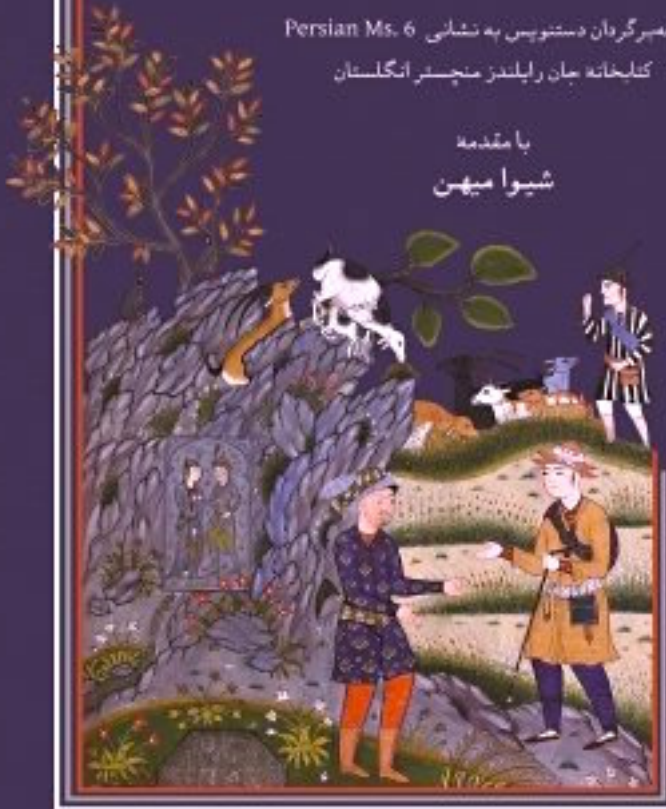


خمر و شیرین طمان

نسخه هنری مصور
به خط اظهر تبریزی (سده نهم هجری)

نسخه گردان دستنویس به نشانی Persian Ms. 6
کتبخانه جان ریلندز منچستر انگلستان

با مقدمه
شیوا میهن



Introduction

The Timurid dynasty, founded by Timur or Tamerlane (1336–1405), ruled in Iran from 1370 to 1507. Under his successor Shāhrukh (r. 1405–1447), the capital moved from Samarqand to his own centre in Herat, which became a cradle of cultural activity for the remainder of the century.

Art and architecture flourished to the point that this period is generally regarded as one of the pinnacles of cultural production in Persia across ages. Shāhrukh's sons received a highly advanced education and among them were noted bibliophiles and great patrons of art, literature and science.

Shāhrukh's son and heir apparent, Prince Bāysunghur (1397–1433), established his celebrated library and atelier in his residence at *Bāgh-i Safīd* (White Garden) in Herat, where the elegant style of Herat School in manuscript production was formed and evolved.¹ The output of his royal atelier

has been studied by a good number of art historians, cataloguers and codicologists for over a century. The spark to the rise of interest in the prince's corpus was probably ignited by the major 1910 exhibition of Islamic art in Munich, "Meisterwerke Muhammedanischer Kunst". Two years later, the art collector and dealer Fredrik Robert Martin (1868–1933) published his book, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey from the 8th to the 18th Century*.

Of the royal patron, Prince Bāysunghur, Martin announced: "He was the founder of the most elegant style of book production in Persia, and well deserves to be remembered as one of the greatest bibliophiles of the world". Martin further described the atelier and the prince's patronage as follows: "Under his auspices forty artists were employed in copying manuscripts under the guidance of Maulana Ja'far of Tabriz, himself a pupil of 'Abdallah, son of Mir 'Ali. By paying large salaries and making princely presents he retained in his service the

1. Khwāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-sīyar*, ed. M. Dabīr Sīyāqī (Tehran, 1353/1974): 3:623.

cleverest masters of the period, who executed the finest work in the production of their splendid volumes. The paper was unsurpassed, the illuminations of extreme delicacy, and the covers are unequalled to the present day”¹.

The rich tradition of manuscript production, which was a legacy of the Jalayirids and Iskandar Sultan at the beginning of the 15th century, continued to develop under the bibliophile prince and after his premature death towards the end of the century. During this period the newly formed Persian calligraphic script, *nasta’līq*, became very popular and progressed and evolved under calligraphy masters, such as Ja’far Tabrīzī, the head of Prince Bāysunghur’s library, and his students Aẓhar Tabrīzī, and Shaykh Maḥmūd, and their descendants in the tutelage lineage.

Among the most significant figures in the development of *nasta’līq* script, Aẓhar Tabrīzī was one of the most prolific scribes in the 15th century. He started his training in the arts (calligraphy and illumination) in Prince Bāysunghur’s atelier at the beginning of the 830s, and by his final years in the 880s he had copied numerous manuscripts under various patrons.

In this introduction, we look at Aẓhar’s career and professional life in a period of around 50 years. After a survey of his works through decades and at different courts, it concentrates on one of his beautiful manuscripts, which he copied in his mature years in an elegant *nasta’līq*.

1. Martin, F.R. *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey from the 8th to the 18th Century* (London, 1912): 36.

Azhar Tabrīzī: Life and Works

Azhar Tabrīzī (fl. 833–880/1430–1475) was a prominent calligrapher, who served multiple patrons and played a significant role in the establishment and evolution of the *nastaʿlīq* script in the 15th century. Originally from Tabriz, he moved to Herat and began his career as a pupil under the famous calligrapher Jaʿfar Tabrīzī (active 1413–1452) at the atelier of the Timurid patron Prince Bāysunghur (1397–1433).¹

Prince Bāysunghur founded his celebrated royal library and atelier in Herat around 1420. Jaʿfar Tabrīzī, who is also widely known by his princely sobriquet al-Bāysunghurī, was the chief librarian and project overseer of the court’s artistic and architectural activities. Under the artistic training of Maulānā Jaʿfar, Azhar soon became master of the six scripts and one of the most eminent

calligraphers of his time.² Over his long life, he worked under the patronage of Prince Bāysunghur, his son ‘Alā’ al-Daula, his brothers Ulugh Beg and Ibrāhīm Sultan, Pīr Budāq Qarā Quyūnlū, and the Timurid prince Sultan Abū Saʿīd b. Muḥammad b. Mīrānshāh.³ Although a great number of sources have written about his prowess, our limited knowledge about his life is gathered by tracing his works and relying upon the information he provided in colophons.

Known as ‘Master of the masters’, in the manuscripts he transcribed over his career, Azhar’s signature is found in various forms, including Azhar al-Jaʿfarī (833H, Herat), Azhar al-Kātib (853, Herat), Azhar (several examples, such as 864, Mashhad), Azhar Tabrīzī (877, Isfahan), and Azhar al-Sulṭanī (864, Herat).

1. Bayānī, M. *Ahvāl va āthār-i khushnivīsān* (Tehran, 1363/1984): 1: 118. See also his account by Simsār, M.H. “Azhar Tabrīzī”, *Dānīshnāma-yi Buzurg-i Islāmī*, vol. 9 (Tehran, 1367/1988): 339–41.

2. 2. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī, *Maṭla‘-i sa‘dayn va majma‘-i baḥrayn*, ed. ‘A. Navā’ī (Tehran, 1383/2004): 4: 807.

3. Bayānī (1363/1984): 68. Bayani also lists manuscripts copied by Azhar; see *ibid.*: 68–74.

His earliest work, the translation of the *Maulūd al-Muṣṭafā*, also known as the *Sīrat al-Nabī*, which he transcribed in 833/1430, is signed Aẓhar al-Jaʿfarī (Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye Library, no. 3342). We can deduce that he and Maḥmūd (later known as Shaykh Maḥmūd Haravī) were both top students of Jaʿfar in 833 and signed their works with a sobriquet granted by their calligraphy teacher. Maḥmūd al-Jaʿfarī copied an anthology of poetry in 833, now in the Astan Quds Razavi Library, no. 10399 (fig. 1).¹ The year 833/1430 can be marked as the beginning of their scribal career.

Aẓhar copied his first princely-commissioned manuscript the *Kulliyāt* of the 8th/14th century Persian poet ʿImād al-Dīn Faqīh Kirmānī a year later. Signed simply Aẓhar, it is a collection of the complete works of the poet, and is preserved at the Bodleian Library in Oxford (Elliott 210). This manuscript contains sumptuous illuminations on the heading of each book, exhibiting the unmistakable Bāysunghurī style.

Both manuscripts are of utmost importance among works of Aẓhar: the former is his earliest known manuscript, and the latter is the only Bāysunghurī manuscript in his hand.

1. For a list of Shaykh Maḥmūd’s works, see Seki, Y. “Shaykh Maḥmūd Haravī”, *Nāma-yi Bahāristān*, 11:16 (1389/2010): 45–60. Seki missed the above-mentioned anthology, and a manuscript of the *Sad Kalima* in the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto (AKM518). For more on that manuscript, see Mihan, S. “*Sad Kalima* (One Hundred Sayings) of Ali b. Abi-Talib”, Aga Khan Museum’s blog, 2019. <https://agakhanmuseum.org/collection/artifact/manuscript-sayings-scribe-sheikh-mahmud-heravi-akm518> (last accessed on 3 May 2020).

Works in the hand of Aẓhar

Title	Signature	Date & Place	Location
(Tr.) <i>Maulūd al-Muṣṭafā</i>	Aẓhar al-Jaʿfarī	15 Rajab 833 / 9 April 1430, Herat	Nuruosmaniye Library, no. 3342
<i>Muṣibat-nāma</i> *	Aẓhar al-Kātib	833/1429–30, Herat	Chester Beatty Library, Per. 121
<i>Kalīla-u Dimna</i> *	Lacks colophon	c. 1430s	Golestan Palace Library, no. 2198
<i>Jung-i Marāthī</i>	Aẓhar	837/1434, almost certainly Herat	Tabriz National Library, no. 2967
Calligraphy specimen (for Ibrahim Sultan)	Aẓhar	n.d., n.p. (Must be before Ibrahim's death in 838/1435)	Topkapi Palace Library (TS) ¹
Calligraphy specimens (f. 28r for 'Alā' al-Daula)	Aẓhar, Aẓhar al-Kātib	840 (f. 22r); 850 (f. 28r)	TS, H. 2154, f. 22r, 23r, 27r, 28r, 29v, 30r, 30v, 31r. ²
<i>Firāq-nāma</i> of Sāvajī	Aẓhar Kātib	10 Sha'bān 846/14 December 1442	Istanbul University Library, F. 131
<i>Kulliyāt</i> of Auḥadī Marāghī	Aẓhar al-Kātib	13 Dhu'l-ḥijja 851/ 19 February 1448	Istanbul University Library, F. 1489 ³

1. Bayānī (1363/1984): 72.

2. Roxburgh, D.J. *Our Works Point to Us': Album making, collecting, and art (1427–1565) under the Timurids and Safavids* (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, 1996): 793–831.

3. Bayani believes the signature is a later addition. Bayānī (1363/1984): 72.

Calligraphy specimens	Aẓhar al-Kātib		Istanbul University Library, F. 1423 (Baba Naqqash album), ff. 12r, 28r, 56v.
Calligraphy specimens (Prayers of ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib)	Aẓhar al-Kātib	853/1449, Herat	Istanbul University Library, F. 1422 (Shah Tahmasp album), ff. 9r, 9v, 37r, 64r, 71v ¹
<i>Būstān</i> of Sa’dī	Aẓhar	Rajab 860/June-July 1456, n.p.	Ezzat Malek Soudavar Collection ²
<i>Khamsa</i> of Niẓāmī (for Abu’l-Qāsim Babur)	Aẓhar Kātib	c. 861	Based on TS, H. 762, ff. 316v–317r ³
A folio of <i>Laylā and Majnūn</i>	-	From the above ms?	TS, H. 2161 (Amir Ghayb Beg album), f. 67v
Calligraphy specimen (for Sultan Abu Said)	Aẓhar	n.d. (after 861), Samarqand	TS, H. 2138 (Shah Isma‘il album), f. 28v
<i>Muqaṭṭa‘āt</i> of Ibn Yamīn Faryūmadī (probably for Pīr Budāq)	Aẓhar	4 Rajab 864/1459, Mashhad	TIEM, no. 1927 ⁴
<i>Khusrau-u Shīrīn</i> of Niẓāmī	Aẓhar al-Sulṭānī	24 Rabī II 824/28 April 1421 (but in reality c. 864/1460)	John Rylands Library, Pers. 6
<i>Divan</i> of Jāmī	Aẓhar al-Kātib al-Sulṭānī	n.d. (probably around the same time as above, judging by its sobriquet)	TS, A. 2540
Calligraphy specimen (probably for Uzūn Ḥasan (r. 828–882))	Aẓhar	873/1468, Shamākhī	TS, H. 2153 (Sultan Ya‘qūb album), ff. 7v, 31r, 33v, 100r, 102v, 121r, f. 94r
<i>Mathnavī Ma‘navī</i> of Maulavī	Aẓhar	Rabi I 872/ October 1467	Majles, no. 258
<i>Khamsa</i> of Niẓāmī and <i>Khamsa</i> of Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī	Aẓhar Tabrīzī	Rajab 877/ December 1472, Isfahan	Lahore, Punjab, University Library

1. Roxburgh (1999): 359.

2. For more details see Christie’s sale (7 October 2008, lot 298):

<http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/books-manuscripts/sheikh-muslih-al-din-sadi-bustan-copied-5125425-details.aspx?from=salesummery&intobjectid=5125425&sid=74c01a3d-82f6-47db-b121-dc20de5e9e59>

3. See Thackston, W.M. *Album Prefaces and Other Documents on the History of Calligraphers and Painters* (Leiden, Boston, Cologne, 2001): 50.

4. This manuscript might have been among the booty that Pīr Budāq acquired from Herat and into which he inserted his *ex libris*.

Anthology of poetry	Aẓhar Tabrīzī	Rajab 877/ December 1472, Isfahan?	Tabriz National Library?
Anthology (for Sultan Ḥusayn Bāyqarā?)	Aẓhar al-Kātib	Muharram 880/ May 1475, Herat	Aligarh University
<i>Haft Paykar</i> *	Aẓhar al-Kātib	988/1580	Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. 13.228.13
<i>Būstān</i> of Sa'dī*	Aẓhar al-Kātib	987/1579	National Archive of Kabul, no. 216
Calligraphy fragments (probably for 'Alā' al-Daula)	Aẓhar, Aẓhar al-Kātib	n.d., Herat?	Golestan Palace, no. 1663-64 (Gulshan album), ff. 49, 181, 197,
Calligraphy folios and specimens (Poems of Kamāl Khujandī, Auḥadī, Ḥāfiẓ, etc.)	Aẓhar	n.d.	Sohayli Collection ¹
Calligraphy specimens	Aẓhar	n.d.	TS, H. 2151 (Amir Ḥusayn Beg album) ²
A calligraphy specimen	Aẓhar	n.d.	St. Petersburg State Library ³
Divan of Ḥāfiẓ*	Aẓhar Kātib	n.d.	Asghar Mahdavi's collection, no. 588 ⁴

The association of the manuscripts marked with an asterisk (*) with Aẓhar does not stand on firm footing.

1. Soudavar, A. *Art of the Persian Courts: selections from the Art and History Trust Collection* (New York, 1992): 134.

2. Ḥabībī, 'A. *Hunar-i 'ahd-i Taymuriān* (Tehran, 1355/1976): 311.

3. Bayānī (1363/1984): 72.

4. Bayānī believed the association of this work to Aẓhar was not solid. Bayānī (1363/1984): 72.

The *Khusrau-u Shīrīn* of Niẓāmī Codicological features

The manuscript of the *Khusrau-u Shīrīn* of Niẓāmī Ganjavī (1141–1209), copied by Aẓhar al-Sulṭānī (d. 880/1475-76) and housed in the John Rylands Library in the collection of Persian Manuscripts (Persian Ms. 6), is enclosed in a 16th-century Safavid binding of large-plate gilt-stamped embossed leather, decorated with floral vines and cloud bands, and framed in a border of cartouches in a similar technique. The spine is a European replacement. The original binding probably included an envelope flap, judging by the traces on f. 1r, and probably of deep red leather, judging by the traces on f. 66v. The inner hinges are a modern repair using light brown leather.

The doublures each have a large medallion with pendants and corner pieces, consisting of filigrees of dark brown leather on an ultramarine blue background. The gilt-stamped surface is adorned with cloud bands

and floral vines. The filigrees on the medallion (*turanj*) have disappeared (covered with a blue paper) and a painting of pink roses on paper has been pasted on it at a later time.

It is not unusual to find a manuscript with a binding replaced less than a century after its production. For instance, a copy of the *Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā'* (God's Splendid Names) transcribed by Sultan 'Alī Mashhadī in the late 15th-early 16th century, in the National Library of Russia, Dorn 56, has a binding that dates to the 1560s–70s, which means that that binding too must have been replaced within less than a century.

The codex contains 66 folios of 305 x 202 mm with text panels of 178 x 112 mm. The folios are remargined with gold-speckled paper of a pink hue. The text is written in 4 columns and 25 lines in *nasta'liq* and the captions are in *riqā'* script.

Provenance

The manuscript of the Khusrau-u Shīrīn has had a long journey. It was copied in the 15th century, and bound and decorated in the 16th century. The ownership of the codex after that time until the 18th century is not known, but a note on f. 1r states that the codex once belonged to Ahmed Paşazade Naşid, whose *tughra* signature is seen on the right side of the note. He was born in 1162/1749 in Morea (Peloponnesus) and was educated at the Palace School at the Topkapi. He became chamberlain of Sultan Mustafa III in 1181/1767, and remained in that position under Sultan Abdülhamid I. In 1188/1774, he was appointed as Armed Guard and Head of Imperial Gatekeepers. He returned to the Palace after the enthronement of Sultan Selim III as the Steward of Emine Sultan, Abdulhamid's daughter. He died in 1206/1791 and was buried in Üsküdar in the Ayazma Mosque. He has a *Divan* of poetry and was known as a good poet, which his nickname Naşid (*nāshid*: who reads beautiful poetry) also confirms.¹ According to the *Tuhfa-yi Khaṭṭāṭīn*, he was also known as a good calligrapher, but none of his works are extant. On the same folio (f. 1r) a seal impression is seen bearing the name

Muḥammad Ibrāhīm and the date 1197/1782.²

The manuscript was acquired by Sir Gore Ouseley (1770–1844), who served as the British ambassador to (then) Persia from 1810 to 1814. The Treaty of Gulistān between Persia and the Russian Empire was prepared by him in 1813, by which a great number of cities and provinces were separated from Iran and added to Russia, including Azerbaijan, Daghestan and East Georgia.

Sir Gore Ouseley's notes on the poem and *Nizāmī* appears on the four fly-leaves at the beginning of the manuscript, with the date 1837, with his *ex libris* and coat of arms on the end flyleaf. The codex next found its way to the great library of Nathaniel Bland (1803–1865), the British orientalist who studied Persian language in Oxford. He was a member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland and his several scholarly articles appeared in that journal. A part of his collection eventually ended up in the John Rylands Library, after his oriental manuscripts were sold through Bernard Quaritch to Alexander Lindsay (1812–1880), 25th Earl of Crawford, in 1866. Alexander William Crawford Lindsay was a Scottish art historian and collector, and his heir James Ludovic Lindsay (1847–1913), 26th Earl of Crawford, a book collector from schooldays, was closely associated to England's bibliographical societies. In 1898, Michael Kerney completed and privately issued the catalogue of Lindsay's Persian, Arabic and Turkish codices, including an identification of their provenance.

1. His works are found in Istanbul University (TY, nr. 538, 1407, 3278, 5453), Topkapı Palace Museum (Yeniler, nr. 3991), Konya İzzet Koyunoğlu (nr. 13601), Egyptian National (nr. 1912) libraries, Germany Tübinger Depot der Staats is in Bibliothek (MS, Orquart, nr. 1500) and in the Suleymaniye Library (Mikrofilm Archive, nr. 2187). More on his works are found on <http://www.islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/nasid> (last accessed on 10 May 2020).

2. I am grateful to Dr Irvin Cemil Schick for his help identifying Ahmed Pasazade Nashid.

Ludovic Lindsay sold parts of his manuscript collections, including the *Khusrau-u Shīrīn*, to Enriqueta Rylands for the John Rylands Library in 1901 (fig. 10). His deposited collections were distributed to the Cambridge University Library, the British Museum, and the John Rylands Library in 1946.

Aesthetic Features

The manuscript opens to an illuminated frontispiece with an exquisite heading on folio 1v, decorated with arabesque vines and delicate cloud bands in gold and lapis blue. The facing pages of the frontispiece have interlinear gilding with inter-columnar rulings decorated with floral bands. The title captions are written in *riqā'* on illuminated cartouches in horizontal boxes. Diagonal lines prior to illustrations are adorned with illuminated triangles. The colophon page (f. 66r) is decorated with two lapis blue boxes carrying gold vines.

Although a note on f. 1r states that the manuscript contains 78 folios and 7 illustrations, the 66 remaining folios and 5 illustrations attest that two illustrated folios are unfortunately missing. The illuminations and illustrations are early sixteenth-century additions. Based on the brief information provided by the scribe in the colophon, we can deduce that the manuscript was very probably copied through difficult political and social situations and the spaces left for illuminations and illustrations remained blank, until early Safavid artists executed an impeccable task to fill those spaces.

They were described in the catalogue as “Five early sixteenth-century miniatures,

exemplifying court artists’ work at the beginning of Tahmasp's reign, identified with more or less certainty to be by two artists, ‘Abd al-Samad and Mīr Saiyid ‘Alī’.¹ The illustrations appear in the following sequence:

The first painting appears in f. 10v, depicting Shīrīn and her companions in a beautiful landscape. Shirin and her courtiers are conversing and pointing to the image of the young king. High hills and golden sky, with tall trees and blossoms are seen in the foreground. Wine and fruit are served, while the maids play music near a stream on the green ground covered with flowers and bushes. Robinson attributed the work to ‘Abd al-Ṣamad (1540–1595). The illustration measures 193 x 108 mm.

The second painting on f. 37v follows two pages of diagonal verses (ff. 36v–37r) and depicts Farhād carrying the drunk Shīrīn on her horse. The mounted courtiers accompany her in a landscape of pale pink and green hills. The details of decorations on the garments and the cover on Shīrīn’s horse illustrate a meticulous and intricate rendering. The footman, who is showing the way, is wearing a turban with a red baton, which was the fashion in the early Safavid period. The painter of this illustration as attributed by Robinson is probably Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī (1510–1572). The illustration measures 178 x 112 mm.

‘Khusrau meeting Shīrīn in her palace’ is the next painting on f. 43v. The image shows Shīrīn inside her Palace with her maids on the rooftop. The palace is lavishly decorated

1. Robinson, B.W. *Persian Paintings in the John Rylands Library: A Descriptive Catalogue* (London, 1980): 148–50.

with geometric tiles. Khusrau sitting on his throne in front of his elegant tent, with a bowl of wine in his hand, exchanges loving glances with Shīrīn. Some of his courtiers are sitting around him in the tiled courtyard, some are watching from behind the balustrade and others are peeping from behind the golden hill. The cloudy sky is depicted in blue. This illustration is attributed to Mīr Saiyid ‘Alī. It measures 173 x 112 mm.

The next illustration on f. 55r shows Khusrau and Shīrīn in the Palace, after their wedding. They are sitting on the bed in their chamber, with Khusrau conversing with a maid. Two gate guards are still drunk from the drinks the night before. Two royal ladies are relaxing on the balcony, as two maids try to get a gold ewer to the top floor. The palace gardener in shorts is walking in the garden with his spade on his shoulder. Robinson attributed this illustration to ‘Abd al-Ṣamad. It measures 178 x 112 mm.

The last painting on f. 60r illustrates the tragic scene of Shīrīn taking her own life after Khusrau’s death. She has stabbed her chest and felled on her husband’s coffin, which is adorned with geometric patterns in *khātam* technique. The female courtiers on the top of the building look upset at the death of the king and the queen. The male attendants and courtiers, all in royal garments and red-sticked turbans, are standing in the tiled courtyard. In the background an attendant is seen with a saddled horse and a mule. This final illustration is attributed to ‘Abd al-Ṣamad too. It measures 178 x 112 mm.

Dating

The date appearing in the colophon is read 24 Rabi’ II, 824. As Robinson noticed, the middle digit of the date appears to have been tampered with (fig. 11). Robinson suggested “the left-hand date was possibly also altered”. Some scholars floated the possibility of the scribe’s signature being in another hand, and that “the final triangular portion of the colophon may not belong to the rest of the colophon, from which it is divided by a gold marginal ruling, possibly masking a join in the paper”. In my close examination of the manuscript, I assume the original margin was torn in a careless way, and damaged the text panel. Backlighting with an LED torch indicates that the triangle was not separated from the text panel, as suggested previously (fig. 12). The signature, therefore, is authentic and part of the original colophon; however, the gold speckling on the margins has covered the text on the bottom triangle, helping the ink appear in a different hue (fig. 13). The colophon reads

بنهایت رسید کتاب خسرو شیرین که آیت مبین و خطاب
مستبین خسته متین مرشد اهل یقین شیخ نظامیست در اوان ایام
تفرقه و حوادث متفرقه که مستوعب اوقات کتابت گشته بود لاجرم
موجب تأخیر تمام در اتمام شد فی الرابع عشرین من الشهر الفاخر
ربیع الآخر لسنة ۸۲۴
خدم بکتابتها العبد المفتقر الی رحمة الله
الغنی اظهر السلطانی

م

The copying of *Khusrau-u Shīrīn*, which is the clear sign and certain speech of the firm *Khamsa* of the master of the faithful, Shaykh Niẓāmī, was finished during the times of disintegration and various clamities that had

ruined the time of transcription – and inevitably resulted in a delay in completion – on 24th of the month of the glorious Rabīʿ II 824.

Aẓhar al-Sultānī, the slave in need of munificent God’s mercy, served by transcribing it.

Following the death of Abu’l-Qāsim Bābur in 861H, Sultan Abū Saʿīd conquered Herat in this same year.¹ In 862H, Jahanshah Qara Qyunlu (r. 841–872/1438–1467) attacked Herat and captured the city. Jahanshah’s son, Pir Budaq was defeated in the battle with Sultan Abū Saʿīd, which resulted in a peace treaty between Jahanshah and Abū Saʿīd and the Qara Qyunlu troops had to leave Herat in 863.²

Another manuscript that was left unfinished during this unsettled period was the *Khamsa* of Niẓāmī, from which the first part is copied by Jaʿfar Tabrīzī (Topkapi Palace, H. 761). Shaykh Maḥmūd who continued the copying of that work also referred to “a course of troublous time”. Barbara Brend states, “It appears that the original fragment of text is in the hand of his [i.e. Maḥmūd’s] master Jaʿfar, so the period of upheaval might be either the Qarā Qūyunlū occupation of Herat or Pīr Būdāq’s removal from Shiraz”, which happened in 864.³

The turbulent time to which the scribe

Aẓhar referred in the colophon of the *Khusrau-u Shīrīn* is very probably about that period of unsettled political situation. This date matches the two untouched digits in the colophon and suggests that the manuscript was very probably copied for Sultan Abū Saʿīd, who is known to have been a patron to the scribe. According to Mīrzā Haydar Dughlāt, Maulānā Aẓhar was often Sultan Abū Saʿīd’s companion.⁴ Sultan Abū Saʿīd ruled a decade of peace and construction until 873H, when he was defeated by Uzūn Ḥasan’s army and was eventually killed by Yādgār Muḥammad.⁵

This survey of manuscripts attributed to Aẓhar affirms his importance in the history of Perso-Islamic calligraphy. In his active years during half a century he copied numerous works for a good number of patrons, mainly in Herat, but also in Mashhad, Isfahan Shamakhi, and so on. Aẓhar initiated his work from Prince Bāysunghur’s library around 830, but only one manuscript can be associated with the prince’s atelier with certainty. The *Khusrau-u Shīrīn* of Niẓāmī penned by Aẓhar al-Sultānī is one of his works, transcribed when he was at the peak of his prowess and was established as Master of the Masters. Decorated with illustrations by two of the most eminent painters of the early Safavid period, this unique manuscript is a feast for the eyes.

1. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī, *Maṭla‘-i sa‘dayn va majma‘-i baḥrayn*, ed. ‘A. Navāʿī (Tehran, 1383/2004): 4: 807.

2. See Vāla Iṣfahānī, *Khuld-i barīn*, ed. M.H. Muhaddith (Tehran, 1379/2000): 607–9.

3. Brend, B. *Perspectives on Persian Painting: illustrations to Amīr Khusrau’s Khamsah* (New York, 2003): 107.

4. Mīrzā Haydar Dughlāt, *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, ed. ‘A. Ghaffārī Fard (Tehran, 1383/2004): 315..

5. Khwāndamīr, (1353/1974): 4: 93. Roemer, H.R. “The Successors of Timur”, *The Cambridge history of Iran*, ed. L. Lockhart & P. Jackson, vol. 6 (Cambridge, 1986): 98–146.