained Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi in his *silsila* of practice. Azhar’s importance is also emphasized in Malik Daylami’s preface, where six students of Azhar

⁸⁸ Anthony Welch (*Artists for the Shah*, p. 152) observed the numerous family relationships between artists of the Safavid period and he suggested that “marriages between artistic families were sought after, possibly as a means of transmitting genetic abilities, perhaps too as a way of establishing a de facto guild.” He gives several examples of family relationships between artists and calligraphers (*ibid.*, n. 4).

are listed, Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi among them. Mir Sayyid Ahmad also makes this connection, but without naming additional masters whom Ja‘far and Azhar had trained. In Shams al-Din Muhammad’s preface, Ja‘far’s importance is tripled: he not only trained Azhar in *nasta‘liq*, who would then go on to teach it to Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, but he instructed ‘Abd Allah Tabbakh in *thuluth* and ‘Abd al-Hayy Munshi in *ta‘liq*. Thus, Ja‘far combined skill in the six scripts with skill in *nasta‘liq* and *ta‘liq*. This made him heir to Yaqut al-Musta‘simi’s legacy and transmitter of the recent inventions of *nasta‘liq* and *ta‘liq* by Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi and Khvaja Taj al-Din Salmani.

Relationships between successive masters or generations could also be defined in terms of affinity in manner (*ravish*, *tarz*),⁸⁹ or style, an aggregate of elements such as letter-shaping, proportion, placement, and grouping of diacritical marks, and the spacing of letters and words on the page. It occurred, perhaps, in those instances when a practitioner did not have a direct connection to a master or to an intermediary teacher with a desirable pedigree. After he has mentioned the students of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi and Mir ‘Ali, Muhammad Muhsin lists still other groups who followed the calligrapher’s styles. In the case of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, he writes about “that group who possesses the manner of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi . . . ,”⁹⁰ and for Mir ‘Ali, “and now the person who follows the manner of Mawlana Mir ‘Ali is Mawlana Muhi. . . .”⁹¹ In both instances Muhammad Muhsin uses the term *ravish*, meaning manner, mode, or way.

Mir Sayyid Ahmad distinguishes between those calligraphers who had studied directly under Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi from those who worked in his style. He writes of “other famous calligraphers whose writings, from musk-like pens, are in the manner of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi. . . .”⁹² A slightly different example is offered by Dust Muhammad, when he notes that, although Ustad Pir Yahya Sufi did not study directly under Khvaja Mubarakshah Zarin Qalam, he was his student. This apparent contradiction is found again in Dust Muhammad’s preface, first where he asserts that Ibn Bawwab was a student of Ibn Muqla,⁹³ and second where he states that Yaqut al-Musta‘simi was a student of Ibn Bawwab. The fact that Dust Muhammad dates Ibn Muqla’s period of activity to the caliphate of al-Muqtadir (r. 908–32) and Yaqut al-Musta‘simi’s to the caliphate of al-Mustansir (r. 1226–42) poses some chronological problems if his statements about pedagogy are taken literally. The chronological relationships between masters of the earlier and later periods were well known. In one source, Mahmud b. Muhammad’s treatise, the author provides dates for numerous occurrences.

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

⁸⁹ *Ravish* is used in several prefaces and *tarz* in Mir Sayyid Ahmad.

⁹⁰ *va jam‘i ki ravish-i Sultān ‘Alī Mashhadī dārānd.*

⁹¹ *va hālā kasī ki dar ravish tatabbu‘ namāyad ba-Mawlānā Mīr ‘Alī Mawlānā Muḥī ast.*

⁹² *ḍīgar khush-nivīsān-i mashhūr ki arqām-i aqlām-i mushk-sāy-i īshān dar ravish-i Mawlānā Sultān ‘Alī Mashhadī ast.*

⁹³ There is some ambiguity in Dust Muhammad’s text. He notes that Ibn Muqla taught his daughter calligraphy with his left hand (*ba-dast-i chap ta‘līm farmūd*) after the removal of his fingers. The next line reads “‘Ali b. Hilal, who is known as Ibn Bawwab, was his [her?] student” (*‘Alī b. Hilāl ki ba-Ibn Bawwāb mashhūr ast shāgird-i ū ast*). The third-person pronoun could conceivably refer to the daughter and not necessarily to Ibn Muqla.

under a master involved the study of calligraphic models. This very process is addressed directly by Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi in two sections of his treatise on calligraphy:

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

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

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

The process outlined by Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi combines the calligrapher’s recall of letter shapes impressed in his memory through patient study with the physical presence of a model in the act of writing. Models were of critical importance after all: how otherwise could one study the balance of calligraphy on the page, the relationship of black ink to white paper; the spacing of the lines in relationship to each other and the edge of the sheet; the sequencing of adjacent single letters, their combination into words, and the relationship of words to words? The lack of direct training in such critical techniques as trimming the pen’s nib (for different scripts) presented serious but not insurmountable obstacles to the calligrapher. The form of the pen’s nib—if actual pens were not available⁹⁶—could be reconstructed through a process of trial and error by studying specimens and comparing the results of

⁹⁴ Trans. Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 117. For Persian edition, see Khvānsārī, *Gulistān-i hunar*, p. 73, lines 5–7.

⁹⁵ Trans. Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 118. For Persian edition, see Khvānsārī, *Gulistān-i hunar*, p. 74, lines 12–19.

⁹⁶ Among the fabulous contents of the treasury in Cairo—looted by riotors during the reign of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir in 1068–69—Qadi Abu al-Husayn Ahmad b. al-Zubayr lists the pens and Korans of Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwab. These objects are described in Qadi b. al-Zubayr’s book on gifts completed by the late eleventh century. For translation and commentary, see Ghada al-Ḥijjāwī al-Qaddūmī, *Book of Gifts and Rarities: Kitāb al-Ḥadāyā wa al-Tuhaf* (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 1996), p. 234, nos. 382 and 383.

one's own efforts against them.⁹⁷ The study of specimens provided one basis for claiming pedagogical affiliation.

Within the dominant framework of the stylistic and technical aspects of pedagogy, whether direct or mediated through a paper model, other processes of classification were developed as subcategories. One is spatial and implies the persistence of a specific style in a metropolitan center or region. Dust Muhammad divides the tradition of the six scripts into two lines—Pir Yahya al-Sufi in Iraq (*silsila-yi ahl-i 'Irāq*) and Mawlana 'Abd Allah al-Sayrafi in Khurasan (*silsila-yi shāgirdī-yi khaṭṭātān-i Khurāsān*)—which are later brought together in the person of Mawlana Muhammad b. Husam, but which no doubt also continued to play out as separate stylistic lines. Mir Sayyid Ahmad alludes to masters of calligraphy in Khurasan, Iraq, Fars, and Kirman, and divides his section on masters of the “hair pen” (i.e., brush), or artists, into two groups: those of Fars and Iraq and those of Khurasan. Shams al-Din Muhammad has a separate section on the masters of Shiraz and Kirman in his passage on *nasta'liq*. The dominant presence of a master over a local tradition was sustained by the replication and repetition of his aesthetic through such processes as copying, both in pedagogy and in production. Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi's presence was so strong that Malik Daylami wrote that “every student took gleanings from his copious harvest and provisions from the dinner table of his writings.”⁹⁸

After naming important masters like Ja'far and Azhar of the six scripts, Mir Sayyid Ahmad asserted that other masters of Iraq, Khurasan, Fars, and Kirman were but “eaters of crumbs from the table of these masters.”⁹⁹ Next to these preeminent figures, the works of slightly lesser masters resembled leftovers. Dust Muhammad remarks that Yaqut's six students were allowed to sign specimens in the master's name, “and he [Yaqut] gave permission to each one that if they signed their good specimens in the name of the shaykh [then] it would not be a sin/crime.”¹⁰⁰

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

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

⁹⁸ *va har shāgirdī az khirman-i fayz-i ū khusha va az khvān-i raqamash tusha yāft.*

⁹⁹ *rīza-khvār-i khvān-i īn ustādān ast.*

¹⁰⁰ *va har yak rā rukhṣat dād ki agar khaṭṭ-i khūb-i khud rā ba-nām-i Shaykh kumand ism na-bāshand.*

‘Abd al-Rahman Khvarazmi, noting instead ‘Abd al-Rahim’s pedagogical connection to Azhar.

Most prefaces suggest that the *nasta‘liq* inherited through Azhar developed along different lines in the hands of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi and ‘Abd al-Rahman Khvarazmi. Mir Sayyid Ahmad writes that Mawlana ‘Abd al-Rahman Khvarazmi “made a change in the style of this group [family] and his two sons became masters of his style.”¹⁰¹ Following the language used by Mir Sayyid Ahmad,¹⁰² Muhammad Muhsin observes that Mawlana ‘Abd al-Rahman Khvarazmi “made a change in the style of this group. His two sons became masters; one [was] ‘Abd al-Rahim known as Anisi and the other ‘Abd al-Karim known as Padsha[h] and the manner of their script is known best through Mawlana Anisi.”¹⁰³

Malik Daylami gives a slightly different version. He observes other styles contemporary to Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi,¹⁰⁴ singling out that of ‘Abd al-Rahim (Anisi). He does not mention ‘Abd al-Rahim’s father, and claims that Anisi taught his brother ‘Abd al-Karim. According to Malik Daylami, Anisi was Azhar’s student but “improved [his style] by increasing ornament.”¹⁰⁵ The same concept of two dominant styles in *nasta‘liq* is addressed by Malik Daylami. Differences of opinion between the authors of the prefaces, however, occur in their sequences of masters.

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

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

¹⁰¹ *taghyr dar ravish-i in ta’ifa namuda va dar ravish-i u du pisar-i u sar amada shuda and.*

¹⁰² It may well be that the similarity results from Muhammad Muhsin and Mir Sayyid Ahmad using a common source, viz. Qutb al-Din Muhammad’s preface.

¹⁰³ *taghyr dar ravish-i in ta’ifa namuda du pisar-i u sar amad shudand yakī ‘Abd al-Rahīm mashhūr ba-Anīsī va yakī ‘Abd al-Karīm al-ma’rūf ba-Padshā[h] va tarz-i khatt-i ishān ba-ravish-i Mawlānā Anīsī mashhūr ast.*

¹⁰⁴ *va ammā ustādān ravishhā-yi digar ki ba’zī mu’āşir-i Mawlānā Sultān ‘Alī Mashhadī būda-and.*

¹⁰⁵ *ammā dar takalluf va islah afzuda.*

style of depiction that was still current in Dust Muhammad's time. Dust Muhammad is careful to trace a continuous chain of practice after Ahmad Musa, noting the affiliations between successive masters.

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

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

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

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

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

¹⁰⁶ The earliest expression of the typology is Qutb al-Din Muhammad in 1556–57. Later writers Sadiqi Beg and Qazi Ahmad also refer to it. See Qutb al-Din Muhammad Qışsa Khvān, "Risāla-ī dar tārikh-i khatt va naqqāshī"; Dickson and Welch, *Houghton Shahnameh*, 1: app. 1; Şadiqī Beg, *Qānūn al-şivar*; and Qāzī Ahmad, *Gulistān-i hunar*, ed. Khvānsārī, p. 132. For an analysis of the *gīrīh* mode, see Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Topkapı Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995).

Variations between prefaces might result from the fact that there was no master narrative of a history of art and that what appears to be a departure from consensus was a different telling or a conscious manipulation of history. One of the author's objectives may have been to shape a canon rather than merely write down the generally accepted view, if there was such a thing. It is also possible that the later periods were so flexible that the canon remained subject to negotiation and debate.¹⁰⁷ Self-interest and rivalry surely lay beneath the surface of preface writing, even if it is not possible to marshal specific cases as evidence. But this personal dimension of the text's constitution should not be forgotten in the analysis of the history that the text narrates. These lists of names were not value-free.

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

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

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

¹⁰⁷ Further study of canon formation in the context of sixteenth-century Iran might be informed by studies about artistic lineages and histories in China. Liscomb argued, for example, that some critics (Du Qiong) in fifteenth-century China did not have an interest in establishing orthodox lineages, which she dates to before the time of the author Dong Qichang (1555–1636). See Kathlyn Liscomb, "Before Orthodoxy: Du Qiong's (1397–1474) Art-Historical Poem," *Oriental Art* 37, 2 (Summer 1991): 97–108, esp. 97.

the *Javāhir al-akhbār*, Budaq Munshi Qazvini, who had been Bahram Mirza's personal secretary, notes that Rustam 'Ali taught Bahram Mirza and had later gone on to serve (*khidmat*) the Safavid prince Ibrahim Mirza. His entry about Hafiz Baba Jan is extensive. He mentions that in playing the lute (*'ūd*) Hafiz Baba Jan was considered to be a second Khvaja 'Abd al-Qadir, a famous polymath of the Timurid court. He was in the service of Bahram Mirza "who conferred the dignity of a close relationship upon him" (*qurb va manzilat-i tamām yāft*); his father had lived during the reigns of Sultan Husayn Mirza and Sultan Ya'qub and his services were sought after.¹⁰⁸ Given Hafiz Baba Jan's importance and his proximity to Bahram Mirza—mentioned by Budaq Munshi Qazvini years after it would have mattered—one wonders why Dust Muhammad neglected to mention him and thus confer upon him special favor.

Dust Muhammad's history of depiction is centered on the tradition in Khurasan just as his history of *nasta'liq* emphasized Timurid Khurasan over Turkmen Tabriz. He does not mention artists working in the Turkmen court in Tabriz during the late fifteenth century, although the origin of the modern tradition began in Tabriz under Ahmad Musa and continued under Jalayirid patronage. Timurid production during the fifteenth century and under Baysunghur, 'Ala' al-Dawla Mirza, Ulugh Beg, and Sultan Husayn Mirza is emphasized. Exchanges between the late-fifteenth-century Timurid and Turkmen courts of Herat and Tabriz allowed for the dissemination of knowledge about each. By the early Safavid period the cultural products of both Timurid and Turkmen patronage were known, although the former may have eclipsed any other.¹⁰⁹

The achievements of artists who had worked under Turkmen patrons, principally Khalil and Ya'qub Beg, were presumably also known to Dust Muhammad, even if he did not care to write about them. Indeed, one *Khamisa* of Nizami,¹¹⁰ begun in the middle years of the fifteenth century under the Timurid prince Abu al-Qasim Babur, was incomplete at the time of his death and fell into Turkmen hands. Pir Budaq, Sultan Khalil, and Sultan Ya'qub each inherited it and contributed to the manuscript's completion. Shah Isma'il finally acquired the book and had it finished. These details, amounting to a history of the book's progress and its ownership, are supplied in a colophon.¹¹¹ Also in that colophon are the names of the Turkmen artists Shaykhi and Darvish Muhammad and the calligraphers Azhar and Anisi ('Abd al-Rahim Khvarazmi), also associated with the Turkmen. Books of this

¹⁰⁸ Budāq Munshī Qazvīnī, *Javāhir al-akhbār*, fol. 110.

¹⁰⁹ Interesting in this respect is a *Khamisa* of Nizami in Istanbul, TSK, H. 757. Annotations on its flyleaves and its dated colophons, some of which have been tampered with, record the production of the book and some of its successive owners. The flyleaf bears a note recording the manuscript's transfer to Muhammad Mu'min, son of Murvarid and future tutor of Sam Mirza, in Herat 1512. Muhammad Mu'min functioned as treasury bookkeeper. A seal on the same page dated 1581 is of Ahmad Feridun Bey, son-in-law of grand vizier Rüstem Pasha. Tanındı suggests that the manuscript was a gift to Ahmad Feridun Bey. She also notes that the colophon on fol. 288a is dated 1499–1500, signed by Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi, transferred from Shaybaq's treasury to Shah Isma'il's and illuminated by Yari Muzahhib in 1510–11. Bihzad added illustrations to it in 1512–13 (Tanındı, "Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts," p. 161, n. 29). If the colophon on fol. 288a is a later addition, it enhances the history of this particular book, inherited by the Safavids from the Timurids after a brief Uzbek interlude. It is one example of the prestige accorded to Timurid manuscripts and of Safavid continuities.

¹¹⁰ Istanbul, TSK, H. 762. The most exhaustive study of the manuscript is by Filiz Çağman, "Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, Hazine 762 No. lu Nizami Hamsesi'nin Minyatürleri," Ph.D. diss., Istanbul University, 1971.

¹¹¹ Fols. 316b–17a. For a translation of the colophon, see Thackston, *A Century of Princes*, pp. 333–34.

kind and practitioners who served under successive regimes ensured continuity of knowledge and of practice into the Safavid period. This heavily documented book only emphasizes Dust Muhammad's omissions, thus highlighting his pro-Herati sentiments. His historical representation runs counter to the physical evidence that the Turkmen tradition played an important formative role in the development of Safavid style.¹¹²

THE PRACTITIONER'S PLACE IN THE TRADITION

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

PROGRESS AND PERFECTION

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

In reading the historical narrative one constantly comes across assessments that imply a kind of progress or inexorable linear movement in the history of art. In his history of the six scripts Dust Muhammad notes that the six students of Yaqut had "drawn a line of cancellation over the calligraphies of the masters of this art,"¹¹⁴ and, after mentioning the generation of students trained by the six masters, inserts the hemistich, "This is the working of good fortune: to whom will it turn now?"¹¹⁵ The history of *nasta'liq* is written in much the same terms, except that its history as an invention of Mir 'Ali Tabrizi is more recent. After the sequence of masters of *nasta'liq* we arrive at Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi, who had taken *nasta'liq* to its limit—no one from beginning (*ibtidā'*) to end (*ghāyat*) could equal or exceed him. In the section on contemporary calligraphers, however, he writes that Mawlana Nizam al-Din Shaykh Muhammad in "speed and power of pen"¹¹⁶ was "unequaled in the world

¹¹² The idea of a Timurid and Turkmen stylistic synthesis in the Safavid period is one of the dominant notions that informs Dickson and Welch's study of the *Shāhnāma-yi Shāhī* (*Houghton Shahnameh*, 1, chaps. 3–4).

¹¹³ *va bād az fawt-i Khvāja hama-yi ustādān tattabū'-i kārhā-yi īshān kardand.*

¹¹⁴ *raqam-i naskh bar khat-i māhivān-i īn fann kashīda.*

¹¹⁵ *īn kār-i dawlat ast kunūn tā ki-rā rasad.*

¹¹⁶ *sur'at va quvvat-i qalam.*

and chief of the scribes of the nation”¹¹⁷ and that Mawlana Nur al-Din ‘Abd Allah is “distinguished by the beauty of calligraphy and peerless in speed of copying.”¹¹⁸ Successive achievements and the inflation of language begin to give rise to apparent inconsistencies. How can two people be at the same time unique in the world and judged as equals by the same criteria?

Dust Muhammad, in his narrative on depiction, attributes the origin of the Safavid style to Ahmad Musa, representative samples of whose work survived into the late fifteenth century (Sultan Husayn Mirza reportedly owned manuscripts with paintings by him). Through a sequence of transmission came Pir Ahmad Baghshimali who worked in the style (*shīva*) of Khvaja ‘Abd al-Hayy, in which he could not be outdone. Next comes Amir Khalil, a painter who worked on the production of an anthology modeled after a manuscript made for Sultan Ahmad, a project instigated by Baysunghur. The group working on this project was augmented with the arrival of Khvaja Ghiyas al-Din Pir Ahmad Zarkub from Tabriz. When Amir Khalil saw the paintings made by the younger artist, Khvaja Ghiyas al-Din Pir Ahmad Zarkub, he gave up depiction. Moving into the later fifteenth century, the section closes with Bihzad, who is the “most excellent of the latter-day [masters] in the art of depiction”¹¹⁹ and “an example for the old masters in illumination and outlining.”¹²⁰ Returning to his contemporaries in a later segment of the preface, Dust Muhammad notes Sultan Muhammad’s contribution to depiction. Like Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi with *nasta‘līq*, Sultan Muhammad had taken his art form to a limit beyond any imagining.

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

MODES, TECHNIQUES, AND EXPERTISE

That the preface was not used to impart technical knowledge or give instruction is not surprising; another literary genre, usually going by the name *risāla* (treatise), performed that function.¹²¹ Disquisitions on how to prepare and select materials (pigments, ink, papers),

¹¹⁷ *bī nazīr ‘ālim va sar āmad-i kuttāb-i umam ast.*

¹¹⁸ *dar ḥusn-i khaṭṭ muntāz va dar su‘at-i kitābat bī anbāz ast.*

¹¹⁹ *afzāl al-muta‘akkkhīrīn fī fann al-taṣvīr.*

¹²⁰ *qīdvat al-mutaqaddīmīn fī al-taḥḥīb va al-taḥrīr.*

¹²¹ Numerous published editions and reference sources have already been cited for the literature on treatises. A useful summary of the sixteenth-century sources is in Afshar, “Risāla-yi khaṭṭ-i Khalīl Tabrizī,” pp. 325–26. Additional references may be gleaned from his notes (*ibid.*, nn. 1–15). Afshar lists three treatises from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: (1) *Ādāb al-mashq* by ‘Abd Allah Sayrafi Tabrizi (before 732/1331–21); (2) *Risāla-yi khaṭṭ* attributed to Mir ‘Ali Tabrizi (before 850/1446–47); and (3) *Tuḥfat al-muḥibbayn* by Ya‘qub b. Hasan Shirazi, nicknamed Siraj al-Husayni (858/1454). To Mayil Haravi’s published treatises he adds one by Khalil Tabrizi (*ibid.*, p. 323).

on techniques (selecting pens and cutting their nibs), and on process by studying and copying models had been written since at least the eleventh century. One of the earliest of these is Ibn al-Bawwab's *Rā'īyya fī al-khaṭṭ* (Ode on Calligraphy, before 1022), a qasida rhymed in the letter *rā'*. It was copied no less than four times, and probably more, in the centuries after his death in commentaries written by Ibn al-Basis (1253–1316) and Ibn al-Wahid (b. 1249) before 1311; Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddīma* (Prolegomena to a universal history, completed before 1406) and Muhammad b. Hasan al-Tibi's *Jāmi' mahāsīn kitābat al-kuttāb* (Collection of the Scribes' Good Writing, dated 1503).¹²²

The calligrapher's custom of writing down the technical knowledge that he had accumulated through experience continued beyond the sixteenth century. Among the best known treatises,¹²³ many of them written in rhymed verse, are those by Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi (*Širāt al-suṭūr*, 1514), Mir 'Ali Haravi (*Midād al-khuṭūt*, 1519–20),¹²⁴ Majnun [b. Mahmud al-] Rafiqi Haravi (*Rasm al-khaṭṭ*, The Form of Calligraphy, 1523–24; *Khaṭṭ va savād*, 1533–34; *Ādāb al-mashq*, no date given),¹²⁵ and Mahmud b. Muhammad (*Qavānīn al-khuṭūt*, 1561–62). Comparable texts existed for the practitioners of depiction. Simi Nishapuri's *Jawhar-i Simi* (Simi's Jewels, not before 1435),¹²⁶ although intended for an audience of secretaries, contained advice on papers, dyes, and colors, recipes for ink, and selecting pens, and practical knowledge that was of use to calligraphers and perhaps even artists. Sadiqi Beg Afshar's *Qānūn al-šūvar* (Canons of Painting, between 1576 and 1602)¹²⁷ contained technical advice on making and handling the brush, applying color, tints and washes, varnish and gilding, preparing silver, gold, and pigments from vegetal and other mineral sources. All of this was preceded by recollections about how he had become an artist, the reasons for writing the treatise, and advice on how to find a master. In its combination of themes the treatise may be considered comparable to Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi's on calligraphy, imitating the model but reshaping its contents for practitioners of depiction. Qazi Ahmad still remembered Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi's treatise when he sat down to compose the *Gulistān-i hunar* (1596–1606). He inserted it after

¹²² The unique manuscript is in Istanbul, TSK, K. 882. For a facsimile and introduction to this manuscript, see Muḥammad b. Hasan al-Tibī, *Jāmi' al-mahāsīn kitābat al-kuttāb*, ed. Šalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1962).

¹²³ A fairly extensive body of secondary literature exists for this group of texts and many of the texts have been edited and published. For a collection of these treatises, including all the examples mentioned here, see Māyil Haravī, *Kitāb āwā'ī dar tamuddan-i islāmī*. For useful lists, see Ḥabībī, "Literary Sources for the History of the Arts"; Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Study*; Muḥammad Taqī Dānīshpazhūh, "Gulzār-i šafā': Šayrafi," pp. 30–43; and Afshar, "Risāla-yi khaṭṭ-i Khalīl Tabrīzī," pp. 325–26.

¹²⁴ For a biographical synopsis of Mir 'Ali Haravi, see Māyil Haravī, *Kitāb āwā'ī dar tamuddan-i islāmī*, pp. 1–lii.

¹²⁵ For details about the treatises and their author, see Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Study* 2, 3, Biography: (d) Calligraphists and Painters; and Māyil Haravī, *Kitāb āwā'ī dar tamuddan-i islāmī*, pp. lvii–lxii.

¹²⁶ Several studies of the text are available. For an abridged translation, see Wheeler M. Thackston, "Treatise on Calligraphic Arts: A Disquisition on Paper, Colors, Inks, and Pens by Simi of Nishapur," in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), pp. 219–28. Thackston provides references to previous editions and analyses of the treatise in *ibid.*, n. 1. For an analysis of the treatise and a summary of its contents, see Yves Porter, "Un traité de Simi Neyšāpuri (IX/XVe S.), Artiste et Polygraphe," *Studia Iranica* 14, 2 (1985): 179–98. The date appears in one section of the treatise (837/1435) (*ibid.*, p. 184). Porter also published a Persian edition of the text (*idem*, *Peinture et arts du livre*, app. 2, pt. 1).

¹²⁷ For an English translation of the treatise and commentary on its terminology, see Dickson and Welch, *Houghton Shahnameh*, app. 1. Additions to the list of published editions of and sources about the *Qānūn al-šūvar* include Muḥammad Taqī Dānīshpazhūh, "Qānūn al-Šūvar," *Hunar va Mardum* 90 (1349): 11–20; and Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, app. 2, pt. 2.

his biographical sketches of Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi and his students. Passages are also found quoted in Budaq Munshi Qazvini’s *Javāhir al-akhbār*.¹²⁸

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

These treatises comprise a rich body of literature that merits separate study, especially from the standpoint of their language. For example, although its purpose was to impart knowledge that could be put to good use by its reader, and writing them in poetry may have been meant to facilitate memorization, they also had shortcomings. Both Ibn al-Basis and Ibn al-Wahid, commenting on the “Ode on Calligraphy” in the thirteenth century, criticized Ibn al-Bawwab for speaking in “generalities which only served to conceal the details of his art.”¹²⁹ At one point in his treatise Ibn al-Bawwab had written: “Then turn your attention towards making the point/for the point is the crux of the task/Do not ask me to reveal it/it is a secret to which I shall hold.” Perhaps the poem was never intended to be an effective means of transmitting information. At the outset, Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi proclaimed his reluctance to record the rules of calligraphy in his treatise: “To expose the rules of writing in verse/In [the opinion of] this humble one is a complete error/Because in writing there is no limit and no end/As in words there is no finality.”¹³⁰ Training required a holistic approach—instruction, study, and practice.

Many of the preface authors were able, if not celebrated, calligraphers, and they were perfectly capable of expounding on the rules of calligraphy, its techniques and practices, but they did not do so. Where matters of process and production are concerned, the importance of the preface resides in what it reveals about categories of art (substantives such as calligraphy or depiction), whether by medium or technique, and the conceptual notions of the creative processes involved in making art.¹³¹

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

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

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

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

¹³¹ An early attempt to come to grips with both substantives (categories such as calligraphy and depiction) and attributives (the language used to describe visual features in words and metaphors) was made by Armenag Sakisian, “Esthétique et terminologie persanes,” *Journal Asiatique* 226, 1 (January–March 1935): 144–50.

nasta'liq and *ta'liq* subdivided into basic and subsidiary. By the sixteenth century Kufic had largely fallen out of use in the arts of the book and for single-page calligraphy, and though it was common enough in architecture, it was used only sparingly in manuscripts for illuminated chapter headings. The six scripts appeared principally in Korans, *ta'liq* in a broad range of chancellery documents, and *nasta'liq* in manuscripts and single-page calligraphies. The principal mode of calligraphic execution was black ink on paper, although some calligraphers excelled in the use of colored inks (*kitābat-i alvān, rang nivīsī*; Dust Muhammad mentions Mawlana Sultan Muhammad Nur and Mawlana Kamal al-Din Rustam 'Ali in this regard). Other specialized techniques, such as outlining (*tahrīr*), required the use of a transfer process, usually pouncing. A model calligraphy would be transferred (*naql*) or copied to another sheet of paper and outlined in a fine inked line. The outline drawn in ink could be left that way or filled in with colored ink or illumination (*tazhib*), the latter constituting yet another specialized skill. Another method was to cut the paper onto which calligraphy had been transferred to make *découpage* calligraphy. Some calligraphers were skilled in several techniques and are praised accordingly, but the expertise of additional masters was needed. A calligraphic specimen executed by one individual could be reproduced in another medium by another master to produce a series of multiples.

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

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

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

¹³³ The word perhaps refers to mirror-reversed calligraphy. The same term is used for this category of calligraphy in an Ottoman context (personal communication, Filiz Çağman).

Practitioners of depiction excelled in a broad range of techniques, including processes of design, the transferring of a model, and finished execution; content ranging from figural to non-figural, and media such as pigment, ink, dyes, and gold and silver. All processes involved in the arts of the book, and not just painting, were subsumed under the word depiction. Because of this, the term *haft aʃl* (seven modes) can be confusing: did it include both animate and inanimate content and thus refer to categories found in illumination, drawing and painting? Or did it refer exclusively to the content of illuminations?

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

Of equal interest are the implications techniques of transfer had for the understanding of authorship. In transferring the visual elements of a calligraphic model to new work the latter existed as a multiple, each one an original copy of the model. Copying was also common in painting and drawing. The compositional elements of either single-sheet paintings or drawings or manuscript paintings could be derived from the works of earlier or contemporary practitioners: the outline was transferred to the new work and differences articulated by such means as changes in color schemes, remodeling of form, or inserting the transferred element into a new compositional network.¹³⁴ Reperformance through imitation was only one form of connection between masters in the history of art; another was the ability to perform in the manner of a master, an ability frequently referred to in the prefaces and in other texts. Technical virtuosity was so complete that a viewer could understand the work of one maker for that of another.

JUDGMENT AND RESPONSE

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

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

¹³⁴ I have dealt with this issue at length in Roxburgh, "Kamal al-Din Bihzad and Authorship in Persianate Painting," pp. 119–46.

Bāburnāma where Babur writes, “Bihzad was one of the painters. He painted extremely delicately, but he made the faces of beardless people badly by drawing the double chin too big. He drew the faces of bearded people quite well.”¹³⁵ But observations of this kind are extremely rare, and comments about works of art in the prefaces amount to characterizations of visually perceived properties or attributes residing in the works. Formal elements of a work of art are also implied, but through analogical literary modes. For example, the metaphorical comparison of jewels or pearls and depictions can be understood as a reference to their lustrous surfaces and brightly colored fields of faceted and hard-edged colors. If the same metaphor is applied to calligraphy it makes the lines of ink pearls or jewels scattered by the pen, a metaphor not well suited to an evocation of calligraphy’s formal features but a powerful intermedial concept that likened the calligrapher’s process to the poet’s. Both calligrapher and poet worked with ideas, speech, and words that were equal to pearls and jewels in value. Two forms of response can be identified: the attributive, which describes an abstracted quality of the work, and the metaphorical, which infers relationships between things based on like qualities. The two responses are entirely consonant with the preface’s rhetorical, literary complex whose vector was the exemplary and the praiseworthy and tended toward the absolute.

Before going over some specific examples of attributes it must be emphasized that our comprehension of the language of judgment, aesthetics of value, and evaluation faces several problems.¹³⁶ Contemporary dictionaries provide some insight into the meanings of attributives/adjectives, but they do not guarantee the specific sense that the author wished to convey, either through a subtle shift or inversion of normative usage or of tone. Nor do the meanings necessarily fit the specialized vocabulary that may have developed for the discussion of a particular practice.¹³⁷

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

¹³⁵ Trans. in Thackston, *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur*, p. 226.

¹³⁶ I found that many of the problems that arise in the assessment of a language of aesthetics for Persianate art are also true for the study of Chinese art under the Ming (see Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* [Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991], chap. 3, esp. pp. 75–78).

¹³⁷ Exemplary in this respect is Michael Baxandall’s *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (rpt. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). Baxandall examines a variety of social practices that may have shaped the value system and language applied to the experience of works of art. For an analysis of critical language used in Vasari, see Roland le Mollé, *Georges Vasari et le vocabulaire de la critique d’art dans les ‘Vite’* (Grenoble: Ellug and Université Stendhal, Grenoble 3, 1988).

Dust Muhammad's reference to a painting by Sultan Muhammad, generally thought to be the painting of the court of Gayumars from the *Shāhnāma-yi shāhī*,¹³⁸ is comparable to that found in Vasifi. In general praise of Sultan Muhammad, Dust Muhammad writes that he had “taken depiction to a place that although the firmament has one thousand eyes, it has not seen anything equal to him.”¹³⁹ His painting in the *Shāhnāma* is such that “the teeth of his pen [brush] would wound the hearts of the lion-hearted of the forest of depiction and the leopards and crocodiles of the workshop of beautiful writing and their amazement at his images [would make them] bow their heads.”¹⁴⁰ Astonishment resulted from the inability to comprehend his images—the starry sky of one thousand eyes was even incapable of doing so—and unable to match them, even the most forceful practitioners of the age (lion-hearted, leopards, and crocodiles) were forced to acknowledge Sultan Muhammad's superiority. Praise of Sultan Muhammad is framed by a single image, but the response is conveyed through an extremely clever metaphor. Continuing with references to the artists Mir Musavvir and Aqa Mirak, Dust Muhammad confesses his inability to describe their works. He attaches no attributes to the visual features of painted or drawn images. Shams al-Din Muhammad's writings about the painted and drawn images are also metaphorical, and he only uses three attributes—graceful (*lutf*), pure (*pākīzagi*), and clean (*tamīz*)—to characterize depictions.

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

Malik Daylami's comments are few and far between; he remarks on Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi's purity (*ṣafā*) and sharpness (*tīzī*). Anisi improved Azhar's style through “ornament and adjustment/trimming” (*takalluf va iṣlāḥ*). Mir Sayyid Ahmad only describes properties of *ta'liq*, characterizing the *ta'liq* copied by secretaries in Khurasan as “at the extremity of freshness and movement” (*nihāyat-i ruṭūbat va ḥarakat*) and the secretaries of Azarbayjan and Iraq as “perfect in firmness, maturity, essentials, and taste” (*kamāl-i istihkām va pukhtagī va uṣūl va chāshnī*). He writes of Bihzad's “firmness of fingers” (*quvvat-i banān*) and “power over the pen/brush” (*qudrat bar qalam*). Shams al-Din Muhammad refers to the features of three calligraphers. Of Ja'far al-Tabrizi's calligraphy he says that it is “very beautiful” (*bisayār nīk*); of Muhammad Qasim Shadishah's that it is “at the extremity of sweetness, elegance, and

¹³⁸ For an illustration of the painting, see Sheila R. Canby, *Princes, Poets, and Paladins: Islamic and Indian Paintings from the Collection of Prince and Princess Sadruddin Aga Khan* (London: British Museum Press, 1998), pp. 48–49, cat. no. 25.

¹³⁹ *ki taṣvīr rā ba-jā'ī rasānīda ki bā vujūd-i hizār dīda-yi falak maṣalash na-dīda.*

¹⁴⁰ *ki shīr-mardān-i bīsha-yi taṣvīr va palangān va nihangān-i kārkhāna-yi taḥrīr az nīsh-i qalamash dil rīsh va az ḥayrat-i ṣūratash sar dar pīsh and.*

lightness” (*ba-ghāyat-i shūrīn va namakī va nāzūk*), and of Anisi Badakhshi’s that it is “very pure, sweet, and light” (*bisyār sāf va shūrīn va nāzūk*).

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

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

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

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

¹⁴¹ Sakisian attempted to match texts to works of art but without sufficient attention to the cultural contexts in which the texts were written and thought about the purposes that they served (“Esthétique et terminologie persanes”). More recently John Seyller tried to link a numerical system to visual features of the Mughal paintings and drawings onto which the numbers were inscribed (John Seyller, “A Mughal Code of Connoisseurship,” *Muqarnas* 17 [2000]: 178–203).

¹⁴² *sāfi ʿtiqād sālik-i masālik-i muḥibbat va vadād . . . /mānī qalam khujasta āsār/ nīkū shiyam ḥamīda atvār.*

¹⁴³ *va az shāgirdān-i rashīd-i vāy ast.*

¹⁴⁴ *siyādat-i maʿāb kamālāt-i iktisāb.*

¹⁴⁵ *dīgar az ustādān-i ḥazrat-i faẓāʾil maʿāb faṣāḥat shīʿar ifādat va ifāzat āsār kamālāt iktisāb.*

¹⁴⁶ *ḥazrat-i rifʿat niṣāb sharāfat intisāb kamālāt iktisāb.*

Around the subjects of innate disposition and ethics (*akhlāq*) an extensive literature grew in the Islamic tradition, and numerous works were written on good character (*ḥusn al-khulūq*) and moral perfection.¹⁴⁷ Among them are didactic treatises that gave advice to rulers, a blend of a mirror for princes and a collection of wise sayings. One example is Husayn Vāʿiz Kashifi’s *Akhlāq-i muḥsinī* (Morals of the Beneficent, 1494–95) dedicated to Abu al-Muhsin, one of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s sons.¹⁴⁸ It includes definitions of moral qualities and exemplary sayings of moral figures. For example, giving thanks (*shukr*) to God is one moral category; it was achieved through man’s heart, tongue, and limbs. The eye’s form of service was “to behold with reverence the works of creation.”¹⁴⁹ Another category was endeavor and exertion (*jidd va jahd*), with allusions to the benefits to be gained from perseverance, hard work, and noble pursuits.¹⁵⁰ The ruler’s patronage of building was particularly important especially because it benefited his subjects and also stood as a record of that dynasty’s might and benevolence.¹⁵¹

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

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

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

¹⁴⁷ In the absence of a synthetic study of Islamic ethics, see *EI2*, s.v. “Akhlāq” (R. Walzer and H. A. R. Gibb).

¹⁴⁸ See Ḥusayn Vāʿiz Kāshifī, *Akhlāk-i Muḥsinī or The Morals of the Beneficent*, trans. Rev. H. G. Greene (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1850). For a Persian edition, see Ḥusayn Vāʿiz Kāshifī, *Akhlāk-i Muḥsinī, The Morals of the Beneficent* (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1850).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 37–38.

¹⁵¹ Also important in this regard is Khvandamir’s *Maʿāzīr al-mulūk* (1498), a listing of the monuments and achievements of kings. The book concludes with statements about the monuments of Sultan Husayn Mirza’s rule.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 47–48. For the Persian, see Ḥusayn Vāʿiz Kāshifī, *Akhlāk-i Muḥsinī*, p. 58.

¹⁵³ An early-fifteenth-century manual (*Anīs al-nās*, “The Good Companion,” ca. 1426–27) composed by a certain Shujaʿ, and dedicated to Ibrahim Sultan b. Shahrukh, on the topic of ethics, contained a section on classes according to three “classes: *awsaṭ al-nās* (middle class); *muluk va arbāb va iḥtishām* (princes, lords, and high officials); *mardum-i bāzarī* (lower class).” In his study of the text, de Fouchécour noted that Shujaʿ “also differentiated between bad extraction (*bad aṣl*) and good extraction (*aṣīl*) with virtue (*ḥumar, ḥumarmand*). He noted that the author was writing “for and to create a man who is neither truly powerful nor vulgar, a ‘well-born’ man in whom virtue finds a fertile ground” (C.-H. de Fouchécour, “The Good Companion” (ʿAnīs al-Nās): A Manual for the Honest Man in Shirāz in the 9th/15th Century,” in *Iran and Iranian Studies: Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar*, ed. Kambiz Eslami [Princeton: Zagros, 1998], pp. 42–57; esp. 46–47. The separate classes are sometimes delineated in the mirror-for-princes genre. A tenth-century manual composed by Qadi al-Nuʿman in Fatimid Egypt contains a section on classes. Salinger notes that this portion of text is ostensibly “an exhortation

innate and acquired talents, and innate talent could be augmented through supra-natural intervention. According to Dust Muhammad, Ibn Muqla was instructed in *thuluth*, *muhaqqaq* and *naskh* by ‘Ali b. Abi Talib when he saw him in a vision (*dar vāq’ia dād*); Yaqut al-Musta‘simi “brought down the occulted rules of this science from heaven to earth.”¹⁵⁴ In their technical treatises, Mir ‘Ali Haravi (*Midād al-khuṭūt*) and Majnun Rafiqi (*Khatt va savād*) wrote that ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (referred to by Majnun as “Shah-i Mardan”) came to Yaqut in a dream and said to him: “‘Cut your pen diagonally!,’ and when he did so his calligraphy became purer, and it is because of this that his calligraphy is preferred over Ibn Muqla’s, not because of basic principles but rather for its purity.”¹⁵⁵

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

The aim of Murtaḍā-‘Alī in writing
Was not merely characters and dots
But fundamentals, purity, virtue;
And he pointed to this by the beauty of his writing.¹⁵⁸
(*gharaḏ-i Murtaḏā ‘Alī az khatt*
na hamīn lafz būd va ḥarf va nuqt
bal uṣūl va ṣafā va khūbī būd
zi ān ishārat ba-ḥusn-i khatt faramūd)

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

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

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

¹⁵⁴ *zavābiḥ-i makhfī-yi ‘ilm rā az āsmān ba-zamīn āvard.*

¹⁵⁵ *dar khvāb dād ki farmūda qalam rā muḥarraf qaṭṭ zan chun chunān kard khatt-i ū ṣāftar shud va in ki khatt-i ū rā bar khatt-i Ibn Muqla tarjūh mī-dahand na az jihat-i uṣūl ast balki az jihat-i ṣafā ast.* This is the passage as it appears in Majnūn Rafiqi, *Khatt va savād*, in *Kitāb āwāz dar tamuddan-i islāmī*, ed. Māyil Haravī, p. 189. The earlier text by Mir ‘Ali Haravi, *Midād al-khuṭūt*, is slightly different (see *ibid.*, p. 89). Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi had recorded the same experience, viz. that ‘Ali came to him in his sleep and gave him a specimen of calligraphy (*khatt*) and a “suit of clothes” (Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 109).

¹⁵⁶ *ānāmīl-i nay savār-i hīch afrīdgār chun shah-savār banān-i mūjiz nishān-i ān ḥaḏrat bar maydān-i kitābat na-guzashta.*

¹⁵⁷ *va ‘alāmat-i kitābat-i ān ḥaḏrat ba’-d-i ṣafā va liṭāfat-i ān ast.*

¹⁵⁸ In Qāzī Aḥmad, *Gulistān-i Hunar*, ed. Khvānsārī, p. 65; trans. in Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 108.

So that it will be left behind you
 in the abode of deception.
 For whatever a man does now
 will confront him on the morrow
 When he has to face
 the inscribed record of his deeds.¹⁵⁹

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

While the ethical standing of depicors was also not in question—Khvandamir/Amini's praise of Bihzad is sufficient evidence of that—the use of attributives in the reception of paintings, drawings, and illuminations was different. When responses do occur they are cast in metaphors that relativize the work or in the trope of incomprehensibility. Dust Muhammad wrote that even the heavens, endowed with the power of one thousand eyes, could not comprehend Sultan Muhammad's paintings. The designer (*tarrāḥ*) Kamal al-Din Husayn's motifs were such that even the most "discerning vision could not understand the perfection of their substance."¹⁶⁰ Over and over, not only Dust Muhammad but other authors, too, assert that to describe depictions and calligraphies is impossible. Any attempt to do so would be without end. Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi's reluctance to write down the rules of writing in his treatise is apropos where he says, "Because in writing there is no limit and no end/As in words there is no finality."

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

If a wise man does not describe the sun
 the emanation of its light is sufficient description.
 And if he does not speak in praise of musk
 the smell of musk is a sufficient eulogizer of its substance
 (*vaṣf-i khurshīd ar na-guyand hūshmand*
fayz-i nūr-i ū buwad vaṣfash band
var ba-madh-i mushk na-gushāyad nafs
mushk rā maddāḥ-i bū-yi mushk bas)

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

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

¹⁵⁹ Trans. from James, "Commentaries of Ibn al-Baṣīṣ and Ibn al-Waḥīd," p. 176.

¹⁶⁰ *nazar-i bārik-bīn ba-kunh-i kamālash na-rasīda.*

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

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

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

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

¹⁶² For a summary of aspects of biography during the classical period, see Catherine N. Parke, *Biography: Writing Lives* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), chap. 1, esp. pp. 2–6.

¹⁶³ See Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, pp. 179–80.

¹⁶⁴ Budāq Munshī Qazvīnī, *Javāhir al-akhbār*, fol. 112b.

describing individual achievement, attributes consonant with the qualities of the maker. It was a history of art that was dominated by transmission and that could be subdivided according to practitioner, school, mode, and technique.

It may well be that the consequence of the dominant focus on practitioners and transmission produced the particular form of narrative found in the album prefaces. It is a form much like the chronicle, a type of historical discourse whose inability to realize complete narrativity has been discussed.¹⁶⁵ The structure of the Persian chronicle and, in particular, the narrativized lists of the prefaces, often present a sequence of statements about events or individuals without coordinating connections that would make an inferred causality explicit. The paratactical structure required the reader to fill in the lacunae.¹⁶⁶

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

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

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

¹⁶⁶ Partner discusses paratactical prose in medieval histories and the idea that it was "a conscious alternative to linear structure, ruled by its own aesthetic," and goes on to say that "this attractive, sophisticated hypothesis . . . requires that we assume a world of writers and readers who found in juxtaposition their primary clue to meaning. Like practiced viewers of films whose central 'statement' works from calculated montage, these imagined past readers easily filled in gaps, 'read' the significance of contiguous images, made form out of the presented elements of artistic experience" ("The New Corfinicius," p. 18).

Study of works of art reveals, however, that artists and calligraphers also skipped generations and looked further back than their immediate contemporaries in their search for models and lessons. The tradition defined a field for performance, a fact that calls for a particular definition of progress or change: contributing to the tradition was not about overturning its rules and prerogatives but working within a universe of predetermined terms—small change, as we might gauge it, could be big change.

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