Increasing the Value or Hiding the Defects?
The Case of the Stuttgart Hātifi Manuscript*

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Abstract

An incomplete manuscript of Hātifi's Haft Manẓar (‘The Seven Belvederes’) that is kept in the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart, Germany, shows remarkable features of human intervention. In fact, it has been the object of an invasive make-over. An attempt is made to describe what has been done to the manuscript and to explain why the manuscript was given such a treatment.

Keywords


* Submitted on May 20, 2017. Accepted for publication on May 21, 2017.
** During my visit to the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart on 9–10 May 2017, I received invaluable help from Dr. Annette Krämer, Senior-Curator Orient in the Museum, and from Ms. Eva Fastenau, the Museum's conservator. Dr. Krämer let me have a look in the Museum's database with an extensive description by Raphaela Veit of the manuscript in question. Ms. Fastenau provided me with important information about the physical structure of the manuscript and she made a number of good-quality images. I am greatly indebted to them both. I am grateful, too, to The Association of Islamic Manuscripts for bringing me to Stuttgart in the first place. The staff of Encyclopaedia Iranica in New York kindly helped me solving an important bibliographical problem.
Values and Prices

That manuscripts have their value is a truism. They have prices too. Numerous title-pages carry the adage ‘even if this book were to be sold for its weight in gold, the seller would still be the loser.’ Yet, wherever there is value, it increases and decreases. Eventually, value may transform into price, an entirely different thing, but often confused with value. In connection with the production of Qur’ānic manuscripts, there have been extensive discussions from as long ago as the early centuries of Islam about ‘commodification’, the making of something (in this case, the Muṣḥaf) into a commodity—into something that can be sold and purchased, something of value that can be priced. For texts other than the Qur’ān, there were fewer restrictions, and the buying and selling of Islamic books in the premodern period always has been a dimension of Islamic booklore. In some respects, it continues today, both in legal and less legal ways. A way to make a manuscript appreciate in value is to hide its defects or to enhance its assets, or both at the same time. The manuscript of the Ḥaft Manẓar by Ḥātifī in the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart is a case in point. Already when I first looked at it I saw distinct traces of beautification, and when I started to describe the manuscript in more detail, in order to understand what I had in my hands, my suspicions were confirmed more than I could have expected.

1 In Arabic: هذا الكتاب لب يباع بوزنه ذهبا لكان البائع المغبونا. The adage was taken by Boris Liebrenz as the motto for his article “Mit Gold nicht aufzuwiegen”. Der Wert von Büchern im osmanischen Syrien (11.–13./17.–19. Jahrhundert’), in zdmg 164 (2014), pp. 653–686.


3 There seems to be no technical term in Arabic for commodification, at least Delia Cortese does not mention one in her ‘The Commodification of the Muṣḥaf in the Early Centuries of Islam’, in Robert Kerr & Thomas Milo (eds), Writings and Writing from Another World and Another Era. Cambridge: Archetype 2010, pp. 41–65.

Hātifī’s ‘Seven Belvederes’ in Stuttgart

The Persian poet ʿAbdallāh Hātifī (d. 927/1521) wrote his Haft Manẓar, ‘The Seven Belvederes’, on the model of the Haft Paykar of Niẓāmī (died early 7/13th century). It was intended to be part of a Khamsa, a ‘Quintet’, just like the one Niẓāmī had composed. Manuscripts of the Haft Manẓar are not as abundantly available as some other titles by Hātifī, but my impression is that they are not rare. The oldest surviving manuscript seems to be the one in the National Library in Paris, which Michele Bernardini used for his edition. As this edition is not available to me, I have used another old manuscript of the text, also preserved in the National Library in Paris, as a comparandum. It is equally a contemporary textual witness firmly dating from 925/1519 and written in Herat, comprising one hundred leaves with thirteen lines to the page. It contains forty-one miniatures. By favour of his Shīʿite views, Hātifī became a well-read author in Safawid Iran, from whence, it has been suggested, the Stuttgart manuscript of the Haft Manẓar originates.

In the Stuttgart manuscript (inventory number A41877L), the text of the Haft Manẓar is written on 47 leaves of indigenous paper, measuring c. 21.2 × 13.5 cm. The paper has been cropped at some point in time as the catchwords have now almost entirely disappeared. The present binding is too tight for the constitution of the quires to be established. The text is expertly written in Iranian Nastaʿlīq script with 18 lines to the page, with a lay-out in two columns, as is conventional with poetical texts. A narrow column between the two text columns is illuminated with Tadhbīb, gold ornamentation, and the entire text is set within a complex frame (gold, green, gold, blue), leaving a wide margin that is not used, except in a few cases that I will mention hereafter. The manuscript

8 It is conveniently fully available on Gallica: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6303519h/fi .item.
9 Ms. Eva Fastenau, the Museum’s conservator, kindly sent me a schematical survey of the constitution of the quires. So much is evident that the present physical make-up of the volume is highly irregular and that no conclusions can be drawn from this that would significantly improve the results of my collation with ms Paris, BnF, Persan 364.
shows several instances of illumination as well as three miniatures illustrating the text (ff. 15a, 31a, 36b). At the bottom of f. 47a is a one-line colophon telling the reader that the copyist, the illuminator, and the illustrator is Maḥmūd al-Mudhahhib, ‘Maḥmūd the Illuminator’. This refers to the artist of that name who was active in Herat during the reign of Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bayqarā (875–912/1470–1506) and later.10 The volume is bound in a full-leather binding. The front- and end-boards are covered with lacquer work showing three animals against a floral background drawn in gold lines (with some discolouration), set within a frame, with a floral décor outside the frame, also drawn in gold. The inner sides of the boards show a leather doublure with polychrome filigree work. The Linden-Museum acquired the manuscript in 1998–1999 from Mr. Said Motamed, an art dealer in Frankfurt am Main.11 It was part of a large acquisition of some 85 book manuscripts, miniatures and calligraphic pieces. The database of the Museum contains a detailed description by Raphaela Veit of the Haft Manẓar manuscript. She does not mention the features that caught my attention.

The volume contains parts of the Haft Manẓar by Hātifī only. A rough count of the verses between the Stuttgart volume and the Paris manuscript indicates that the Stuttgart manuscript contains somewhat less than half of the entire text, which may consist of c. 20,000 distiches. My identification of the Stuttgart text is based on a collation against the text in the Paris manuscript. Notwithstanding the numerous minor differences that can be observed between the two texts, it is evident that the Stuttgart manuscript contains the Haft Manẓar and not another text. Not long ago, an owner or trader has written the title in pencil on the front fly-leaf, together with a note in English that this is a manuscript from the Safawid era (Iran, 907–1145/1501–1732), or rather of the time of Shāh ʿAbbās (reigned 996–1038/1588–1629). There is nothing specific in the Stuttgart manuscript that supports this identification, but that


this is the *Haft Manẓar* is beyond doubt. This note in pencil might originate from the person(s) who made the Stuttgart manuscript into what it is now.

**Ornamental Features of the Stuttgart Hātifī**

A survey of the ornamental work in the Stuttgart manuscript, together with a collation of the text in the Stuttgart manuscript against the Paris manuscript (BnF, Persan 364), gives the following information:

f. 1a. Full-page *Tadhhīb* drawing in gold: a cypress and other trees, unrelated to the *Haft Manẓar*, as on f. 47b, below.

ff. 1b–2a. Double-page opening with *Tadhhīb* ornamentation in the margins, with on f. 1b the beginning of the text with an illuminated *Sarlawḥ*, made of polychrome floral motifs, pasted onto the top of the text, which corresponds with ff. 8b–9a in the Paris manuscript.

ff. 14b–15a. Double-page opening with marginal *Tadhhīb* with a short *Chalīpā* on f. 14b, with text corresponding with f. 47b in the Paris manuscript, and on f. 15a a miniature for ‘Monday’: King Bahrām under the green pavilion, with text corresponding with f. 48a in the Paris manuscript.

f. 15b. *Chalīpā*, but there is no subsequent miniature, so there must be a lacuna directly after f. 15b. There is no marginal *Tadhhīb*.

f. 16a. Polychrome cartouche for a *Ḥikāyat*, ‘story’, corresponding with f. 49b in the Paris manuscript.

f. 24b. Polychrome cartouche for a *Ḥikāyat*, ‘story’, corresponding with f. 73b in the Paris manuscript.

ff. 30b–31a. Double-page opening with marginal *Tadhhīb* with an extensive *Chalīpā* on f. 30b, and on f. 31a a miniature for ‘Wednesday’: King Bahrām under the blue pavilion, corresponding with ff. 72a–73a in the Paris manuscript.

f. 32a. Polychrome cartouche for a *Ḥikāyat*, ‘story’, corresponding with f. 73b in the Paris manuscript.

ff. 36b–37a. Double-page opening with marginal *Tadhhīb*, with on f. 36b a miniature for ‘Thursday’: King Bahrām under the *sandal*-coloured pavilion, corresponding with f. 81b in the Paris manuscript.

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12 Expansion of space used as a device in the lay-out in Persian poetical manuscripts.
f. 37a. Polychrome cartouche for a *Hikāyat*, ‘story’, possibly corresponding with f. 82a in the Paris manuscript.

f. 41b. The heading only for Friday (here named *Rūz-i Ādīna*), the day that King Bahram sits under the white pavilion, possibly corresponding with f. 88b in the Paris manuscript. Between ff. 41b–42a there seems to be a lacuna of at least one leaf that would have contained a miniature with the white pavilion.

f. 42a. Polychrome cartouche for a *Hikāyat*, ‘story’, corresponding with f. 90a in the Paris manuscript.

f. 47a. Colophon, one line of text, written in blue ink in *Thuluth* script, on erasure: ‘written and illuminated and illustrated by Mahmūd al-Mudhahhib.’ The last line of the *Haft Manzar* on f. 47a in the Stuttgart manuscript corresponds to f. 97a, line 9, in the Paris manuscript.

f. 47b. Full-page *Tadhhīb* illustration of Simurgh, ‘phoenix’, flying over a garden, unrelated to the text, as on f. 1a, above.

Conclusion

It is evident that, in its present state, the Stuttgart Hātífī is the product of an extensive make-over, which may have been done not too long ago. This must have had the purpose of making an already attractive, but very incomplete manuscript into a more beautiful manuscript whose shortcomings are compensated for, or rather overshadowed by, the splendour of the extra ornamentation.

This gives me occasion to make the following observations:

- From the collation by structure with the Paris manuscript (BnF, Persan 364), it is clear that the Stuttgart copy of the *Haft Manzar* lacks both beginning and end, and that it is lacunous in several places. This problem was solved by visually (not textually, of course) creating a beginning and an end to the manuscript. A *Sarlawh* that was cut out from another manuscript was pasted on top of what now appears to be a beginning of the text (f. 1b). An end to the text was provided by writing on erasure a colophon in a space that was first used as a chapter heading (f. 47a).

- To make an even more complete manuscript, two drawings in gold, which are unrelated to the text, were added (ff. 1a, 47b). They transform the text area (ff. 1b–47a) into a quasi-unit. If there was text on f. 1a or f. 47b, the leaves
may have been split in order to create a blank page. It would not be the first time that leaves are split as we know from the Houghton Shāhnāme.

- We have here the work of a con-artist, clearly with a talent for wielding the gold pen. He has created, apart from the drawings on ff. 1a and 47b, four double-page illuminated openings, one at the beginning of the text (ff. 1b–2a) as one might expect, and three more for the openings in which a miniature is shown (ff. 14b–15a, 30b–31a, 36b–37a). He has done so by adding Tadhhīb work in the margins. That this marginal Tadhhīb work is a later addition to the manuscript becomes clear from the fact that such work is lacking on f. 15b, which was, nevertheless, the right half of an opening with a miniature (now absent). Had the marginal illumination been authentic, it would have shown on that page as well.

- Trimming the pages, thereby making disappear most of the catchwords, is yet another means to dissimulate the lack of order in the pages or incompleteness of the text. Conveniently absent, these catchwords can no longer contradict the overall impression of completeness conferred on the manuscript by the above-mentioned stratagems.

- The colophon on f. 47a evidently is a fraud. It has been written on erasure in a field where there was once a chapter heading, as collation with the Paris manuscript proves. This means that the content of the colophon is probably false as well. The man who, according to the colophon, copied, illuminated, and illustrated the Stuttgart manuscript, Maḥmūd al-Mudhahhib, is a well-known painter and calligrapher from Herat. However, when one looks at other work ascribed to him, such as the expressive portrait of Sulṭān Saṅgar (if it is authentic, of course),¹³ the uncharacteristically clichéd faces of the personages in the miniatures in the Stuttgart manuscript cannot have been painted by him. I have little or no doubt about the authenticity of the three miniatures (although one never knows), only about their ascription to Maḥmūd al-Mudhahhib.¹⁴

- The binding is not authentic, as it now neatly fits to the text block, while the paper has been trimmed (with, as said, loss of the catchwords), and

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¹³ In ms Paris, BnF, Suppl. Persan 983, f. 41 https://asiecentrale.revues.org/docannexe/image/538/img-1.jpg. That portrait is only ascribed to Maḥmūd Mudhahhib, but also the portraits published by Arménag Sakisian, ‘Mahmud Mudhahīb—miniaturiste, enlumineur et calligraphe persan’ in Ars Islamica 4 (1937), pp. 338–347, are much more sophisticated than the routinely made faces of the persons in the three miniatures in the Stuttgart manuscript.

¹⁴ However, the miniatures seem to be problematic as well. Ms. Eva Fastenau writes me that they have been overpainted in many places, especially in the faces.
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at some point in time the volume must have been considerably larger. The boards could have been recycled from another manuscript, which is common practice.

These observations give room to the following speculations:

– The abundant work with the gold pen makes all other gold work in the Stuttgart manuscript suspect; in particular, the leafy illumination between the two columns of text and maybe even the ornaments on the lacquer work of the binding.

– Would the formulation of the fraudulent colophon on f. 47a be an echo of the title of Sakisian’s article of 1937 that carries the same three qualifications of Maḥmūd al-Mudḥahhib: miniature painter, illuminator, and calligrapher? The coincidence cannot be ignored even if Sakisian is not the first to mention these three qualifications in one breath.

– If the make-over of the Stuttgart Hātifi could somehow be placed in the twentieth century, the expertise needed for details, such as the fraudulent colophon, could come from an expert art historian in collusion with an artist who is able to paint in classical styles.

– All these beautifications only work if the prospective buyer of the manuscript is unfamiliar with the Persian language and with Persian literature in general. The intended victim is the snobbish collector, who buys upmarket and who falls for the illusion of possessing a complete and illustrated manuscript.

Multiplication by Division?

What could, of course, not be mended was the fact that four miniatures remain missing from the Stuttgart manuscript. The superficial beholder is distracted from this deficiency by the extensive work done on the manuscript. A complete illustrated manuscript of the Haft Manẓar, ‘The Seven Belvederes’, would contain at least seven miniatures. Have the four missing miniatures, together with the missing text, been somehow concocted into yet another quasi-complete copy of the Haft Manẓar by Hātifi? It would be interesting to find, somewhere in a museum or library, or in a private treasury, the other half of such a Siamese twin manuscript, with four miniatures illustrating the part of the Haft Manẓar that is now missing from the Stuttgart manuscript.
The suggestive double illuminated opening page of Hātifī, Haft Manẓar. The paste-on Sarlawḥ and the gold penwork in the margins are later additions. MS Stuttgart, Linden-Museum, A.41877L, ff. 1b–2a.

PHOTOGRAPH BY EVA FASTENAU
FIGURE 2  The fraudulent Sarlawḥ of Hāṭifi, Haft Manzar, cut out from another manuscript, pasted on part of the text, suggesting the beginning of the text at that spot. Ms Stuttgart, Linden-Museum, A41877L, f. 1b, detail. PHOTOGRAPH BY EVA FASTENAU
Figure 3  Hâtîfî, Haft Manzâr, 'Monday': King Bahrâm under the green pavilion. The marginal penwork is of later date. Ms Stuttgart, Linden-Museum, A.18771, f. 15a.

Photograph by Eva Fastenau
Hātifī, Haft Manẓar, double-page opening with marginal penwork in gold of later date. A long Chalipā on f. 30b, and on f. 31a a miniature for ‘Wednesday’: King Bahram under the blue pavilion. MS Stuttgart, Linden-Museum, A418771, ff. 30b–31a.

PHOTOGRAPH BY EVA FASTENAY
Hātifī, Haft Manzar, double-page opening with marginal penwork in gold of later date, with on f. 36b a miniature for ‘Thursday’: King Bahram under the sandal-coloured pavilion. MS Stuttgart, Linden-Museum, A41877, ff. 36b–37a.

Photograph by Eva Fastenau
The suggested end of Hātifī’s Haft Manẓar, with the fraudulent colophon written on erasure, mentioning Maḥmūd al-Mudhahhib as calligrapher, illuminator and miniaturist. ms Stuttgart, Linden-Museum, A41877L, f. 47a. PHOTOGRAPH BY EVA FASTENAU