

10 The Nizāmī Manuscript of Shāh Tahmāsp: A Reconstructed History

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This essay will focus on a single manuscript of Nizāmī's *Khamṣa* and will present the historical, literary, and artistic issues which arise from its study and examination.¹ In conformity with the aims of this publication, comments will be made about the implications of these findings for the reception of Nizāmī's poetry in Safavid Iran. That manuscript, Or. 2265, in the British Library, is justly famous as one of the most beautiful in the library's rich collection.² Its seventeen illustrations are the principal source of this high reputation. These have been published and republished to the point that they are among the most widely known specimens of Safavid painting. Scholarly attention has been directed principally toward their attribution to particular painters.³

A question which has been raised several times is whether five single-page pictures, now in various public and private collections, were intended for inclusion in Or. 2265. Four closely resemble its sixteenth-century paintings and a fifth has close ties with its mid-seventeenth century ones. One carries no text but is believed to illustrate a theme connected with the story of Laylī and Majnūn; another is inscribed with verses from Nizāmī's *Khusraw u Shīrīn*. A drawing in a closely related style illustrates an episode from the *Haft Paykar*, and a fourth painting showing an urban setting has also sometimes been connected with Or. 2265.⁴ Additionally, a painting signed by Muhammad Zamān and dated to 1085/1676 which depicts "Majnūn in the Wilderness" bears a strong resemblance to the three paintings of the same date in Or. 2265, two of which also bear his signature. A. Welch has suggested that Muhammad Zamān produced these paintings for a seventeenth-century refurbishment of Or. 2265 during which the sixteenth-century single-page paintings mentioned above were removed from the manuscript.⁵ Another aspect of Or. 2265 which has attracted attention is its lacquer-painted binding bearing a depiction of the Qajar ruler, Fath Alī Shāh and his sons at the hunt. This painted binding is believed to have been produced ca. 1825.⁶

To date, most studies of Or. 2265's paintings have been conducted without reference to their connection with the remainder of the manuscript to which they belong. This circumstance has prevented a clear understanding

of the various questions which arise from a study of the place of those pictures within the manuscript as a whole. Also, the book's Safavid and Qajar phases have been considered in isolation from each other without reference to their interconnected roles in its historical formation.

Study of this manuscript's fourteen paintings from the reign of Shāh Tahmāsp (r. 1525-75) has been based on the assumption that the manuscript as presently constituted is a single artistic entity, and that it is to be identified with a Nizāmī manuscript prepared for Shāh Tahmāsp by Aqā Mirak and Mir Musavvīr which is mentioned by Dūst Muhammad in an album preface composed in 951/1544.⁷ Therefore, the dates given in its text colophons, 946-9/1539-43, have been assumed to apply equally to those paintings. Although text colophons are normally a useful indicator of the date and origin of a manuscript's paintings, in the case of Or. 2265 this assumption is flawed. Furthermore, the presumed linkage of illustrations and text colophons has led to a neglect of other aspects of this manuscript's history that have a bearing on the interpretation of those paintings. The hypothesis advanced by Welch concerning the relationship of Or. 2265 and the various paintings and drawings with which it has been associated is plausible but does not take full account of the physical and codicological evidence provided by the book itself.

This essay summarizes an investigation into the origin and history of Or. 2265 based upon an examination of the manuscript itself as well as upon photographs made of it by the British Library. Its goals are to understand the book as it exists today; to make a detailed inventory of its contents, not just the paintings, but also its text folios, section headings and marginal paintings and to use that data to reconstruct a history of Or. 2265's creation.

The information provided by this study has several potential uses. The paintings of Or. 2265 are among the most accomplished examples of manuscript illustration from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and a better understanding of their origin and historical significance has ramifications for the study of the pictorial arts of Iran during these centuries. This manuscript's connection with patrons belonging to both the Safavid and Qajar dynasties gives it importance for an investigation of the significance of royal patronage for the illustration of Nizāmī's text. The special meaning that the text and illustrations of Firdawsī's *Shāh Nāma* had for Iran's rulers has been examined on several occasions, but to date much less attention has been devoted to the possible association of Nizāmī's poems with the theory and practice of royal power.⁸ From the point of view of the British Library, a better understanding of this manuscript's contents and history is useful in determining the appropriate way to care for, display and make available for study this key example of the book arts of Iran.

A manuscript as elaborate as Or. 2265 was normally produced by a group of people with the specialized skills required for its transcription,

decoration, illustration and binding.⁹ The fact that many manuscripts' illuminations or illustrations were left incomplete demonstrates that interruptions in production were not unusual. Not infrequently, tasks left unfinished by a project's originators were completed at a later moment and in a different place. What makes Or. 2265 unusual is the nature and the scope of the transformations that it has sustained.

It is useful to review the steps needed to produce a luxury manuscript before examining Or. 2265 in more detail. Prior to the transcription of a text, sheets of paper were prepared for the entire manuscript. Some elaborately produced Safavid manuscripts have composite pages in which separate sheets of paper are used for the text and its margins.¹⁰ This structure recalls the construction of an album in which each page is an independent physical unit. The format of Or. 2265, was, however, more traditional. One sheet of paper was used for both zones of the page but the area reserved for the text block was first lightly dusted with flecks of gold and then impressed with fine lines to guide the scribe in his transcription. Initially, the pages' marginal zone was undecorated.¹¹ After the text had been inscribed work began on the decoration of each text page's marginal zone. These paintings or drawings in shades of gold with touches of silver occur on almost every one of its pages.

The basic text layout of Or. 2265 has four columns of twenty-one lines, which means that the maximum number of *bayts* on a single page is forty-two. Due to the frequent insertion of section headings the number of forty *bayts* per page is a more useful figure for calculating the length of a normal/average text page. In Safavid court manuscripts it was common to embellish pages which preceded illustrations or colophons by writing some *bayts* on the diagonal thereby providing space for the introduction of decorative panels and also reducing the number of verses transcribed on a given page, sometimes by as much as one-half.¹²

The gold lines demarcating text columns or framing diagonal text panels were added only after the text had been copied.¹³ The reasons why portions of a poem were copied on the diagonal has been debated. At times the use of pages with a variety of layouts may have served an aesthetic purpose; the embellishment of the page or pages that precede an illustration alerts the reader that a picture is to follow.¹⁴ This procedure also ensured that a painting was properly located within a text and appropriately situated on a manuscript page.

The placement of illustrations within a manuscript was normally established by the scribe as he copied its pages. The space left blank was usually bounded by a portion of the text which served as the physical and conceptual frame for the intended picture. In particular, the words immediately before or after an image established its theme. In a luxury book, images are often centered and framed above and below by text panels. When the placement and shape of an illustration was of critical importance to the

design of a manuscript it is likely that the transcription of verses on the surrounding pages was calculated in advance to ensure that the text flanking a picture was appropriate to its theme.

Although images tied to a specific textual passage are often considered normative, there were situations in which pictures had a more independent identity. As early as the fourteenth century some painters created picture-models that could be inserted into manuscripts as needed. Most surviving examples carry no text and it is often difficult to establish their exact subject or where they were intended to be used.¹⁵ The rise in popularity of *muraqqa*'s or albums appears to have encouraged the creation of pictures not tied to a specific text although they might reflect a recognizable literary theme.¹⁶ Sometimes the boundary between a manuscript illustration and an independent image was not precise. This is particularly true when pictures were painted on a sheet of paper which had one blank side and lacked any accompanying text.

Pictures of this type could be either added to an album or inserted into a manuscript as desired. If a single-page painting was destined for use in a manuscript it could be glued to another page which bore a text only on one side. If such a picture had internal text panels they would be inscribed only after the picture had been integrated with a manuscript, a procedure that ensured that the text on the picture was continuous with that on the preceding and following pages. The best documented instance of this procedure whereby pictures were created separately and then integrated into a manuscript is the *Haft Awrang* of Jāmī made for the Safavid Prince Ibrāhīm Mīrzā.¹⁷

In manuscripts with elaborate decorative programs, pages set aside for illustration were treated differently from ones devoted to the text. In order to allow a painter to develop his picture more freely, rulings separating text columns might be omitted. Frequently, a page's marginal zone remained undecorated until after its illustration had been completed; this permitted a picture to expand beyond the confines of the text-block into the surrounding area.

The History of Or. 2265

The key element for reconstructing Or. 2265's history is not the paintings which have been the subject of such intense scrutiny, but rather the manner in which Nizāmī's text was transcribed onto its paper. One conclusion of our study is that Or. 2265 contains pages which appear to be of four different origins. In other words, this manuscript is a composite creation rather than the unified entity upon which previous discussions of its importance have been predicated. The evidence to support this new interpretation of Or. 2265 is largely contained within the book itself and it is beyond the scope of the present essay to document and illustrate every facet of this

newly complicated understanding of its production. Why, where, when and by whom these diverse materials were assembled into the present configuration are also questions which can not yet be answered in detail. Here, the principal aim of establishing the manuscript's phases will be to suggest how these transformations are linked to the paintings it contains.

The essential fact about Or. 2265 is that its components range in date from the first quarter of the sixteenth century to the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Its two principal ingredients, the text copied by Shāh Mahmūd al-Nīshāpūrī and the sixteenth-century paintings now joined to it, each have clear and documented connections to Shāh Tahmāsp but the principal finding of this study is that this text and its illustrations were not originally intended to be combined and, in fact, derive from two different copies of Nizāmī's *Khamṣa*. These two manuscripts will be referred to here as "Tahmasp A" denoting the text copied by Shāh Mahmūd, and "Tahmasp B" which consists of the manuscript's opening folios (2b-3a) and its fourteen full page illustrations from the sixteenth century.¹⁸ (figs. 1 and 2)

The text pages which link "Tahmasp A" and "Tahmasp B" to each other are physically distinctive and belong neither to Shāh Mahmūd's manuscript nor to the pages of "Tahmasp B" and are here designated "replacement pages." (fig. 3) The time and place of their creation and insertion into Or. 2265 is at present unknown although many "replacement pages" have a distinctive type of intra-textual illumination as well as a particular variety of marginal landscape painting. If the history of both types of decoration were better known this evidence could be used to establish when and where Or. 2265 assumed its present configuration. The marginal paintings found on "replacement pages" contain landscape features that are widely used in the paintings of Rizā 'Abbāsī and his followers, suggesting that they were produced in Iran during the middle decades of the seventeenth century.¹⁹

There is a fourth, more limited, series of pages which occur only in the *Haft Paykar* section of Or. 2265.²⁰ These differ from the main series of "replacement pages" in their paper, calligraphy and decorative embellishment. The paper on which they are written is a stark, white color and is much thinner than that used for either Shāh Mahmūd's text or the main "replacement pages." Another distinctive feature of these pages is the framing of their text in gold, a form of embellishment used in some Persian manuscripts from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.²¹ Gold panels of this type also surround the texts inscribed on two of Or. 2265's mid-seventeenth-century paintings.²² (fig. 4) Thus, this second type of "replacement page" appears to represent a distinct phase in the refurbishment of Or. 2265. The *terminus ante quem* for their insertion into Or. 2265 is provided by the date of 1086/1676 inscribed on two of the paintings by Muhammad Zamān. The damage which these paintings have sustained, particularly to their upper sections, suggests that the Muhammad Zamān paintings were forcibly removed from another setting in order to combine them with the rest of Or. 2265 (fig. 5).

This circumstance and the survival of a fourth closely related single page painting of “Majnūn in the Wilderness” suggests that the Muhammad Zamān pictures and their associated text pages had had an independent life before they were joined to Or. 2265.²³

The manner in which the three Muhammad Zamān paintings were added to Or. 2265 is different from the way the paintings of “Tahmasp B” were joined to the text of “Tahmasp A” so that the insertion of the two sets of pictures must have occurred independently. The folios to which the Muhammad Zamān paintings have been added appear to have two layers but the resulting pages are still supple and lack the cardboard-like thickness of the folios bearing sixteenth-century paintings. The date of the insertion of the Muhammad Zamān paintings is unknown but the present manuscript was part of the Qajar royal collection circa 1825, the approximate date of its lacquer painted binding. The addition of this binding provides the *terminus ante quem* for the various additions to Or. 2265. Shortly thereafter, in 1243/1827-8, Fath Alī Shāh decreed that the manuscript be given to one of his wives named Tāj al-Dawla, a transfer recorded in a note on fol. 348b.²⁴ (fig. 6) Subsequently, Or. 2265 entered the collection of the British Library and during the 1880’s was catalogued in a preliminary fashion by Rieu.²⁵

Shāh Mahmūd’s Contribution to Or. 2265

The most important text pages of Or. 2265, and by far the most numerous, are those copied by Shāh Mahmūd al-Nīshāpūrī, here designated as “Tahmasp A”. Since his pages constitute the core of Or. 2265, they will be considered first. The scheme which he established for its transcription with four columns of twenty-one lines per page was also used for all the subsequent additions to Or. 2265. Because he signed the colophons belonging to each of the five books of Nizāmī’s text, he must have completed its transcription. Their dates range from the beginning of Jumada II 946/ October 14, 1535 at the end of *Makhzan al-Asrār* to the 20th of Dhu’l Hijja 949/28 March 1543 at the conclusion of the *Iskandar Nāma*. The fact that his signature in these two colophons includes the epithet *al-shāhī* is indicative of his personal and professional affiliation with Shāh Tahmāsp and carries with it the presumption that this copy of the *Khamasa* was a royal commission, although that ruler’s name is not specifically mentioned in any of its colophons.

Despite this evidence that Shāh Mahmūd must have completed the transcription of Nizāmī’s text, a significant number of his pages were subsequently lost. Most of *Makhzan al-Asrār* belongs to his copy, but much less of his work is preserved in the text’s later sections such as the *Haft Paykar* or the *Iskandar Nāma*. An appreciation for Shāh Mahmūd’s manuscript and a desire to obtain a complete copy of Nizāmī’s text appear to have been two of the factors which stimulated the reconstruction of Or. 2265. It

is, therefore, necessary to establish his manuscript's original appearance, to the extent that it is now possible.

His copy of Nizāmī's *Khamṣa* exemplified the highest standards of book production at the court of Shāh Tahmāsp and was notable for its lavishly decorated marginal paintings executed in shades of gold with touches of black and silver. His copying of the text and the execution of marginal decoration on those pages appear to have proceeded in tandem and to have preceded the creation of rubrics describing sections of the text. Many of the text folios written by him also have marginal paintings in various shades of gold highlighted by silver, which are similar in theme and execution. Some pages feature repeating patterns that show pairs of birds in schematic foliage or a series of intersecting cartouches similar to those employed in the design of Safavid rugs and textiles, but most are landscapes.²⁶ Someone turning the pages of Or. 2265 enters a woodland punctuated by pools and waterfalls and inhabited by a variety of animals and birds. Creatures inhabiting the margins of Shah Mahmud's pages include birds such as herons, ducks, pheasants and peacocks as well as a range of quadrupeds. Among these are various predators: leopards, lions and tigers as well as foxes and wolves. Along with these are the animals which formed their prey including deer, gazelles, goats and rabbits. In addition, there were other creatures which we would view as imaginary or at least supernatural, particularly the composite bird-like creature known as the "simurgh," as well as dragons and kyllins.

Conflicts between predator and prey are a chief theme of these marginal paintings. Usually these combats involve two creatures of different species such as felines attacking deer, gazelles, wild asses or goats. There are also combats between and among various fantastic creatures such as dragons, simurghs, or kyllins. Some of the marginal landscapes depict gentler, more pastoral, themes such as animals grazing on vegetation, drinking from streams or pools, at rest under trees or even nursing their young. The creatures inhabiting the margins of Shāh Mahmūd's pages belong to the distinctive repertoire of what has been called "decoral painting," and the manner in which these creatures were drawn reveals their roots in the artistic repertoire of East Asian, particularly Chinese art.²⁷

His manuscript was also to have been illustrated but none of its intended paintings appear to have survived. Two types of evidence can be used to reconstruct the original illustrative cycle of Shāh Mahmūd's manuscript. The clearest evidence consists of the two pages in which a space reserved for a painting was left blank, but in other sections of the manuscript a sequence of pages with reduced verse counts and diagonal text panels appear to mark the location of a missing illustration.

The two pages where an illustration was planned but not executed are in *Khusraw u Shīrīn* and the *Haft Paykar*.²⁸ In each case the picture space was framed on top and bottom by inscribed verses which conform to the

spacing of this manuscript's normal text block. In the page from *Khusraw u Shīrīn* the inscribed verses recount the story of Shīrīn's visit to the Milk Channel that was under construction by Farhād, an incident that is frequently illustrated²⁹ (fig. 7). Instead of a painting, this page has illuminated panels and a marginal painting in gold. The margins of this page are decorated with landscapes executed in gold which conform to those found on the "replacement pages." This demonstrates that in the manuscript's initial production they had been left blank, presumably to give the painter more freedom in designing his image.

The second example of a page on which a space set aside for a painting was never completed comes in the *Haft Paykar* (fig. 8). Once again the painting would have been centered on the page and framed by verses above and below. This time its subject would have been Bahrām Gūr's visit to the Black Pavilion, the episode which opens the cycle of his visit to the Seven Princesses, an event that was frequently illustrated.³⁰ This page also carries a note in a cursive hand that is possibly of Qajar date.

In addition to these two spaces set aside for paintings, Shāh Mahmūd's text contains other clues that allow for a partial reconstruction of the themes which had been selected for illustration. The best index of those missing pictures is the inclusion of pages with diagonal text panels, which often precede the space set aside for a painting. A number of the replacement pages also appear to mark the site where an illustration was intended. This evidence is admittedly incomplete, but among the subjects that may have been planned for Shah Mahmud's text are the meeting of "Farīdūn and the Gazelle" in *Makhzan al-Asrār*, and "Khusraw's Hunting Expedition" from *Khusraw u Shīrīn*. In each case the illustration's place is taken by a "replacement page" in which the text has been arranged as if to fill the space left for a picture.³¹ A complete census of such places where images may have been intended has not yet been undertaken.

The Contents of "Tahmasp B"

Although evidence concerning the intended illustrations of Shāh Mahmūd's manuscript is incomplete, it is even harder to form a general impression of the other parts of Or. 2265 which belong to the reign of Shāh Tahmāsp, a collection of pages described here as "Tahmasp B." These include the manuscript's opening text illumination, folios 2b-3a and its fourteen illustrations.³² Although it has not been subjected to close analysis, the paper on which the opening folios are transcribed appears to be similar to that employed in the manuscript's sixteenth-century illustrations and distinct from that used for Shāh Mahmūd's codex. Another indication that the pages of "Tahmasp B" are distinct from the text folios copied by Shāh Mahmūd or "Tahmasp A" is that their union was effected by use of special pages different in color, size and calligraphy from those of folios

connected with Shāh Tahmāsp (fig.3). These pages, here designated as “replacement pages” appear to have had two principal functions. Some are used to replace missing sections of Nizāmī’s text, and others are used to link the text of “Tahmasp A” with the pictures of “Tahmasp B.” For example, Shāh Mahmūd’s copy begins only on the fifth folio of the *Makhzan al-Asrār*. The two opening illuminated pages (folios 2b-3a) are joined to the remainder of the manuscript by three “replacement pages” (folios 3b, 4a, 4b) (fig. 9). Otherwise, most of the folios in *Makhzan al-Asrār* belong to Shāh Mahmūd’s copy, “Tahmasp A.”³³

From the time of Or. 2265’s initial description by Rieu, it has been assumed that its fourteen paintings from the sixteenth century were made for the manuscript copied by Shāh Mahmūd between 946/1539 and 949/1543. Therefore, these dates have been presumed to apply also to the paintings. There is no doubt that the sixteenth-century paintings for which Or. 2265 is famous were made for Shāh Tahmāsp. His name and titles are included in the painting which celebrates Khusraw’s accession to the throne.³⁴ Several of the paintings have a youthful prince as their main protagonist and they depict the splendour of a royal court or the prowess of a royal hunter.³⁵

One of the primary conclusions of this project, however, is that the paintings preserved in Or. 2265 do not belong to Shāh Mahmūd’s manuscript; there is physical, codicological and literary evidence that these pictures were originally intended for another purpose. Although an individual observation may seem inconclusive, in our view, they are mutually reinforcing, each lending weight to the other.

All of the sixteenth-century paintings of Or. 2265 have sustained physical damage, particularly to their upper sections, which suggests that they were forcibly removed from another support by someone working from top to bottom. In many cases the pictures appear to have been trimmed on the bottom, top and both vertical sides. It is impossible to determine the original dimensions of the illustrations of “Tahmasp B” but two of the isolated paintings which have strong stylistic ties with Or. 2265, a painting in Edinburgh and a drawing in Boston, are too large to fit into Or. 2265.³⁶

The paintings of “Tahmasp B” appear to have been executed as single-page pictures because they currently lack a text on their reverse side. This is evident when the paintings are illuminated from the back, a procedure carried out in the Book Conservation Laboratory of the British Library.³⁷ The text panels within the pictures also present various anomalies. Examples of such situations will be given below in the discussion of individual pictures.

An examination of Or. 2265 reveals how the sixteenth-century illustrations were inserted into Shāh Mahmūd’s text. After the paintings had been cut down, they were mounted on separate pages, the margins of which were then decorated in gold with scenes of birds and animals in an

abbreviated landscape. Although in two cases the pages on which the paintings have been mounted appear to be of mid-sixteenth-century date, most have marginal landscapes in the same seventeenth-century style used on the borders of the “replacement pages.”³⁸ These remounted pictures were then joined to Shāh Mahmūd’s text by being pasted onto a text page, in most cases, a seventeenth-century “replacement page.” As a result of these layers of paper, pasted one upon the other, folios with paintings on one side have a thick, cardboard-like consistency which is very different from the supple pages of Shāh Mahmūd’s original text.

Although the trimming of the sixteenth-century paintings and their union with newly transcribed text pages may appear crude, those responsible were at pains to create a complete copy of Nizāmī’s text. The “replacement pages” were inscribed with as much text as was needed to link a given picture with the adjacent folios of Shāh Mahmūd’s text. In some cases, a painting was easily integrated into its new setting but at times two or even three “replacement pages” were required to link the sixteenth-century pictures or “Tahmasp B” with Shāh Mahmūd’s portion of Or. 2265, here designated as “Tahmasp A.”³⁹

This textual exactitude came, however, at a price. In some cases the text panels on paintings may have been cut down to eliminate unneeded verses.⁴⁰ In many cases the text was added after the painting had been completed and possibly even after they had been integrated into Or. 2265. In two cases, visual evidence suggests the illustrations of Or. 2265 are wrongly situated in Nizāmī’s text as they do not depict the subject indicated by their text.⁴¹ The most instructive case is one in which the original subject of a painting was deliberately concealed by covering its inscribed text and substituting for it another passage from Nizāmī’s poem. It has long been recognized that a painting situated in the text of *Khusraw u Shīrīn* depicts a well-known subject from the *Iskandar Nāma* in which Iskandar was confronted with his own portrait by Nūshāba, but the full implications of this anomaly have not been explored (fig. 10). Text panels obscured by gold paint but still faintly visible in the painting’s upper left corner probably contain the relevant passage from the *Iskandar Nāma*.⁴² Verses from *Khusraw u Shīrīn* have been crowded into panels along the page’s lower section and in some cases their letters extend over its painted surface. These verses describe how Shāpūr made portraits of Khusraw Parvīz to show to Shīrīn and they are continuous with the text of the preceding page, which is a “replacement page.” That page in turn continues the text from the preceding page, which belongs to Shāh Mahmūd’s manuscript, so that the insertion of an inappropriate picture was “corrected” by inscribing it with verses that link it to Shāh Mahmūd’s manuscript by means of an extra text page.⁴³

There are other anomalies in the juncture of text and image in Or. 2265. A painting known as the “Feast of Khusraw” carries text panels in which the writing extends over the painted surface. The text in question describes

how Shāpūr reported to Khusraw on his visit to Shīrīn in which he prepared portraits for her to see.⁴⁴ This rather obscure passage was only rarely illustrated, and the picture in Or. 2265 does not depict its principal event – Shāpūr reporting to Khusraw. What it does illustrate is a princely entertainment in the country-side, a scene that would have been appropriate for other contexts in Nizāmī’s poem or even as an embellishment for an album or another text altogether.

The justly famous painting of “Khusraw Enthroned,” which contains a building adorned with the name and titles of Shāh Tahmāsp, also has sustained considerable damage to its upper zone and been mended by pasting it to a new sheet of gold-painted paper.⁴⁵ The fact that this painting has been substantially cut down is suggested by its asymmetrical composition which truncates the left side of the building where the ruler is enthroned. At present, the picture has incomplete compositional elements such as a bouquet of flowers which has lost its vase next to a pool along the painting’s lower left border (fig. 11). In these cases, however, whatever the incongruities in the juncture of text and image, Nizāmī’s verses flow without interruption from the text of Shāh Mahmūd to the replacement pages and their associated pictures and back again to the Shāh Mahmūd’s text. This combination suggests that whenever and where ever the paintings of “Tahmasp B” were added to the text of “Tahmasp A,” textual completeness was more important than pictorial accuracy.

The union of the manuscript “Tahmasp A,” with the paintings of “Tahmasp B” was facilitated by the fact that Shāh Mahmūd’s text was, itself, to have been illustrated but as was mentioned above, those paintings were either never executed or were removed from the manuscript to make room for the addition of the large and impressive paintings which it now contains. In some cases the present illustrations may well be similar in theme to the paintings originally intended for the manuscript.

There are also cases in which the pictures fit into Shāh Mahmūd’s text so easily that it is probable that his manuscript would have contained the same illustrations. One curious example comes from the *Haft Paykar*.⁴⁶ The often reproduced page of a youthful prince pinning the hoof of a *gūr* or wild ass to its ear on fol. 210a, has sustained damage to its upper section and is framed by and backed with a “replacement page” but the preceding page, fol. 209 b which belongs to Shāh Mahmūd’s text has beautifully executed marginal landscapes occupied by wild asses in various poses. The most poignant is situated in the page’s lower left corner where there is a *gūr* drawn with its head caught in a bow (fig. 12).

The Replacement Pages of Or. 2265

Although Shāh Mahmūd’s signature at the end of each of the books of the *Khamsa* indicates that he had completed its transcription by the end of

March in 1543, subsequently portions of that text must have been damaged, lost or removed and a decision made to fill these gaps by the addition of newly transcribed pages. The location and design of such pages in Or. 2265 suggest that their primary purpose was to create a complete copy of Nizāmī's text by linking together the surviving pages copied by Shāh Mahmūd. As was discussed above, they also served to connect that text with the fourteen paintings of "Tahmasp B." In that respect, the addition of these replacement pages had the goal of conserving two valuable heirlooms, a group of paintings made for Shāh Tahmāsp and the text copied by Shāh Mahmūd. The high prestige attached to his calligraphy by subsequent generations is also signaled by the restoration project carried out on another manuscript copied by him which is also in the British Library, Add 1578. Its colophon describes how a nineteenth-century calligrapher completed and restored a sixteenth-century manuscript.⁴⁷

Although the "replacement pages" of Or. 2265 maintain the general arrangement of Shāh Mahmūd's text with four columns of twenty-one lines each, the two sets of pages are consistently and visibly different from each other. The newer pages use a different kind of paper, which is darker in color than that of the original manuscript. The text block of these pages was also slightly larger in size than that of Shāh Mahmūd's pages and differs from it in such details as the widths of the text columns and of the inter-columnar spaces.⁴⁸ The manuscript's sixth colophon which is located on fol. 348a at the end of the first section of the *Iskandar Nāma* bears neither signature nor date and is written on one of the "replacement pages." Its insertion created a division between the two sections of the *Iskandar Nāma* which had not been present in Shāh Mahmūd's original manuscript and provided the opportunity to add a section heading for the second section of the *Iskandar Nāma* on folio 349b. It is this added heading which bears the signature of a certain "Salih ibn Fadl Allāh" (fig. 13). The opening illumination of the first book of the *Iskandar Nāma* on folio 260b also appears to be his work (fig. 14). These two headings are strikingly similar in design and color scheme to the intra-textual illumination found on many of the "replacement pages," a circumstance which suggests that all were added in a single campaign.

Although the general vocabulary of the "Salih ibn Fadl Allāh" illumination employs the same ingredients of floral and arabesque scrolls that are common in the illumination of earlier periods, it is distinctive for its vibrant palette and for the way in which strongly opposed colors are juxtaposed. This approach contrasts with the more limited and sedate colors employed in the illumination of the sixteenth-century sections of the manuscript. Where the Tahmāsp period illumination relies heavily on blue, gold and red, the "Salih ibn Fadl Allāh" pages use strong shades of yellow, green, mauve, orange and pink.⁴⁹

The Decoration of Or. 2265

As might be expected from the evidence presented so far about the composite nature of this manuscript it is not surprising that its decoration also is neither of one type nor of one date. There appear to be two major types of intra-textual and marginal paintings, those on the pages written by Shāh Mahmūd and those belonging to the main group of “replacement pages.” Within each set of marginal illustrations there are several variants which may reflect the work of specific painters. These rich and varied paintings deserve a separate study but will be mentioned here primarily in conjunction with the current project’s objective of determining Or. 2265’s historical evolution.

As was mentioned above, the “replacement pages” differ from those copied by Shāh Mahmūd in the larger dimensions of their written surface and the darker color of their paper.⁵⁰ Even more striking is their distinctive type of intra-textual illumination and their particular repertoire of marginal landscape painting. The components of these marginal paintings on the “replacement pages” and the manner in which they are used to create landscapes bear a strong resemblance to a style used by Rizā ‘Abbāsī in his early seventeenth-century manuscript paintings and album leaves (fig. 3). This mode of landscape depiction continued to be used by his successors and imitators such as Afzāl al-Husaynī and Mu‘in Mūsavvīr into the middle decades of that century, and its popularity may well have continued until the end of the Safavid era.⁵¹

A pair of detached paintings inscribed with the date of 1020/1612, now in the Hermitage Museum, that may have been intended as the frontispiece to a manuscript or album, provide a well-articulated example of this mode of landscape painting in both its principal images and their marginal landscapes.⁵² Diagnostic features of this style include flame-like clouds, and a simplified rendition of trees with pentagonal leaves or feathery, plume-like branches. All forms, whether of plants or of animals are reduced to silhouettes with little indication of space and volume. Although in this respect the landscapes are simplified, the creatures and plants represented belong to the world of everyday experience. They include lions, goats, gazelles, rabbits and various birds rather than the exotic creatures which are so prominent in the borders of Shāh Mahmūd’s original manuscript. The marginal paintings on the “replacement pages” of Or. 2265 exhibit different levels of execution but, in general, they are rendered in a simpler and more summary fashion than is true of the early seventeenth-century paintings by Rizā ‘Abbāsī.

Conclusions

If the findings presented here are correct, then Or. 2265 now contains portions of four distinct entities. One is the text copied by Shāh Mahmūd; the second is comprised of pictures linked to Shāh Tahmāsp, which were originally destined for a different purpose, most probably for inclusion in another copy of Nizāmī's text; the third is a series of "replacement pages" created sometime in the middle of the seventeenth century to fill any textual lacunae resulting from the merger of these two heirlooms. This finding raises new questions about the fate of those pictures between their creation in the sixteenth century and their insertion into Or. 2265, more than a hundred years later. It also suggests that the question of their date is not established by the colophon dates of Shāh Mahmūd's text. Furthermore the ascription of individual paintings to particular painters should be given new scrutiny because many of those attributions are inscribed on the marginal zones of those paintings and are therefore contemporary with the introduction of "replacement pages" some time in the middle of the seventeenth century. The fourth component consists of pages illustrating themes in Nizāmī's poems prepared by Muhammad Zamān ca. 1086/1676, perhaps for inclusion in an album, perhaps for yet another copy of Nizāmī's poem. These pages were united with the composite sixteenth-seventeenth-century manuscript at a later moment, in part through the addition of another group of "replacement pages." Although the time and place of this reconstruction is difficult to establish, one possible context would have been in the first decades of the nineteenth century when Or. 2265 was rebound at the court of Fath 'Alī Shāh.

Notes

- 1 The authors had use of a series of transparencies of the manuscript's individual folios prepared by the British Library's photographic service and would like to thank the staff for permission to examine these materials. Direct study of the manuscript's pages was carried out in the Conservation Laboratory of the British Library and the authors would like to thank Mr. Martyn Jones, Senior Conservator, for his assistance in this project.
- 2 Rieu (1966), vol. 3, 1072-3.
- 3 First publication of the paintings: Binyon (1928); for the attribution of paintings to specific painters see Stehoukine (1959) no. 20, 69-75; Welch (1979) 134-75, Dickson (1981) vol. I, *passim*.
- 4 Robinson (1967) nos. 39, 40 and 42, 55-6; Welch (1979) 176-83; Grabar (2001b).
- 5 Welch (1973) no 71, 102, 117; Soudavar (1992) no. 151, 374-5.
- 6 Diba (1989) fig. 7; Diba (1998) fig. 14, 58, 179-80.
- 7 Thackston (2001) 4, 15-6; Binyon (1933) 113-6, 186.
- 8 For a variety of interpretative approaches concerning the use of Firdawsī's text see Welch (1972); Grabar (1980); Hillenbrand (2004).
- 9 For a description of the processes involved: Shreve Simpson (1982); Shreve Simpson (1993).
- 10 Shreve Simpson (1997) 40-2.

- 11 Or. 2265 f.35b, the reverse of the page bearing the colophon for *Makhzan al-Asrār* exemplifies the manner in which the pages were prepared for transcription with impressed lines and a gold-sprinkled textblock.
- 12 Shreve Simpson (1997) figs. 27, 41, 42, 43, 46, 163.
- 13 Ibidem, 44-5.
- 14 Ibidem, 57-61.
- 15 For examples of such models see Ipşiroğlu (1964).
- 16 For a discussion of the development of *muraqqa's* see Roxburgh (2005).
- 17 Shreve Simpson (1997) 70-3.
- 18 For references to these pictures see note 3, the pair of illuminated medallions with which Or. 2265 opens may derive from yet another source; illustrated in Welch (1979) 134-5.
- 19 Compare Binyon (1928) pl. II and Canby (1996) cat. no. 55, pls. 100-1.
- 20 The British Library's photographic documentation of the *Haft Paykar* section of Or. 2265 is incomplete, so that no definitive list of such pages can be compiled. They include folios 200a, 224a, 225a.
- 21 The text on fol. 200b is outlined in gold.
- 22 Fol. 203b, "Bahrām Gūr and the Dragon" and fol. 213a "Fitna carries the Ox."
- 23 Soudavar (1992) 364, 374-5. The damage to "Bahrām Gūr at a Night Entertainment," fol. 221b, is particularly striking.
- 24 The authors would like to thank Dr. Maryam Ekhtiar for assistance in making this identification. This note on fol. 348b comes between the two halves of the *Iskandar Nāma*.
- 25 Rieu (1966) vol. 3, 1072-3.
- 26 For a typical marginal landscape see Welch (1979) 144-5; repeating patterns probably created with a stencil are found on Or 2265, fols. 17a,b; 22a,b.
- 27 Dickson (1981) vol. 1, 262-5, for the treatment of these themes in Chinese art see Rawson (1984).
- 28 Or. 2265 fol. 83a. and fol. 218a.
- 29 KS52,79-80 (*bihishtī-paykar āmad...* and *chinān pandāsh t k-ān...*) over the picture space; KS52,81-82 under the picture space. Manuscripts in which this subject is illustrated include John Rylands University Library Ms. 36 and Topkapi Saray Library Hazine 754 and Hazine 1008.
- 30 HP26,1-2 (*chūnkih Bahrām shud nishāt...* and *ruz-i shanba...*) above the picture space and HP26,3-4 below it.
- 31 Or. 2265 fols. 21a and b, 44 a and b.
- 32 For the illumination and the illustrations see Welch (1979) 136-7, and 138-175. The two blank medallions on folios 1b and 2a appear to derive from yet another source.
- 33 Replacement pages in *Makhzan al-Asrār* are 3b, 4a-b, 16a, 18b, 21a-b, 27a-b, 28a-b and 29a-b.
- 34 Or. 2265, fol. 60b, Welch (1979) 154-5.
- 35 Or. 2265, fols. 57b, 60b, 66b, 77b, 202b, 211b; Welch (1979) 152-61, 172-81.
- 36 The folio size of Or. 2265 is 36 x 25 cm; the Edinburgh page is 36 x 25 cm and the Boston drawing is 45 x 29.5 cm.
- 37 The authors would like to thank Mr. Martyn Jones, Senior Conservator at the British Library for his assistance in carrying out this examination.
- 38 Two of the paintings, "Anushirwan and the Vizier", fol. 15b and the "Mi'raj," fol. 195a, are surrounded by sixteenth-century borders but both have sustained damage to their upper zone and in both cases the text appears to have been added after the picture has been painted; Welch (1979), 138-41. Both paintings and their adjacent folios have been framed for exhibition, making it impossible to conduct an examination of those pages.
- 39 For example, the painting on fol. 18a is backed by a replacement page (18b); that on 26b is followed by "replacement pages," 27a & b, 28a & b, 29a; the painting on 48b is

preceded by a “replacement page,” 48a; the painting on 53b is preceded by a replacement page, 53a.

- 40 Pages where the text has been trimmed or cut down: 60b, 66b, 166a, 211a.
- 41 The wrongly placed pictures are on fols. 48b and 57b.
- 42 Or. 2265, fol. 48b; Welch (1979) 148-9.
- 43 The text of Or. 2265, 47b ends with KS20,9-10; fol. 48a contains 20 *bayts*: KS20,11-30 and 48b: KS20,31-2.
- 44 Or 2265, fol. 57b; Welch (1979) 152-3; The text of fol. 57a ends with KS29,37, the text inscribed on the top of the painting is KS29,38-40 and that on the bottom is KS29,41-42.
- 45 Or. 2264, fol. 60b; Welch (1979) 154-5; The section of Or. 2265 between fol. 57 and fol. 61 shows signs of alterations and repairs. The illustration on fol. 57b is followed by a “replacement page” and that on 60b is both preceded and followed by “replacement pages” on fols. 60a and 61a/b. Despite these changes Nizami’s text appears to be complete. The last verses on fol. 60a are contiguous with those on 60b (KS32,2-3).
- 46 Or. 2265, fol. 210a, Welch (1979) 174-5.
- 47 Rieu (1966) 574.
- 48 The text block of Shāh Mahmūd’s pages measures 217 by 132 mm, whereas the replacement pages measure 220 by 117 mm. The text columns of Shāh Mahmūd’s pages are 29 mm in width, whereas in the replacement pages the outer columns of text are wider than those in the center (32-34 mm on the outside and 29-29 mm for the inner columns).
- 49 For comparable illumination from the reign of Shāh Tahmāsp, see Thompson (2003) pls. 3.15 and 6.15, 60-1, 174-5. For illumination comparable to that signed by Salih ibn Fadl Allāh, see Binyon (1928) pl.II.
- 50 The written surface of Shāh Mahmūd’s manuscript measures 21.7 x 13.2 cm and that of the replacement pages measures 22 x 13.5.
- 51 Stchoukine (1964) pls. XXXII left, XXXIII right, XXXIV right, XXXVIII-XXXIX, LXXII, LXXVI; Canby (1996) cat. nos. 7, 10, 232, 39, 55, 57, 65, pp. 3, 37, 57, 70-71, 100-101, 105, 113, and passim.
- 52 Adamova (1996a) no. 15, 208-11, Canby (1996) no. 55, 99-102.