50. The European traveler Adam Olertius, who visited the shrine of Shaykh Sali at Ardabil in 1537, obtained such a certificate and mentioned that the scribe inscribed the names in a style which were extremely helpful in warding off misfortune and disgrace.

51. In addition to documents with seal impressions, such as the firman for Shah Isma'il, one royal seal itself has been preserved: a remarkable rock crystal example, inscribed for Tahmasb and now in the Khiāli Collection, see Toby Falk (ed.), Treasures of Islam (London, 1989), no. 67; Mikhail B. Piotrovsky (gen. ed.), Heavenly Art, Earthly Beauty (Amsterdam, 1990), no. 276. Souchek, 'Calligraphy in the Safavid Period,' 3-19. On Safavid seals, one awaits Venetia Porter's forthcoming monograph on Arabic and Persian seals and amulets in the British Museum.

52. See, for example, the gold and black tughras for Isma'il on his firman. It was said to have been designed by his chancery scribe, Khwaja Atiq.

53. Such methods, for example, helped canonize the style of Sultan 'Ali. His manuscript of the Mantiq al-Ṭair (Figure 7.17) was clearly examined by artists working for Shah 'Abbās in the early seventeenth century when the last four paintings were added and the manuscript was sealed with his seal and endowed to the dynastic shrine at Ardabil. Sultan 'Ali's rhyming treatise was included in Qādi Ahmad's book Callistan-i Hunar, 64-9. Qādi Ahmad, Calligraphers and Painters, 106-35. Such treatises are hard to follow without pictures and might well be assumed to reflect the style of the eighteenth-century Ottoman example illustrated in Souchek, 'Calligraphy in the Safavid Period,' 3-2.

54. Sultan Muhammad Nur ('light'; fl. 1459-1550; Bayani, Abval wa athar-i khushnvisan, no. 272, 372-81) was known for writing in colors. Other followers of Sultan 'Ali, named Muhammad, include Sultan Muhammad Khanian ('household'; fl. 1504-8; Bayani, Abval wa athar-i khushnvisan, no. 384, 386), and Muhammad Abulzahmi ('silken'), b. before 951/1544-5; Bayani, Abval wa athar-i khushnvisan, no. 853.

55. Bayani, Abval wa athar-i khushnvisan, no. 703, Eth, 'Ali Heravi.' Mir 'Ali was born at Herat [hence his epithet Heravi, 'from Herat'] to a family of husaynis sayyids from the late seventeenth or sixteenth century such as Sultan 'Ali Mashadi or Mir 'Ali Tabrizi. They attest to the Mughals' interest in these earlier masters of nastaʿlīq and show how aesthetic considerations of balance and symmetry, along with exquisite color and decoration, outweighed content and readability in assembling these pages and albums.

56. The signature, or part of it, could also be written in smaller script up the left side, as in Figure 3.3. The calligrapher's name was given in a variety of ways. Sometimes the signature contains only the name of the calligrapher, typically prefixed by abdal (the poet). Other times the phrase begins with a verb, including katabaha (so-and-so copied this), mashagaha (so-and-so copied this), perhaps indicating a practice page or denoting a lower level of accuracy and elegance, qa'lahu (so-and-so composed this), qata'ubha (so-and-so cut this out), and harratana (so-and-so copied or perhaps outlined or filled this). It remains for scholars to establish the precise meaning of these verbs and indeed whether they even had the same meaning at all times.

57. Mir 'Ali Haravi's calligraphy, already popular during his lifetime, became highly prized in later times. The Ottoman chronicler Mustafa 'Ali, writing c. 1560, reports that, somewhat astonishingly in his view, a calligraphic specimen by Mir 'Ali Haravi brought more than one by his model and predecessor Sultan 'Ali Mashhadī. The Mughal emperors were avid collectors of Mir 'Ali's work, and many examples of it are incorporated in the stupendous albums created for them. These albums usually have a pair of facing pages with calligraphy set within figural borders followed by a pair of facing pages with figural paintings set within floral or abstract borders. The borders, added during the Mughal period, are painted in gold and polychrome washes (Figure 2.3) and can even be seen to subsume the calligraphy they enclose. They exemplify the Mughal's preoccupation with decoration over writing. See further, Chapter 13.

58. Bayani reported, for example, that he had seen innumerable examples.

59. On the problem of Mir 'Ali's signatures, see Annemarie Schimmel, 'The Calligraphy and Poetry of the Kevorkian Album,' in The Emperors' Album: Images of Moghul India, Stuart Cary Welch, et al. [New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987], 34, who suggests that an examination of the paper and decoration might be more helpful than the calligraphy in sorting out the works by Mir 'Ali from those by his disciples.

60. C. Welch, et al., The Emperors' Album, no. 36. In the view of Schimmel, 'Calligraphy of Kevorkian Album,' 35, Mir 'Ali was not a great poet, 'but no worse than many versifiers whose lines fill the pages of later anthologies.'

61. Sultan Muhammad Nur was particularly good at juxtaposing different sizes of nastaʿlīq, see the example illustrated in Souchek, 'Calligraphy in the Safavid Period,' 3-13.

62. The calligraphy in these border fragments is sometimes signed by many calligraphers from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century such as Sultan 'Ali Mashadi or Mir 'Ali Tabrizi. They attest to the Mughals' interest in these earlier masters of nastaʿlīq and show how aesthetic considerations of balance and symmetry, along with exquisite color and decoration, outweighed content and readability in assembling these pages and albums.

63. The Ottoman chronicler Mustafa 'Ali, for example, described how this practice worked at the Ottoman court, where artists in the royal atelier cut up pages with poetry on them and placed unconnected hemistiches at the border of each page like a commentary. Mustafa 'Ali Efendi, Manazq-i Hunavarvan, 45-56, cited in Schimmel, 'Calligraphy of Kevorkian Album,' 36 and n. 30. Scholars of Persian poetry might profitably investigate the verbal connections between main and marginal texts.

64. Thackston, Album Prefaces, 15.

65. The other four were Rustam 'Ali, Shaykh Muhammad, 'Abdallah Shirazi, and the author himself. For Shah Mahmud, see the biographies in this book, Abval wa athar-i khushnvisan, 398-407, no. 430; Simpson, Haft Avang, 356-70. In addition to the short biography given by Dust Muhammad, his contemporary and colleague in the Safavid studio.
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Shah Mahmud, was the subject of a lengthy biographical notice by his student, the chronicler Qadi Ahmad: Gulistan-i Hunar, 87-9, Calligraphers and Painters.

66. Shah Mahmud's work was already prized in Safavid times; many examples of it are included in the album prepared for Bahram Mirza (1543) in which the poet Dast Muhammad praises the calligrapher as the foremost artist in Tahmasp's workshop.

67. TSK, H.S. 25; Martin Lingn, The Quranic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination (London, 1976), no. 91; M. Uğur Derman, The Art of Calligraphy in the Islamic Heritage, trans. Mohamed Zakariya and Mohamed Asole [Istanbul, 1998], 61-2; Sousek, Calligraphy in the Safavid Period, 3:15. The colophon on fol. 45v-6a is reproduced in Simpson, Haft Awarag, fig. 138. The dedicatory rosette at the beginning, specifying that the manuscript was ordered for the library of Sultan Muhammad Baha'ud Jan, is added, and the princey quality suggests that the original patron probably had been Shah Tahmasp, but the Safavid Shah apparently presented the manuscript to the Ottoman sultan Murad III on his accession in 1574.

The text is transcribed on quarter-boghdadi size sheets which are cream-colored and densely dusted in gold. Regular pages in the 37-folio manuscript have nine widely spaced lines, the opening pages juxtaposing Suras 1 and the beginning of Sura 2 have five lines of text interspersed with four bands of arabesque scroll. The text is penned in fine black nasta'liq, with chapter headings written in cartouches in white riq'a.

68. Badoq Qazvini (f. 1135, cited in Adle, 'Dust-Mohammadi,' 227, n. 38) reports that the calligrapher Dast Muhammad transcribed an entire manuscript of the Koran in nasta'liq. Several pages from other manuscripts in nasta'liq have survived as well. Bayani [Abval wa athar-i khusnivisat, 302] mentions a copy of a Koran manuscript in the Karimzada-Tahbizi collection, whose seven folios of text, comprising Suras 48-73 written in nasta'liq with headings in rubatu, are signed by Shah Mahmud Nishapuri at the capital Tabriz. Similarly, the Khallili Collection owns an album page with Koran 48:1-4 written in nasta'liq (CAL2755, Safwat, Art of the Pen, no. 46).

69. The opening pages of the Koran manuscript can be compared, for example, to those in Shah Mahmud's copy of Nizami's Khusn-i Azam (BL, Or. 2365; Stuart Carly Welch, Wonders of the Age: Masterpieces of Early Safavid Painting, 1507-1576 [Cambridge, MA, 1979], no. 40) and in the Amir Husayn Beg album compiled by Malik Djalami in 1586-87 (H2351). Sousek, 'Calligraphy in the Safavid Period,' 2:320. Later pages have gold borders with large lotus flowers added, according to Derman, under the supervision of Hasan Baghban in 1576.

70. Contrary to what has been claimed (Sousek, 'Calligraphy in the Safavid Period,' 66), these elongations were chosen for visual effect rather than to enhance the verbal elongations that occur when reciting the text.

71. London, BL, Or. 2365. The work demands a full monograph. In the meanwhile, see Stuart Carly Welch, Wonders of the Age, 134-75.

72. The texts of the colophons, ranging from early Jumada II 944/mid-

October 1539 to 30 Dhu'l-Qa'da (not 10 as stated) 949/March 1543
are given in Simpson, Haft Awarag, 387-8.

73. Shah Mahmud was justly proud of his calligraphy, and, according to the ink he used. By writing his epitaph al-shahi in gold, he created a visual pun on his other epitaph zarin golam (golden pen) and

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provided a fitting accompaniment to the gold-dusted paper used in these royal manuscripts, perhaps metaphorically contrasting the shah to the sun.

74. Shah Mahmud may well have been working on other manuscripts during this period. The one other signed and dated work done by him at this time is a copy of Sa'di's Gulistan completed in early Rajab 947/November 1546 [BN, supp. pers. 1531; see the list in Simpson, Haft Awarag, 389-405]. He may have been working on undated works as well.

75. The rulings and illumination in Shah Mahmud's copy of the Khamsa are also more delicate and balanced than those in Sultan 'Ali's copy of the Mantiq al-Tayr. In the Mantiq al-Tayr the rulings make the two middle columns narrower and the two sides columns wider so that there is extra blank space before the first hemistich and after the last. In contrast, the rulings in the Khamsa set off four columns of almost equal width, so that all the calligraphy begins near the ruling.

76. Illustrated in black and white in Stuart Carly Welch, Wonders of the Age, no. 49. The calligraphy is surrounded by contour lines pricked in gold, and the gold background filled with minute blue sprigs and leaves, some in their own contour lines. Central cartouches are inscribed in white riq'a outlined in black, the same style used for headings in his Koran manuscript. These colors also echo the frame bands linking the multiple medallions finely decorated with arabesques and flowers. The margins have designs drawn in silver and several times of gold.

77. One sign of Tahmasp's withdrawal of patronage may be the unfinished nature of this manuscript. Several paintings were only added by Muhammad Zaman in the seventeenth century, and the dedicatory inscription was inscribed in the rosette on the opening page (fol. 18r). The same is true of a copy of Jami's Yusuf and Zuleyha transcribed by Shah Mahmud in 1550/1543-4 [BN, supp. pers. 1519]. Francis Richard, Splendeurs persanes: manuscrits du Xle au XVle siècle [Paris, 1997], no. 110, which was refurbished at Bijapur in 1575 under the Adilshahis.

78. FGA 46.12; see the extensive description of the manuscript and its calligraphers by Marianne Shreve Simpson, 'The Production and Patronage of the Haft Awarag by Jamə in the Freer Gallery of Art,' Ars Orientalis 15 (1983): 91-119; Simpson, Haft Awarag.

79. The standardness of its style is clear from the fact that so far it has been impossible to attribute the seventh poem, Khudaratayn-ye iskandari, which has lost its colophon, to any particular calligrapher, either of the five who signed the other poems or even another hand.

80. Biographies in Bayani, Abval wa athar-i khusnivisat, 318-38, no. 709; Ebr, 'Emad Hasani,' Francesca von Habsburg, The St Petersburg Manuscript: Album of Indian and Persian Miniatures from the 16th through the 18th Century and Specimens of Persian Calligraphy by Emad al-hassani [Milan, 1996], 39-46; Derman, Art of Calligraphy, 220.

81. Academy of Sciences E/14, the album has been reconstructed in Habsburg, St Petersburg Manuscript: Purchased in Tehran in 1909 for Tzar Nicholas II, the album seems to have been compiled to contain the substantial collection of calligraphy and painting owned by an influential individual named Mirza Mahdi, probably to be identified as Mirza Muhammad Mahdi Khan Astarabad, the Calligrapher, Secretary and companion to the Afsharid ruler Nadir Shah. By the time the binding for the volume was completed in 1147/1738-9, the collection of works to be included had increased substantially, and the album now
contains 198 calligraphic specimens and 34 exercises (mushaf) produced by Mir 'Imad at Aleppo, Qazvin, Isfahan, and Farahabad between 1595 and 1613.

82. JU, 1421, Derma, Art of Calligraphy, no. 69. The album of 33 qira'as, now in the Yildiz section of the library, was one of a pair acquired in 1803 as part of the legacy of Mehmed Amin Efendi, son of the Ottoman master of nasta'liq, Shakhry ar Islam Veli al-Din Efendi. This piece was illuminated in 1178/1764 by Salihi, the Ottoman illuminator whose name appears in a cloud that projects at the right in the signature of Mir 'Imad in the triangle at the bottom.

83. A similar term is used in Turkish: kahralama, from the noun kara (black). The same contrast is expressed in Arabic, where the noun musawwara, from the verb sawawada (to blacken), meaning the black practice sheet, is juxtaposed to musayyada, from the verb bayyada (to make something white, clean, or perfect), the white felt copy.

84. London, Khalili Collection, CAL 266, Safwat, Art of the Pen, no. 15.

85. Mir 'Imad's petition to join 'Abbas's service is preserved in Paris and reproduced in Faizi, Atlas-i khatt, 526.

86. The earliest practice sheet to survive is one by the Ottoman calligrapher Shakhryar Hamdallah dated 899/1168–900, see Sevket Rado, Türk Hattatları. XV. Yüzilda Din Guzelmeler Kadar Cemil Ünlü Hattatların Hayatları Ve Yazılırların Ornekler [Istanbul, 1985], 53.


91. For an outline of the script's development, see Faizi, Atlas-i khatt, 666–40. Elr, 4669–702. For a discussion of its inherent qualities and lessons on how to read it, see Hanaway and Spooner, Reading Nasta'liq.

92. Hanaway and Spooner, Reading Nasta'liq, 14–20, listed more than fifty ways in which the regularly non-connected letters are distinguished in shikasta.

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105. The finest is a copy of Fays al-durar', a treatise about the martyrdom of Imam Husayn composed by Muhammad Ibrahim Nawab Tahirani, dated Rajab 1283/November-December 1866, Tehran, National Library 683, see Badr Astakh, "Pirzad-i khatami-i Jami wa maddah-i khat-i khabxnah-ye salmaniyi" (Tehran, 1352/1973), 393. Folio 28 bears the seal impression of Nasir al-Din Shah.

106. Many illustrated in Kalhor.


111. Copies of the Koran written in naskh, for example, typically had marginal commentaries written in nasta'liq.

112. See Sheila R. Canby, 'The Pen or the Brush? An Inquiry into the Technique of Late Safavid Drawings,' in Persian Painting from the Mongols to the Qajars, Studies in Honour of Basal W. Robinson, ed. Robert Hillenbrand (London, 2000), 75-83, on the difficulties of distinguishing brushwork from that done by the pen.

113. Istanbul, IUL, F142b, folio 46v, published in Abdelkehir Khatibi and Mohammed Sijelmassi, The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy, trans. J. Hughes and E. J. Emory (London, 1995), 108-9. The album contains mainly works in nasta'liq by noted Safavid masters, including eighteen unadorned calligraphic specimens by Shah Mahmud Nishapuri [in list in Simpson, Haft Awrang, 394-5], and the page title reads 'The Shah Mahmud Nishapuri Albums' (muraqaat al-`. Although the dedication medallion is blank, the album seems to have been compiled and bound in a splendid tortoise-shell and silver cover for the Ottoman sultan Sulayman c. 1560 (Esin Atal, The Age of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent [Washington, DC, 1987], no. 49). F. M. Rogers and R. M. Ward, Suleyman the Magnificent [London, 1988], no. 53). Given the name on the title page and the number of signed specimens at the beginning of this album, the zoomorphic composition is sometimes as in Khatibi and Sijelmassi, 108-9 attributed to Shah Mahmud Nishapuri, but this is not accurate. Not only do the pages around the cut-out zoomorphic composition contain various drawings in the nasta'liq style and a paper-cut-out of a garden, but this page is also signed by another calligrapher.

114. The opening verse, nad `aliyyan mushahhah al-oj'ah, forms his face and head. The second verse, wajfdahawn `armana laka tayl al-nawwara, begins along the bottom of his lower jaw and tills his nose, left front paw, and chest. The third line, kull hamrn wa-ghamn sayana, circles his right front paw and fills his stomach. The final line of the prayer, bawley-yak`a `ali ya `ali ya `ali, fills the rear of his body, top of his back, and his tail. The word hamrn [care] seems to be written backwards along the right side of the lion's right front leg.

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115. Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani, Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World 8th-18th Centuries (London, 1982), nos. 118-20; Linda Komaroff, The Golden Disk of Heaven: Metalwork of Timurid Iran, Persian Book Arts Series [Costa Mesa, CA, 1992], Appendix II, nos. 4, 4, and 7. Qadi Ahmad (Qalistan-i Hunar, 85; Calligraphers and Painters, 133-3) was aware of the Herati connection, for he attributed the invention of zoomorphic writing to Majmun (read by Minokey as Mahmud) Chapuvis (the left-handed or the one who writes in reverse), a calligrapher from Herat who had a fine nasta'liq hand and worked for Sam Mirza, governor of Khurasan under the Safavid shah Tahmasp at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Writing under the pen of Majmun, he was also a poet and author of a treatise on calligraphy. According to Qadi Ahmad, Majmun invented a style of writing in which combinations of letters formed images of men and beasts. As an example, the Safavid chronicler cites a hemistich about sugar and the lips of the beloved penned in the shape of three or four men standing one under the other. As with other so-called calligraphic inventions, we should interpret Qadi Ahmad's text as meaning that this style of zoomorphic writing was codified at this time.

116. On other metalwares or calligraphic specimens (qat`a) with this prayer [e.g., Khatibi and Sijelmassi, The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy, 110], the calligrapher usually added his name or the date following the prayer.

117. Other works in this album are signed Mir 'Ali and 'Ali al-khatib, the latter dated 1546/1539-40. Rogers and Ward, Suleyman the Magnificent, 117.

118. Springfield, MA, Museum of Fine Arts 59 Me47, Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom [eds], Images of Paradise in Islamic Art [Hanover, NH, 1991], no. 3.


120. The earliest surviving examples of micrography date from the late tenth, eleventh, and eleventh centuries and were made for the Karaites, a Jewish sect that denies the Talmudic rabbinical tradition, recognizing the Scriptures as the sole and direct source of religious law. See Leila Avrin, Hebrew Micrography [Jerusalem, 1981]. The Karaites flourished in Egypt during the Fatimid period, and many, if not all, of these manuscripts can be attributed to them. In some examples, the mosarab, the concordance-like notes that appeared in the margins of manuscripts of the Pentateuch and the Bible, were written in figural or architectural shapes. In other cases, notes as well as palmus and dedications were combined with painted ornament into full-page compositions. For example, in a double-page frontispiece from a parchment copy of the Pentateuch transcribed c. 1010 (Gabrielle Sed-Rajna, L'Art juif [Paris, 1973], 176-7), the tiny words are arranged to form the contour lines of a checkerboard and a rosette. The texts chosen usually corresponded to the subject illustrated (Rachel Milstein, 'Hebrew Book Illumination in the Fatimid Era,' in L'Egypte fatimide: son art et son histoire, Actes du
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colleque organisé à Paris les 28, 29 et 30 mai 1998, ed. Marianne Barrucand [Paris, 1999], 429–48. Since many features in these Hebrew manuscripts – from the codex format to vocalization, numbering of verses, and decorative devices used as section markers, titles, and space fillers – derive from the Kharosthi tradition, it seems likely that Hebrew micrography also derived from examples in Arab manuscripts that have not survived. In later centuries calligraphers penning Arabic script took micrography one step further so that the words composed of single letters form not only designs but further words. Such examples too may have been made before the age of empires, but none has survived.

121. Tehran, Gulistan Library, no. 1423, Atabay, Fihris-i qur'ana-yi khatti, no. 183.


123. Scrolls made in Iran were often inscribed with specifically Shi‘ite ones, notably the Nad ‘Ali found, for example, on a scroll in the Khalili Collection [CAL 3, Safwat, Art of the Pen, no. 126].


125. These scrolls have been more popular as collectors’ items in recent times, and several examples have turned up in auction catalogues in recent decades.

126. IUL, F1426, Derman, Art of Calligraphy, no. 41.

127. Qadi Ahmad, Gulistan-i Hunar, 63 and 78–79. Qadi Ahmad, Calligraphers and Painters, 106 and 126. Zayn al-Din Mahmud [d. 1579] is regularly mentioned in the various album prefaces; see Thackston, Album Prefaces, 51, 55, 53, and 36. See the brief biographies in Bayani, Aghval wa athar-i khushnivisat, 864–6, no. 1293, Derman, Art of Calligraphy, 210.

128. London, Khalili Collection, CAL 3, Safwat, Art of the Pen, no. 53. The text contains the seven verses of the Fatima mounted on nine separate boards, each measuring 35 cm in height and containing a phrase or two written in a large nasta‘liq. Reserve cartouches at the end of the words on four folios bear the signature of the calligrapher. He is probably to be identified with Muhammad Kazim Walahi-yi Islahani, a master of nasta‘liq and shikasta who died in 1339/1821–14. For a biography, see Bayani, Aghval wa athar-i khushnivisat, 823–4, no. 1215.

129. As in a verse by Hafiz done in grisaille attributed to the second half of the seventeenth century and the hand of Hussain zarin galam, see Falk, Treasures, no. 179; ‘Islamic Calligraphy: An Outline [La Calligraphie Islamique: Un Aperçu],’ 35.


131. Geneva, cx-Khoroovani Collection; Falk, Treasures, no. 177. The painting was sold at Sotheby’s on 12 October 2004, lot 31.

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