als many points of practice that may have been at variance with the manuscripts made for Shah Tahmasp. First, the directorship of the calligrapher, Muḥibb al-Šaykh, head of the court’s khitābkhāneh, five leading Safavid scribes copied the masnavi poems of the manuscript. Working in three cities — Mashhad, Qazvin and Herat — the scribes were with individual text sheets on which they could write at pace. When a scribe completed transcribing one of the, he passed it on to the member of the library ‘team’ who was sheet in its borders. At this point the illuminators would the text pages. Simpson believes that the painters would view their folio-sized pages after the completion of the text. The pages were placed in order and sewn into quires the work was completed.

use of this system it was possible, when the final compilation took place, for the masnavi to be bound in an it did not reflect the chronology of the work on the manuscript, in other words, the three draftors or sections of the ‘Chain of states 965/1556, 964/1557 and 966/1559, precede ‘Yusuf and ‘Ali’, dated 964/1557. Possibly because the scribes were busy other work in this period, the book took nine years to. In addition to the calligraphers — Shah Mahmud al-Šaykh, Rustam al-Šaykh, Muḥibb al-Šaykh, Malik al-Šuylama, ‘Aṣṣī ibn ‘Umar al-Shaykh — the illuminator ‘Abdu al-Birānī signed one illuminated title page and the painter Muhammad signed a painting. Stylistic evidence of ‘Ali al-Ma‘ṣūm found in some illustrations from the manuscript could corroborate his mention by Iskandar Beg Murshid as worked in the prince’s atelier. S. Richardson has attributed intangibility in the manuscript to Muḥammad ‘Ali, Aṣṣī bint, Aziz, Qādī and Mirzā ‘Ali al-. If these artists contributed to the manuscript, they may have followed the patterns of graphers, working from Qazvin rather than relocating to. The result is an opulent manuscript with paintings that style from the classical mode of the 946–9/1539–45 Kashmiri to a more mannered idiom in which pictorial and ambiguity abound. Such paintings are full of jarring patterns of pattern and colour, carpets with figural designs so as alive as the human and animal figures in the scene.
and vertiginous compositions. While the style and decorative programme of the manuscript would have been tailored to Sultan Ibrahim Mirza’s personal taste, they do not herald a shift in the vocabulary of ornament in other media, as Shah Tahmasp’s manuscripts had done. Rather, the *Haft Avarang* established the younger artists who participated in the project, such as Shaykh Muhammad and 'Ali Asghar, and influenced others who were active in Qazvin, Shiraz and Khurasan.

One of the results of Shah Tahmasp’s disbanding of his artists’ atelier was the need for court artists to find alternative sources of employment. Thanks to Sultan Ibrahim Mirza and certain regional patrons, the court artists continued to be employed and commercially produced illustrated manuscripts still found a market. Book illustrations attributed to commercial artists working in Qazvin, such as ‘The Discovery of a Dying Man’ from a *Matla’ al-Ansar* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi (fig. 59), rely on pictorial devices found in
of the results of Shah Tahmasp's disparaging of his artists' as the need for court artists to find alternative sources of bent. Thanks to Sultan Ibrahim Mirza and certain regional the court artists continued to be employed and commer-

shaded illustrated manuscripts still found a market. Book ons attributed to commercial artists working in Qazvin, The Discovery of a Dying Man' from a *Matba' al-Anwar* of usrur Dihlavi [fig. 59], rely on pictorial devices found in

60 (far left) 'Pensive in the Mountains', school of Muhammad, Khurasan, 1560s, opaque watercolour and ink on paper, 22.5 × 14.4 cm, British Museum, 03.1920.9. 170502. As a notably with a moustache receives a cup of wine from a smiling boy, other youths play music, serve fruit, read poetry or catch the fruits that their friend in the palm tree has tossed in their direction.

61 (left) Double cloth, 16th century, silk, 30.5 × 15.6 cm, Textile Museum, Washington, DC, 3.280, acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1947. The poetic verses placed in vertical and horizontal cartouches praise the beauty of the cloth and compare it to Shirin, the Armenian princess in Nizami’s story of *Khosrow and Shirin*.

62 (right) Silk carpet, Kashan?, second half of the 16th century, 2.30 × 1.80 m, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, T. 100. The relatively small size of the silk carpets thought to have been made in Kashan in the 16th century suggests that they were laid on top of other larger carpets and used for sitting.
the work of the *Haft Aurang* artists, such as the flattened profile of the figure in a striped shirt, borrowed from ‘Ali Asghar, the long necks and puffy cheeks of the youths, and the almond-shaped eyes with cornices formed by a vertical line, similar to those of some figures by Shaykh Muhammad. Yet the sketchy treatment of rocks, trees and clouds, the smaller size of the book, and the thinness of paint indicate that the manuscript containing this illustration did not meet the standards of the royal atelier, even though its artist relied on royal prototypes.

While Qazvin and Shiraz artists continued to produce illustrated manuscripts until the end of Shah Tahmasp’s reign, a new type of single-page work was gaining currency in Khurasan. The leading exemplar of this form of painting was Muhammadi of Herat. By about 967/1559 he was producing very fine drawings of princely subjects, such as hunts and picnics, genre scenes including encampments and Sufis dancing, and portraits of youths, dervishes and girls. His drawings, executed in pen and ink on plain paper, often include details in polychrome. This technique was adopted by his followers working in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century [fig. 69]. Equally influential were Muhammadi’s portraits, both for their characteristic swaying pose, tipped-up feet and round smiling faces and for the simplicity of their setting.23 Whereas Qazvin manuscript illustrations are characterized by large numbers of figures and a quantity of ornamental detail, the illustrated manuscripts produced in Khurasan during the last third of the sixteenth century contain few figures and blocks of contrasting colour arranged in almost abstract patterns. While the schools of Qazvin and Khurasan painting are related to one another, their differences are more a question of degree and emphasis than of ideology.

As in paintings of the first half of the century, the textiles found in works datable to 962-84/1555-76 are at variance with actual pieces thought to be of this period. In paintings of this period most robes either have repeating floral patterns in gold or are of solid-coloured cloth. Among the few textiles assigned to this period, a red and white silk double cloth derives its imagery from manuscript illustration [fig. 61]. Divided into a series of rectangles, the textile contains a vertical row of vignettes showing Shirin on her horse, a line of poetry, Farhad at Mount Bisutun, another line of poetry.24 This row is divided from the next by a narrower band in which
of the *Haft Awrang* artists, such as the flattened profile of the Haft Awrang artists, such as the flattened profile of the
bowl in a striped shirt, borrowed from 'Ali Asghar, the long and pouched cheeks of the youths, and the almond-shaped thorneces formed by a vertical line, similar to those of some the smaller size of the book, and the thickness of this illustration did not meet the standards of the royal atelier, even though its artist was a royal prototype.

ile-Qazvin and Shiraz artists continued to produce illustrated ripts until the end of Shah Tahmasp's reign, a new type of age work was gaining currency in Khurasan. The leading painter was Muhammad of Herat. By 67/1569 he was producing very fine drawings of princely scenes, such as hunts and picnics, genre scenes including encamped, Sufis dancing, and portraits of youths, devishes, and animals, executed in pen and ink on plain paper, often in polychrome. This technique was adopted by his students working in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Equally influential were Muhammad's portraits, their characteristic swaying pose, tipped-up feet and round faces, and for the simplicity of their setting. Whereas manuscript illustrations are characterized by large numbers and a quantity of ornamental detail, the illustrated manuals in Khurasan during the last third of the sixteenth century contain few figures and blocks of contrasting colour in almost abstract patterns. While the schools of Qazvin manuscript painting are related to one another, their differences are a question of degree and emphasis than of ideology. Paintings of the early half of the century, the textiles found datable to 962-84/1555-76 are at variance with actual usage of textiles. In paintings of this period most have repeating floral patterns in gold or are of solid cloth. Among the few textiles assigned to this period, a red silk double cloth derives its imagery from manuscript on *[fig. 61]*. Divided into a series of rectangles, the textile a vertical row of vignettes showing Shirin on her horse, a poet, Farhad at Mount Bisutun, another line of poetry. This is divided from the next by a narrower band in which lobed cartouches containing a hemistich of poetry alternate with cartouches containing a spotted deer, both at right angles to wider bands. The other wide band contains a vignette of two young men flanking a cypress tree, a cartouche containing a pair of ducks, and a domed pavilion. Such pieces are sturdy and lightweight, more suitable for garments than furnishings. Yet their absence from manuscript illustrations and portraits emphasizes the uncertainty about their use. The technique and colour scheme, however, must have met with favour because they continued to be employed well into the seventeenth century, as later examples attest. Presumably this type of fabric was produced in one workshop which adhered to the weaving and compositional formula established in the third quarter of the sixteenth century while adapting the imagery to the style of the day.

Although the decorative arts lacked a central, guiding force in the period 962-84/1555-76, the strength of the system established in the first half of the century sustained a high level of quality in carpet and textile production. Carpets continued to be a staple of royal gift-giving. In 961/1552–3 Sultan Bayazid, the rebellious son of the Ottoman sultan Suleyman, came to the Safavid court and was given carpets from Kerman and Jowshaan woven with gold thread, pieces of felt in various colours, precious stuffs from many regions. While connecting written reports with existing carpets is difficult, one can note the correlation between some carpet designs and bookbindings and manuscript illuminations. A silk carpet in Lisbon, one of a group thought to have been made in Kashan, consists of pairs of fabulous animals in combat on a red ground, a quatrefoil central medallion containing two pairs of *simurghs* and two pairs of dragons, corner pieces with flowers and birds and a main border of S-shaped pheasants alternating with lotuses [fig. 62]. The pheasants and flowers also appear on the inside of a lacquer bookbinding in the field surrounding a central medallion with Majmun and the animals in the wilderness painted in gold on a black ground [fig. 63]. The combination of the pheasants, found on the Lisbon carpet, and Majmun in the wilderness, found in manuscripts and textiles, suggests that the arts of the book continued to be the source of decorative motifs for carpet and textile makers in the third quarter of the sixteenth century. Royal commissions of carpets would have continued for gifts both to individuals and to institutions, and to replace worn ones. In fact, it was the Shah's custom to present every royal baby with a carpet and all the trappings of a cradle. Shah Tahmasp sent for the infant 'Abbas [the future shah, born in 978/1571] the carpet which was spread beneath his own royal throne in the Chehel Sultan hall of the palace at Qazvin, together with all the necessary appurtenances for his cradle.

Given the shah's reputation for miserliness in later life, this gift would have been an economical way to honour the newborn prince while allowing the shah to benefit from a new carpet.

The study of metalwork from the last two decades of Shah Tahmasp's reign is hampered by a dearth of dated pieces. Melikian-Chirvani has signalled a brass bowl with rounded sides, a low straight neck and slanting ring foot as a probable product of the mid-sixteenth century [fig. 64]. He cites this piece as the first appearance of overlapping compositions of large and small lobed ovals which become standard in Safavid metalwork. He also notes
ample in the Victoria and Albert Museum is decorated with bands of interlaced vines alternating with undecorated ribs on its top and neck, and engraved roundels, cartouches and arches filled with flowers and vines adjacent to plain metal areas on its belly. Not only the shape but also the alternation of plain and decorated areas remained fashionable into the seventeenth century.

As with metalwork, the study of Persian ceramics from the third quarter of the sixteenth century must rely on a single dated piece, a fragmentary blue and white plate with the twelve signs of the zodiac in the cavetto, and in the centre of the base the signature of 'Abd al-Vahid in 971/1563-4, surrounded by an interlocking vine scroll [fig. 66]. Although the cloud scrolls found so often in early Safavid tiles, carpets and illuminations are still present here in some of the zodiacal roundels, the scales between the roundels may indicate an awareness of Iznik pottery of c. 957/1550 in which scales had begun to appear. The strong central arabesque motif and its use in a roundel in the base of a plate is more closely connected to designs on metal objects of the second half of the sixteenth century and perhaps by extension to illuminated shamsas or sunburst decoration in manuscripts than to decoration on other ceramic objects. Also its stylistic distance from Chinese prototypes relates it to the figural group of so-called ‘Kubacli’ wares that are assumed to have been produced in Tabriz or another north-west Iranian centre. Even a group of blue and white bulbous jars ornamented with large flower blossoms, serrated leaves and broken stems which Arthur Lane dated to the third quarter of the sixteenth century owe more to the Safavid decorative vocabulary than to Chinese models.

One group of ceramic tiles bears mention, namely a set of hexagonal tiles said to have come from the Safavid palace in Qazvin [fig. 67]. While their runny glazes and craquelure may suggest that they were not made for the royal establishment, the choice of angels, birds, animals and flowers as the individual motifs on each tile connect them with the types of ‘filler’ decoration found on carpets and even the wall paintings of Na’in. Moreover, the borders of each tile consist of scrolls incised through the glaze, in precisely the same technique as the black and turquoise North Persian wares of the late fifteenth century. Like the roundels of the zodiac plate, each tile contains only one motif and a minimum

the close connection between the decoration of this bowl and manuscript illumination of the type found in illuminated books of the Tabriz school, where the influence of Herat was fully synthesized by the mid-sixteenth century. New shapes of metal objects evolved in this period, in particular the mash'at or pillar candlestick. By 969/1561-2, the date of a pillar candlestick in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad, the form had developed from a very tall, tapering cylinder to a somewhat shorter, faceted cylinder made by a western Iranian metalworker. Elegant ewers with long necks and curving spouts and handles are attested and appear regularly in paintings from the third quarter of the century [fig. 65]. An ex-
in the Victoria and Albert Museum is decorated with bands of fluted vines alternating with undecorated ribs on its top and undecorated roundels, cartouches and arches filled with vine designs and vines adjacent to plain metal areas on its belly. Not all shapes but also the alternation of plain and decorated areas are fashionable in the seventeenth century.

With metalwork, the study of Persian ceramics from the quarter of the sixteenth century must rely on a single dated fragmentary blue and white plate with the twelve signs of the zodiac in the cavetto, and in the centre of the base the signature of Luqai al-Valid in 971/1565-7, surrounded by an interlocking vine [fig. 66]. Although the cloud scrolls found so often in early tiles, carpets and illuminations are still present here in the zodiacal roundels, the scales between the roundels may indicate an awareness of Iznik pottery of c. 957/1550 in which had begun to appear. The strong central arabesque motif used in a roundel in the base of a plate is more closely related to designs on metal objects of the second half of the century and perhaps by extension to illuminated manuscripts than to decoration on other objects. Also its stylistic distance from Chinese prototypes is to the figurative group of so-called ‘Kubachi’ wares that are likely to have been produced in Tabriz or another north-west centre. Even a group of blue and white bulbous jars ornament with large flower blossoms, serrated leaves and broken which Arthur Lane dated to the third quarter of the century owe more to the Safavid decorative vocabulary of Chinese models.

Group of ceramic tiles bears mention, namely a set of six tiles said to have come from the Safavid palace in [fig. 67]. While their runny glazes and craquelure might that they were not made for the royal establishment, the angels, birds, animals and flowers as the individual motifs tile connect them with the types of ‘filler’ decoration found in the Safavid and earlier times belief in astrology was not viewed as incompatible with Islam.

66 Fragmentary dish with signs of the zodiac, north-west Iran, dated 971/1565-7, signed by Abd al-Valid, stonepaste ware with underglaze blue decoration, diam. 41 cm, Saeid Motee Museum, I.1292. In Safavid and earlier times belief in astrology was not viewed as incompatible with Islam.

67 Group of tiles, Qazvin, c. 1555-65, stonepaste with polychrome glazes, Victoria and Albert Museum. These tiles are said to have come from Shah Tahmasp’s palace complex at Qazvin, though their runny glazes suggest that they decorated a ‘back of house’ area, not the rooms of the king or his family.

from all walks of life emigrated to India, stimulating the eastward trade of Persian goods. Fortunately, Shah Tahmasp did not systematically renounce the material world when he released his artists and musicians. He still acquired ‘Boscassinian cloth’ from the east, ‘close velvets and other silken fabrics’ from Khorasan, woollen cloths from Aleppo to give in payment to soldiers, and jewels and silks for his harem. While the reasons for scaling down the royal kitabkhaneh are rooted in his increasingly strict religiosity, it is none the less odd that he did not imagine that his actions might have a negative effect on the production of other luxury items. Presumably the benefits of peace and the ability of artisans to find markets for their wares counteracted the dampening effect of the shah’s actions and contributed to the survival and development of the ‘Qazvin style’ in painting and its analogues in other media.
The Lowest Ebb

Shahs Isma‘il II and Muhammad Khudabandeh

1576–1587

The city is full of sorrow and woe; O where is our king? 

In Rabi‘II–Jumada I/October 1575 Shah Tahmasp, aged sixty-one, fell seriously ill. During the two months of his affliction the rivalries between different Qizilbash tribes that had lain dormant for over forty years resurfaced as amirs from different factions attempted to influence the choice of Tahmasp’s successor. Although he had been imprisoned for eighteen years, Tahmasp’s second son, Isma‘il, was strongly supported by amirs of the Bamba, Afshar and Turkman tribes as well as by his sister Pari Khan Khanum. Muhammad Khudabandeh, Isma‘il’s elder brother, was universally discounted as a potential heir to the throne because of his near-blindness. Isma‘il’s main rival was his younger half-brother, Haydar, whom Shah Tahmasp had kept at court and involved in running the affairs of state. The Ustajju amirs and cousins of his Georgian mother, who herself was a rival of Pari Khan Khanum, formed the pro-Haydar faction. While the two factions did not come to blows during the period of Tahmasp’s illness, they waged a mighty war of words, slandering whichever prince their enemies supported and trying to convince the shah of the treachery of one and the loyalty of the other. The shah reacted by sending some Ustajju amirs to distant posts and by hiring a bodyguard for Isma‘il, but neither son’s situation changed nor was either of them knowingly designated heir to the throne. In the end, when Shah Tahmasp died on 14 Safar 984/14 May 1576, he still had not made his preference known. After a lifetime of deliberation before he acted, the shah failed to time his final decision right, or perhaps after one of the longest reigns in Iranian history he chose to leave his succession in the hands of fate. While the pro-Haydar faction announced that their candidate was named heir-apparent in Shah Tahmasp’s will, their enemies claimed the document was a forgery. Although the people of Iran may have been ready for a change, they certainly could not have asked for a worse decade than the one that followed the death of Shah Tahmasp.

Writing of the Safavid court in 1575, the Italian Vincentio D'Alessandri had made remarks about the two princes that in retrospect seem remarkably prescient. Of Isma‘il he noted that he:

is particularly beloved by his father, but his fear of him is great, seeing how ardently he is desired as ruler by all the

68 ‘Picnic Party with Youths Wading in a Stream’, from a Khamsah of Nizami with a Khamsah of Amir Khusraw in the margin, Mashhad, dated Dhul q‘da 984/February 1577 and Rabi‘I 985/July 1577, opaque watercolour, gold and ink on paper, each folio 28.5 × 17.5 cm, Keir Collection.
esigned heir to the throne. In the end, when Shah
am died on 14 Safar 984/14 May 1576, he still had not
ted his preference known. After a lifetime of deliberation
before he acted, the shah failed to time his final decision
right, or perhaps after one of the longest reigns in Iranian
history he chose to leave his succession in the hands of
fate. While the pro-Haydar faction announced that their
candidate was named heir-apparent in Shah Tahmasp's
, their enemies claimed the document was a forgery.
the people of Iran may have been ready for a change,
ainly could not have asked for a worse decade than the one
owed the death of Shah Tahmasp.
ing of the Safavid court in 1575, the Italian Vincenzo
ndri had made remarks about the two princes that in retro-
remarkably prescient. Of Isma'il he noted that he
icularly beloved by his father, but his fear of him is
; seeing how ardently he is desired as ruler by all the

Party with Youths Wading in a Stream', from a Khamsah of Nizami
nsh of Amir Khusrau in the margins, Mashhad, dated Dhu'l q'ad
ay 1577 and Rab' 1 985/July 1577, opaque watercolour, gold and
ver, each folio 29.5 x 17.5 cm, Keir Collection.
people; and the Sultans are especially afraid of him from his too proud disposition; so that if he ever comes to succeed to the throne he may have to replace a great number of the chiefs of the soldiery, and to oppose all his brothers, who have taken possession of many portions of the kingdom. Sultan Haydar was described as:

small in stature, most fascinating and handsome in appearance, and excelling in oratory, elegance and horsemanship, and most beloved by his father; he is very fond of hearing people discourse about war, although he does not show himself much fitted for that exercise, from his too delicate and almost feminine nature. Given the bellicose nature of the resurgent Qizilbash tribes in this period, it is not surprising that they should have preferred Isma'il who had defeated the Ottomans in battle at an early age.

Shah Tahmasp was buried within the Qazvin palace precinct at Yurt Sh.irvani 'between the harem garden and the palace.' This either indicates that his grave was covered by a yurt, a round domed tent, or by a brick or stone tomb tower in the shape of a yurt, or simply in a building named 'yurt' which was actually 'the gabled building in the palace'. Here Shah Tahmasp's coffin was placed until Shah Isma'il decided where it should go. In any event, his body was moved within a few months to the grounds of the shrine of the Imam Riza at Mashhad. Before Tahmasp's initial burial could be achieved, Prince Haydar had crowned himself shah and then had realized that his enemies had locked him in the palace. When his supporters stormed the palace to free him, the pro-Isma'il camp entered as well and proceeded to the harem where Haydar was hiding. As he tried to escape in women's clothing, they spotted him and slew him. His supporters, including his brother Mustafa, dispersed as some of the supporters of Isma'il occupied the palace and others rode to Qahqa to pledge their fealty to the prince. While Isma'il's supporters waited for him to arrive in Qazvin, his sister Pari Khan Khanum attempted to govern, but during the ten days between the death of Shah Tahmasp and the arrival of Isma'il Qazvin slid into chaos with rioting, looting and violence fomented by the Isma'il faction against the supporters of Haydar.

By the time Sultan Ibrahim Mirza, who had originally sided with Haydar, and the keeper of the royal regalia, Mirza Salman, rode to meet Isma'il on the plain of Zanjan, his name had been read in the khutba in the Friday mosque of Qazvin and he was shah de facto if not yet de jure. By mid-Rabi' I 984/mid-June 1576 Shah Isma'il had reached Qazvin. 'He did not enter the city at once, but camped on the northern side of it, since he was awaiting a propitious hour for his entry.' Eventually the shah entered the royal palace, but before his official coronation he ordered changes to be made in the buildings of the palace complex and some new buildings to be constructed. All the while Qizilbash tribes were converging on Qazvin in anticipation of Isma'il's coronation, and the shah's allies were busy assassinating anyone whom they thought had been in the pro-Haydar faction. Finally, on 27 Jamada I 984/22 August 1576 all the grandees of Iran – princes, amirs and government ministers – gathered in the Chihil Sultans hall. Then Shah Isma'il II entered and took his place on Shah Tahmasp's throne where the assembled dignitaries each kissed his feet.

From May until August Shah Isma'il had not attended to any of the normal business of government. He vested in his cousin Sultan Ibrahim Mirza and several high government officials the power to deliver certain judgements in court, but all major decisions were held in abeyance. After a few months during which the shah had failed to make the necessary government appointments and had complained about the people he had installed, he openly turned against Sultan Ibrahim Mirza. Apparently Isma'il had feared that unless he treated Ibrahim Mirza with respect, the prince would convince his brother, who was governor of Qandahar, to start a rebellion in Khurasan. When that prince died of natural causes, Isma'il had no further reason to show favour to Sultan Ibrahim.

The fate of Sultan Ibrahim Mirza's brother was the exception to the rule during the reign of Shah Isma'il II. Upon the shah's orders six Safavid princes were murdered in one day. These included Sultan Ibrahim Mirza himself, universally recognized as a highly cultivated man whose influence on Shah Isma'il II's artistic patronage will be assessed below, Shah Isma'il's brothers Sultan Mahmud Mirza, Ismaquli Mirza and Sultan Ahmad Mirza, the infant son of Sultan Mahmud Mirza and one of the sons of Shah Tahmasp's deceased brother Bahram Mirza. The shah also ordered the killing...