The Court of Gayumars’ confirmed Sultan Muhammad’s preeminence among Shah Tahmasp’s painters. One of the few individual paintings to be mentioned is a sixteenth-century text, the work was described by Dust Muhammad in 951/1544 as ‘such that the lion hearded of the jungle of depictions and the leopards and crocodiles of the workshop of ornamentation quail at the fangs of his pen and bend their necks before the awesomeness of his pictures.’ Welch has estimated that Sultan Muhammad worked on ‘The Court of Gayumars’ for three years,’ which sets it apart from the other 257 illustrations to Shah Tahmasp’s Shahnameh and partly explains its wealth of detail and colouristic intensity. For practical and stylistic reasons the majority of the paintings in the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp are painted on a somewhat larger scale, with fewer figures and less tonal variation than ‘The Court of Gayumars’. Many of the illustrations are superb works of art and provide much information about the material culture of the Safavids.

As the collecting of calligraphies and single-page paintings increased in this period, compilers of albums such as Dust Muhammad consciously arranged the works to reflect the chain of artistic development from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. These visual compendia, as well as Dust Muhammad’s 951/1544 Preface to the Bahram Mirza Album, Malik Daylam’s 968/1560–61 Preface to the Amir Husayn Beg Album, Mir Sayyid Ahmad’s Preface to the Amir Ghayb Beg Album of 972/1564–5, the late sixteenth-century account of Qazi Ahmad and signed or ascribed paintings, provide the basic information about which artists were working for Shah Tahmasp and the nature of their familial or student–teacher relationships.” Sultan Muhammad, the doyen of the Tabriz school, was the father of the artist Mirza ‘Ali, who also contributed to Shah Tahmasp’s Shahnameh, and the grandfather of Mir Zayn al-‘Abidin, who was a painter and illuminator in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Whereas artists such as Bihzad and presumably Mir Musavvir moved to Tabriz from Herat and Badakhshan, respectively, their students and pupils were brought up in the court atelier at Tabriz. Some of them, namely Dust-i Divan, a pupil of Bihzad, and Mir Sayyid ‘Ali and his father, Mir Musavvir, left Iran in the 1540s to join the Mughals in Kabul and then Delhi. Yet other Safavid court artists such as Muzaffar ‘Ali, a student and

34. ‘Rustam Pursues Akvan, the Onager-die’, from Shah Tahmasp’s Shahnameh, attributable to Muzaffar ‘Ali, c. 1550–55, opaque watercolour, gold and ink on paper, image 26.8 x 17.5 cm, Aga Khan Trust for Culture. The hero Rustam is about to lasso an onager which he has been attacking a herdsman’s horses and which was believed to be the demon Akvan in disguise.
relative of Bihzad, and Aqa Mirak remained at Tabriz, becoming
confidants of the shah.

The regional sources of the styles of Sultan Muhammad and
Mir Musavvir, both artists of the older generation, are evident in
their earlier Shahnameh illustrations. Whereas Sultan Muhammad's
careful Shahnameh paintings exhibit the spatial illogic and
natural dynamism of 'Rustam Sleeping' [see fig. 18], Mir Musavvir's
illustrations from the 1520s, including the only dated painting
in the manuscript, 'Arash and the Slave Girl Gulnar' of 1527–8,9
have compositions that are carefully constructed with
an emphasis on the geometry of architectural elements and the
specific rendering of objects such as lamps, bowls and ewers. By the
1530s the synthesis of the eastern and western Iranian styles of
painting was well under way. Sultan Muhammad's composition
had become more architectonic, while those of Mir Musavvir were
more broadly conceived and dramatic; both artists ceased to include
a plethora of minute details in their illustrations. The younger
generation of painters furthered the development of the new style
with their contributions to the manuscript. The contributions of
Mirza 'Ali and Aqa Mirak reveal a heightened interest in charac-
terization and opulent colour. Muzaffar 'Ali's illustrations combine
elegance and exuberance [fig. 34], while Mir Sayyid 'Ali, 'Abd al
Samad and the artist Dust Muhammad, who should be identified
with Dust-i Divaneh [see fig. 55], the three artists who with Mi
Musavvir joined the Mughul atelier, took great care to depict the
stuff of the material world.

Shah Tahmasp's repertory of all forbidden acts in 939/1532–3
did not yet include a strict Muslim prohibition of human imagery
and his support for his artists and calligraphers remained strong
through the 1530s. As a result, following the completion of the
Shahnameh in about 944/1537, the employees of the royal atelier
embarked on another lavish commission, an illustrated Khamsheh o
Nizami. Produced between 946/1539 and 949/1543, the manuscript
was copied at Tabriz by the scribe Shah Mahmud of Nishapur.
Fourteen illustrations from the sixteenth century and three from
seventeenth-century refurbishment remain in the manuscript
while at least four were removed from it and are in museum collec-
tions. Instead of a large stable of painters, only a handful of the
shah's best artists, namely Sultan Muhammad, Aqa Mirak, Mirz

35 'Haftvand's Daughter and the Worm', from the Shah Tahmasp Shahnameh
of Firdausi, ascribed to Dust Muhammad, Tabriz, c. 1540, opaque watercolour,
gold and ink on paper, image 40.6 x 26.7 cm, Aga Khan Trust for Culture.
Haftvand's daughter spared a worm she found in an apple, and in return it
grew enormous and spun great quantities of silk, thereby enriching her family
and village.
of Bibad, and Aqa Mirak remained at Tabriz, becoming intimates of the shah.

Regional sources of the styles of Sultan Muhammad and Usavir, both artists of the older generation, are evident in earlier Shahnameh illustrations. Whereas Sultan Muhammad's Shahnameh paintings exhibit the spatial illogic and dynamism of 'Rustam Sleeping' [see fig. 18], Mir Musavvar's illustrations from the 1520s, including the only dated painting made for the manuscript, 'Ardashir and the Slave Girl Gulhar' of 27–8, have compositions that are carefully constructed with a virtuoso rendering of the geometry of architectural elements and the rendering of objects such as lamps, bowls and ewers. By the mid-1530s, the synthesis of the eastern and western Iranian styles of gilding was well under way. Sultan Muhammad's compositions come more architectonic, while those of Mir Musavvar were elaborately conceived and dramatic; both artists ceased to include some of the minute details in their illustrations. The younger generation of painters furthered the development of the new style in their contributions to the manuscript. The contributions of 'Ali and Aqa Mirak reveal a heightened interest in caricature and opulent style. Mu'izz al-Din 'Ali's illustrations combine in a sanguine and exuberant style, while Mir Sayyid 'Ali, 'Abd al-Majid and the artist Dust Muhammad, who should be identified with the dust-i Divanqan [see fig. 35], the three artists who with Mir Musavvar created the Mughal atelier, took great care to depict the material world.

Baha' al-Din's repentance of all forbidden acts in 939/1532–3; yet include a strict Muslim prohibition of human imagery, support for his artists and calligraphers remained strong throughout the 1550s. As a result, following the completion of the dust-i Divanqan in about 944/1537, the employees of the royal atelier on another lavish commission, an illustrated Khamsah of Hafez, produced between 946/1539 and 949/1543, the manuscript then returned to Tabriz by the scribe Shah Mahmoud of Nishapur. Illustrations from the sixteenth century and three from a seventeenth-century refurbishment remain in the manuscript, at least four were removed from it and are in museum collections of a large stable of painters, only a handful of the best artists, namely Sultan Muhammad, Aqa Mirak, Mirza
composition is, it incorporates numerous realistic details, such as the niches behind Khusrav which enclose a pencase, an hourglass, bottles and bowls. Mirza ‘Ali has adroitly interwoven elements of the narrative with details of Safavid court life that would have given the patron, Shah Tahmasp, pleasure on many levels.

In the 1530s and 1540s the Safavid court artists supplemented their manuscript illustrations with single-page paintings for inclusion in albums, called murqqa’as. Thus in the 1530s Mir Musavvir was engaged in painting portraits such as the one of ‘Sarkhan Beg the Table-steward’ [fig. 37]. Even if the paint on the figure’s face had not been removed, his identification on the basis of the portrait alone, without the inscription, would have been impossible for today’s viewers because of the level of idealization in Persian portrait in this period. Possibly the figure’s pose, girth and clothes would have been clues to his identity, but such figures were hardly rare and, like today’s fashion models, they conformed to certain stylish norms. Even the sitter’s belt with its jewel-studded medallions is of a type that was being made in the second decade of the sixteenth century, as an example taken from the Safavids at Chaldiran attests [see fig. 16]. Those appointed to the position of table-steward (sufrach) were young men, often of noble birth and chosen for their physical beauty. Serving the shah and his brothers as personal attendants, the table-stewards were reportedly present at a musical entertainment given by Shahram Mirza, the shah’s brother, in 1540 where they drank aquavit along with the prince and eventually, ‘drunk, [they] stretched out on the carpets on the ground’.

In 951/1544, the same year that Dust Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Haravi compiled a sumptuous album of paintings and calligraphies for Bahram Mirza, the deposed Mughal emperor, Humayun, took shelter at the Safavid court. In 952/1546 he requested Shah Tahmasp to release Mir Sayyid ‘Ali and ‘Abd al-Samad to his service. By Shavval 956 (November 1549) they, as well as Mir Musavvir and the painter Dust Muhammad, were in the Mughal court at Kabul. While Humayun must have admired the ability of all four of these artists to depict the material world faithfully, Shah Tahmasp would probably not have been inclined to release them if he himself were still actively patronizing them. Certain painters, such as Aqa Mirak, Mirza ‘Ali and Musaffar ‘Ali,
did remain in favour with the shah. Apparently a specialist in horse paintings, Muzaffar 'Ali continued to produce single-page works for albums, such as the ‘Hunter on Horseback’ [fig. 58], maintaining the elegant style of his illustrations to the Shahnameh and Khamsch. Qazi Ahmad noted of Muzaffar ‘Ali that ‘besides painting, he had a most wonderful hand in calligraphic copying (nastaliq), wrote nasta’iliq well, excelled in gold sprinkling and gilding, and was outstanding in his time in coloring and lacquer work (raughani-kari). Few have been so versatile as he.’

Aqa Mirak continued to work at the court where he was appointed garak-yarag for the shah, that is the person in charge of supplies for court offices. However, he and Mir Sayyid ‘Ali also were responsible for painting two vaults in the audience hall of Shah Tahmasp in Tabriz. From Dust Muhammad’s account, it is difficult to separate the description of the wall painting from that of the other furnishings: ‘It is a heaven adorned with stars, a place decorated with the likenesses of people. It is ... an Eden resplendent with serving-boys and hoursis. Its carpets would dazzle the eyes of the great ...’ This passage does reveal that in 951/1544 Shah Tahmasp had not yet turned entirely away from the visual arts. In fact, Aqa Mirak is thought to have played a leading role in the illustration of a very large Book of Divination (Fata nek) which was produced in the 1550s. Although Shah Tahmasp may have chosen to have a manuscript on the subject of divination because of his growing superstitions, the unusual size may be due to other factors. First, unlike a manuscript which he would have read to himself, the text of this book would have required consultation with others, for which a large format would have been more practical. Furthermore, assuming the manuscript was conceived around 962–3/1555, the shah may have been suffering from the onset of the long-sightedness that many people experience in middle age. Paintings on the scale of those in the Shahnameh and Khamsch would have been very difficult to see without eyeglasses, whereas the Fata nek pages pose no such problem.

Painters were by no means the only members of the royal kitabkhaneh. The scribes who copied the texts of the manuscripts...
had traditionally been the elite members of the library, a position emphasized in contemporary texts by discussing them as the most recent members of a chain that stretched back all the way to Imam ‘Ali. Shah Mahmud Nishapur, who copied the British Library Khamsah of 946–9/1539–43, spent his early career in the service of Shah Tahmasp, having come to Tabriz from Nishapur. When the shah tired of calligraphy and painting, Shah Mahmud moved to Mashhad, where he lived in a madrasa at the shrine of Imam Riza for twenty years until his death in 972/1564–5. After he left the court, where he had copied manuscripts and produced calligraphic samples ‘both in a large and a small hand’, he continued as an independent scribe, writing specimens of calligraphy for inclusion in albums as well as teaching and composing poetry. Although calligraphers were respected for their ability to write in various styles, the most prevalent script in the sixteenth century was nasta’liq. The elegant, elongated letters of this hand were equally well suited to writing on the horizontal, as in manuscripts, and on the diagonal, as in single-page qur’ān, or calligraphy specimens [fig. 59]. The nasta’liq script was devised by Mir ‘Ali Haravi, a fifteenth-century calligrapher at the Timurid court, and as a result Herat was the source and home of many of the pre-eminent scribes of the period of Shah Tahmasp. Although the scribes were employed by the shah, many of them remained in Herat and presumably sent their work to Tabriz. Of those who served at the court in Tabriz, some, such as Mir Sayyid Ahmad Mashhadi, worked as clerical scribes, writing letters to the Ottoman sultan and other official documents as well as calligraphic samples [fig. 40]. Others were called upon to provide inscriptions for buildings (see p. 46 above) or had specialties such as writing epitaphs on tombstones. The versatility of the master scribes served them well because, when Shah Tahmasp released them from royal service, significant numbers of them emigrated to India where they were welcomed at the Mughal and Deccani courts.

The art of illumination in the Safavid period represents a step in a long chain of developments stretching back ultimately to the earliest eighth- and ninth-century Qur’āns. By the sixteenth century the conventions regarding which pages or sections of books were appropriate for illuminating had been long established. Thus a luxury manuscript may have a khamsah, or sunburst design containing the name of the patron or other information, on th
41 Double-page illuminated frontispiece, from a Khamsah of Amir Khosru Dihlavi, made for Abu’l Fath Bayram Mirza, Tabriz, c. 1550–60, opaque watercolour, gold and ink on paper, 50.2 x 18.3 cm, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, S86.0067-68. The gold cartouches above and below the text include the title and author’s name and the mention of the library of Bayram Mirza, the brother of Shah Tahmasp.

Art of illumination in the Safavid period represents a step forward in design, style, and technique. The Safavids preferred illuminated texts for their manuscripts, which were produced in large numbers for the court and for the royal family. The style of illumination during the period of Shah Tahmasp owes much to Timurid antecedents from Herat. Illuminated headings from late fifteenth-century Herat manuscripts feature rectangles with a blue ground covered with an arabesque of thin gold tendrils joining red, pink, and white flowers, all bordered by a predominantly gold band of interlace. Chapter headings appear in a central cartouche that overlaps irregular lobed quatrefoils. The comparison with Safavid royal illumination points up many similarities and a few differences [fig. 41]. First, the cartouches in the heading panels do not always overlap but connect by their interlaced outlines to lobed triangles. While the components of Safavid illumination do not differ greatly from those of the Herat school, subtle changes in the palette and in the preference for certain motifs are noted. Thus, in a frontispiece to Bayram Mirza’s Khamsah bright red flowers and compartments signal a shift away from the cooler palette of Herat. In addition, the ubiquitous split-palmette here forms a lively scroll on the black ground of the band surrounding the text and headings. At Tabriz illuminators favoured squared edges and straight lines around their illuminations, while at sixteenth-century Shiraz illuminators preferred illuminations that extended into the margins in a series of gold and blue-lobed triangular projections.

In addition to the various forms of illumination that set off headings and text passages, the borders of many fine Safavid manuscripts were decorated with gold sparkling, floral or geometric...
patterns, or scenes of fantastic and wild animals in landscape [fig. 42]. These real and imaginary animals belonged to an accepted repertoire which the late sixteenth-century artist Sadiqi Beg described in his *Canons of Painting*. He differentiated between ‘decoral art’ (*naqqashi*), figural painting (*suratkari*) and animal design (*janvar-sazi*). Decoral art consisted of seven basic patterns: *islimi* (ivy and spiral pattern), *khatai* (Chinese floral pattern), *abv* (cloud-like foliage), *vaq* (human-headed scroll), *nusfar* (lotus), *farangi* (Frankish pattern) and *band-i rumi* (Anatolian knot pattern). While cautioning artists to avoid parodying the works of past masters when portraying humans and animals, Sadiqi Beg noted that the aim of animal design was ‘artful imitation’. He defined the types of forms in this genre as follows: ‘the simurgh—bird, the *azhdar*—dragon, the *hizab*—lion, and the *gan-i ganj* or “guardian bovine”. He then described ‘the motif called *girif-gir*, which is to say, the “give and take” of animals locked in battle’. He advised the artists to avoid slackness in drawing the animals, to show them entirely engaged in combat with one another, and not to repeat identical patterns in order to avoid monotony.”

The use of these animal forms in manuscripts was an important innovation in the early Safavid period and may have led to the incorporation of these motifs in other media. In some instances artists relied on stencils to reproduce the border designs from one page to another. However, even repeating floral borders were more often painted freehand. The most spectacular examples were the work of the leading court painters such as Sultan Muhammad, whose combing animals are as full of life as any in his manuscript illustration.

The first half of the sixteenth century was a time of innovation in another art of the book, that of bookbinding. By the end of the fifteenth century book covers fell into several categories: leather covers with stamped and tooled decoration on the exterior; and added colour; stamped and tooled leather covers with gilding; and...
of Sa'di with sultan d and ink on z. The borders of coloured mentioned by imed and

of Mir 'Ali 'Ali, Tabriz, 6.1 x 15.2 cm, ning the trees, black sky, uttering effect illows the

l the artists to avoid slackness in drawing the animals, to him entirely engaged in combat with another, and not at identical patterns in order to avoid monotony. The use of animal forms in manuscripts was an important innovation in 10 Safavid period and may have led to the incorporation of motifs in other media. In some instances artists relied on stencils and the border designs from one page to another, even repeating floral borders were more often painted d. The most spectacular examples were the work of the court painters such as Sultan Muhammad, whose combatants are as full of life as any in his manuscript illustrations. First half of the sixteenth century was a time of innovation her art of the book, that of bookbinding. By the end of the h century book covers fell into several categories: leather with stamped and tooled decoration on the exterior but no clav, stamped and tooled leather covers with gilding; and

the rare lacquered example, painted in polychrome on leather and covered with a transparent shellac (rima). The inside surfaces of the covers often have filigreed areas under which coloured paper has been laid. These techniques were continued into the Safavid period, but lacquer covers became increasingly popular. Not only was Muzaffar 'Ali mentioned as an excellent lacquer-worker, but also Mir Sayyid 'Ali tried his hand at painting lacquer book covers [fig. 45], treating the book cover as if it were a manuscript illustration of a courtly picnic. Tooled and stamped leather bindings with gilding were also produced with figures and animals in landscapes as if they were the frontispieces of illustrated manuscripts [fig. 44].

The more typical composition of early Safavid book covers consisted of a tooled and stamped central medallion, usually ogival but sometimes round, on a plain ground with tooled and stamped corner pieces. Even when the ground was also decorated, the medallion and corner pieces were usually retained as a design element. The decorative vocabulary of this type of bookbinding ranges from cloud scrolls and split-palmette leaf arabesques to mythical beasts and actual wild animals and birds and angels. Non-

figurative motifs were favoured for religious books such as the Qur'an. In the use of the central medallion and corner pieces as well as the choice of decorative elements, this group of bookbindings relates closely to Safavid carpet design and suggests that members of the ateliers that produced books may have provided designs for the carpet makers.

Although the illustrated manuscripts and albums commissioned by Shah Tahmasp and his brothers were essentially private works that would not have been viewed outside court circles, some compositions were copied or traced and adaptations of them have come down to us. The original paintings provide a more or less accurate record of the style of buildings, objects and fashions that was prevalent in Tahmasp's reign. Paintings such as 'Khurram Listening to Barbad Playing the Lute' [see fig. 36] or 'Sarkhan Beg the Sta__ steward' [see fig. 37] provide information about metalwork, ceramics, textiles and carpets that is not readily available through extant objects. Thus the gold dishes and wine cups in figure 36 are mentioned in texts but have not survived, whereas partial and complete pencases and inkwells are known from this period or

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slightly earlier [see fig. 25]. The type of metal bowls that remain from this period are made of cast brass and have either slightly bulbous or straight sides and a narrow everted rim [fig. 45]. Scenes from the 946-9/1539-43 Khamsah that portray tradesmen and other non-royal figures include bowls of this type and suggest, not surprisingly, that the hierarchy of metals from base to precious was paralleled by their use by the different levels of Safavid society. The decoration of this group of brass bowls consists of inscription bands on the exterior beneath the rim and above bands or pendants of arabesque ornament. In some cases the name of the owner is incorporated in the inscription and often verses of poetry will refer to the use of the bowl, for example, ‘May every fruit that is sweet in heaven’s orchard/Be the fruits in thy bowl at thy gathering.’

Dated candlesticks are almost entirely absent from the corpus of metalwork of the first half of the sixteenth century. In the illustrations of Shah Tahmasp’s Shahnameh and Khamsah the standard type of candlestick, called a shariʿdan, has a wide truncated conical base and cylindrical shaft, either plain or punctuated by knobs and a cylindrical socket to hold the candle. With stylistic variations this shape of candlestick had been used in Iran and the Arab world at least since the thirteenth century. Why no examples can be assigned to the first half of the sixteenth century is unclear unless scholars have dated candlesticks to the fifteenth century that belong in the sixteenth century. Their ubiquity both in court paintings of Tabriz and in commercial illustrations from Shiraz has been ascribed to artistic anachronism, or may suggest long-term usage of traditional candlesticks; this is an area ripe for further research. By 946/1539 a new type of pillar candlestick, the chiragh, had begun to be produced. A very tall example in the Asian-e Quds Museum in Mashhad bears the date 1 Jumada I 946/14 October 1559 and signature of ‘Master Daʿud, the founder. Made in Lahore’ as well as that of the designer Iskandar ibn Shukrullah.’ Despite its Indian provenance the decoration of lobed ovals containing arabesques and horizontal bands of arabesque is purely Persian, and it must have been made expressly to be donated to the shrine of Imam Riza at Mashhad. In the second half of the sixteenth century this type of candlestick superseded the shariʿdan.

Chinese blue and white porcelains were used at the Safavid court, just as they were under Shah Ismaʿil, while Persian stonepaste and earthenware ceramics were produced for more general use. Until more petrographic studies are completed, the only way to establish a ceramic chronology from the mid-1520s to the mid-1550s is to chart the stylistic development of the numerous blue and white wares and less common black and green wares, black and
have dated candlesticks to the fifteenth century that belong to the sixteenth century. Their ubiquity both in court paintings and in commercial illustrations from Shiraz has been to artistic anachronism, or may suggest long-term usage of candlesticks; this is an area ripe for further research. By the 16th century pillar candlesticks, the chipan, had begun to be used. A very tall example in the Astan-e Quds Museum in Tehran is dated 1 Jamad II 946/14 October 1559 and is inscribed ‘Master Da’ud, the founder. Made in Lahore’ as well as the name of the potter, Iskandar ibn Shukrullah.’ Despite its Indian origin, the decoration of lobed ovals containing arabesques and floral bands of arabesque is purely Persian, and it must have been expressly to be donated to the shrine of Imam Riza at Mashhad.

In the second half of the sixteenth century this type of candlestick superceded the chipan.

Blue and white porcelains were used at the Safavid court as well as under Shah Isma’il, while Persian stone-ware earthenware ceramics were produced for more general usage. More pictorial and more decorative pieces were made, the only way to a ceramic chronology from the mid-1520s to the mid-16th century. The stylistic development of the numerous blue-and-white wares and less common black and green wares, black and turquoise wares and polychrome wares.

Although ceramic production continued at Nishapur in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, it also prospered at Tabriz, where it is assumed that the so-called Kubachi wares were made. Dishes decorated in underglaze blue and black include those that combine geometric and vegetal designs. Bands of hexagons enclosing one or more dots remained popular, as did the stylized wave and crest motif on the border [fig. 48]. Some dishes feature central motifs, such as the duck and vine scroll with blossoms, which rely more closely on Chinese prototypes, but the rim design connects them to other wares from sixteenth-century Tabriz [fig. 46]. Few sixteenth-century potters with human or animal decoration derive from the vocabulary of Safavid art. However, one mid-sixteenth-century polychrome bowl contains a figure of a kneeling man with a Safavid turban playing a rubab while a woman dances and plays her castanets [fig. 47]. The use of blue, turquoise, purple and ochre underglaze anticipates the far more numerous polychrome vessels and tiles of the Kubachi type from the seventeenth century, but the band of hexagons in the cavetto relates to the blue and white bowl also made in Tabriz [see fig. 48]. While such a piece is clearly influenced by miniature painting, the actual drawing must have been the work of the potter. Unlike Turkish ceramics of the same period, Persian wares rarely give the impression of slow and careful painting. Rather, the pigments appear to have been quickly applied, as if the potter were either concerned only with approximating certain designs or in a hurry to mass-produce their wares.

As with certain groups of metalwork, the existing evidence for early Safavid textiles does not match those depicted in manuscript illustrations and single-page paintings. ‘Sarhkan Beg the Steward’ [see fig. 57] wears a long blue short-sleeved robe over a long-sleeved green shirt. The robe has a repeating pattern of gold roundels which one might assume are a brocaded pattern on a silk ground. Such textiles, as well as those with all-over arabesque designs on a black ground, plain cloth with gold cloud collars and less frequent decoration of birds or animals in gold on a plain ground.