

Interwoven Lovers: Safavid Narrative Silks Depicting Characters from the Khamsa

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Abstract

In the twelfth century, Persian language poet Nizāmī Ganjavī (1141-1209) authored a quintet of epic poems on five subjects, known as the *Khamṣa* or “Five Treasures.” Two of Nizami’s works in the collection are romances based on legendary figures whose tales were grounded in historical events: the love story of Sasanian king Khusrau Parvīz and Armenian princess Shīrīn, and that of Bedouin beauty Laylā and her admirer Qays, aka “Majnūn” [Ar. “madman”]. In the centuries following Nizami’s codification of the characters, several illustrated manuscripts of the *Khamṣa* were produced by workshops for the ruling classes throughout greater Iran, some by later poets who composed their own *Khamṣa* manuscripts. By the turn of the sixteenth century, scenes representing a few pivotal events in the respective narratives had become part of the cycle of illustration, and well known among the educated elite.

Between 1550 and 1650, silk luxury textiles depicting these scenes were produced, possibly representing royal as well as independent textile workshop manufacture. A group of eleven different signed and unsigned textile designs depicting scenes from *Khusrau and Shīrīn* and *Laylā and Majnūn* are the basis of this study. The textiles will be examined alongside contemporary *Khamṣa* manuscript illustrations, evaluated as a group and individually, and analyzed for their iconological properties based on patronage and consumerism.

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Introduction

This study examines a significant group of figural silk textiles attributed to the Safavid era in Iran (1501-1722) depicting characters from two of the most famous love stories in the Persian-speaking world: *Khusrau and Shīrīn* and *Laylā and Majnūn*. Both legends were codified in the twelfth century by Iranian poet Nizāmī, who spun enthralling tales of these historical figures: the Sasanian king Khusrau and his Armenian queen, Shīrīn, and the Bedouin poet-lover Majnūn and his beloved Laylā. The poems are part of Nizāmī's *Khamsa*, a quintet of epic poems on historical subjects, written in Persian in the twelfth century.

Scenes from the two love stories were illustrated in royal manuscripts for centuries, but the characters are only depicted on textiles from the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries: a total of eleven different designs whose fragments reside in several North American and European museums. Figural textiles have been celebrated since the late nineteenth century as the zenith of Safavid silk weaving, primarily due to the technical mastery involved in creating the detailed imagery that mirrors manuscript painting of the same era. In addition, the *Khamsa* silks represent a unique moment in the arts of early modern Iran, during which characters from epic poetry were represented on fabric.

To date, the most comprehensive study of the *Laylā and Majnūn* textiles within this group is my Master's thesis, "Donning the Cloak: Safavid Figural Silks and the Display of Identity" (2007).¹ The thesis set out to answer questions about the motivation of a potential consumer of garments depicting these characters, and concluded that the

wearer was representing his/her own internal state through dress. Passages from Niẓāmī's original text, close examination of the iconography, and primary literary sources were cited in order to develop the theory. However, silks depicting the Niẓāmī's additional love story *Khusrau and Shīrīn* were not included in the study. This publication seeks to analyze the group as a whole, as well as each design individually.

To briefly summarize the poems in relationship to the silks, *Khusrau and Shīrīn* tells the tumultuous love story of the Sasanian Khusrau (r. 591-628) and his beloved Shīrīn, whom Niẓāmī establishes as the heiress to the Armenian throne. The royals are smitten with one another, but their relationship falls prey to the workings of human machinations as well as the greater force of fate, and the tale emphasizes the near misses of the lovers. A celebrated climax in the story places the lovers on the same road as they travel to meet one another, but do not recognize each other; this meeting takes place while Shīrīn is bathing nude in a stream and Khusrau is separated from his entourage. Although the two fall in love upon finally meeting, Shīrīn insists that Khusrau regain his fallen status as King before she will marry him. The story is intensified with a love triangle involving another historical figure: the sculptor and engineer Farhād, who is infatuated with Shīrīn just as she is passed over by the unfaithful Khusrau for a courtesan. To demonstrate his affection, Farhād carves a tunnel from a faraway pasture to Shīrīn's castle in order to bring her fresh goat's milk, impressing her with his devotion. The Farhād and Shīrīn episode takes on a powerful sub-plot, as Khusrau orders his competitor complete the impossible task of carving a tunnel through a mountain in order to win Shīrīn's hand. The poem finally culminates in the marriage of Khusrau and Shīrīn, a happy union that ends tragically, with Khusrau murdered by his rebellious son and Shīrīn

committing suicide on his bier. Of these major events in the narrative arc, the erotic bathing scene is represented in three different designs woven in velvet, one design including a signature. A fourth design depicts the scene in double cloth technique, with poetic verses woven as part of the design. A final scene, also woven in double cloth, includes the heroine Shīrīn visiting Farhād as he carves the channel to her castle.

Laylā and Majnūn tells the tender tale of two innocent Bedouin youths who fall in love at school, where the young man openly expresses his affection through poetry and song. Nizāmī sympathizes with the legendary lovers, who are mocked by their peers and tribal society and subsequently separated by the girl’s parents. The young man spirals into a frantic state, wandering the desert naked and refusing food and drink, earning the epithet “Majnūn” (crazy; Ar., *possessed by djinn*). Majnūn continues to compose beautiful poetry for the girl, as he wanders in the wilderness befriending wild animals who are tamed by his gentle soul. Intermediaries work to reunite the characters through messages and secret meetings, which take place near Laylā’s camp, even though she is forced to marry another man. The lovers never unite in Nizāmī’s poem, but instead follow one another to early graves. Two different silk textiles executed in satin lampas technique depict Laylā visiting Majnūn in the wilderness, both of which include signatures. Two additional designs are executed in velvet, one depicting the lovers in the wilderness and one depicting Majnūn alone with the wild animals. A fifth version of the lovers together is executed in double cloth technique. A final textile, also double cloth, depicts multiple scenes of lovers, including Khusrau and Shīrīn, as well as Laylā and Majnūn.

Representing a broad range of techniques, several of the silks have been examined by textile scholars for their advanced technical properties, with the inspirational poetic narratives as background. Textiles depicting both sets of lovers were first introduced into art history in 1899 by collector and connoisseur F.R. Martin through a small publication in German, *Figurale Persische Stoffe aus dem Zeitraum 1550-1650* (Persian Figural Stuffs from the Period 1550-1650), which was later translated to English.² Perhaps based on this early publication, the whole group of *Khamisa* silks is attributed a date range between the mid-sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries.

In 1920, A.F. Kendrick and T.W. Arnold of the Victoria and Albert Museum published a Khusrau and Shīrīn velvet design as well as a double cloth of Laylā and Majnūn from the collection, as part of a longer article on Safavid figural silks, identifying the characters without naming a poet.³ Referencing Majnūn, Kendrick and Arnold note that “Textile and MS representations usually depict the scene where he is visited in the desert by his beloved,” but do not specify the manuscript to which they refer.⁴ In 1945, Gertrude Underhill of the Cleveland Museum of Art published a brief article focused on the same Khusrau and Shīrīn velvet, noting that four fragments of the same design “appeared in London about 1920” including the two that reside at the museum. Underhill includes a translation from Nizāmī’s Persian poem, without citing the author, making the connection between the scene and the author for her reader.⁵

A comprehensive technical study of textiles in 1937 by Nancy Andrews Reath and Eleanor B. Sachs, *Persian Textiles and their Techniques from the Sixth to the Eighteenth Centuries*, includes analyses of four silks from this group, naming the

characters but also refraining from attribution to a poet. In 1978, curator and scholar Friedrich Spuhler published two velvets depicting the lovers, citing Nizāmī as the poet inspiring Persian painter Bihzād and his followers, further connecting textile design with painting in his catalog entry for the Laylā and Majnūn fragment.⁶ Spuhler also cites Nizāmī directly for a fragment depicting Khusrau and Shīrīn, comparing the iconographic details to contemporary manuscript paintings of Nizāmī’s epic poem.⁷

The largest number of silks from the *Khamisa* group were published together in the 1987 exhibition catalogue *Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart*, edited by former Textile Museum curator Carol Bier. Milton Sondag analyzed two different velvets depicting Khusrau and Shīrīn in “Patterns and Weaves: Safavid Lampas and Velvet,” as well as providing technical analyses for the three additional silks: a satin lampas and a double cloth depicting Laylā and Majnūn, and the Shīrīn and Farhād double cloth.⁸

In addition to listing materials and techniques, the iconography was analyzed by Milton Sondag and Marianne McWilliams in the catalog entries, where both authors also cite Nizāmī’s *Khamisa* in the catalogue entry featuring the double cloth fragment of Shīrīn and Farhād, quoting a translation of Nizāmī’s poem.⁹ With regard to the Laylā and Majnūn double cloth, McWilliams writes: “Although representations of this scene occur in Safavid manuscript painting and decorative arts, the main literary versions of this romance do not feature a meeting of lovers in the Wilderness.”¹⁰

As McWilliams and earlier scholars agree, the designs correlate closely with the iconography established in Safavid manuscript painting; however, the relationship between the painting and textile workshops remains somewhat vague. Much of the

information on this topic must be filtered through primary source material, both Iranian and European, which takes the form of first person accounts or historiographies that serve the agendas of their authors or patrons. In addition, the question of whether the silks were produced for the court or for sale on the open market potentially alters their context. A royal patron indicates an individual interest in the *Khamsa* lovers, rather than a more general trend in society. The range in techniques and materials of the group indicates that some designs were probably produced at the court, and some in individual workshops.

Adding to the question of production, two of the *Laylā and Majnūn* designs and one *Khusrau and Shīrīn* design are signed “Work of Ghiyāth al-Dīn” within the woven repeat pattern itself. This signature was believed to be the work of a sixteenth century weaving master from Yazd, Iran, introduced to the scholarly community by Phyllis Ackerman through two articles published in the early 1930s.¹¹ Basing her information on Iranian primary source material written a century following the designer’s active period, Ghiyāth al-Dīn (also “Ghiyās” or “Ghiyāth”; ca.1530-1593-5) was a wealthy entrepreneur, *naqshband* (Per., textile designer; pl. *naqshbandān*), poet, and favorite of Shah Abbas I (r.1587-1629), who named him head of the royal textile workshop for a period of time. The remaining eight designs in the group are unsigned and feature different iconographic and stylistic details.

Since 2000, as the inner workings of Safavid textile workshops have been examined more closely by contemporary scholars such as Jon Thompson, the remarkable stylistic similarity between Safavid manuscript painting and figural imagery on silk has become clearer.¹² There was an assumption by earlier scholars that *naqsh* (Per.,

designs; pl. *naqshehā*) were handed directly from the painting workshop to the weaving workshops. However, painters were not trained in the technical skill of weaving, and adapting the imagery to the loom was the job of a *naqshband* such as Ghiyāth al-Dīn. This brings into question whether painters were directly involved in creating textile designs, or whether the *naqshbandān* were creating the imagery independently based on manuscript paintings available to them. Primary sources stating the exact process have yet to be discovered and translated.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn is credited with having designed 50 silks sent from Shah ‘Abbās I to Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1598. The primary source for this exchange is the *A’in-i Akbarī* (Per., Akbar’s Regulations), part of the *Akbarnāma*, a comprehensive Mughal historiography authored by Akbar’s official chronicler, Abu al-Fazl ‘Allamī [Abul Fazl].¹³ However, according to recent scholarship, 1598 postdates the life of the famous *naqshband* and entrepreneur from Yazd by approximately three to five years.¹⁴ This lag in chronology brings about a series of questions, such as whether Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s signature was applied to the design by his workshop posthumously in order to maintain the high status of his textiles. Alternately, the *naqshband* may have designed the textiles at an earlier date, and the workshop could have woven the textiles later according to his specifications. A third possibility is that the silks were gifted to the Safavid sovereign by Ghiyāth al-Dīn prior to his death, and removed from the royal treasury later to be regifted to the Mughal court.

Curiously, the designer did not sign all his woven silks, and Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s signed figural designs have different layouts than the two Laylā and Majnūn lampas

designs, which stand out somewhat from his other attributed works. The third signed work, a voided velvet depicting Khusrau and Shīrīn in the bathing scene, is more likely to be part of his body of work, perhaps during the period of his engagement at the royal court in Qazvin. Velvets were the most expensive and time-consuming textiles to produce, and several scholars have connected velvet fragments with royal patronage. The high expense of producing velvet silks, due to the labor-intensive technique and use of metal-wrapped threads, would indicate royal patronage for this type of textile, a point with which Spuhler concurs.¹⁵

The unsigned designs in the group include four velvets: Majnūn alone in the wilderness surrounded by animals, Laylā and Majnūn together in the wilderness, and two renditions of Khusrau and Shīrīn's bathing scene. However, if these silk velvets were produced at the Safavid royal court where Ghiyāth al-Dīn was employed, the question remains as to why he would sign one velvet design but not the others. This leads to a hypothesis that some of these designs may have been what we call in modern vernacular "designer knock-offs." Similar to today's designer garments, the high price of silks woven with gold thread and signed by a well-known artist would have been unattainable for most consumers. Therefore, fabrics produced with similar iconography, using less expensive materials and less time-consuming techniques, would have serviced less affluent consumers in the open market while delivering the same message to the viewer. These textiles would presumably have been produced in an independent workshop; however, one must also consider that the direct emulation of designs produced for the court may have been prohibited by sumptuary laws. Primary source materials do specify sumptuary laws with regard to certain garment types; with regard to the restriction of

narrative figural silks, the point remains somewhat speculative, as this is not specifically addressed.

Despite the open question about whether designs for figural silks originated from the court or the open market, originating from painting or textile workshops, the iconography appearing across media provides an important link to establishing literary provenance. The cycle of illustration from Nizāmī's *Khusrau and Shīrīn* consistently depicts the lovers in the classic bathing scene: Khusrau rides on horseback, while Shīrīn sits in a shallow pool represented by metallic paint—represented by either flat strips or metal-wrapped threads, in the case of the silks. Shīrīn is depicted partially nude, her long hair covering her breasts and her bottom half concealed by a cloth. Compared with extant Safavid illustrated copies of Nizāmī's *Khamṣa*, the depictions in both paintings as well as textiles remain fairly consistent with the text.

Conversely, in the silks depicting the protagonists of *Laylā and Majnūn*, we see a shift from Safavid paintings of the epic poem. In four of five textile designs, Laylā is seen visiting Majnūn in the wilderness, whereas manuscript illustrations of Nizāmī's *Khamṣa* show Majnūn alone with his wild animals. Clearly, the discrepancy between representations in painting and silk point to another literary source, which will be explored throughout the paper.

These eleven narrative silks represent a rather narrow grouping within the larger genre of figural silk textiles, but is a large enough collection to warrant investigation. The variety of woven techniques, the number of designs produced with little variation in scene, the close correlation with painting, and the general familiarity in the Islamic world

with the *Khamsa* narratives all point to a trend within the elite community. This study will include: an analysis of the silks based on technique and materials; summaries and passages from the epic poetry, presented as English translations; primary literary sources that indicate the uses and context of silks; and consideration of the patron or designer's motivation for reproducing these specific narrative scenes in silk.

Based on this extensive investigation, the cohesion that earlier historians gave this group is somewhat superficial and erroneous in its attribution of the entire group to Niẓāmī's *Khamsa*, as well as the definitive attribution to Safavid Iranian manufacture. There are several questions that remain open, and fall somewhat beyond the scope of the current study. In particular, more information on the provenance of certain silks within the group would be helpful, but is not available at the time of this publication. For objects that incorporate Persian poetry for which there are no documented English translations, I have translated these primary sources independently. Elsewhere, I have relied upon English translations by established scholars, as noted throughout the paper. All notations for translations follow the guidelines established by the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES).

I end with a note to my reader, paraphrasing Ghiyāth al-Dīn's statement to Shah 'Abbas upon offering him a fine silk garment: I hope you accept this humble offering with clemency; any faults thereof are owing to me.

NOTES

¹ Published under my former surname, Nazanin Hedayat Shenasa [now Nazanin Hedayat Munroe], *Donning the Cloak: Safavid Figural Silks and the Display of Identity*, Master's thesis at San Jose State University (2007) available online [http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/3421]

² F.R. Martin, *Figurale Persische Stoffe aus dem Zeitraum 1550-1650* (Stockholm, 1899).

³ A.F. Kendrick and T.W. Arnold, "Persian Stuffs with Figure Subjects-I" in *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 37, No. 212 (Nov., 1920): 236-239, 242-245.

⁴ Ibid., 238.

⁵ Gertrude Underhill, "Fragments of a Khusraw and Shīrīn Velvet" in *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Vol. 32, No. 6 (June, 1945), 96.

⁶ Friedrich Spuhler, *Islamic Carpets and Textiles in the Keir Collection* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), 166.

⁷ Ibid., 170-171.

⁸ Milton Sonday, "Patterns and Weaves: Safavid Lampas and Velvet" in *Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart* ed. Carol Bier, (Washington D.C.: The Textile Museum, 1987), 65-67.

⁹ Ibid., cat. no. 25; translation by Jerome Clinton.

¹⁰ Sonday and McWilliams, *Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart*, cat. no.26.

¹¹ Phyllis Ackerman, "Ghiyath, Persian Master Weaver" in *Apollo* 18 (1933), 252-256, and Phyllis Ackerman, "A Biography of Ghiyath the Weaver" in *Bulletin of the American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology*, 7 (1934), 9-13.

¹² See "Safavid Carpets and Textiles" by Jon Thompson in Jon Thompson and Sheila Canby, ed., *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts in Safavid Iran 1501-1576* (Milan: Skira, 2003), 275-285, for a discussion of the *karkhana* and textile production in the Safavid period.

¹³ The *Ain-i Akbari*, "Akbar's Regulations" or "The Institutes of Akbar," is the third volume of Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*. The English translation referenced for this publication is Abul Fazl 'Allami, trans. H. Blochmann, *The Ain-i Akbari by Abul Fazl 'Allami, translated from the original Persian*, vol. I (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873). Available online

<http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Fauth%3D7%26work%3D002>

For the reference to the fabrics designed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn, see *A'in-i Akbari*, n. 745, <http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D00701023%26ct%3D260%26rqs%3D1075> (accessed 2 June, 2017).

¹⁴ Skelton approximates the dates of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's life to be approximately 1530-1593-5. See Robert Skelton, "Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Ali-yi Naqshband and an Episode in the Life of Sadiqi Beg" in *Persian Painting from the Mongols to the Qajars*, ed. Robert Hillenbrand (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2000), 249-263.

¹⁵ Spuhler, *Islamic Carpets and Textiles at the Keir Collection*, 166.

Chapter One: Stories, Silks, and Signatures

The poet known as Nizāmī Ganjavī (1141-1209) was born Ilyās ibn Yūsūf Mu’ayyad in Ganja, modern-day Azerbaijan. Taking the name of his home city, he would come to be known as the great poet of the Saljūq dynasty, ruling the regions of greater Iran during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹ The Saljūq governors were Sunni Muslims of Central Asian Turkish origin, and during Nizāmī’s lifetime these local rulers commissioned a number of literary works in Persian with the aim of legitimizing their rule in Iran.² As such, each of Nizāmī’s epic works is dedicated to a ruler who functioned as the patron for the production of the work. Nizāmī was never directly employed as a court poet, and as such does not appear in the annals of historic records, which list the names of ruling families and eminent persons in each dynasty’s court. Much of the information on his life and work, however, is embedded within the epics themselves.

Most scholars agree on the significant facts of Nizāmī’s personal life. The poet was married three times, and remained monogamous during each marriage. His first wife, Āfāq, was originally a Qipchak slave granted as a gift to him by Fakhr al-Dīn BahramShāh, whom he married against the convention of the day. Nizāmī and Āfāq produced the poet’s only son, Muḥammad, who is referenced in the introduction of *Laylā and Majnūn*.³ Though Ganja was a bustling city at the crossroads of Eurasian trade, Nizāmī never ventured from the region, making his literary images of landscapes from Arabia to Armenia that much more impressive.⁴

Although a small corpus of his lyrical poetry has survived, Nizāmī is best known for his *Khamisa* (Ar., Five), a quintet of epic poems that the poet produced throughout his

lifetime. Assembled after his death into the collection also known as *Panj Ganj* in Iran (Per., Five Treasures), the *Khamisa* of Nizāmī became the model and inspiration for subsequent poets both for its meter and its subject matter. A brief summary of the poems analyzed as part of this study will contextualize the subject matter depicted on the Safavid silks in this study, as each textile illustrates narrative scenes from two of the poems in the anthology.

The *Khamisa* contains approximately thirty thousand couplets, arranged in extant manuscripts in a specific order. The first is *Makhzan al-Asrār* (Per., The Storehouse of Mysteries)⁵, a didactic mystical treatise of approximately 2,300 couplets with twenty moral discourses intended for the edification and education of rulers, completed in 1166. This is followed by *Khusrau and Shīrīn*, a romance based on the historical courtship and marriage of Sasanian king Khusrau Parviz and the Christian Armenian princess, Shīrīn, 6,150 couplets completed between 1176 and 1186.⁶ The third poem in the group is *Laylā and Majnūn*, 4,500 couplets recounting the legend of the Bedouin lover driven to madness due to his separation from his beloved, completed in 1188. Nizāmī returns to the subject of Sasanian kingship with *Haft Paykar* (Per., Seven Beauties): over 5,000 couplets about the fifth century king Bahram Gur and his interaction with seven story-telling princesses residing in monochromatic domed pavilions, completed in 1197. The collection concludes with the longest of the poems, *Iskandarnāma* (Book of Alexander), which records the adventures of Alexander the Macedonian in 10,500 couplets, completed in 1194. This lengthy work was composed in two sections, referred to as the *Sharafnāma* (The Book of Honor), describing the deeds and life of Alexander as king and conqueror, and the

Iqbāl-nāma (The Book of Fortune), describing Alexander's role as philosopher and prophet.⁷

Of this group, characters from the second and third narratives, *Khusrau and Shīrīn* and *Laylā and Majnūn*, are those who appear on Safavid textiles. Since the stories and characters were based on historical legend, Nizāmī's subject matter was not new to his audience; however, his version of the romance of *Khusrau and Shīrīn* differs somewhat from that of Ferdowsi written almost two centuries earlier in his epic *Shāhnāma*. Additionally, he was the first poet to codify the legend of *Laylā and Majnūn* as a comprehensive narrative, which had been circulating among Arabs in the oral tradition as early as the eighth century. In each story, the narrative and characters were adapted to medieval Persian court culture to suit his twelfth century audience; though it is curious to note that of his four romantic protagonists, only the Sasanian King, Khusrau Parvīz (Per., "Victorious Ruler"), was from Iran.⁸

The summary of the story of *Khusrau and Shīrīn* is as follows:⁹

Khusrau is the prince of the sixth century Sasanian king Hormuzd, and is raised to be a skilled hunter and a just, wise ruler advised by the court sage, Bozorg Omīd. In order to set a good example for his son, Hormuzd issues a decree in which misdemeanors are to be swiftly and justly punished. As a young man who enjoys wine and the company of women, Khusrau falls out of the decree following an incident in which his retinue carouses in a nearby village while on a hunting expedition, his horse trampling a farmer's plot and his page stealing some grapes as the minstrel entertains the drunken party. Harshly punished by his father for these acts, Khusrau loses the horse, the page, the musician and

his throne. He regrets his actions and offers a sincere apology to his father, after which Hormuzd forgives him. That night, Khusrau's grandfather, Khusrau Anūshirvān (Per., "Honorable Ruler") comes to him in a dream, and assures the prince that his humility and willingness to accept chastisement will bring him future happiness. Anūshirvān prophesies four events that will supersede Khusrau's losses: that he will ride Shabdīz, the world's swiftest horse, that he will sit on *Taqdīs*, the Throne of thrones, that he will be serenaded by Bārbad, the skilled musician, and that he will one day have Shīrīn, his "destined love," whose sweetness and beauty will charm him all his life.

The narrative here incorporates the integral concepts of fate, free will, and divination. Khusrau's dearest friend, Shāpūr, is a well-traveled painter whose skills in portraiture are unrivaled in the region. The talented artist describes a kingdom in Armenia whose young heiress, Shīrīn, is a most beautiful and enchanting woman. Recognizing her name from the prophetic dream, Khusrau immediately sends Shāpūr to Armenia to bring Shīrīn back to him. Once he arrives, Shāpūr uses his skills as a painter to entice Shīrīn with a portrait of Khusrau, and she in turn becomes enamored with the prince's likeness, determined to meet him.

Shāpūr concocts a plan in which Shīrīn rides away from her guards and attendants on her speedy horse, Shabdīz, and flees towards Khusrau's palace in KermanShāh. Shāpūr has given the princess a royal seal ring, so she can prove her connection to the King if she is questioned upon her arrival. Simultaneously, Khusrau is to ride towards Shīrīn in his characteristic red royal robes, at which point she will recognize him. As fate would have it, Khusrau becomes the innocent victim in a plot to overthrow his father, and is forced to flee his realm dressed as a peasant to escape imprisonment, doffing his red royal garments.

After Shīrīn has been traveling on the dusty road for two weeks, she stops to bathe in a clear stream, thinking there is no one around. Yet at the same moment, Khusrau is traveling the same road towards Armenia, and finds her bathing in the stream, washing her long black hair as her horse grazes nearby. Though neither lover recognizes the other with certainty, this became their first brief face-to-face encounter. Nizāmī writes of Khusrau's first impression of Shīrīn:

Suddenly, he came across the pool in the emerald field and saw Shīrīn sitting in the water like a lily. At the sight of her his heart caught fire and burned; he trembled with desire in every limb. Softly he rode toward her and whispered to himself how he would like to have such a beautiful maiden and such a black horse as hers, little knowing that one day they would both be his.¹⁰

Suddenly, Shīrīn sees her onlooker and covers her nude body with her long hair as she emerges from the stream, dressing quickly and mounting her horse for a swift departure. Khusrau weeps silently at her exit, then continues towards Armenia.

Shīrīn finally reaches Khusrau's palace and presents the King's ring, but refuses to reveal her identity to the servants. She spends several weeks looking out of the palace windows at the dusty plains, but there is no sign of Khusrau. When the household servants tell Shīrīn that Khusrau left instructions for his workmen to build her a residence anywhere she likes, she requests that a residence be built for her in a more hospitable region with green foliage, to remind her of Armenia. However, the jealous women of the palace household instruct the workmen to build in a hot, arid place and Shīrīn is forced to stay indoors like a prisoner. Conversely, when Khusrau reaches Armenia, he is welcomed with great ceremony by Queen Mihīn Bānū, Shīrīn's aunt. Shāpūr arrives in Armenia with news of the beautiful and strong-minded Shīrīn and an elaborate plan to unite the lovers. Khusrau immediately sends Shāpūr back to Iran to retrieve the princess, and Shīrīn is brought back

to her palace in Armenia; meanwhile, political intrigue at the Sasanian court is ongoing, and by this time she arrives, Khusrau has already departed.

The death of King Hormuzd leaves a power vacuum in the absence of Khusrau as heir, and he rushes back to claim his throne. However, Bahram Chobīn, a power hungry general close to the late king, undermines Khusrau by spreading false rumors of patricide. Forced to flee again, Khusrau rides towards Armenia, and incidentally encounters Shīrīn a second time while on the hunting field. At this meeting, both royals break their silence; Shīrīn consoles the distraught Khusrau and shelters him in her palace. Although Mihīn Bānū is supportive of their union, she warns Shīrīn against allowing Khusrau to satisfy his desires before they are wed; the couple therefore spends several weeks together chaperoned by the queen and her retinue. Shīrīn gently reminds Khusrau that he has lost his throne, and must regain his power before too much time has passed; to encourage him, she promises her hand in marriage, which spurs him to action.

In order to fight against Bahram Chobīn's powerful army, Khusrau must enlist the assistance of the Byzantine Emperor, and is forced for political reasons to take the Emperor's daughter Maryam as his only wife.¹¹ Following a successful defeat of Bahram Chobīn's army, Khusrau regains his throne, and fulfills his promise to the Emperor. Khusrau and Maryam produce a son, Shīrūya, inciting the jealousy of his beloved; Niẓāmī's Shīrīn, however, is steadfast in her devotion to Khusrau.

During the course of their separation, Shīrīn continues to reside in the palace that has been constructed for her in KermanShāh. As she is conversing with Shāpūr, she mentions her longing for fresh milk, and he brings her request to the court. The king

summons Farhād, an engineer and sculptor and former classmate of Shāpūr. The strong and clever Farhād use his engineering skills to create a channel in the mountainside from a faraway pasture to the palace, upon Shīrīn's request for fresh milk, and becomes smitten with his patroness during the process. Khusrau is jealous, and calls the enamored sculptor to the court to try and divert his attention from Shīrīn by offering him gold, but Farhād is steadfast and refuses the bribe. Khusrau then sets the impossible task before the sculptor of carving a road through a menacing mountain (at the site of Bisutun, in KermanShāh) promising him Shīrīn as his reward, a challenge to which he agrees. Farhād sets immediately to work; Shīrīn pities him, and visits him at the site.¹² When the task is nearly completed, Khusrau fears the loss of his love; he sends a messenger to falsely inform Farhād that Shīrīn has died, inducing the passionate sculptor to throw himself off the edge of the mountain in suicidal grief. Shīrīn mourns Farhād, knowing Khusrau would never be as devoted to her. Despite this realization, Shīrīn still loves Khusrau.

After the Farhād episode, Khusrau's first wife Maryam dies, and he sends a messenger to Shīrīn informing her that they would be wed at last; however, the promiscuous Khusrau pursues others. While en route to Shīrīn he stops in Isfahan, where a courtesan named Shekar entices him to take her as a second wife, frustrating the faithful Shīrīn further. After some time, Khusrau tires of the courtesan and misses Shīrīn. He leads an extended hunt party in the direction of Armenia, but when he arrives at her palace, she bitterly reproaches him for his conduct. Khusrau returns to his camp, but Shīrīn repents and rides out to find him in the middle of the night. Shāpūr helps her to remain hidden from Khusrau, then arranges for the two court musicians Bārbad and Nikīsā to sing the couple's responses to each other, resulting in forgiveness. The lovers finally marry amid much

festivity, and are enthroned. Khusrau and Shīrīn produce a son and daughters, and enjoy a peaceful reign for several years, fulfilling the prophecy of Anūshirvān.

Despite the happy years together, however, the romance ends in tragedy. Khusrau's son from his marriage to Maryam, Shīrūya, has him imprisoned; Shīrīn has willingly gone to prison with her husband, but could not prevent his assassination in the palace dungeon while she sleeps. After usurping the throne, the youth then asks his stepmother, Shīrīn, to marry him. Verbally agreeing to this in order to arrange an elaborate funeral for Khusrau, Shīrīn leads the procession to the royal mausoleum, then shuts herself inside and commits suicide on Khusrau's corpse. Nizāmī ends his tale with the entire country grieving, but assuring readers that in death, Khusrau and Shīrīn were united eternally.

Over the centuries following Nizāmī's completion of his epic, royal patrons commissioned several illustrated manuscripts of his *Khamṣa*. While the main episodes in the narrative arc are illustrated in several earlier copies of the *Khamṣa*, one Safavid manuscript used for comparison in this study was painted in the Herat style [Tabriz style] early in the reign of Shāh Tahmāsp (1524-25), and just prior to the earliest date of the silk textiles depicting the scene. Currently residing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (13.228.7), the manuscript was a commission signed by well-known calligrapher Muhammad Nūr and illuminator Mahmud Muzahhib; with paintings executed in the workshop in Herat supervised by Persian master Bihzad and his top pupil, Shaykh Zada.¹³ Formerly belonging to the royal library or *kitābkhāna*, the manuscript contains the complete *Khamṣa* of Nizāmī and is stamped with the Safavid royal seal.¹⁴ The manuscript originally contained sixteen paintings, four of which correspond to the story of Khusrau and Shīrīn, including the first meeting of Khusrau and Shīrīn as she is bathing, and Shīrīn

visiting Farhād as he carves the tunnel at Bisutun, both of which are included in the group of Safavid silks depicting the story.

The composition and figural placement of the bathing scene in manuscript painting were established during the Timurid era; examples from the early fifteenth century show a seated Shīrīn with her bottom half covered by a cloth, in a once-silver pool now tarnished to a dark gray (fig. 1).¹⁵ Faithful to Nizāmī's description, Shīrīn washes her long hair, skillfully illustrated covering her nude breasts as she gazes at the water, unaware of her voyeur. Khusrau is depicted in a diagonal relationship to Shīrīn towards the top of the composition on his horse; although the placement of the figure in earlier examples is usually top left, in the Safavid *Khamsa* painting Khusrau moves to the upper right quadrant of the scene. He looks down at Shīrīn with one finger held to his mouth, a characteristic gesture of surprise in Persian painting. Elements of landscape representing the wilderness along the road between Armenia and Iran also balance the composition, such as the leafy maple that separates the lovers, and the sparse vegetation surrounding the pool. Shīrīn's clothing and crown are nearby, while her bow and quiver hang in a branch of the tree.

On textiles, this classic scene from the cycle of illustration appears on three different designs produced in silk velvet, all approximately dated mid-sixteenth to early seventeenth century (figures 2, 3 and 4). The main elements depicted in miniature painting reappear in the narrative silks featuring the scene, even including the details of Shīrīn's royal robes and crown. Of the three designs featuring Khusrau and Shīrīn executed in velvet, one is signed and two are unsigned designs; a fourth design of the bathing scene was executed in polychromatic double cloth, and will be discussed in the collection with other silks constructed in the same technique.

In the velvet fragment at the Topkapi Museum (fig. 2), the lovers are isolated in polylobed medallions in an ogival half-brick layout. Shīrīn is seated in a shimmering pool whose effect is achieved by metal threads acting as a supplementary weft, with alternating backgrounds of butter yellow, persimmon orange, ruby red and apricot. As depicted in the paintings, she lifts her hands to wash her hair, which hangs down in two plaits over her nude upper body, while her bottom half is covered by cloths whose colors alternate from sky blue, beige, and persimmon in horizontal and vertical rows. Shīrīn's clothes hang on a branch in a nearby flowering tree, but there is no sign of her beloved horse Shabdīz. Khusrau lifts one finger of his right hand to his mouth in characteristic surprise while riding horseback, holding the reigns of the horse in his left. Throughout this fragment, Shīrīn faces the same direction in each medallion, therefore it may be assumed that reflection (vertical symmetry), was not employed in the design and the layout is a half brick repeat.¹⁶

The second Khusrau and Shīrīn velvet design is not executed with voiding, but features an equally intricate design style with the black outlining of figures characteristic of painted examples. The small extant fragments, one at the Metropolitan Museum (1978.60) (fig. 3a), and one at the Cleveland Museum of Art (1944.499.b) (fig. 3b) depict the standard composition of a seated Shīrīn in a pool edged by vegetation, clothing placed upon a nearby branch. The back half of Shabdīz, Shīrīn's prized black horse, is visible in the Metropolitan Museum fragment. Khusrau is barely visible in the Cleveland Museum fragment, but is recognizable from his red crown, as he holds one finger of his right hand to his mouth—the iconic gesture of surprise that appears frequently in narrative paintings.

The repeat pattern has been reconstructed from these small fragments in drawings for the purpose of this study in my own studio, as well as previously by Milton Sonday in

1987, and by A.F. Kendrick in 1920.¹⁷ The reconstruction of the repeat shows a strong diagonal line created by the leafy maple, drawing the eye to the upper right. The absence of metal threads in this velvet, as well as the awkwardness of the half-brick repeat pattern, sets it apart from the other two examples, both in worth and execution.

The final Khusrau and Shīrīn velvet echoes the iconography of the aforementioned designs (fig. 4). Similar to the Topkapi velvet (fig. 2), the voiding in this textile is cleverly employed: Shīrīn sits in a pool created by the weft threads brocaded with metal foil onto a satin foundation, while the vegetal edges of the pool are executed in pile velvet. The figure of Khusrau is depicted directly above and below Shīrīn, rather than in a diagonal relationship to her. All design elements are intricately outlined with a thin black outline, resembling contemporary book painting. The designer's signature is subtly incorporated on the saddle of Shabdīz, Shīrīn's steed, who looks back at Khusrau as he approaches on horseback (fig. 5). Twin cypress trees alternate with a leafy maple, onto which Shīrīn has hung her clothing and crown, adding to the linearity of the design.¹⁸ There are three extant fragments of this silk velvet cut into lobed medallions, one residing at The Textile Museum in Washington D.C. (3.318) and two at the Keir Collection, London, with a fourth fragment fashioned in an oblong semi-circle at the Montreal Museum of Fine Art (950.51.Dt.20).¹⁹ All fragments have been identified as having been used as royal tent decoration and dating to the sixteenth century.²⁰ The repeat for this textile has also been reconstructed by Milton Sonday.²¹

It is the final velvet design that incorporates in the weaving itself the signature “Work of Ghiyāth” (Per. عمل غياث, transliteration *Amal-e Ghiyāth*), placed as a design element in the saddle of Shīrīn's horse (fig. 5).²² The signature has appeared on at least

eight silk textiles of the same period, inspiring scholars to research the name appearing on these luxury silks.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn Ali Yazdi (ca. 1530-1593-5) was introduced to twentieth century scholars of Safavid textiles through two articles about this designer published in 1933 and 1934 by Phyllis Ackerman.²³ More recently, Robert Skelton brought together several important primary sources about the personage sometimes mentioned in contemporary sources by his full title, “Kwaja Ghiyāth al-Dīn ‘Alī Naqshband-i Yazdī,” giving us ample information about Ghiyāth’s reputation and life during his lifetime and in the century following.²⁴ These biographical accounts from the Safavid era were compiled as a list of notable people of the literary and art worlds, and are known as *tazkira*.²⁵ The most commonly referenced of these include the *Tazkira* of Nasrabadi, who began writing in Isfahan in 1672²⁶, and the *Majma’ al-Khavāṣṣ* by Sadiqi Beg, as well as other sources.²⁷ Across borders, Ghiyāth is also mentioned by name with reference to his finely woven silks in the *A’in-i Akbarī* (ca. 1590), volume III of the *Akbarnāma* (Per., Book of Akbar), by Abu’l-Fazl ‘Allamī, the vizier of Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605).²⁸

One of the longer accounts of Ghiyāth al-Dīn appears in a Safavid compilation entitled *Jāmi’-i Mufīdī* (The Complete Works of Mufidi), who wrote a well-known history of Yazd (1679). The *tazkira* was discovered and translated in collaboration by Arthur Pope and Farajollah Bazl in 1933, and the section on our designer reads, in part:

Kwaja Ghiyāth al-Dīn ‘Alī was unrivalled in the art of textile design. He continually drew marvelous things and wondrous forms on the pages of time with a thoughtful brush and completed exquisite textile fabrics. Such was the renown of his high achievement in this art that the mighty kings and rulers of India, Turkestan and Turkey sent him precious gifts asking for textiles from the workshop of his genius.²⁹

Ghiyāth al-Dīn's contemporaries also recorded his reputation as a superior artist. Sadiqi Beg, head of the royal book workshop during the reign of Shāh Abbas I (1587-1629), wrote of Ghiyāth al-Dīn in the *Majma' al-Khavāṣṣ* (Congress of the Nobles):

He has many skills. Firstly in the art of designing and making silken fabrics he can be called the phoenix of the age and the unique one of his time. The kings and princes of Iran and Turkestan are after the silk cloths of his contriving.³⁰

In addition to his skills pertaining to the loom, Ghiyāth al-Dīn was also a noted poet. Several verses written by the master designer himself are preserved and quoted in *tazkira*, in which Ghiyāth al-Dīn recognized his own ability and status among his contemporaries as the most renowned artist/craftsman in his time:

I, who in Yazd am the envy of my contemporaries
Am chosen by God in artistic skills.

There is no art (*hunar*) like eloquence
Yet I am an artist-craftsman as well as being a poet...

During the daytime I am busy engaged in making decorative designs
At night in the companionship of prayer and the Qur'an...

Do you know where I have acquired all these virtues?
From being one of the slaves of the King of Valour ('Alī).³¹

Many of Ghiyāth's verses juxtapose his status as a renowned artist in his time with his growing interest in spirituality. His professional life was impressive: by the time of his appointment as the head of Shāh Abbas I's *kārkhāna-i khaṣṣ* [royal workshop; alternately called *kārkhāna-i sultanati*], Ghiyāth had also held the official position of *Muqaddam*, head of the weaver's guild in Yazd. To shed some light on his relationship to the court and the *kārkhāna-i khaṣṣ*, one can consider the following passage from the *Jami'-i Mufīdī* about Ghiyāth al-Dīn:

With his increasing proximity to the King he achieved high rank and eminence in the royal assembly and was raised to the peak of honor and the summit of preferment. He wrote clever and amusing verses and presented his petitions to the King in the form of poems. Thus he made a request for his salary in this quatrain:

Oh (Shāh), source of light to my blood-weeping eye,
Untie with a glance the knot in my affairs.
Oh problem solver of the Kingdom of Iran
Grant me, this year, last year's salary.³²

The fact that Ghiyāth requested a salary indicates that he was an employee of the *kar-khāna-i khaṣṣ* for some period of time during the reign of Shāh Abbas I, and also informs us that this position was a contractual, salaried appointment. Despite the honor bestowed upon artists of the court, Ghiyāth's verses indicate that he found the capricious nature of Shāh Abbas I and the ostentation of the Safavid court to be in conflict with his mystic practice, which was his primary interest towards the end of his life.³³ This further supports his interest in the works of Niẓāmī, whose *Khusrau and Shīrīn* expresses the poet's views on how to utilize worldly power as a tool for justice and beneficence in order to elevate the soul.

In all references to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, he is referred to as a *naqshband* (pl. *nakshbandān*) which is literally translated from Persian as a “drawer of threads/weaving” The practice of *nakshbandī* has been defined by scholars as a practice that “embraces the various arts that depend on the drawing or painting of designs”³⁴ and also as “a range of arts requiring skill in drawing and design.”³⁵ The *Burhan-i Qatī*, a Persian dictionary compiled in the seventeenth century (completed 1651) equates the verb *naksh bāstan* with *afridān*, “to create.”³⁶ This interesting etymology indicates that the design and creation of textiles could both have fallen under the duties of the *nakshband*.

As far as the source of the imagery for figural textile designs, the level of interaction or collaboration taking place between the book painting and royal or private textile workshops is still unclear. We know that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was “a favorite of Kings,”³⁷ so it follows that he would have had access to the manuscripts produced in the royal *kitāb khāna*, such as the illustrated *Khamṣa* manuscript at the Metropolitan Museum, as well as other manuscripts in the royal library. However, the question remains open as to whether Ghiyāth al-Dīn was personally involved in designing his figural silks on the paintings in early Safavid versions of the *Khamṣa*. It is also possible that the painters in the *kitāb khāna* were actually producing cartoons for the *nakshbandān*, who were then expected to put these cartoons into the appropriate repeat pattern layout and determine woven structures. First, a brief discussion of the function of the *kitāb khāna*.

Painting and book production during and previous to the Safavid era was a collective enterprise.³⁸ Patronage on a more permanent basis was provided for artists in the *karkhāna-i khāṣṣ*, whereas independent artists could seek employment with patrons in non-imperial workshops for specific projects.³⁹ The manuscript workshop or *kitāb khāna* was assembled and dismantled at the will of the patron and possessed multiple functions, including that of atelier, collection repository and library.⁴⁰

The different activities included the specialized painting of seven decorative modes, including human figures, animals, landscape, and ornament; calligraphy in six different styles (e.g. *Thuluth*, *Naskh*, or *Nasta‘liq*), illumination, and gilding.⁴¹ Other tasks included tinting paper, ruling in preparation for calligraphers, making frontispieces for albums, gold-flecking, lapis-lazuli washing, and the making of stencils and cutouts.⁴²

Manuscript production was also dependent on the work of bookbinders, papermakers and scribes, and related activities.⁴³

Each *kitābkhāna* had a *kitab-dar* or head of the atelier.⁴⁴ A royal decree dating to the early 1520s announced the appointment of Bihzad as head of the royal *kitab-khāna* at Tabriz, following his extensive period at Herat where the *Khamasa* of Nizāmī at the Metropolitan Museum was produced.⁴⁵

There is also mention in primary sources dating back to the Timurid era of the 1420s that the royal workshops of Baysunghur in Herat also included a *naqqāsh-khāna* (loosely translated as a design workshop), which is known to have worked closely with the *kitab-khāna*.⁴⁶ The function of the *naqqāsh-khāna* is one that has caused some confusion for scholars due to its ambiguity in primary sources. The *naqqāsh-khāna* is not documented in any known sources to have worked directly with the textile workshops for woven designs in the early Safavid period (1501-1576); however, there is some evidence that designs produced were used for embroidered fabrics.

Therefore, the question of the origin of designs for loom-woven textiles remains unanswered. Older scholarship with regard to textile design in the Safavid era made assumptions that there was a central *naqqāsh-khāna* responsible for producing designs across all media, due to stylistic similarities and shared iconography paralleled in painting, ceramics and textiles. However, this is speculative, and without definitive documentation to support this theory, the question of design origination remains open, and points less to the idea of textile design as a purely derivative art form.⁴⁷

Furthermore, there are other groups of Safavid figural silks whose imagery cannot be found at all in contemporary manuscript paintings, such as the “prisoner silks,” a group of thirteen different lampas-woven designs studied in detail by Mary Anderson McWilliams.⁴⁸ McWilliams has connected the designs historically and visually with the four victorious military expeditions waged against the Georgians by Shāh Tahmāsp between 1540-1553. The “prisoner silks” show the Georgians being led by the Safavids, who ride on horseback leading their chained captives—men, women and children—behind them.

The prevalence of prisoner imagery in textiles, and their absence from manuscripts and albums, is theorized by McWilliams to be indicative of the end use of the objects: books being for private viewing, and textiles, particularly garments, being for display. In addition, the practice of bestowing *khila’at* at the court would have made these textiles very useful as part of pro-Safavid propaganda, either within Iran or as diplomatic gifts to envoys or heads of state.

The function and structure of textile workshops must be laid out in order to consider the relationship to book making workshops. Luxury textiles such as velvets, which were both time-consuming and expensive, were produced with royal patronage in *karkhāna-i khaṣṣ*, as well as independent entrepreneurial workshops. The royal textile workshop was focused on textile production for the court, including the king, his male and female family members, and women in the harem. However, the court purchased additional textiles from independent workshops as well.

The textiles produced at the *karkhāna-i khaṣṣ* were used for high-end furnishings, such as the tent medallions featuring Khusrau and Shīrīn (fig. 4), and apparel. New clothing was required for the Shāh and his entourage several times a year, such as Noruz celebrations and weddings. The Shāh also showed his approval at Noruz through the gifting of robes of honor or *khila't* (from Ar. *khil'a*) to worthy courtiers, military leaders and government employees. The Shāh would also bestow honor on ambassadors and visitors by granting them *khila't*.⁴⁹ The higher the status of the recipient, the finer and more elaborate the gift: the finest of these included not only an overcoat or *balapush* made of figured luxury silk, but also a vest, shirt, trousers and turban, horse trappings and weaponry inlaid with precious gems.⁵⁰ Given the numerous uses for luxury textiles, textile workshops were producing a significant amount of goods that were widely disseminated within the court as well as abroad.

The process of textile production during the Safavid era began with a pictorial design similar to a tapestry cartoon, drawn by a *naqshband*, then woven as a *naqsheh* or scale sample of the repeat unit. The *naqsheh* was attached to the harnesses supporting the warp threads. Skilled weavers would then weave the cloth with the assistance of a “draw boy,” whose job was to lift the individual threads up to create the pattern as determined by the *naqsheh*.⁵¹ This was the standard procedure for lampas-woven silks, which are compound textiles woven with two warps in different weave structures (usually tabby, twill and satin in various combinations).

Safavid velvets are pile fabrics, which feature a continuous or non-continuous pile as well as a foundation fabric. The pile of the textile is created by the warp, which is created during the weaving process by inserting a metal rod or *trevette*. After a few rows of weft

have been woven, the looped threads across the top of the *trevette* are sheared, and the pile is created. Occasionally supplemental warps (also referred to as “substitute warps”) are utilized in addition to the two main warps, mostly to increase the color palette in the design. Despite the attribution to some of the *Khamsa* velvets to the mid-sixteenth century, the production of velvets in the early Safavid period Iran is not documented in the dynastic annals, and earlier scholars specializing in Safavid velvets had assumed that production had been outsourced to Ottoman textile workshops in Bursa.⁵² Since Sondag’s technical studies published in the 1980s, these have more recently been analyzed as having a lampas structure that makes them unique to Iranian production, perhaps belonging to the *karkhāna-i khaṣṣ*.⁵³

All skilled workers in the textile industry outside of these court-sponsored workshops were employees of independent workshops, and members of a regional guild which in turn paid taxes to the crown.⁶³ Independent workshops had a documented history of production in Yazd as well as Kashan, while court-sponsored workshops in the Safavid era resided in the capital cities of Tabriz, Qazvin and Isfahan.⁵⁴

If the textile designers and painters were not utilizing images from a central workshop, how did the textile designers develop the imagery for their silks?⁵⁵ Considering the close relationship that Ghiyāth al-Dīn reportedly had with Shāh Abbas I, and his employment in Qazvin during the early part of the Shāh’s reign, he may have had exposure to the collection and making of manuscripts at the court. However, there is no evidence for or against the direct relationship of shared designs for paintings and textiles.

This brings to the foreground the issue of whether or not these representations of Nizāmī's characters are developed directly from illustrated manuscripts of the *Khamṣa*, and why these particular scenes are the ones that were produced and reproduced in several different textile designs. Close comparison of the textile compositions depicting the bathing scene of Khusrau and Shīrīn, to Timurid and Safavid manuscripts, shows an uncanny resemblance to iconography, overall composition, and compositional placement of the two main figures. It seems clear that if the repeat pattern and motifs were created by the *naqshband*, the designer would have had access to the manuscripts and used them for inspiration.⁵⁶

The bathing scene is the only one from the cycle of illustration in Nizāmī's *Khusrau and Shīrīn* that appears on textiles in this era. The artistic motivation and patronage for the choice of this scene over others leads to the hypothesis that the allure of a naked Shīrīn is part of the appeal. Although Islamic culture strongly forbids public nudity of any kind, and especially requires complete covering of the hair and body for women, the depiction of Shīrīn circumvents *shari'a* (Islamic law) owing to her identity as a Christian. The story also takes place in Iran during the reign of Khusrau (591-628 CE), concurrent with the founding of Islam in 610 CE, but still takes place in a Zoroastrian society. This seems to give artists license to depict Shīrīn half-nude, maintaining a modicum of decency by adding the waistcloth that covers her groin as she sits in a once-silver pool washing her hair which also partly covers her breasts. The illustration of this erotic moment in the story of the two lovers meeting is therefore developed and accepted as a standard part of the cycle of illustration for Nizāmī's *Khamṣa*.

However, the depiction of a nude Shīrīn on a fine silk textile, rather than a painting in a closed book, brings the significance of the choice of this scene to another level. All of the bathing scene silks are developed with expensive materials, indicating that these textiles are intended for high end outer garments or furnishings, raising questions of both purpose and patronage. Particularly when fashioned as garments, textiles are not created for private viewing as manuscripts are; they are a tool for self-expression and identity, allowing the wearer to create a connection between himself and the characters depicted.⁵⁷ As there are almost no examples of women wearing figural silks in the Safavid era, a presumably male garment depicting Khusrau and Shīrīn places the identity of the wearer and viewer with the male protagonist, as he enjoys this voyeuristic moment in the story.

The relationship between textile design and manuscript painting brings up a larger question with this group of textiles when taking a close look at the silks depicting the other set of lovers, Laylā and Majnūn. The context of the textiles requires a brief summary of Nizāmī's epic poem recounting the Bedouin legend, commissioned by the Seljuk governor Akhsitan ShirvanShāh and completed in 1188.

The summary of the story of *Laylā and Majnūn* is as follows:

The son of the wealthy chieftain of the Banu Amīr, Qays, falls in love with the beautiful Laylā at school. The two youths soon fall into the hapless oblivion of deep love, and they do not heed the expectation of society to keep their tender feelings obscured from the public eye. Soon lover and beloved become the object of ridicule, and Laylā's father forbids contact between his daughter and her admirer. Separated from Laylā, Qays becomes obsessed with her, singing of his love for her in public. The obsession grows to

the point that he sees and evaluates everything in terms of Laylā; hence his sobriquet *Majnūn*, “possessed by djinn.”

When he realizes that he cannot obtain union with Laylā even when other people intercede for him, Majnūn grows disillusioned with society and roams naked in the desert. On two occasions he sacrifices his few possessions to save deer that are ensnared in a hunter’s trap, as the black eyes of the deer remind him of Laylā; thereafter the deer and wild beasts become his companions in the solitude of the desert wilderness. Contemplating the ideal of Laylā increases his love so that he cannot eat or sleep. His only activity is thinking of her and composing exquisite love poems, which he sings unabashedly. Sympathizers visit him in the wilderness, memorize his poems and sing them in the town, where they reach Laylā covertly; she composes poems in response that are taken to him by intermediaries. Meanwhile, the young lady is betrothed against her will to a wealthy suitor, Ibn Salam, but she remains steadfast in her devotion to her lover by refusing to consummate the marriage, news that eventually reaches Majnūn in the desert.

After they are separated as schoolchildren, lover and beloved meet again two times in Nizāmī’s narrative. Each of their face-to-face encounters takes place near Laylā’s camp: the first while Majnūn is in chains, led by an old woman, and later in a palm grove, facilitated by an old man. During these meetings, Nizāmī’s lovers have no physical contact; instead, they swoon and recite poetry to each other from a distance. Majnūn never recovers from his mad state, refuses to eat and continues to recite poems while wandering in the desert surrounded by animals.

Laylā's husband dies, and she observes the obligatory two-year mourning period before sending an intermediary to bring the news to Majnūn that the legal obstacles to their union have been removed. Subsequently, Laylā falls ill and when she is on her death bed, she tells her mother about her deep love for Majnūn, and requests that her shroud be blood-red [instead of the traditional white] as a sign of her martyrdom and suffering.⁵⁸ Hearing the news of her passing, Majnūn rushes to her grave, where he dies in mourning. The lovers are buried side by side, and their graves become a site of pilgrimage. In the coda, a sympathizer dreams that Laylā and Majnūn are united in paradise, living as a king and queen.

Unlike the silks depicting *Khusrau and Shīrīn*, which closely emulate the imagery of *Khamsa* paintings, the textiles depicting Laylā and Majnūn show a departure from Nizāmī's narrative.

In two different satin lampas designs signed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn (figures 6 and 7), Laylā visits Majnūn in the wilderness while riding in a palanquin; this never happened in Nizāmī's text. All the meetings in the narrative take place near Laylā's camp, and Majnūn is brought to her by a mediator, rather than her venturing to see him in the wilderness. The silk designs do not include the old woman, indicating the scene in which Majnūn stands before Laylā's tent in chains reciting poetry, nor are there palm trees indicating the second meeting facilitated by the old man. In all meetings, there was no indication of a camel, palanquin or servant.⁵⁹

The symbolism of the deer as a proxy or symbol for Laylā is consistent in each version of the *Laylā and Majnūn* silks; in the dark satin lampas signed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn,

Majnūn holds the deer in his lap (fig. 6). The signature of the designer is written *Amal-e Ghiyāth* (“work of Ghiyāth”) in *naskhi* calligraphy, in a cartouche located on the palanquin directly beneath Laylā as she rests her head in her hand. Several fragments of this design (perhaps originally part of one garment) are dispersed among the Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum in New York (1902-1-780), the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (28.17), and the Designmuseum Danmark in Copenhagen (B21/1931).

A similar design, a red and gold satin lampas also depicting Laylā venturing to Majnūn in the wilderness, is also signed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn and now resides in The Textile Museum (fig. 7). A view of the whole fragment, which includes selvages, shows the design executed in a half-brick repeat, with alternating rows featuring either Laylā or Majnūn. The figures are posed differently as well from Ghiyāth’s other signed lampas design. Majnūn holds his head in his hand, while the deer and other animals are surrounding him, rather than holding the deer in his lap. Laylā reaches out to him from her palanquin, where the designer has cleverly signed his name in *Kufīc* within an eight-pointed star. Unlike the black lampas, there is no servant or intermediary between the lovers included in this design.

A third design depicting Laylā and Majnūn is also executed in red: an unsigned velvet in the Keir collection (fig. 8) shows Majnūn reaching out to Laylā, who holds a sleeve-covered hand to her mouth in horror at his disheveled state. Majnūn is emaciated, and there is a thin line on his upper body meant to outline his rib cage. We cannot see whether or not there is a deer in Majnūn’s lap due to deterioration of the textile; however, there are two deer sitting together peacefully between the couple; a metaphor perhaps of their eventual union in paradise. The date of manufacture listed by the museum is the late

sixteenth century; Friedrich Spuhler, formerly the Islamic curator at the Keir Collection, declares this the product of a royal workshop, under Shāh Abbas I or Shāh Tahmāsp.⁶⁰

In another design executed in velvet now at The State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Majnūn is alone in the desert with a deer in his lap (fig. 9). This is the closest representation to Niẓāmī's narrative describing Majnūn's solitary wandering. In this depiction, Majnūn has a contented look on his face, and isn't quite as emaciated as he is in the Keir velvet; the deer covers his torso, so the outlining of the rib cage cannot be determined. This textile was fashioned as a chasuble and attributed to sixteenth century Iran.⁶¹

The aforementioned Timurid and Safavid era paintings in extant manuscripts of the *Khamṣa* show Majnūn in a similar scenario, usually fondling a deer, nude to the waist and surrounded by animals in the desert wilderness. Laylā is never included in this scene. When comparing the unsigned Hermitage velvet to the Safavid album drawing or manuscript painting, there is much more similarity to Niẓāmī's Majnūn than in the designs featuring both lovers.

A final red and white silk executed in double cloth shows Laylā and Majnūn closer to each other than any other design, with large-scale foliage in the background dwarfing them in the wilderness (fig. 10). Majnūn holds a deer in his lap while he perches on a jagged rock. The figures are miniscule, measuring only a few inches tall. Fragments of this design reside in multiple institutions, including The Textile Museum (1969.36.1), the Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum (1902-1-379), and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (916-1897).

Another double cloth, possibly produced by the same workshop, depicts the romance within a romance of *Shīrīn and Farhād* (fig. 11). The largest fragment of this design resides at the Metropolitan Museum (46.156.7), and is one of two layouts in the *Khamṣa* group that feature a compartmentalized layout. The lovers are placed in separate rectangular registers alternating with cypress trees flanked by Safavid courtiers. Here, we see Farhād toiling beside the channel he has carved for Shīrīn's milk, closely resembling the manuscript painting in the Metropolitan Museum *Khamṣa*. Departing from Nizāmī's narrative, the designer has depicted fish in the channel, as if it were a running stream rather than milk. The borders on the vertical registers contain poetry, but not quoting Nizāmī's text. They read:

The splendor of your figure [comes] from beauty.
It has given life to this outer cloak.
There has never been a garment of such beauty.
One might say it has been woven from the threads of your soul.⁶²

The quote implies that the end use of these double-cloth woven figural textiles were intended as garments, a likely function when examining the triangular shape of additional fragments of the Laylā and Majnūn double cloth design.⁶³ Extant fragments of the same design reside at The Textile Museum (3.280), and the Yale Art Gallery (1937.4625).

Sharing the technique and color scheme of the *Shīrīn and Farhād* silk, two additional textiles featuring narrative figural designs should also be noted. The first is a red and white double cloth, the second of the two designs arranged in a compartmentalized layout. This silk depicts scenes of three sets of lovers from Persian literature, each interacting with each other in recognizable scenes representing the arc of each narrative: Laylā and Majnūn in the wilderness, Khusrau and Shīrīn in the bathing scene, and the

addition of another set of lovers not featured in Nizāmī's work: Yusef and Zuleikha (fig. 12).⁶⁴ Anonymous Persian poetic verses in *Naskhi* calligraphy are arranged in rectangular registers throughout the design, appearing in reverse in alternating rows due to the use of vertical reflection. They are loosely translated: "Sleep soundly and from our friendship glad tidings will arise,"⁶⁵ representing an anonymous poet. The only known or published fragment of this silk resides at The British Museum, and is ascribed with a later date of manufacture in the early seventeenth century. In *The Golden Age of Persian Art*, scholar and former British Museum curator Sheila Canby posits that the silk may have been produced by the same workshop that produced the Shīrīn and Farhād textile (fig. 11).⁶⁶

The final design in this group features Khusrau and Shīrīn. The small extant fragment is also woven as double cloth, executed in polychromatic silk without the inclusion of metal thread. The silk fragment resides in the collection at the Yale University Art Gallery and depicts the two protagonists in the bathing scene (fig. 12). Also arranged in vertical registers, the main elements of the design appear in cream on colored grounds that alternate with the characters in ruby red, ochre yellow and sea green, separated by pale yellow borders with floral sprigs. Khusrau rides on horseback along the road to Armenia with a servant; Shīrīn is seated cross-legged in a circular pool washing her hair, her horse grazing nearby in a floriated landscape. The lovers are separated by registers of a brief repeating poetic phrase, for which no translation is published, but could be: "In the shadow (of the beloved), (I am) happy and fortunate as kings" (transliteration: *Az zelash shād va dowlatmand chon khusravān*, a play on the name *Khusrau*.)⁶⁷ This textile is also assigned a date of manufacture in the early seventeenth century, but it is difficult to verify if it originates from the same workshop as the other double cloths.

As noted, the scene of Laylā visiting Majnūn in the wilderness never occurs in Nizāmī's narrative, nor are there any known Timurid or Safavid manuscript illustrations of the two lovers alone together in a similar environment.⁶⁸ Nizāmī's narrative places the lovers together only twice during the period of madness and separation: at Laylā's camp when Majnūn comes as a beggar with the old woman, and in the palm grove, a meeting facilitated by an old man. These meetings are not always depicted in Safavid versions of the *Khamṣa*, but Timurid versions depicting the lovers together include both mediators at the site, with tents in the background indicating proximity to Laylā's camp. When Majnūn is wandering in the desert wilderness of Najd, he is isolated from his beloved in these scenes, surrounded only by the wild animals sympathetic to his wild nature.

Therefore, in this group of six silks depicting Laylā and Majnūn, only one remains faithful to Nizāmī's narrative: the metal-thread velvet at The State Hermitage Museum (fig. 9) that depicts a dreamy Majnūn with a deer in his lap. The other five designs, including the two signed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn, do not seem to correspond with Nizāmī's poem, nor with manuscript illustrations.

All eleven silks in this group are dated by the collections that house them as having been produced in the latter half of the sixteenth century or the early part of the seventeenth century. The great variation in woven techniques indicates that the designs may have been woven in different workshops for different purposes and consumers. Because several of the versions are unsigned, it cannot be known with certainty if these designers had access to illustrated manuscripts of the *Khamṣa*, as Ghiyāth al-Dīn may have had. And yet, there is a shared visual language among them.

The development of narrative figural iconography in silk is specific to this particular era in the Islamic world; so why, at this particular moment in time and history, did these stories take on significance and popularity? Luxury textiles are intended to impress viewers, a point that must be taken into account when determining the relationship of artist and patron, designer and consumer. Trends in the textile industry must address a widespread interest in the product, in order for supply to meet demand so independent designers could profit from the venture.

One possible hypothesis is that the earliest versions of these silks are those signed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn, which may have found their way from the royal manufactories to the bazaar, encouraging designers to emulate his subject matter—or to create what we call in the modern vernacular, “designer knock-offs.” Similar to today’s designer garments, the high price point of silks woven with gold thread and signed by a well-known artist would have been unattainable for most consumers. Therefore, fabrics produced with similar iconography, using less expensive materials and more expedient techniques, would have delivered the same message to the viewer, servicing affluent consumers outside the court circle.⁶⁹ It is unknown whether the textiles in the unsigned group were produced by competitors in separate workshops; presumably, there would have been more than one workshop competing for the business of the upper middle class consumer. However, the primary source materials do not specify this information, and this point remains somewhat speculative.

Related to this point, this group of textiles demonstrates a vast range of techniques representing the same subject matter, with potentially vast variation in worth. In terms of

cost on the open market, the most expensive of these textiles would have been the metal-thread velvets, of which there are two depicting *Khusrau and Shīrīn* (fig. 1 and fig. 4) and one depicting *Laylā and Majnūn* (fig. 9). Next in cost are the silk velvets woven without metal threads, one *Khusrau and Shīrīn* (fig. 2) and one *Laylā and Majnūn* (fig. 8). Following these, the two metal-thread satin lampas silks depicting *Laylā and Majnūn* (fig. 6 and fig. 7), both of which bear Ghiyāth's signature, and lastly, the double cloth designs of *Laylā and Majnūn* (fig. 10) and *Shīrīn and Farhād* (fig. 11), which include some now-tarnished silver threads alternating with red and white silk. Costs would have been lowest for the final red and white double cloth featuring three sets of lovers from the poetry: *Khusrau and Shīrīn*, *Laylā and Majnūn*, and *Yusef and Zuleikha*. The polychromatic double cloth depicting *Khusrau and Shīrīn* stands in a category by itself, but falls within the same price point as the other designs executed in double cloth.⁷⁰ The techniques and materials displayed indicates that the consumers of this type of cloth probably included royalty as well as the upper and wealthy middle classes, also indicating that the iconography and narratives for Nizāmī's lovers were easily recognized by the late sixteenth century. This is a reasonable assumption, given the popularity of Nizami's poetry: from the educated elite, who were well versed in medieval Persian classic literature, to the middle class who attended the newly popularized coffee houses in Isfahan and other urban centers, where narrators "performed" the stories by reciting the poems from memory from the early seventeenth century onwards.⁷¹

However, the greatest distinction between the textiles in this group lies in the fact that the *Khusrau and Shīrīn* images correspond so closely to Safavid manuscript paintings

of Nizāmī's *Khamṣa*, but the *Laylā and Majnūn* images diverge from the text in their representations.

There were, in fact, several paintings of Laylā and Majnūn together in the wilderness produced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. However, none of them are included in manuscripts of Nizāmī's *Khamṣa*. They are found illustrating another *Khamṣa*: that of Turco-Indian poet, Amīr Khusrau Dihlavi (1253-1325), who composed his own quintet of poems on the same subject matter between 1298-1302 in response to Nizāmī's great work.⁷²

Amīr Khusrau was the first of several poets to respond to Nizami's *Khamṣa* with works of his own, composed in Persian in the same meter, a practice sometimes referred to as "literary imitation."⁷³ A court poet for several successive rulers in Delhi, Amīr Khusrau also wrote in Persian, employing the same meter and poetic style as Nizāmī, but differentiating his work from Nizāmī. In addition to inverting the title names of his epic poems to *Shīrīn and Khusrau* and *Majnūn and Laylā*, Amīr Khusrau altered the narratives somewhat, including adding a scene in which Laylā goes to visit Majnūn in the wilderness with her camel and palanquin.⁷⁴ This scene is often part of the cycle of illustrations for illustrated manuscripts of Amīr Khusrau's *Khamṣa*, and is one of the most commonly depicted scenes.⁷⁵

A late Timurid illustrated *Khamṣa* of Amīr Khusrau dated 1485 and attributed to Bihzad, the same artist that supervised the workshop that produced the Metropolitan Museum *Khamṣa* of Nizāmī manuscript paintings, shows Laylā's camel in the lower left of the composition, with Laylā embracing Majnūn.⁷⁶ The four silks in the group placing

the lovers together include several of these details. In some paintings as well as the two lampas designs signed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn, Layla has arrived on a camel riding in a palanquin, which also corresponds with Amīr Khusrau's narrative.

Mughal paintings of the same scene in the sixteenth century include several of the same elements of the composition. A painting from a *Khamisa* of Amīr Khusrau, produced at the Mughal Court in the 1590s, shows the lovers in a similar scene in the wilderness surrounded by animals (fig. 14). Attributed to Sanwalah and residing at the Cleveland Museum of Art, this image shows Laylā embracing an emaciated Majnūn as her camel grazes nearby, balancing the draped red palanquin on its back. Shocked at Majnūn's condition, she exhibits the iconic gesture of surprise by holding one finger to her mouth.

Although the lampas designs signed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn show Laylā in her palanquin while she journeys to Majnūn rather than the two embracing, the double cloth and Keir velvet depicting the lovers place the couple much closer together, and more similar in composition to the paintings. Majnūn is depicted in both of these unsigned versions with details emphasizing his ascetic condition, such as the outlining of the rib cage and an ultra thin waist.⁷⁷ Illustrations of Amīr Khusrau's *Majnūn and Laylā* in sixteenth and seventeenth century Mughal paintings also echo these details, which makes one wonder if these manuscripts are indeed the ones that these unidentified textile designers have been looking at, if they were looking at paintings for inspiration.

In Amīr Khusrau's *Shīrīn and Khusrau*, the narrative is also altered. The bathing scene is omitted, and the author adds other events that create a different cycle of illustration in extant manuscripts than those in Niẓāmī's *Khamisa*. Even in Mughal manuscripts of

Nizāmī's *Khamṣa*, in which the bathing scene is faithfully included in the text, paintings depicting Khusrau and Shīrīn in the erotic bathing scene are noticeably absent.⁷⁸ It seems clear that the *Khusrau and Shīrīn* silks are depicting Nizāmī's poem, while the *Laylā and Majnūn* silks are depicting Amīr Khusrau's poem. Several questions remain, such as whether the latter textiles were produced for the Mughal court by Safavid weavers in Iran, or in a Mughal Indian textile workshop. The possibilities must be explored in the context of textile production in sixteenth and seventeenth century Mughal India.

Keeping in mind that Nizāmī's work was composed in the twelfth century, and that countless others—including Dihlavī, Hilālī, Hātefī, Jāmī and 'Alī Shīr Navā'i—wrote their own versions of the same characters, the possibility that these silks may be representing other versions of the stories is very strong.

NOTES

¹ The Saljūqs were Central Asian Turkic leaders who conquered Iran in the tenth century, and like many of the non-indigenous groups who ruled in Iran, they quickly assimilated to Persian culture. The Saljūqs created a tri-partite government comprised of Turkic rulers, Arab clergymen and Iranian administrators, who established Persian as the language of the court.

² Poetry had become a signifier of nationalism more than one hundred years before Nizāmī's time. The great poet Abul Qasem Ferdowsī (940-1019)² codified the history of Iranian kingship in his Persian national epic, the *Shāhnāma* (The Book of Kings). Completed ca. 1010 and spanning approximately thirty years in its production, the *Shāhnāma* is composed of fifty thousand rhyming couplets called *maṣnavī*. The epic work was a reaction against the Arab influence in Iran following the Islamic conquest, celebrating the ancient culture and language of the region. Ferdowsī's *Shāhnāma* established Persian as the preferred language of literature, the composition in *maṣnavī* as the poetic style, and the patronage of the ruling class as a model for later poets throughout the Islamic world. The major works by Ferdowsī and Nizāmī became the most illustrated manuscripts in the Islamic world.

³ For a complete Persian-English translation of the introduction to Nizāmī's *Laylā and Majnūn*, see the monograph by S. Lornejad and A. Doostzadeh, *On the Modern Politicization of the Persian Poet Nezami Ganjavi*, edited by Victoria Arakelova, (Yerevan: Caucasian Centre for Iranian Studies, 2012), 50-57.

⁴ The more intimate details of Nizāmī's life are rooted in the *Khamṣa* itself, such as the character of Shīrīn being modeled on Āfāq, and his fatherly concern for educating his son to lead a proper life by learning from the examples of the male characters in his narratives.

⁵ An alternate translation of *Makhzan al-Asrar* is "The Treasury of Secrets." See Barbara Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamṣa of Nizāmī* (London: British Library, 1995), 6.

⁶ Nizāmī's first wife, Āfāq, was Nizāmī's great love and the mother of his only son, Muhammad. Āfāq is speculated to have been the model for the faithful and clever Shīrīn in *Khusrau and Shīrīn* in a lengthy commentary on Nizāmī's *Khamṣa* by Iranian scholar Vahid Dastgerdi, "Kolliyāt Nezami Ganjavi" (the 5 collections of Nezami Ganjavi) (Tehran: 1939). For more speculation on Nizāmī's wife Āfāq as the model for Shīrīn, see Lornejad and Doostzadeh, *On the Modern Politicization of the Persian Poet Nezami Ganjavi*, 173.

⁷ The order of Nizāmī's poems in extant manuscripts of the *Khamṣa* does not reflect the chronological order of his work. The *Haft Paykar* has a later date of completion (1197) than *Iskandarnama* (1194), but they are arranged in extant manuscripts in the order listed above. It is interesting to observe that Amīr Khusrau's *Khamṣa*, which was produced as a response to his predecessor's work earlier than the oldest extant manuscript of Nizāmī's *Khamṣa*, places these last two poems in order of Nizāmī's chronology: *Ayineh-yi Iskandari* is the fourth poem, and *Hasht Behesht* is the final work. This suggests that the order of

earlier copies of Nizāmī may have been arranged differently. See Domenico Parrello, “Kamsa Of Nezāmi,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition 2010 available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kamsa-of-nezami> (accessed on October 21, 2016.)

⁸ In addition to being copied in fine calligraphic script, Nizāmī’s *Khamṣa* provided a wealth of metaphoric imagery that easily lent itself to manuscript illustration. Due to the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century, no complete copies from the earlier era exist; the oldest dated manuscript among the extant copies of the entire *Khamṣa* is dated 1362 (AH 763) and belongs to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Supplément persan 1817), with subsequent copies produced in book-making workshops on commission for private collections and as gifts throughout the Timurid and Safavid eras.

⁹ For an English translation of Nizāmī’s “Khusrau and Shīrīn” see Peter J. Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: 1975), 21-45. The published volume includes color reproductions of manuscript paintings from a *Khamṣa* of Nizāmī at The Metropolitan Museum (13.228.7) also discussed in this study.

¹⁰ Ibid., 27.

¹¹ Although Nizāmī does not name the Byzantine Emperor, the time period of Khusrau’s struggle corresponds with the reign of Maurice (r. 582-602) and it is documented that Maurice helped Khusrau with an army of 35,000 men to regain his throne in 591, against a unanimous Senate vote. For a translation of the letter that Khusrau wrote to Maurice requesting assistance, see Wilhelm Baum, *Shīrīn: Christian-Queen-Myth of Love: A Woman of Late Antiquity--Historical Reality and Literary Effect* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2004), 22. Baum also questions the validity of the marriage of Khusrau to Maryam/Maria; see 26-30 of the same publication.

¹² Nizāmī writes that Shīrīn offers Farhād a drink from her flask of milk; then as she sets off on her horse, he stumbles; horse and rider fall to the ground. Farhād lifts them both up on his shoulders and carries them all the way to Shīrīn’s residence. See Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World*, 37.

¹³ The *Khamṣa* of Nizāmī manuscript was purchased in 1908 by the dealer F.R. Martin in Paris from an unnamed Armenian merchant who had acquired it “from the women of the Harem,” claiming that the Shāh gave it to them to pay for their dresses and perfume. The MS was a Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran in 1913 to the Metropolitan Museum. See F.R. Martin, *The Nizāmī MS. From the Library of the Shāh of Persia, Now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (Vienna: Adolph Holzhausen, 1910), 7-8.

¹⁴ According to F.R. Martin, the Safavid seal is now scratched out and was replaced with a later Qajar inscription: “This was written in the month of Zu’l Hijja, 1260” (A.D. 1844) Underneath is a seal with the name Sultan Husain, 1260 [second son of Fath Ali Shāh]. Paintings originally had the word “waqf” written, now covered with colors.” See Martin, *The Nizāmī MS. From the Library of the Shāh of Persia*, 10.

¹⁵ For Timurid examples of the bathing scene in Nizāmī's *Khusrau and Shīrīn*, see F.1931.32 at the Freer Sackler Galleries, Washington D.C. or 28.22 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

¹⁶ For color reproductions of this velvet depicting Khusrau and Shīrīn, see "Safavid Carpets and Textiles" by Jon Thompson in Jon Thompson and Sheila Canby, ed., *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts in Safavid Iran 1501-1576* (Milan: Skira, 2003), Figure 12.5; and Gulru Necipoglu, "Early Modern Floral: The Agency of Ornament in Ottoman and Safavid Visual Cultures," in *Histories of Ornament*, Ed. Gulru Necipoglu and Alina Payne (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), Figure 11.3 c. Thus far, the Topkapi fragment of this textile design executed in velvet is the only one of which I am aware.

¹⁷ See Milton Sonday, "Patterns and Weaves: Safavid Lampas and Velvet" in Carol Bier, Ed., *Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart*, Figure 7; A.F. Kendrick and T.W. Arnold, "Persian Stuffs with Figure Subjects I," Figure 1 and Plate I A. See Sonday's drawing for a larger repeat in the reconstructed design.

¹⁸ Due to the arrangement of the motifs, the technical repeat unit is considerably larger than other designs depicting Khusrau and Shīrīn, measuring approximately 112.5 cm (44.25 in) x 34 cm (13.5 in).

¹⁹ The velvet signed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn depicting the bathing scene of Khusrau and Shīrīn has been published in Bier, ed. *Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart*, No. 29; two lobed medallions at the Keir Collection have been published in Friedrich Spuhler, *Islamic Carpets and Textiles in the Keir Collection* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1978), color plates 94 and 95. The oblong fragment in the Montreal Museum of Fine Art was published by Hayat Salam Liebich, "A Little Known Collection of Islamic Art," *Apollo* 103 (May 1976): 380-383; and by the same author titled "Masterpieces of Persian Art from the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Collection," *Iranian Studies* 25, no. 1/2 (1990), 19-29.

²⁰ The tradition of royal tents decorated with precious luxury silks is depicted in paintings from Safavid Iran as early as the mid-sixteenth century, and Mughal India in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Additionally, the diplomatic exchange in 1576 of an imperial tent decorated with jewels from the court of Shāh Tahmāsp (r.1524-76) to Sultan Murad III (r.1574-1595) led to the Ottoman acquisition of such fine textiles. Though the tent no longer exists in the Topkapi holdings, the exchange was depicted in an Ottoman painting in the *Šāhanšāh-nāma* in 1581 (Istanbul University Library, no. F1404). For more information, see Zeren Tanındı, "Topkapi Palace" *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2008, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/topkapi-palace> (accessed on 10 February 2017). The painting does not illustrate the details of the tent cloth, but instead depicts the construction of the tent itself.

²¹ For a drawing of the reconstruction of this design, see Sonday, "Patterns and Weaves: Safavid Lampas and Velvet," fig. 7, 67.

²² Though works by less renowned artists remained unsigned, it was becoming common by the sixteenth century in Iran for venerated artists to sign their works with their first name

preceded by “work of,” translated from both Persian and Arabic as *Amal*. For an example in painting, see “A Young Aristocrat and His Friends” by court painter Bihzad in a *Divan* of Hafez, 1581-86, in the Topkapi Palace Library, H.986, folio 111b.

²³ See Phyllis Ackerman, “Ghiyāth, Persian Master Weaver” in *Apollo* 18 (1933), 252-256, and Phyllis Ackerman, “A Biography of Ghiyāth the Weaver” in *Bulletin of the American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology*, 7 (1934), 9-13. In the earlier publication, Ackerman writes: “Ghiyāth was first introduced to art historians by a Naskhi signature on a black Persian satin, with a representation in dull yellows of Leila [sic] riding forth on her camel to the meeting with Majnūn, was a noted minor design that, on analysis, proved to be the name Ghiyāth” (*Apollo* 18, 252). Ackerman also cites in a footnote on the same page the publication by F.R. Martin, *Figural Persische Stoffe aus dem Zeitraum 1550-1650* (Stockholm, 1899) as the earliest art historical publication bringing Ghiyāth’s name to light.

²⁴ The title “Kwaja Ghiyāth al-Dīn ‘Alī Naqshbandi Yazdi” is translated: “The Honorable Ghiyāth al-Dīn ‘Alī, textile designer from Yazd,” indicating both the profession and regional location of his family and/or workshop. See Robert Skelton, “Ghiyāth al-Dīn ‘Alī-yi Naqshband and an Episode in the Life of Sadiqi Beg,” 249-263.

²⁵ *Tazkira* (pl. *tazkirāt*) is defined by Robert Skelton as “biographical notices of poets and men of learning,” 249.

²⁶ *Tazkira-i Nasrabadi* (Tehran: Armaghan Press, 1316-17 H./1937-8). Nasrabadi cites “Ghiyāth-i Nakshband” as a “Weaver of the firmament” who produced gold brocades which were presented to Shāh Abbas, including a coat; he is also a poet and a few of his verses are quoted.

²⁷ Skelton, “Ghiyāth al-Dīn ‘Alī-yi Naqshband and an Episode in the Life of Sadiqi Beg,” 250. Skelton includes a passage describing Ghiyāth al-Dīn from the *Majma’ al-Khavāṣṣ* and notes that the court painter Sadiqi Beg also visited Ghiyāth at his home in Yazd, as inscribed on a drawing dated 1580. This is the only mention of Ghiyāth by one of his contemporaries. Skelton’s article includes appendices with excerpts from primary sources with English translations, 257-261. Included in the group of *tazkirāt* including information on Ghiyāth al-Dīn: Muhammad Mufid Mustaufi Baqfi, *Jāmi’-i Mufīdī*, vol. 3, Tehran, 1340 H., 426-431 (Appendix B in Skelton), who wrote his discourse from approximately 1080/1671-2-1679; Sadiqi Beg Kitabdar, *Majma’ al-Khavāṣṣ*, Persian translation of the Chagatai text by ‘Abd al-Rasul Khayampur (Tabriz, 1327 H./1948-9)(Appendix C) .

²⁸ For a translation, see H. Blochmann, *The A’in-i Akbarī by Abul Fazl ‘Allamī, translated from the original Persian*, vol. I, Calcutta, 1873, p. 88, 616-7.

²⁹ Skelton 2000, 259.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 260.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Ibid., 258.

³³ For more information on the character and reign of Shāh Abbas I (r.1587-1629), see Sheila Canby, *Shāh Abbas: The Remaking of Iran* (London: British Museum, 2009); also see David Blow, *Shāh Abbas: The Ruthless King Who Became an Iranian Legend* (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2009).

³⁴ See Skelton, “Ghiyāth al-Dīn ‘Alī-yi Naqshband and an Episode in the Life of Sadiqi Beg,” 250 for discussion of Ghiyāth’s proclamation of being both a designer and a weaver. See also Anthony Welch, *Artists for the Shāh* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London: 1976).

³⁵ With regard to textiles, Steingrass defines “naqshbandi” as ‘embroidery, but it can also mean brocade weaving.’

³⁶ The *Burhān-i Qatī* [sic *Borhān-e Qate*] was an alphabetically arranged Persian dictionary completed in 1651 by Muhammad Husayn b. Kalaf Tabrizi, whose pen name was Burhan. Of Persian origin, Burhan dedicated the work to his patron, Abd-Allah Qotbash, the seventh sultan of the Shi’a dynasty of Golconda in the Deccan. For more information see Mohammad Dabirsiāqi, “Borhān-e Qate” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/borhan-e-qate> (accessed on 26 September 2016). Also referenced in Skelton 2000, 263, Note 54.

³⁷ *Jāmi’-i Muḥīdī* trans. Skelton, “Ghiyāth al-Dīn ‘Alī-yi Naqshband and an Episode in the Life of Sadiqi Beg,” 258.

³⁸ Early Safavid practices and procedures with regard to the *kitab-khāna* is documented in the manual of Safavid administration dating from the end of the dynasty. See Shreve-Simpson, 110, after Vladimir Minorsky, trans. and expl., *Tadhkirat al-Muluk: A Manual of Safavid Administration* (London, 1943; repr. 1980).

³⁹ Sheila Canby, “The World of the Early Safavids: Shāh Tahmāsp at Qazvin,” in *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran* (New York: Asia Society, 2003), 22; after Marianna Shreve Simpson, “The Making of Manuscripts and the Workings of the Kitab-Khāna in Safavid Iran,” *Studies in the History of Art*, Vol. 38, Symposium Papers XXII: The Artist’s Workshop (1993), 104-121. In addition to Shāh Tahmāsp, whose *kitabkhāna* produced the famous *Shāhnāma* (1524-5) also at the Metropolitan Museum (1970.301), other Safavid royal patrons include his father, Shāh Ismail; Bahram Mirza, Sam Mirza and Ibrahim Mirza, whose *kitābkhāna* produced the *Haft Awrang* manuscript at the Freer Sackler Galleries (F46.12), as well as other manuscripts in American and European collections. Later Safavid patrons include Ismail II and Shāh Abbas I.

⁴⁰ See Shreve Simpson, “The Making of Manuscripts and the Workings of the Kitab-Khāna in Safavid Iran” on the workings and structure of the *kitab-khāna*. Shreve-Simpson notes that “in Safavid Iran...the making of manuscripts occupied as much, if not more, energy that any of the other visual arts (except perhaps textiles),” 105.

⁴¹ For more on the decorative modes, see Gulru Necipoglu, “Early Modern Floral: The Agency of Ornament in Ottoman and Safavid Visual Cultures,” in *Histories of Ornament: From Global to Local*, ed. Gulru Necipoglu and Alina Payne (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 134-135, and 138.

⁴² Thompson, “Safavid Carpets and Textiles,” 278.

⁴³ Shreve Simpson, “The Making of Manuscripts and the Workings of the Kitāb-Khāna in Safavid Iran,” 112.

⁴⁴ The *Haft Awrang* of Jami at the Freer-Sackler galleries produced by the *kitāb-khāna* of Sultan Ibrahim Mirza is signed by his illuminator, Muhibb’Alī, as “*kitāb-dār*.” See Shreve Simpson, “The Making of Manuscripts and the Workings of the Kitāb-Khāna in Safavid Iran,” 108.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 112; after Lentz and Lowry 1989, 311-12. It was not clear if the date of the decree was before or after Shāh Tahmāsp’s ascension to the throne.

⁴⁶ See Thompson, “Safavid Carpets and Textiles,” 311, n. 27; Thackston 1989, 323-27 and Thackston 2001, 43-46.

⁴⁷ For a review of the relationship between artists working in different media in the early Safavid era, see Thompson, “Safavid Carpets and Textiles,” 278-279. Thompson also reviews twentieth century scholarship of Safavid textiles and carpets that is erroneous, unfounded, and misleading study in the same essay, 271-273.

⁴⁸ Mary Anderson McWilliams, “Prisoner Imagery in Safavid Textiles,” *Textile Museum Journal*, Vol. 26 (1987): 5-23.

⁴⁹ Shāh Tahmāsp (r.1524-76) at the time of his death was in possession of over 30,000 fine silk robes. See Patricia Baker, *Islamic Textiles* (British Museum Press, London: 1995), 113.

⁵⁰ Procedures of gift-giving in the Safavid court is detailed in the early 18th century manual, *Tadhkirat al-Mulk*, written ca. 1725. For more on the history of *khil’at*, see Patricia Baker, “Islamic Honorific Garments,” *Costume* 25 (1991): 25-35.

⁵¹ Thompson, “Safavid Carpets and Textiles,” 282.

⁵² There is excellent information on the materials, techniques and style of a group of 17th century Safavid velvets in Carol Bier, *The Persian Velvets at Rosenborg* (Copenhagen: De Danske Kongers Kronologiske Samling, Rosenborg, 1995). However, Bier asserts that attempting to identify production details considering weave structure and other technical aspects of textiles is a hypothetical exercise, not supported by sufficient textual evidence. See p. 32-33.

⁵³ Thompson, 285; after Sondag, Bier ed., “Patterns and Weaves: Safavid Lampas and Velvet,” 1987.

⁶³ For the relationship between independent workshops and the government during the Safavid era, see Mehdi Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life in the Later Safavid Period* (Ph.D. dissertation, School of Oriental Studies, Durham University, 1980), 73-74.

⁵⁴ Seventeenth century primary sources point to production in Yazd and Kashan for velvets; for a list of European primary sources citing location of velvet manufacture, see the Analytical Bibliography in Bier, *The Persian Velvets at Rosenborg*, 106. In terms of royally sponsored velvets at the *Kārkhāna-i khaṣṣ*, these were determined by the location of the Safavid court; in the latter half of the sixteenth century the court was located in Qazvin (1555/6-1598), then Isfahan (1598-1722). The *kārkhāna* in Qazvin may have also been producing for the court early into the seventeenth century, after the move to Isfahan.

⁵⁵ This question has been pondered by several scholars. Loukonine and Ivanov, 1996, 49.

⁵⁶ Some issues with regard to the development of the *naqsheh* are still a mystery, such as whether or not the painters in the *kitābkhāna* developed a *cartoon* for the textiles which were then put into repeat by the *naqshband*. Definitive proof would have to come from a surviving signed, dated drawing indicating as much; anything less would be conjecture.

⁵⁷ The relationship between self-expression and garments made from figural silks is expanded upon in my 2007 thesis publication, *Donning the Cloak: Safavid Figural Silks and the Display of Identity* [http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/3421/].

⁵⁸ The transliteration for the Persian reads: *Khūn kon kafanam ke man shāhīdam/tā bāshad rang-e rūz-e eidam*.

⁵⁹ In the palm grove meeting there was no camel, palanquin or servant; an old man facilitated the meeting.

⁶⁰ Spuhler writes: “The fineness of the work and comparison with paintings leave no doubt that this velvet was woven in a court manufacture under Shāh ‘Abbās I, or even under Shāh Tahmāsp.” See Friedrich Spuhler, *Islamic Carpets and Textiles in the Keir Collection* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), 166.

⁶¹ This work is listed in the exhibition catalogue *Lost Treasures of Persia: Persian Art in the Hermitage Museum* as being transferred in 1930 from the history museum, Moscow (Inv.No. IR-2327) See Valdimir Loukonine and Anatoli Ivanov, *Lost Treasures of Persia: Persian Art in the Hermitage Museum* (Washington D.C.: Mage Publishers, 1995), Cat. No. 182.

⁶² For the English translation with original Persian, see Maryam Ekhtiar et al, *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), cat. no. 172, 248.

⁶³ Garments in 17th century Iran consisted of an overcoat, which by mid-century had become a knee-length coat with a cross-over front and an A-line silhouette [also described as bell-shaped]. For a contemporary depiction of Safavid garments for both men and women, see Jean Chardin, *Travels in Persia 1633-1677* (New York: Dover, 1988).

⁶⁴ The historic personages of Yūsuf and Zuleikha are included in both the Old Testament [Joseph and Potiphar's wife] and the Qur'an. The depiction of these lovers on the British Museum double cloth is probably inspired by the epic poem *Yūsuf and Zuleikhā*, written by Persian poet Jāmī in the fifteenth century. His love story is stylistically and poetically derived from Nizāmī's *Khamṣa* romances, but he takes liberties with the tale to create a mystical allegory. The *naqshband* was obviously inspired to add this third love story as part of the collection of great Persian romances; Laylā, Majnūn, Shīrīn and Farhād are all mentioned by name in Jami's prologue to the tale. For an English translation, see Jāmī, trans. David Pendlebury, *Yūsuf and Zuleikhā* (London: The Octagon Press, 1980).

⁶⁵ Translated in Patricia Baker, *Islamic Textiles* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 118. It is curious to note that instead of quoting the poetry of the original authors, the *naqshband* here is quoting a lesser known poet; or, perhaps in the tradition of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, writes original verse which he has included here as a demonstration of his skill.

⁶⁶ The red and white double cloth featuring three sets of lovers is determined to have a later date of manufacture based on the dress styles of the characters depicted, which correspond with Safavid figure paintings from the early 17th century by Rizā Abbāsī and the Isfahan school of painters. See Sheila Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Publishing, 2000), 109.

⁶⁷ The verses are in *Nasta'liq* calligraphy, with diacritical marks decoratively overlapping; this makes the text difficult to read and translate. The author of this brief phrase is unidentified. Persian transliteration: *Az zelash shād va dowlatmand chon khusravān*, translation courtesy of Dr. G. Malek Hedayat.

⁶⁸ This observation was also noted by Mary Anderson McWilliams, with acknowledgement to Marianna Shreve Simpson for pointing out the discrepancy between this scene with Nizāmī's text. However, in that publication the question was not explored further. See Bier, ed., *Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart*, Cat. No. 26, 187.

⁶⁹ The point remains unclear as to whether or not certain designs or weaves were regulated by sumptuary laws in the Safavid era. Based on the range of techniques in which this group of figural silks are produced, and the price points associated with the different techniques and materials, it seems reasonable to assume that anyone who could afford these textiles could purchase them for apparel or other uses.

⁷⁰ Abul Fazl provides a list of approximately textile valuations in the last decade of the sixteenth century. See A'in 32, section A: "Gold Stuffs" <http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D00701023%26ct%3D260%26rqs%3D1075> and section B: "Silks & Plain"

⁷¹ Rudi Matthee, “Coffee in Safavid Iran: Commerce and Consumption,” in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1994). Matthee notes the large amounts of coffee sold in Iran, which are largest in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, 5; and also of the popularity and character of coffeehouses noted by visitors such as Pietro Della Valle, Don Garcia de Silva y Fiegueroa, and others who had visited them in Isfahan, sometimes in the presence of Shah ‘Abbas and his entourage, 19-23. References to poetic recitation are also made, 23-24. Nasrabadi’s *Tazkira* also mentions, at the end of the seventeenth century, that poets frequent coffeehouses, and that men of learning and literature congregate there, 25-26. Matthee states: “It is clear, moreover, that coffeehouses served as a forum for a sufi-dominated counter culture which expressed itself in the narration of epic folk tales by wandering dervishes,” 31.

⁷² For a summary of the text of Amīr Khusrau and detailed study of the illustrated *Khamasa* produced under the patronage of Emperor Akbar, see John Seyller, “Pearls of the Parrot of India: The Walters Art Museum “Khamasa” of Amīr Khusraw of Delhi” in *The Journal of the Walters Art Museum* Vol. 58 (2000): 5-176.

⁷³ It was common practice for aspiring poets to create works based on accepted literary masterpieces, and as such, Nizami’s *Khamasa* was a model for his “imitators.” The poetic practice of *javab gu-i* or responding to the work of earlier poets with new poems was a practice already established by the late thirteenth century, when Amīr Khusrau composed his *Khamasa*. For more on literary imitation, see John Seyller, “Pearls of the Parrot of India: The Walters Art Museum “Khamasa” of Amīr Khusraw of Delhi,” 13; also see Annemarie Schimmel, “Amīr Khusrau Dehlavī” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. I, Fasc. 9, pp. 963-965; available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/Amir-kosrow-poet> (accessed November 3, 2016). Nizami himself did not practice literary imitation, as attested to in the *Sharafnama*, 8:6-15, and the introduction to *Layla and Majnun*; see S. Lornejad and A. Doostzadeh, *On the Modern Politicization of the Persian Poet Nezami Ganjavi*, edited by Victoria Arakelova, (Yerevan: Caucasian Centre for Iranian Studies, 2012), 29-30 and 60-61.

⁷⁴ Detailed summaries of Amīr Khusrau’s *Shīrīn and Khusrau* and *Majnūn and Laylā* comprise Appendices B and C of this publication.

⁷⁵ For a list of manuscript illustrations by subject matter, see Barbara Brend, *Perspectives on Persian Painting: Illustrations to Amīr Khusrau’s Khamseh* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), Appendix A.

⁷⁶ For a color reproduction and commentary on the painting “Laylā Visits Majnūn in the Wilderness” (1485) by Bihzād, see Ebadollah Bahari, *Bihzad: Master of Persian Painting* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1996), Figure 27, 67. The original resides in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (MS163, f. 120v.)

⁷⁷ The detailed outlining of the rib cage is in line with Hindu depictions of ascetics, and Majnūn is frequently depicted with this detail included. In the red and white double cloth showing a continuous repeat of Laylā and Majnūn (fig. 10), his rib cage is carefully outlined, despite the small scale of the design (the figures are approximately 3.5” wide x 5” tall).

⁷⁸ The *Khamsa* of Nizāmī commissioned by Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1590 includes the bathing scene as part of the narrative, but this is not illustrated in the manuscript. Instead, the first depiction of Khusrau meeting Shīrīn is on the hunting field. See Barbara Brend, *The Emperor Akbar’s Khamsa of Nizāmī* (London: British Library, 1995) for a detailed study of the entire manuscript, now housed at the British Library (BL Or 12208).

Chapter Two: Poets, Painters, and Patrons

The relationship of the two *Khamzas* examined in this study began long before the earliest figural silks depicting the characters were produced in the sixteenth century. By the thirteenth century—one hundred years after Nizāmī completed his *Khamza*—the popular quintet had already traveled to the Delhi sultanates, where the original Persian verses were studied by scholars and aspiring poets, such as Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī. The poet referred to himself as *Tooty-i Hind* (Per., The Parrot of India), perhaps referencing his talent for literary imitation, as well as the eloquence with which he expressed himself.¹

Born Nāṣer-al-Dīn Abu'l-Ḥasan in 1253 at Patiyali on the Ganges River, the poet was later known as Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī (Prince of Delhi), referencing his status at court as a highly respected poet for the Delhi sultans. His father, Amīr Sayfuddin Mahmūd, was a Turk of the Lachin tribe from the region of Balkh in modern-day Afghanistan. To escape the chaos of the Mongol invasions, Sayfuddin had moved to north India where he took service with Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish (r.1211-36) in Delhi, and married the daughter of a highly-placed courtier, 'Imād al-Mulk, an Indian Muslim.² Amīr Khusrau was one of three sons, and expressed pride in his bi-cultural heritage, an aspect of his personal life that would resonate with the rulers of the Mughal dynasty. Similar to those of Nizāmī, several of his verses contain autobiographical information that shed light on his career, including his declaration that he was a childhood prodigy who excelled in composing verses as a schoolboy.³

Following the untimely death of his father in 1261 during battle, eight-year-old Amīr Khusrau went to live with his maternal grandfather. Under the guardianship of 'Imād al-Mulk, Amīr Khusrau was surrounded by prominent members of the Delhi court who

encouraged his skills as a poet. In 1272, Amīr Khusrau met the Sufi shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Auliya, who would become his spiritual leader until the end of his life. The poet praised his shaykh in several written works, and remained his disciple until the end of his teacher's life, whose mystical teachings colored his poetic works.⁴ The opposing worlds of courtly pleasure and spiritual practice were reflected in the range of subjects produced by Amīr Khusrau throughout his career.⁵

Unlike Nizāmī, Amīr Khusrau consistently held the official position as poet laureate under a rapid succession of royal patrons throughout the early part of his career (1272-1296), and is documented in dynastic annals as being part of the inner circle of various rulers. A boon companion for his patrons, Amīr Khusrau traveled extensively with them to different cities every few years until mid-career, when he returned to Delhi and settled into a long period of stability as court poet for 'Alā' al-Dīn Muhammad Khaljī (r.1296-1316), the patron for his *Khamṣa*.⁶ Amīr Khusrau was incredibly prolific; his *Khamṣa* accounts for only a small percentage of the 400,000-500,000 verses he claimed to have written in Persian, in addition to Persian prose and Hindi poetry.⁷

Amīr Khusrau acknowledges his quintet as both homage and response to Nizāmī, while also taking some liberties with the narratives, and emphasizing aspects of the characters that paint them in a slightly different light. His *Khamṣa* is composed in Persian using the *maṣnavī* format and follows the same pattern established by Nizāmī: the opening work is a didactic treatise, followed by four legendary epics. The entire work was completed at great speed between 1298-1302.

Extant manuscripts of his Amīr Khusrau's *Khamṣa* are arranged as follows:

Matla' al-Anvār (Per., “The Ascent of Lights”), 3,010 couplets completed in 1298 in just two weeks during 1298. The romance of *Shīrīn and Khusrau* follows, 4,124 couplets retelling the story of the Sasanian King and his Armenian Queen, completed in 1299. Third in the quintet is *Majnūn and Laylā*, 2,660 couplets about the Bedouin lovers, also completed in 1299. The fourth poem is *Ā'īnah-i Iskandarī* (Per., “Alexander’s Mirror”), 4,450 couplets about the adventures of Alexander the Macedonian, completed 1299-1300.⁸ Finally, the collection culminates in *Hasht Bihisht*, (Per., “The Eighth Paradise”), 3,344 couplets about the Sasanian King Bahram Gur visiting seven princesses in their colored pavilions, culminating in an “eighth paradise” that encloses them, completed 1301-1302.⁹ After Ferdowsi’s *Shāhnāma* and Nizāmī’s *Khamṣa*, the *Khamṣa* of Amīr Khusrau is one of the most frequently illustrated literary works from the Islamic world.¹⁰

Although his *Khamṣa* closely mirrors Nizāmī’s original, elements of the narrative have been altered to represent the storyline and characters differently. In the poet’s *Shīrīn and Khusrau* the title names are reversed, and the bathing scene is notably absent from the narrative. These alterations and additions inspired a new cycle of illustration for the work, and the details in painting further distinguish the poems represented the *Khamṣa* silks.¹¹

Replacing the bathing scene, the erotic moment of the protagonists’ first meeting as they are traveling to meet each other, is a meeting of the lovers with their respective retinues on the hunting ground, a scene often depicted in illustrated manuscripts of Amīr Khusrau’s *Khamṣa*. The relationship between Shīrīn and Farhād is also given much more attention in this version of the tale; Farhād is represented as an eastern prince ostracized by his father for wanting to pursue the arts, and Shīrīn stumbles upon him as he is carving an impressive passage at Mount Bisutun.¹² In the context of the silks, this eliminates the idea

that the textiles depicting Khusrau and Shīrīn, all of which illustrate the bathing scene, are referencing Amīr Khusrau's *Khamṣa*. However, it is possible that the double cloth textile featuring Shīrīn and Farhād may be derived from Amīr Khusrau's telling of the tale.

However, as noted in Chapter One, the silks depicting Laylā and Majnūn together are most likely based on illustrations of Amīr Khusrau's version of the love story. In Amīr Khusrau's *Majnūn and Laylā*, it is the madman who marries against his will, reversing the anguish of the lovers. Majnūn flees to the wilderness in grief and shame; following a beautiful dream in which she has reunited with her lover, Laylā prepares a camel with palanquin and visits Majnūn in the wilderness. Amīr Khusrau has created a situation in which the young lovers are together alone, but still abide by the laws of propriety; the closeness they share does not manifest in a physical union, despite the absence of intermediaries who act as chaperones in Nizāmī's tale. Additionally, Amīr Khusrau's Laylā is the instigator of the union, propelled by her jealousy resulting from Majnūn's forced marriage.

Accepting that the silks depicting the scene of Laylā and Majnūn in the wilderness together (figures 6, 7, 8, 10 and 12) are derived from the illustrations and narrative references to Amīr Khusrau's *Majnūn and Laylā* rather than Nizāmī's earlier version, several questions remain open. One is the location of origin: whether the silks were manufactured in Mughal India or Safavid Iran. Second is the question of intended use and market: whether the silks were intended as items for export on the international market, local market, or woven by commission for the court. A third issue arises with regard to the intended use of the textiles, which may have been either apparel or interior furnishings.¹³ And lastly, the important question of patronage and purpose: whether the silk textiles were

created to signify an association between the characters depicted and their patrons. This last question leads into the larger issue: whether there is an ethnocentrically motivated leaning for either the Mughals or the Safavids to support the poets from their respective regions, or if there are other reasons to depict characters from one narrative vs. the other.

The costly silk weaving techniques of velvet and metal-thread lampas point to royal production based on imagery produced in manuscripts of both *Khamsas*, indicating that the rulers in the time between 1550 and 1650 were familiar with this subject matter. The deeper meaning associated with Majnūn and Khusrau will be given special attention in relationship to the potential patrons of the high-end silks in both Safavid and Mughal contexts.

The Mughal dynasty was founded in the sixteenth century by Bābur, a Central Asian Turk who traced his lineage to Tīmūr (r. 1370-1405) and his Mongol predecessors. The Timurids ruled modern-day Iran, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and northeastern India throughout the fourteenth century, eventually losing all territory except a small principality centered around Kabul. As the tribal ruler of this area, Bābur recognized that the Uzbeks would prevent westward expansion; therefore, he ventured eastwards with his armies to reconquer the rich lands of Northern India, and succeeded in a decisive victory at Panipat in 1526. Soon after taking over the Lodi capital at Agra, Bābur established his new capital near the Jamuna River, where he maintained his seat of power until his death in 1530. Bābur's eldest son, Humāyūn (r. 1530-40, 1555-56), was ruler of the north Indian provinces but lost control of the region to his rival, Sher Afghan, in 1540. He was compelled to seek refuge with his Iranian wife, Hamida Banu, and their young son Akbar (b. 1542) at the

Safavid court of Shah Tahmāsp in 1544. Tahmāsp agreed to assist Humāyūn with the recapture of his lands on the condition that he convert to Shi'ism.¹⁴

Educated in Persian literature as well as the sciences, Humāyūn was welcome to peruse the royal *kitab Khāna* at the Safavid court. His interest in the literary and visual arts was expanding just after Tahmāsp's attentions shifted to statecraft and piety in the 1530s, away from patronage of the book arts. The Safavid ruler allowed several of the masters from his *kārkhāna* to depart for newly regained Mughal territory, including the expert painters Mīr Sayyid 'Alī and Abd as-Samad. These Safavid masters, along with the Indian painters Daswanth, Basawan and others, would fuse the Herat style of painting with Hindu painting styles at the Mughal court during the latter half of the sixteenth century.¹⁵ This syncretic style would reach its mature stage during the latter half of the reign of Homayun's son and successor, Akbar (r. 1556-1605), and was also reflected in textile design.

The role of luxury textiles during the Mughal dynasty (1526-1857) followed the examples set in Safavid Iran, which played a significant role in forming the culture at the Mughal court. Large numbers of Safavid artists, including painters and textile workers, migrated to the Mughal court from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, such that the hybrid of these two cultures is reflected in the iconography of the textiles produced.

Akbar's long reign focused on unifying the largely Hindu indigenous population in India with the Central Asian heritage of the Mughal rulers. He undertook a series of political moves to bring about this unity, such as marrying a Rajput princess who would be the mother of the heir and successor, Jahāngīr (r. 1605-1627), as well as creating a universal religion called *Din-i Illahi* (Ar. and Per., Religion of God).¹⁶ Akbar's own predilection for the mechanical arts and engineering prompted the patronage of both technology and the

decorative arts, whose *kārkhānājāt* employed the best craftsmen from Iran, Central Asia, and India.¹⁷

Akbar's patronage in the visual arts included commissioning a large number of manuscripts, expanding the domestic silk industry, and encouraging the fusion of Muslim and Hindu clothing styles, in which he took a particular interest. In part this was a practical issue, as the Persian and Central Asian costumes of his ancestors were not suited to the tropical climate of the Indian subcontinent; this also may have been a political move to integrate with the local rulers of the Hindu courts. For example, he introduced the *chakdar jama* into his court, a type of unlined wrap-around overcoat worn by men in India since the Medieval era. To formalize this garment, Akbar had the slits on the side removed, redesigned the skirt to have a full asymmetrical hem, and placed the fastening ties on the right for Muslim men.¹⁸ Several existing garments were also given romanticized names, which did not trickle down to the common populace and disappeared after Akbar's reign was concluded.¹⁹ This active participation in fashion is documented in many detailed accounts of clothing during Akbar's reign by his vizier and chronicler, Abul Fazl 'Allamī, in the *Ā-in-i Akbarī*.²⁰

It was during Akbar's reign that royal *kārkhānājāt* were established in the cities of Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Lahore and Ahmedabad. The workshops are documented as having a large number of artists who migrated from Iran and Central Asia to India, in addition to indigenous craftsmen.²¹ The majority of luxury silk weaving in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries took place in the royal *kārkhāna*, under the supervision of a Safavid master and several workers, who worked on site to produce textiles for use in the royal context.²²

The vast number of garments produced included the ruler and his entourage, as well as inhabitants of the *zenāna*, the enclosure housing the women that were related or married to the ruling family. In addition to textiles being woven for the royal family, the granting of large numbers of honorific garments is documented as early as 1528, during the reign of the dynasty's founder, Bābur (r. 1526-30).²³ The tradition continued into the time of Akbar, whose reign covered the first half of the period dated to the silk textiles in the study, documented as bestowing 12,000 robes to the nobleman in charge of the annual hajj to distribute among the pilgrims.²⁴ Robes of honor, *khil'at*, were also distributed as a sign of approval from the Shah to courtiers, military leaders, and esteemed visitors. Diplomatic embassies that traveled from Europe to the Islamic World, as well as between Islamic courts in the early seventeenth century, also required an increase in production of luxury textiles to create the grandeur required for the reception of foreign ambassadors.²⁵

On select occasions, even former adversaries received textiles from the court. A manuscript illustrating the *Akbarnāma* contains a painting ca. 1596-1600, depicting the granting of *khil'at* from Mun'im Khān to Da'ud, the Afghan rebel who was defeated by Mughal forces. In this context, the donning of *khil'at* by the defeated enemy represents submission to the victor.²⁶

The range of designs for garments is documented in several contemporary paintings, such as "Jahāngīr with Asaf Khān and Shayista Khān" in the Late Shah Jahān Album: primarily small scale florals and other delicate naturalistic patterns. The depiction of figural silks utilized as clothing is rare.²⁷

One anomalous example lies in the Bikaner coat, a garment fashioned from figural silk into a three-quarter length jacket and presented to Maharaja Rai Singhi of Bikaner by

his son-in-law, the future emperor Jahāngīr, in 1596. In her publication *Costumes and Textiles of Royal India*, author Ritu Kumar states that the silk “was probably woven in the Shah of Persia’s royal workshops,” which implies that the silk may have been fashioned into a coat and given as a diplomatic gift to the Mughal court, then perhaps re-gifted from Jahāngīr to his future father-in-law.²⁸ Another possibility is that the silk may have been commissioned by the Mughal court to a Safavid *naqshband* residing in either India or Iran, then fashioned into a cross-over robe, with the side ties and full skirt of a *jama*. Though the garment is now faded, details of the exquisite weaving show alternating male and female figures appearing in vertical registers, with verses of Persian poetry in Nasta’liq between the figures. Unlike contemporary figural silks, the figures are not depicted in full form but rather at a cropped view of the head and shoulders encircled by flowering sprigs. The male appears without a turban, but the female wears a small *chahar-qat* head covering similar to those depicted in sixteenth century Safavid paintings. Despite the date documenting the coat as a gift in 1596, the textile is given a date of manufacture of 1570-80, and compared to the Aqa Mirak school of painting.²⁹

Figural silks similar to this one in style are depicted as royal furnishings for bolsters, standards, animal trappings, and tent decoration in Mughal paintings.³⁰ For Sunni Muslims, the donning of figural garments would have been prohibited in most contexts, so it follows that figural silk cloth may have been produced as interior furnishings, diplomatic gifts, or for export.³¹

To date, there has been at least one figural silk attributed to Mughal Indian manufacture, a luxury metal-thread velvet. The panel, which resides in four different collections including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) (M.71.13),

depicts confronting and addorsed women in profile, dressed in Mughal court attire.³² The panel is dated to the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and has been described by former curator Mary Kahlenberg as “a prototype of Persian velvets,” with the illustrative stylization of the figures reminiscent of the Golconda style of painting.³³ Kahlenberg focuses on stylistic elements of the iconography, and notes that technical similarities between Mughal and Safavid velvets “attests to the fact that skilled craftsmen travelled between the weaving centers of India and Persia.”³⁴ Based on the depiction of a similar figural velvet in the *Padshāhnāma*, the illustrated manuscript celebrating the reign of Jahāngīr’s son, Shah Jahān (r.1627-1664), Kahlenberg estimates the period of manufacture for this rare type of Indian figural silk to be between 1649 and 1659, when the Safavids and Mughals were at war and import of silks from Iran were ceased, creating the need for a domestic industry.³⁵

More recently, this textile was included in the 2011 publication *The Fabric of India* edited by Rosemary Crill. In his catalogue entry, scholar Stephen Cohen compared this panel to Safavid panels with similar iconographic elements, but also attributes the velvet’s manufacture to one of the major weaving centers of the Mughal realm.³⁶ In the catalogue entry for the LACMA fragment, Cohen corroborates Kahlenberg’s assessment:

When purchased in 1971, the curators at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art believed their velvet to be Indian simply on the basis of its coloring and design, although they lacked any structural proof. That intuitive opinion has now been scientifically validated.³⁷

In his notes, Cohen cites the 2011 monograph by Rahul Jain, *Mughal Velvets in the Collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles*, which examines structural characteristics of a group of seventeenth century velvets.³⁸ In his publication, Jain notes the similarities and

differences between Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal velvets, both structural and material, which helps to establish Indian manufacture for the LACMA fragment. Mughal velvets brocaded with gold or silver threads achieve this effect by consistently employing metal-wrapped threads: thin metal sheets that are cut and wrapped around a silk core. Safavid velvets use either flat strips of metal, or metal-wrapped threads. Jain and Kahlenburg both note a difference in the direction of the wrapped metal: a ‘Z’-direction for Mughal examples, an ‘S’-direction for Safavid examples (also referred to as ‘Z-twist’ and ‘S-twist’). This distinction is crucial to identifying the place of manufacture; the Z-direction of the wrapping in the LACMA fragment corresponds with Kahlenberg’s earlier analysis attributing the velvet to India.³⁹

Although painted depictions of the *Khamisa* silks as apparel or furnishings have yet to be discovered to provide a more exact dating or end use of these textiles, the attribution of the LACMA figural silk velvet to the reign of Shah Jahāngīr or Shah Jahān supports the probability that figural velvets were being produced in Mughal India during the era corresponding with the later dates of the *Khamisa* silks. According to Abul Fazl’s account in the *Ā’in-i Akbarī*, patterned drawloom-woven velvet was not manufactured in India for the Mughal court until the end of the sixteenth century. Abul Fazl describes them as “brocaded” and incorporating gold or silver metal thread, and acknowledged these textiles produced in the royal *kārkhānājāt* of Gujarat and Lahore as being inferior to those produced in Yazd.⁴⁰ Jain cites the earliest examples of patterned Indian velvets dated between 1600 and 1625, slightly later than Abul Fazl’s compilation for the Akbarnama in the last decade of the sixteenth century.⁴¹

Within the group of *Khamisa* silks, the velvet metal thread silk depicting Majnūn alone in the wilderness with his animals (fig. 9) may possibly be of Mughal manufacture. Residing in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (IR-2327), the museum information available about this magnificent textile, which is fashioned into a chasuble, credits its origin as sixteenth century Safavid Iran.⁴² However, an iconographic comparison with Mughal velvet silk designs dated to the seventeenth century indicates that it could possibly have been woven between 1600 and 1650 in a Mughal *kārkhāna*.⁴³ The overall design is arranged in a brick repeat comprised of the central figure of Majnūn surrounded by animals and floral sprays, and lacks the interlacing of sixteenth century figural precedents. Seventeenth century Safavid figural velvets also present a more fluid, interlaced design, such as the Persian velvets in the collection at Rosenborg Castle, than the singular arrangement of the motifs in this velvet.⁴⁴

Also supporting a date of manufacture for this velvet to the seventeenth century is the naturalistic rendering of flora and fauna, which appear across media during the reign of Shah Jahāngīr. Natural sciences were given prominence in the *Jahāngīrnāma*, the imperial memoirs of Jahāngīr, who strove to represent himself as a naturalist. Much of the ruler's character may be gleaned through this detailed first person account written in Persian with the sovereign's own hand, covering a range of subjects. In contrast to the carefully constructed *Akbarnāma*, a third person historiography left for future generations, Jahāngīr's memoirs were intended as a treatise for the elite of his realm.⁴⁵ His commentary and prosaic style emulates that of his great-grandfather and dynastic founder, Bābur, who elaborates on the flora and fauna he observed on military campaigns in his own memoir, the *Bāburnāma*.⁴⁶

The effect of Jahāngīr's self-fashioning as naturalist and its manifestation in the arts is evident upon further examination of the stylized flora in the Majnūn velvet, which appear to have taken cues from botanical drawings and painting in the same period. Court painter Mansūr was particularly well known for his realistic depictions of exotic animals and plants.⁴⁷ Mansūr was given the title *Nadir al-Asr* (Unique one of the Age) by his patron Jahāngīr, and travelled with the sovereign on campaigns and forays into Kashmir and other parts of India. Mansūr's task was to document the many species of flora and fauna in the region, resulting in several detailed single-page paintings that were compiled into albums—a great shift from the narrative illustrated manuscripts of the sixteenth century. The floral studies produced in the early part of Jahāngīr's reign would remain part of the Mughal iconographic repertoire through the mid-seventeenth century, defining the decorative style of monuments such as the Taj Mahal (built between 1632 and 1648), as well as forming a common repertoire in the visual arts during the reign of Shah Jahān (r. 1628-1658).

The production of single-page paintings of realistically rendered plants and animals was mirrored in Safavid Iran during the same period, which corresponds with the latter half of the reign of Shah 'Abbās I (r. 1587-1629) and the successive reigns of Shah Safi I (r.1629-1642) and 'Abbās II (r.1642-1666). Shah 'Abbās I's court painter, Riza 'Abbasi, established the style of painting that prevailed from the 1590s to his death in 1635, which included single pages of elongated figures surrounded by monochromatic floral sprigs, as well as single birds in landscape settings.⁴⁸ Following his example, and possibly the European examples of botanical albums brought by visitors which had been circulating throughout the Safavid capital at Isfahan, his son Shafi 'Abbasi elaborated on the study of

natural subjects, adding more naturalistic detail to the flora and fauna while maintaining Riza's curvilinear, calligraphic line.⁴⁹

It follows that in the early decades of the seventeenth century, both Safavid and Mughal painters and textile designers began incorporating these depictions of flora and fauna into their designs, and the botanical spray began to appear as a popular design.⁵⁰ Several Safavid velvets dated to the seventeenth century feature birds, butterflies, and swaying flowering plants that emulate painted studies, often in conjunction with figural designs.⁵¹

Closely following drawings by contemporary painters, the botanical sprays in the Majnūn velvet chasuble appear to be representations of three different species: the tulip, appearing as a single flower that stems from a group of five long leaves from which a gazelle or ibex grazes; the narcissus, appearing in a spray of three flowers with large serrated leaves; and a stylized peony, also in groups of three with bent stems and a smaller collection of leaves at the base. However, the motifs in the velvet do not echo the style of Safavid contemporary painting.

Rather, when the motifs in the Majnūn velvet are compared to Mughal botanical studies that appear in albums from the periods of Shah Jahāngīr and his successor Shah Jahān, as well as the floral decorative motifs at the Taj Mahal, the design sensibility resonates much more.⁵² The velvet motifs lack the graceful swaying of contemporary Safavid examples, but instead embody the regal stylization of the floral motifs found in Mughal architecture, decorative objects and textiles of the period.

Based on the proximity of painters and textile designers, the proliferation of shared iconography, and the establishment of imperial workshops during the reign of Akbar, there

is a high probability that the silk velvet design of Majnūn in the wilderness with his animals was created sometime after 1585 and possibly as late as the 1650s—late in the reign of Akbar, or more likely during the reigns of Jahāngīr or his successor, Jahān.⁵³

Additionally supporting the hypothesis of Mughal manufacture, iconographic details such as the dragonfly do not commonly appear in Persian silk textiles of the period, though butterflies do appear as a motif in the seventeenth century.⁵⁴ However, a signed painting by Mansūr, Jahāngīr’s court painter, includes a tulip with both a butterfly and dragonfly.⁵⁵ The similarities between the tulip and dragonfly in the velvet are remarkable. Interestingly, in the aforementioned painting of “Jahāngīr with Asaf Khān and Shāyista Khān,” the ruler dons a wine-colored *jama* with a detailed depiction of its small repeated motif: a butterfly in profile, rendered in gold and probably representing brocaded metal-wrapped threads.⁵⁶ His garment is rendered as opaque, indicating a heavier weight of fabric.

Other motifs in the Majnūn velvet, such the rabbit that appears in alternating light and dark shades in the *naqsheh*, appear in both Mughal and Safavid paintings. A painting by Safavid artist Farrukh Beg—another transplant to the Mughal court from Safavid Iran—in a *Bāburnāma* dated 1580-85 depicts the founder of the Mughal empire, Bābur, seated on his throne receiving a courtier.⁵⁷ Illustrated on the iwan behind him, two addorsed rabbits are seated in profile; these are almost identical in form to the long-eared species that Majnūn holds in his lap in the double cloth with Laylā, and of the three couples (figures 10 and 12). The rabbits found on both textiles closely resemble the black naped hare (*Lepus nigricollis*) commonly found in the Indian subcontinent. A similar rabbit also appears in the drawing “Majnūn in the Wilderness” (45.174.6) at The Metropolitan Museum of Art,

attributed to Iran in the second half of the sixteenth century.⁵⁸ In both velvet and drawing, the rabbit turns its head to look at Majnūn, who is directly engaged with the deer representing Laylā.

The shared iconography again finds its roots in the migration of Safavid artists to the Mughal court. Given the mass exodus of artists from Safavid Iran which included both painters and *naqshbandān*, it is difficult to determine definitively if these extant fragments are Mughal or Safavid. Even with technical analyses testing chemical components in dyes, and structural comparisons such as Jain's which consider both weave structure and thread type, experts have a difficult time distinguishing Safavid from Mughal silks.⁵⁹

Primary source information about Safavid artists at the Mughal court is documented by Akbar's vizier, Abul Fazl, in his *Akbarnāma*. This monumental work in three volumes documents the Mughal realm under the leadership of Akbar, written towards the end of his reign between 1596 and 1604. Volume I informs readers of Akbar's ancestral history, tracing his Central Asian lineage to the fourteenth century conqueror, Tīmūr. The second volume records the administrative legacy of Akbar's reign from its beginning in 1556 to the forty-sixth regnal year, 1602-3. Most of the information regarding textiles, clothing, artists and designers resides in Volume III, *Ā-in-i Akbarī* (Per., Akbar's Regulations, or The Institutes of Akbar), which in turn is composed of three volumes, and comes to English-speaking scholars through a nineteenth century translation by H. Blochmann.⁶⁰

Working from the technical to the metaphorical, it seems possible to put forth a hypothesis that some designs in the group of *Khamṣa* silks were produced during the reign of Jahāngīr, with a special request from him for this specific subject matter of Laylā and

Majnūn. These may have been produced by Safavid weavers at the Mughal court, or perhaps on commission in Iran.

As a highly sophisticated patron and connoisseur, Jahāngīr's literary and visual association with images of Majnūn as the suffering lover was imminent. Considering his personal life, which involved separation as a theme in his love affairs, it seems even more likely that he identified with the mystical union of these two lovers unchaperoned in the wilderness.

Much like the characters in the *Khamṣa*, Jahāngīr—from the time when he was still Prince Selīm—had two notable infatuations that manifested during his epic journey to kingship. The first and undisputedly greater romance was with the daughter of an Iranian nobleman known as Iti'mad al Dawla, whose name was actually Ghiyāth [*sic* Ghiyās]. His daughter, Mehrunissa, became the object of the prince's attention, but Akbar would not allow a marriage between them. Instead, Mehrunissa was ordered to be the wife of Ali Quli, an Afghan commander in the Mughal army. After her husband's death, she would finally marry Jahāngīr in 1611 at the age of 34, and become known as Nūr Jahān (Light of the World). The presence of both Mehrunissa/Nūr Jahān and her father Ghiyāth/Itimad al Dawla, as well as her brother Asaf Khān, was analyzed by late nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars of Jahāngīr's reign as a weakening influence on the drug-addicted Shah, who fell victim to their machinations.⁶¹ Neither his wife nor her family are elaborated upon in the *Jahāngīrnāma* or the *Muraqqa'*, an album compiled by Jahāngīr with notes on the events in his reign.

During his separation from Nūr Jahān, and prior to his accession to the throne, Jahāngīr fell in love with a slave girl named Anarkali. His father, Akbar, was outraged and

ordered her death. To commemorate his affection for her, Jahāngīr had the following verses inscribed in stone on her cenotaph in Lahore:

*Tā qiyāmat shukr gūyam kirdargār-i khvīsh rā
Ah gar man bāz bīnam rū-yi yār-i khvīsh rā*

I would give thanks to my God until the day of resurrection,
Ah! Should I ever behold the face of my beloved again.⁶²

A separate cartouche on the cenotaph inscription also reads: *Majnūn Selim-i Akbar* (The madman/madly-in-love Selim, son of Akbar), bearing the dates 1599-1600 (1008 AH) and 1615-16 (1024 AH), referring respectively to the date of her death and the date of the tomb.⁶³ Jahāngīr perhaps referred to his lovelorn state again through the names of two saras cranes he kept as pets, whom he called Laylā and Majnūn.⁶⁴

Further supporting Jahāngīr's self-identification as Majnūn is a painting executed in 1600, around the date of Anarkali's death. Known as "Prince Selim, the later Jahāngīr, as Majnūn in the Wilderness," the painting is ascribed to Muhammad Sharīf (known as Amīr al-Umara') and resides in the Bodleian Library.⁶⁵ The portrait depicts a pleading Jahāngīr on his knees before a *pir* (a Sufi wise man; here, also posited as representing his father, Akbar) in a rocky wilderness, surrounded by a horde of pacified animals. Mirroring popular imagery of Majnūn in both Mughal and Safavid paintings, the rocky landscape that rises behind both Majnūn and Jahāngīr like a throne correlates closely with the wilderness rendered in the unsigned Laylā and Majnūn red velvet (fig. 8) in the Keir Collection, and in a more stylized form in the black and gold lampas (fig. 6) signed by Ghiyāth.⁶⁶

The famed Safavid weaver was known in India as well as Iran, as documented in Abul Fazl's *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. Several scholars have referenced the Blochmann translation for

two passages about the weaver Ghiyāth, whose signature appears on three of the *Khamasa* silks, discussed at length in Chapter One. The first passage is as follows:

Experienced people inquire continually into the prices of articles used both formerly and at present, as a knowledge of the exact prices is conducive to the increase of the stock. Even the prices became generally lower. Thus a piece woven by the famous Ghias-i Naqshband may now be obtained for fifty mohrs, whilst it had formerly been sold for twice that sum; and most other articles have got cheaper at the rate of thirty to ten, or even forty to ten. His Majesty also ordered that people of certain ranks should wear certain articles; and this was done in order to regulate the demand.⁶⁷

This identity of the “famous Ghias-i Naqshband” [sic] in this section of the translation includes an end note, in which Blochmann references the passage about Ghiyāth al-Dīn from the *Tazkira* of Nasrabadi extolling the talents of the *naqshband*. Blochmann includes the anecdote of the weaver presenting a piece of “*mushajjar* brocade” [figured silk] to Shah ‘Abbas I.⁶⁸ Herein lies a question with regard to Blochmann’s connection of the person referenced by Abul Fazl as “Ghias-i Naqshband” to Nasrabadi’s entry in his *tazkira*, which explicitly names the title, name, province, and occupation of the weaver: “Kwaja Ghiyāth al-Dīn Ali Yazdi Naqshband.” This custom was common practice in *tazkira*.

It was also customary for Iranian artists at the Mughal court to be identified as such in primary sources by referring to their city or province of origin as part of the description. For example, when Abul Fazl lists the painters at the court of Akbar, he refers to “Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī of Tabrīz” and “Khājah Abduḥḥamad, styled *Shīrīnqalam*...He comes from Shīrāz.”⁶⁹

This practice of identifying the hometown of artists was still in use twenty years later, during the reign of Akbar’s successor. In an entry for the *Jahāngīrnāma* dated 1618, the ruler wrote about one of his court painters:

Abu'l-Hasan's father was Aqa Rizā of Herat, who joined my service while I was a prince. Abu'l-Hasan therefore is a Khānazād in this court. His work, however, is beyond any comparison in any way to his father's; they can't even be mentioned in the same breath.⁷⁰

However, in Abul Fazl's passage about *Ghiyās-i Naqshband* there is no mention of his hometown, which Nasrabadi specifies in his entry as Yazd, Iran. It seems reasonable to assume that the passage in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* is referencing the Safavid designer, but perhaps this lack of geographical identification indicates that there is a second *naqshband* in the Mughal realm, also named or titled Ghiyāth; and perhaps it is this later *naqshband* that designed the Laylā and Majnūn silks.

This possibility is strengthened by a stylistic comparison to the works attributed to Ghiyāth al-Dīn of Yazd. For comparison, we will consider two extant examples: a velvet silk and a triple cloth silk, both signed *Amal-e Ghiyāth*. The cut and voided velvet, which resides at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (52.20.13), is woven with a satin foundation adorned with floats of flat metal thread. The stylized ogival layout adorned with eight-pointed rosettes visually functions as an overlay for the subpattern of floral arabesques. Overall, the design features a fourfold symmetrical design, in which the name of the designer appears mirrored both vertically and horizontally. The fragment is given a date of manufacture by the museum as late sixteenth century, based on Ghiyāth's signature and life span (ca. 1530-1595).⁷¹

The triple cloth textile, residing in the Yale University Art Gallery (1937.4626) features a compartmentalized layout with a fourfold symmetrical design depicting various scenes. The design includes both animals and figures in the repeat: a fox captures a duck by the neck, confronting cheetahs leap, and a reclining male figure leans on a patterned bolster holding a cup of wine. The head wear on the male figure echoes those worn during

the period of Shah ‘Abbas I in the late sixteenth century: a wide turban that has abandoned the vertical red and white *taj* characteristic of the Tahmāsp period, in favor of a voluminous pleated swath of fabric puckered in the middle. The predatory animal scenes, sharply in contrast to the reclining figure, are separated by a flowering vase, sprigs, pomegranates, and books that float behind the figure. In summary, the figural scene carries some mystical connotations of spiritual serenity amidst the chaos of a violent world—a popular Sufi metaphor expressed in the visual arts of the Safavid period through various iconographic combinations—but there is no narrative element here.⁷²

Additionally, both design layouts feature both vertical and horizontal reflections that cause the signature to only be read correctly one in four times throughout the weaving of the textile. Compared to the other three signed textiles (figures 4-7), these two silks feature very different approaches to design, as well as containing a smaller overall layout; the figures in the Yale fragment measure roughly 2.5” w x 2.25” h. The figures in the signed Khusrau and Shīrīn velvet at the Keir Collection and the Textile Museum (figures 4 and 5) feature the largest figures of any signed Ghiyāth textile in the group, including the non-narrative example at Yale University Art Gallery. Furthermore, the fourfold symmetry employed in the *naqsheh* of the non-narrative signed examples are not employed in any of Ghiyāth’s narrative designs of Laylā and Majnūn, or Khusrau and Shīrīn.

The signature itself is also curiously inconsistent among the signed examples. The non-narrative examples both feature signatures executed in *Naskhi*. While the signatures on the horse’s saddle in Khusrau and Shīrīn (figures 4, 5) and on Laylā’s palanquin (fig. 6) are written in *Naskhi*, the signature on Laylā’s palanquin in the alternate lampas design

(fig. 7) is written in square *Kufic*.⁷³ Why would the same designer employ such different stylistic features for both layout and his signature?

There are a few possible explanations. These stylistic differences may indicate a departure or evolution from earlier work throughout the designer's career. Alternately, the name of "Ghiyāth" may have been held in such high regard that his workshop may have continued the use of his name as a brand beyond the end of his life, much like high-end design houses in our time continue using the name of the founder after they expire (e.g. Alexander McQueen). A final possibility: this may be a different Ghiyāth, who also signed his *naqsh* with the established formula of *Amal-e Ghiyāth*.

The iconographic differences between the non-narrative silks and the *Khamisa* silks, the differences in design layout, varying techniques, and the range of dates for this group of textiles leads me to speculate as follows.

The signed velvet of Khusrau and Shīrīn (figures 4 and 5) was probably designed by Safavid Ghiyāth al-Dīn for the court. The imagery was undoubtedly inspired by paintings from illustrated manuscripts of Nizāmī's *Khamisa*. Based on the medallion shape, this velvet is believed to have decorated a royal tent. Accordingly, the date would correspond with the early part of the reign of Shah 'Abbas I, but before the death of Ghiyāth (between 1587 and 1595). Similar medallion-shaped velvet fragments, attributed to mid-sixteenth century Iran, were used as interior decoration for an imperial tent.⁷⁴

If the signed velvet was specifically designed for the court, there is an assumption that viewers outside the court circle would not have had access to the textile; however, there are two additional velvets depicting the same scene which are unsigned. The fragments at The Metropolitan Museum (fig. 3a) and the Cleveland Museum of Art (fig.

3b), which are remarkable in the rendering of outlined figures but do not feature costly metal threads, may have been created by a competitor's workshop outside the capital or for a situation outside the court, by a *naqshband* was highly skilled but not as well known as Ghiyāth al-Dīn.

With regard to the metal-thread voided velvet at the Topkapi Palace Museum (fig. 2), the textile may have been a court-sponsored seventeenth century production, based on the expensive materials. The accession number of the textile indicates that it entered the treasury in 1697, leading to the possibility that this may have been part of a diplomatic gift from the Safavid court, or an offering from an Ottoman military commander to the sultan after a campaign in Iran.⁷⁵ Unless this textile was stored for almost one hundred fifty years before reaching the Topkapi Palace, the accession date indicates a later date of manufacture than the proposed mid-sixteenth century. Perhaps a later monarch was inspired by earlier silks and had a new silk velvet made on commission? In all examples, it seems reasonable to attribute the Khusrau and Shīrīn velvets to Safavid Iran; Ottoman Sunni restrictions on figural imagery would have prevented active patronage of such imagery, particularly considering the partial nudity of Shīrīn as she bathes.

The Laylā and Majnūn signed satin lampas designs are more difficult to categorize. They may also have been designed by the Safavid Ghiyāth early in the era of Shah 'Abbas. In the dark satin lampas, iconographic details, such as Laylā's elongated sleeves, and the upturned edges of the robe and turban with aigrette worn by Laylā's servant, correspond with contemporary late sixteenth century Safavid fashion. Other details indicate a departure from Safavid style: the representation of Majnūn, who is elongated and emaciated with his rib cage outlined in a continuous line, resembles depictions in Mughal paintings. Instead

of Nizāmī's famous poem, the design references the scene from "Majnūn and Laylā" from illustrated manuscripts of Amīr Khusrau's *Khamṣa*. However, the fact that a servant is included in the rendering is a departure from the original narrative, in which Laylā ventured to see Majnūn alone; this may have been included to create a sense of propriety for the audience.

Since Ackerman's articles in the 1930s, scholars have accepted the second Laylā and Majnūn red satin lampas as a Ghiyāth design based on the signature. But compared with the other satin lampas, there are several differences in the design style and rendering of the scene that lead one to question whether this is a second attempt at the subject matter, or whether this was the work of a different *naqshband*.⁷⁶ The absence of a servant or other intermediary figure, as well as the vast difference in the overall design and rendering of foliage, raise the possibility that this textile was created by another independent Safavid or Mughal *naqshband*. Was it a designer knock-off, or was his name also Ghiyāth? The *kufic* signature may be the indication that this was not an "original," though this is purely speculative.⁷⁷

Other renditions of Laylā and Majnūn pose even more questions. The red velvet fragment at the Keir Collection (fig. 8) has been analyzed for its technical features by Reath and Sachs, which revealed a satin foundation with four to five warps used simultaneously, which is in line with Safavid techniques.⁷⁸ Spuhler, former curator at the Keir collection, erroneously states that this velvet depicts "the sentimental climax of the story, where Majnūn retires into the desert in his grief and forms a friendship with the wild animals. His beloved visits him there."⁷⁹ He further connects the *naqsh* for the silk to painted examples from Nizāmī's *Khamṣa*, but this is indeed another depiction of the Amīr Khusrau version.

Laylā meets Majnūn alone: her camel sits nearby as she holds her sleeve to her mouth as her lover reaches out to her. Her garments closely resemble mid-sixteenth century Safavid fashion, including the *chahar-qat* headscarf, a short kerchief which was folded over and placed on the crown of the head with its edges hanging down to the shoulders. Laylā's robes require careful consideration: upon first glance, she appears to be wearing a long-sleeved garment underneath a short-sleeved robe, a popular style depicted in Tahmāsp period paintings (r.1524-76) that showcase the contrasting colors and patterns of the layered garments. However, her left hand is covering her mouth with the longer sleeve of the overgarment, so that one sleeve appears short and the other long; this may reflect the style that the few surviving garments also feature, in which the elongated sleeves can be worn over the hands, or the hands and arms can be freed through a slit in the sleeve.⁸⁰ The *naqshband* may have looked at the earlier Bihzad painting of "Laylā visiting Majnūn in the Wilderness" from a *Khamisa* of Amīr Khusrau (ca. 1485), in which she is dressed in a similar style: Laylā's red overgarment has three-quarter length sleeves, underneath which the fitted long sleeves of her green dress peek through. Altogether, the iconography seems to point to Safavid production, with the exception of the rendering of Majnūn: we find again his rib cage is outlined by a continuous line culminating in a narrow waist, finding its roots in the Mughal rather than Safavid depictions of Majnūn.

Finally, the double cloth group should also be taken into consideration. As a popular and well-documented technique pre-dating the group of *Khamisa* silks, double cloth is presumed to have been manufactured in Safavid Iran. The details in the red and white double cloth depicting Laylā and Majnūn (fig. 10) seem to correspond with this attribution, in that Majnūn's rib cage is represented by small lines along the side of his torso, more in

line with Safavid representations of his wasted state. Laylā is adorned in the Safavid style of a patterned short-sleeved overcoat worn over a long-sleeved gown, with a *chahar-qat* and aigrette on her head, also indicating a sixteenth century date. The wilderness in this silk is more like a garden, with the exception of a small rock that Majnūn is perched upon and the ibex leaping in the background.

The double cloth at The British Museum featuring three sets of lovers (fig. 12) is also attributed to Iran, dated to the early seventeenth century. Again using the dress of the characters depicted as a marker for the date of manufacture, we see the voluminous turban of the Shah ‘Abbas I era worn by both Khusrau and Yusef, while Laylā wears the long veil and tiara popular in Isfahan in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.⁸¹ The accompanying verses in *nasta’liq* do not indicate either *Khamisa* poet, but the scenes represent Nizāmī’s “Khusrau and Shīrīn,” Amīr Khusrau’s “Laylā and Majnūn,” and Jami’s “Yusef and Zuleikha.”

Despite the similarities in weave structure and color palette, the final red and white double cloth depicting Shīrīn and Farhād brings special attention to the possibility of Mughal patronage in a workshop run by a Safavid *muqaddam*. In his memoir, Jahāngīr states that a *Khamisa* of ‘Alī-Shīr Navā’ī (1441-1501) is his favorite in the royal *kitāb khāna*.⁸² This fifteenth century poet from Herat worked at the royal court for the Timurid Husayn Bayqara, where he was an administrator and advisor directly for the sultan. Navā’ī penned works in both Turkish Chaghatay and Persian. His *Khamisa* is written as homage and imitation of Nizāmī’s quintet, but in lieu of the usual story of Khusrau and Shīrīn, he has written the tale of Shīrīn and Farhād, as well as a rendition of Laylā and Majnūn.⁸³

This could explain the unusual choice of subject matter depicted the silk in fig. 11, whose details include the isolated lovers engaged in various tasks. Farhād holds his pick axe above his head as he gazes upward, as the channel he has carved through the rocks is filled and flows downhill—including a fish, perhaps indicating a departure from Nizāmī's version in which the channel is carved for milk. Shīrīn rides horseback, holding the reigns with her right hand while holding up her left hand, palm facing upward. The figures in the third figural scene do not correspond to any recognizable episode from the narrative, but seem to be taken from stock examples and alternate with a fourth scene representing an architectural monument (perhaps a minaret or tomb tower). Verses woven into the textile praise the cloth and its potential wearer, indicating that the silk was intended for apparel.

The final double cloth design, which depicts Khusrau and Shīrīn in Nizāmī's bathing scene (fig. 13), also brings up questions of patronage. Attributed to seventeenth century Iran and executed in multiple colors rather than the red and white palette of the double cloth designs, the imagery seems to correspond with Safavid paintings from Nizāmī's *Khamsa*, but the *Naskhi* poetic verses have not been translated. The figures are minuscule, as the whole fragment measures 8 1/4 x 10 3/4 in. and features several repeats.

One of the issues with regard to the reattribution of these textiles is the question of identifying them as Safavid or Mughal; but how is it possible to determine one or the other, with so many Safavid artists working at the Mughal court, and the proliferation of Persianate literary and artistic influences dominating the Mughal sensibility with regard to patronage? The patrons and visitors to both countries may shed light on the issue.

NOTES

¹ Paul E. Losensky and Sunil Sharma, *In the Bazaar of Love: The Selected Poetry of Amīr Khusrau* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2011), xi.

² Barbara Brend, *Perspectives in Persian Painting: Illustrations to Amīr Khusrau's Khamsa*, xix-xx.

³ His education in poetry was under the aegis of Šehāb-al-dīn Maḥmera Badā'ūnī, who had authored panegyric and religious verse. See Annemarie Schimmel, "Amīr Khusrau Dehlavī" *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. I, Fasc. 9, pp. 963-965; available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/Amir-kosrow-poet> (accessed November 3, 2016).

⁴ Amīr Khusrau was buried next to Nizām al-Dīn in 1325, and both graves are pilgrimage sites to this day in New Delhi.

⁵ Much of Amīr Khusrau's work includes panegyrics for his royal patrons, in addition to ghazals and longer works. Although this was typical of medieval poets relying on patronage in a rapidly shifting political climate, he often found court life to be in contrast to his deep mystical practice. See Losensky and Sharma, *In the Bazaar of Love: The Selected Poetry of Amīr Khusrau*, xii and xvi.

⁶ Amīr Khusrau traveled to Bengal from 1277-78 with his patron Boḡrā Khān, the younger son of Sultan Balban. After returning to Delhi, Amīr Khusrau left again for Multan with Muhammad Qa-an, Balban's older son; the well-appointed court included another court poet and contemporary, Hasan Dihlavī, who is best known for his *Favā'id al-Fu'ād* ("Morals of the Heart"), which recorded the discourses of Nizām al-Dīn. After that period, Amīr Khusrau was in Awadh from 1287-1289, under the order of Kay Qubād, before returning to Delhi. See Brend, *Perspectives in Persian Painting: Illustrations to Amīr Khusrau's Khamsa*, xx-xxi, for a detailed account of Amīr Khusrau's whereabouts and patrons during the early part of his career.

⁷ Amīr Khusrau is also credited with innovations in Indian music. Brend, *Perspectives in Persian Painting: Illustrations to Amīr Khusrau's Khamsa*, xix.

⁸ Brend posits that *Ā'īnah-i Iskandarī* may have been the fourth of the poems in Amīr Khusrau's quintet due to his patron, Ala al-Dīn, viewing himself as the second Alexander. The title *Iskandar al-Sāni* (The Second Alexander) appears on some of his coinage. See Brend, *Perspectives in Persian Painting: Illustrations to Amīr Khusrau's Khamsa*, xxii.

⁹ Extant manuscripts of Amīr Khusrau differ from those of Nizāmī in the order of the five poems. While the mystical work and love stories of Khusrau and Shīrīn and Laylā and Majnūn retain their order as the first three poems, the story of Alexander is presented fourth, and the narrative of Bahram Gur is the final work. Although there is overlap with the general narrative arc of the lovers' tales in both *Khamsa* collections, Amīr Khusrau's poems inspire a different cycle of illustration than those of Nizāmī. Though few complete

manuscripts remain in tact, a comprehensive study of a manuscript produced during the Mughal era includes the *Khamṣa* of Amīr Khusrau at the Walters Art Museum, which was the subject of John Seyller's monograph, "Pearls of the Parrot of India: The Walters Art Museum *Khamṣah* of Amīr Khusrau of Delhi" in *The Journal of the Walters Art Museum*, Vol. 58 (2000), 5-176.

¹⁰ Brend, *Perspectives in Persian Painting: Illustrations to Amīr Khusrau's Khamṣa*, xiii.

¹¹ For detailed summaries of Amīr Khusrau's *Shīrīn and Khusrau* and *Majnūn and Laylā*, see Appendices B and C of this publication, respectively.

¹² The story of Shīrīn and Farhād has historical as well as literary roots. See Heshmat Moayyad, "Farhād (1)" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 2016, New York, 1996-. [http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/Farhād%20\(1\)](http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/Farhād%20(1)) Accessed November 4, 2016.

¹³ As referenced in Chapter One, the larger fragments of the red and white Laylā and Majnūn double cloth fragment (fig. 10) residing in (1902-1-379), and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (916-1897), are both cut in a triangular shape. This could correspond with the bell-shaped overcoats popular in the early seventeenth century in Iran, whose front sections would require two right triangles meeting on the hypotenuse to form the opening in the front of the coat. They could alternately be the front sections of a Mughal *jama*, the crossover coat worn by men during the time of Akbar.

¹⁴ Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, 26.

¹⁵ For Abul Fazl's account of painters at the Mughal court during the reign of Akbar, see A'in 34, "The Arts of Writing and Painting," available online [<http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Fauth%3D7%26work%3D002>] Accessed November 1, 2016.

¹⁶ Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, 28.

¹⁷ For an account of Akbar's interest in technology, see Irfan Habib, "Akbar and Technology," *Social Scientist* Vol. 20, No. 9/10 (Sept.-Oct. 1992): 3-15.

¹⁸ For an illustration of Hindu and Muslim *jama* styles, see Ritu Kumar, ed. Cathy Muscat, *Costumes and Textiles of Royal India* (London: Christie's Books, 1999), 39.

¹⁹ Ibid., 39.

²⁰ The Ā-in-i Akbarī lists types of dress and all types of cloth used in royal court, as well as Akbar's names for them, in *A'in 31 and 32*. Available online at <http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D00702051%26ct%3D78%26rqs%3D7> Accessed June 1, 2017.

²¹ From 1600 onwards, with the establishment of the Dutch and English East India

Companies and the Portuguese occupation of Goa, the Mughal textile industry began to develop specific products for export. These were primarily cotton products known as calico and chintz, featuring mostly floral and occasionally figural designs applied with surface techniques such as *qalamkari* and mordant-resist dye processes. For examples of textiles created for export, see John Guy, “One Thing Leads to Another”: Indian Textiles and the Early Globalization of Style” in *Interwoven Globe: The Worldwide Textile Trade, 1500-1800*, ed. Amelia Peck (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013), 12-27.

²² See Joseph M. Dye, III, “Fabrics, Carpets and Costumes” in *Romance of the Taj Mahal*, ed. Pratapaditya Pal et al. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 171-172.

²³ See Rosemary Crill, *Fabric of India* (London: V & A Publishing, 2015), 103-4.

²⁴ Crill, *Fabric of India*, 7-8. The granting of *khil’at* to distinguished visitors is also depicted in an illustration from the *Akbarnāma* in the same publication, pl. 3, p. 8.

²⁵ The role of luxury textiles, particularly figural silks, is a subject which will be elaborated upon in Chapter Three of this publication.

²⁶ For a color reproduction, see Beach, *The Imperial Image*, cat. no. 10f, 75. A detailed discussion of *khil’at* is in Chapter Three of this publication.

²⁷ Some depictions of figural silks as garments do appear in Mughal paintings of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

²⁸ Kumar, *Costumes and Textiles of Royal India*, 40 -41. Color reproduction with detail, 41.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Figural silks appear as furnishings in several Mughal portraits, such as the portrait of “The Emperor Shah Jahān with his Son Dara Shikoh” in the Shah Jahān album at The Metropolitan Museum (55.121.10.36): the bolster behind the Shah is patterned with a figural textile.

³¹ The Sunni prohibition on images is a complex issue based on the interpretation of *hadith*; see Abolala Soudavar, “Between the Safavids and the Mughals: Art and Artists in Transition,” in *Iran*, Vol. 37 (1999), 51 and n.37.

³² Fragments of the Mughal figurative velvet referenced here reside in the following collections: Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (83.630); Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (TXT 130); Keir Collection, London; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (71.13). For a color reproduction, see Crill, *Fabric of India*, pl. 69. The velvet was also published by Mary Kahlenberg, *Fabric and Fashion: Twenty Years of Costume Council Gifts* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1974); also by Mary Kahlenberg, “A Mughal Personage Velvet,” *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 115, No. 848 (Nov., 1973), 721-725+727; and in Pal et al, *Romance of the Taj Mahal*, pl. 203, 192.

³³ See Kahlenberg, *Fabric and Fashion: Twenty Years of Costume Council Gifts*, cat. No. 14.

³⁴ Kahlenberg, “A Mughal Personage Velvet,” 725.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ See Crill, *Fabric of India*, 62; and Kahlenberg, “A Mughal Personage Velvet,” 721-724 for comparisons to three different Safavid velvets.

³⁷ Stephen Cohen, “Velvet Panel with Figures” in Crill, *Fabric of India*, 62.

³⁸ Rahul Jain, *Mughal Velvets in the Collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles* (Ahmedabad: Sarabhai Foundation, 2011).

³⁹ Also corroborated by Crill, *Fabric of India*, 62.

⁴⁰ Abul Fazl, *Ain-I Akbarī*, A’ in 32 “On Shawls and Stuffs,” Appendix A. Available online at <http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D00702051%26ct%3D78%26rqs%3D7> Accessed June 1, 2017.

⁴¹ Jain, *Mughal Velvets in the Collections of the Calico Museum of Textiles*, 8.

⁴² Loukonine and Ivanov, *Lost Treasures of Persia: Persian Art in the Hermitage Museum* (Washington D.C.: Mage Publishers, 1996), cat. No. 182. The catalog entry states that the chasuble was transferred from the History Museum in Moscow around 1930, and confirms the subject matter of Laylā and Majnūn, though only Majnūn is depicted with a deer in his lap—perhaps a symbolic proxy for Laylā. This author’s speculation is that the silk was sent in a large quantity to Russia as a diplomatic gift, and later fashioned into a chasuble.

⁴³ Lacking the detailed technical information on this textile, I can only compare the Majnūn chasuble to contemporary velvets based on iconographic similarities. For a similar botanical spray see catalog notes on Acc. No. 54 in Jain, *Mughal Velvets in the Collections of the Calico Museum of Textiles*, 28-31.

⁴⁴ For examples of “voided” metal-ground Safavid velvets see Bier, *The Persian Velvets at Rosenborg*, 1995. This group of Safavid figural and floral velvets were presented as a diplomatic gift to the Duke of Holstein in 1639, and housed at the Rosenborg castle in Copenhagen.

⁴⁵ See Lefevre, “The Imperial Discourse of Jahāngīr,” 457-458.

⁴⁶ The Bāburnāma was an unillustrated work of prose written in Chaghatay Turkish, covering a period of time between 1594 and 1529. The work was translated into Persian during the reign of Akbar in 1589-90 by his *Amīr*, Khān-I Khānan. See Corinnne LeFevre,

“Recovering a Voice from Mughal India: The Imperial Discourse of Jahāngīr (r.1605-1627) in His Memoirs,” *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (2007), 460, 474.

⁴⁷ See Som Prakash Verma, *Mughal Painter of Flora and Fauna Ustad Mansūr* (New Delhi: Abinav Publications, 1999).

⁴⁸ For an example of Riza ‘Abbasi’s mature style, see “The Lovers,” Metropolitan Museum of Art (50.164); also published in Maryam D. Ekhtiar et al, *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art in The Metropolitan Museum* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), cat. No. 148, 221.

⁴⁹ Canby, *Golden Age of Persian Art*, 123-124.

⁵⁰ Sheila Canby notes that textile pattern books were brought to Isfahan by English merchants; for an example of a botanical study by Shafi ‘Abbasi on the same page, see Canby, *Persian Painting*, 108. For additional examples of Safavid botanical drawings by Shafi ‘Abbasi see Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art*, figures 112 and 113, 123.

⁵¹ For examples of a figural velvet with botanical elements, see Jennifer Harris, *5,000 Years of Textiles* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), fig. 87, for the seventeenth century coat sent to Queen Christina of Sweden by Russian Czar Mikhail I in 1644; also see Bier, *The Persian Velvets at Rosenborg*: “Inebriated Youth, detail” (fig. 13), 35; “Falconer” (fig. 14 and 15), 40; and “Supplicant” (fig. 17), 42.

⁵² For examples of Mughal botanical drawings from the seventeenth century, see *Romance of the Taj Mahal*, figures 98-100.

⁵³ This later date of 1650 corresponds with Kahlenberg’s hypothesis that figural silks may have been manufactured in India after the war with the Safavids, which started in 1649. See Kahlenberg, “A Mughal Personage Velvet,” 725.

⁵⁴ For examples of Safavid seventeenth and early eighteenth century velvets with a butterfly motif included in the design, see the panels with accession numbers 30.59, 30.95.140, and 11.134.1 at the Metropolitan Museum. Also see Canby, *Shah ‘Abbās: The Remaking of Iran*, cat. No. 110, 231.

⁵⁵ For an example of a floral study clearly signed by Mansūr dated 1610, featuring a tulip with a dragonfly and butterfly, see Asok Kumar Dos, *Wonders of Nature: Ustad Mansur at the Mughal Court* (Mumbai: Marg Foundation, 2012), pl. VI.6; available online at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mansurtulip.jpg> Almost identical to the motifs in this velvet are the daffodil and other flowering plants, rendered with careful precision and surrounded by butterflies and clouds, which represent the pietra dura behind Shah Jahān at the Taj Mahal in fol. 70B of the *Pādshāhnāma*. For a color reproduction, see Milo Cleveland Beach and Ebba Koch, *The King of the World: The Padshahnama: An Imperial*

Mughal Manuscript from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle (London: Royal Collection, 2003), pl. 10.

⁵⁶ For a color reproduction with detail of the painting, see Milo Cleveland Beach, *The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court* (Washington D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution and Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, 2012), cat. No. 21f, 98 (detail) and 117 (full page).

⁵⁷ The painting “Bābur Receives a Courtier” ca. 1580-85 from a *Bāburnāma*, attributed to Farrukh Beg, resides in the Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. (S1986.230). For a color reproduction with commentary, see Beach, *The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court*, Plate 8a, 62-63.

⁵⁸ For a publication of the drawing “Majnūn in the Wilderness,” see Sussan Babaie and Marie Lukens Swietochowski, *Persian Drawings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: 1989), cat. no. 11, 33.

⁵⁹ For a technical analysis on Mughal and Safavid velvets, see Shibayama et al, “Analysis of natural dyes and metal threads used in sixteenth-eighteenth century Persian/Safavid and Indian/Mughal velvets by HPLC-PDA and SEM-EDS to investigate the system to differentiate velvets of these two cultures,” *Heritage Science* 3/12 (2015):1-20, and Jain, *Mughal Velvets in the Collections of the Calico Museum of Textiles*.

⁶⁰ The translation of Volume III of the Akbarnāma used in this study is Abul Fazl Allamī, trans. H. Blochmann, M.A. and Colonel H.S. Jarrett, *The Ā-in-i Akbarī* (Bengal: The Asiatic Society, 1873-1907). For an online version of Blochmann’s translation, see <http://persian.packhum.org/persian/bio?anum=0007> Accessed February 14, 2017.

⁶¹ This point is aptly made by Corinne LeFevre in “Recovering a Voice from Mughal India: The Imperial Discourse of Jahāngīr (r.1605-1627) in His Memoirs,” 452-453. Based on LeFevre’s careful analysis of the *Jahāngīrnāma*, there is little doubt that the ruler consciously chose where to direct his power, in that he spent a considerable amount of energy establishing and immortalizing his self-image through his memoirs.

⁶² These verses are identified as quoted from Persian poet Sa’di. See Koch, “Mughal Emperor as Solomon, Majnūn, and Orpheus, or the Album as a Think Tank for Allegory” note 62, 310; after Robert Skelton.

⁶³ Koch, “Mughal Emperor as Solomon, Majnūn, and Orpheus,” 304-305.

⁶⁴ LeFevre, “Recovering a Voice from Mughal India: The Imperial Discourse of Jahāngīr (r.1605-1627) in His Memoirs,” 475. LeFevre cites Nizāmī as the reference to the naming of the birds, but this could easily have been inspired by one of the other *Khamasa* renditions of the story of Laylā and Majnūn.

⁶⁵ See Koch, “Mughal Emperor as Solomon, Majnūn, and Orpheus,” fig. 22.

⁶⁶ For two sixteenth century Safavid drawings depicting a rocky landscape rising above Majnūn, see two objects entitled “Majnūn in the Wilderness,” Babaie and Swietochowski, *Persian Drawings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, cat. nos. 10 and 11, 31-33.

⁶⁷ Abul Fazl, A'in 31, “The Wardrobe and the Stores for Mattresses,” available online <http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D00701023%26ct%3D260%26rqs%3D1075> (accessed 2 June, 2017).

⁶⁸ Blochmann's note reads in full: “GHIA'S I NAQSHBAND. We know from the *Tazkirah* of Tāhir Naṣrābādī [*sic*] that Ghiās [*sic*] was born in Yazd. “The world has not since seen a weaver like him. Besides, he was a good poet. Once he bought a piece of *mushajjar* brocade, on which there was among other figures that of a bear between some trees, to Shāh 'Abbās (1585 to 1629), when a courtier after praising the stuff admired the bear. Ghiās said on the spur of the moment: “*The gentleman looks chiefly at the bear. Each looks at his own likeness.*” Bears in the East are looked upon as stupid animals. A proverb says, ‘A bear on the hill is an Avicenna,’ *i. e.* a fool among bigger fools is a philosopher. Naṣrābādī quotes some of Ghiās's verses.” Available online <http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D00702051%26ct%3D328%26rqs%3D405%26rqs%3D411> Accessed June 2, 2017.

⁶⁹ Abul Fazl, A'in 34, “The Arts of Writing and Painting,” available online <http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Fauth%3D7%26work%3D002> Accessed March 3, 2017.

⁷⁰ Beach, *The Imperial Image*, 202; after the *Jahāngīrnāma*. See n. 14, 215.

⁷¹ See “Silk Textile Designed by Ghiyāth” (52.20.13), Metropolitan Museum of Art <http://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451093> Also published in Ekhtiar et al, *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art*, cat. no. 170, 246.

⁷² See “Textile Fragment” attributed to “Khwaja Ghiyāth ad-din ‘Ali, active late 16th–early 17th century” (1937.4626), Yale University Art Gallery <http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/60785>

⁷³ Silk textiles signed “Amal-e Ghiyāth” include examples of both *Kufic* and *Naskhi* signatures. In his publication *Safavid Rugs and Textiles*, Mehmet Aga-Oglu lists the signed textiles attributed to Ghiyāth al-Dīn in Appendix A, which total seven. Aga-Oglu illustrates examples of the signature written in both scripts; see 45-47.

⁷⁴ A group of medallion-shaped velvet fragments attributed to mid-sixteenth century Iran, residing at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, were used as interior decoration for a tent. The Met group was owned by the Polish Sanguszko family until 1920. See Ekhtiar et al, *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art*, cat. no.s 168 and 169, 224-245. Another medallion from the same group resides in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (28.13); see Laura Weinstein, *Ink, Silk and Gold: Islamic Art from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2015), cat. no. 61, 98.

⁷⁵ Ottoman law required that in the event of the death in battle of high-ranking military leaders, their estates would revert to the crown. Ottoman commanders also made offerings to the Sultan after campaigns, which included both gifts and booty.

⁷⁶ *Survey of Persian Art* primary author Arthur Upham Pope (also Ackerman's husband) also accepts both lampas designs as belonging to the same *naqshband* when he states: "The romance of Laila and Majnūn, one of the perennial tragic love-stories of Persia, seems to have especially absorbed this master - who was a poet in his own right as well as draftsman, weaver, entrepreneur, financier, wit, and at the end of his life, religious." Arthur Upham Pope, *Masterpieces of Persian Art* (New York: Dryden Press, 1945), 186.

⁷⁷ A little mentioned fact is that there are at least two different fragments of this Laylā and Majnūn red satin lampas silk, both residing at The Textile Museum (TM 3.312, and TM 3.313) which differ slightly in the sett of the cloth: the second example, which to my knowledge has never been published, offers a tighter, smaller design, indicating an increase in the number of threads per inch. The design is also more worn in the areas where Majnūn is depicted, which were once gold, and now only a faint black outline remains. My special appreciation goes to Sumru Krody, who allowed me to view and photograph the second fragment of this silk in 2006.

⁷⁸ Reath and Sachs, *Persian Textiles and their Techniques from the Sixth to the Eighteenth Centuries*, pl. 77, 119-120.

⁷⁹ Spuhler, *Islamic Textiles at the Keir Collection*, cat. no. 93, 166.

⁸⁰ For a depiction of a Safavid woman wearing a short-sleeved robe worn over a long-sleeved garment, see "Seated Princess with a Spray of Flowers" attributed to Mirza 'Ali, ca. 1540 (1958.60) at the Harvard Art Museums
<http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/303532?position=0>

⁸¹ For a depiction of early seventeenth century headwear for women wearing a long veil held in place by a second cloth and a feathered aigrette, see "A Gathering of Grandees," c.1620-25, in Canby, *Shah 'Abbas: The Remaking of Iran*, cat. no. 51, 132-133. In other depictions, the veil is held in place by a tiara.

⁸² LeFevre, *Discourse of Jahāngīr*, 483.

⁸³ The *Khamasa* of 'Ali-Shir Nava'i includes the following: *Hayrat-ol-abrar* (*Wonders of Good People*); *Farhād va Shīrīn* (*Farhād and Shīrīn*); *Layli va Majnūn* (*Layli and Majnūn*); *Sab'ai Sayyar* (*Seven Travelers*) (about the seven planets); and *Sadd-i-Iskandari* (*Alexander's Wall*). In context, it seems natural for Timurid literary patronage to replace the story of the Sasanian king with that of Shīrīn's other lover, Farhād, who in Nizāmī's tale is Persian, but is Central Asian or Chinese in the Amīr Khusrau version—a nationality much closer to the heritage of the Timurids.

Chapter Three: Diplomats, Depictions, and Discussions

Following the detailed discussion of the group of *Khamsa* silks, one must consider the impact of figural silks in the international context. In most instances, these luxury silks were either intended for display at court—Safavid as well as European—or to showcase the goods as a specialized commodity to potential consumers. It is also important to distinguish the subtle implications of narrative silk designs, which are a sub-grouping within the larger group of figural silks, for both wearer and viewer. Despite the proliferation of figural imagery on silk, the narrative group of *Khamsa* silks may represent different intentions on the part of patron, *naqshband* and intended consumer.

First, the importance of both raw and woven silk as a commodity during the Safavid period must be contextualized. Silk played a crucial role in the representation of Iranian interests in global commerce. As maritime trade routes gained viability during the sixteenth century, the expansion of trade inspired a series of diplomatic exchanges between the courts of Europe and Asia. These diplomatic embassies sought the fruition of two concrete goals: to form political and military alliances against common enemies, and to introduce trade opportunities for goods, including silk textiles and raw materials.

The Safavids found themselves in the enviable position of being the major producers of raw silk for export to France and Italy at the Mediterranean ports, a relationship in place as early as the thirteenth century, with Armenian merchants as the intermediaries.¹ The disadvantage was that the merchants had to travel through Ottoman territory, and paid heavy tolls and taxes; in addition, the Ottoman-Safavid wars of the late sixteenth century caused prices in raw silk to increase.² From the late 1590s, land routes

were dismissed in exchange for travel by sea through the Persian Gulf, which was particularly favorable following Shah ‘Abbās’ successful 1622 defeat (with English naval assistance) of the Portuguese, who had controlled the port of Hormuz.

For centuries, the silk industry in Iran was composed of individual farming dynasties producing raw material in the northern provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran.³ Following his conquest of the silk-producing regions, Shah ‘Abbās I (r. 1587-1629) centralized this cottage industry into a state-run monopoly, in which the raw silk was purchased at a fixed price from farmers by agents of the state, and sold to third parties at a profit, with revenues benefitting the crown. Following the establishment of this economic plan, Shah ‘Abbās sent several emissaries to European courts with samples of the different grades of silk to encourage trade.⁴

Woven silk textiles and carpets also played an important role in the story of Safavid silk, produced for export to Europe as well as domestic markets. The expertise of weavers and designers in the regions of Yazd and Kashan was already established by the Safavid period, specializing in compound weaves such as lampas as well as velvet. When Shah ‘Abbās I moved the capital to Isfahan (1598), he established royal *kārkhānājāt* there as well, with weaving workshops focused on the production of luxury textiles for the court. This included interior furnishings for buildings and tents; luxurious clothing for the royal family, their respective entourages, and the women’s quarter; and apparel fabrics for the gifting of *khil’at*. Considering the range of intended consumers and situations for silk, we should consider each individually.

Honorific silk clothing comprised a tremendous expenditure on the part of the state during the Safavid period, but the practice of gifting expensive robes has ancient roots in the region. Dating to the pre-Islamic period of the Achamaenians (ca. 500-333 BC), subjects in the realm offered tribute to the king during the key celebrations of *Norūz* and *Mihrajān* (spring and fall equinoxes, respectively), bringing valuable goods that included cloth and luxurious clothing.⁵ A gift given by a subordinate to a superior was generally called *pīškaš*, and putting presents down before the shah was known as *dastandāz*, *pāyandāz*, or *pīšandāz*.⁶ The King, in turn, gave away all the clothing in his wardrobe to members of his court at both celebrations, which was believed to be imbued with the divine glory of sovereignty.⁷ In this context, the giving and receiving of clothing was an essential aspect of kingship, in that the subjects paid respect to the sovereign, who rewarded their loyalty with objects whose worth exceeded the gift.

The gifting or regifting of clothing was not strictly an Iranian phenomenon. In pre-Islamic Arab culture, poetic praise also played significantly into this practice: when the ruler was pleased with a panegyric or well composed poem, he would doff his *abā* (Ar., cloak or overgarment) and place it on the shoulders of the poet.⁸ Following the Arab conquest and the mass conversion of Iranians to Islam (650 AD onwards), clothing given as a gift was referred to in Iran as *khil'at* [from the Arabic, meaning “to take off” one’s clothing; the garment itself is referred to as *khil'a*].

The cloak is also significant in the religious context. The immediate family of the Prophet Muḥammad (ca. 570-632 AD) are referred to as “*Al-e 'Aba*” (Ar., The Family of the Cloak). This designation includes his son-in-law ‘Alī, his daughter Fatima, and their children Hasan and Hossein. The expression finds its roots in a *hadith* (canonical saying about the Prophet’s life) relaying that Muḥammad gathered these four family members one by one under his goat-hair

cloak, after which the Koranic verse 33:33 was revealed to him: “God wishes only to remove taint from you, people of the Household, and to make you utterly pure.”⁹

Further signifying the mystical properties of certain garments, the mantle worn by the Prophet Muḥammad after the revelation (610 AD) became both a material asset and a psycho-spiritual talisman. The Prophet was documented in *hadith* as having bestowed his own *burda* (Ar. mantle; Per. *khirqā-yi sharīf*) to the poet K’ab ibn Zuhayr, after being presented a poem commemorating the latter’s conversion to Islam. Successive Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd caliphs, ruling the Islamic lands in the first centuries following the Prophet’s death, wore the Prophet’s *burda* on their shoulders to legitimate their right to spiritual and temporal leadership. Later this garment takes on additional significance when Sufī mystic al-Busīrī, a 13th century Egyptian shaykh, dreams that the Prophet comes to him and wraps him up in his sacred overcoat, curing him of his paralysis. The dream inspired a poem entitled “*Qasīda al būrda*” (Ar., The Poem of the Mantle) which became a blessing for all who heard its recitation.¹⁰

Despite the association with honorific garments, gift-giving customs in the Iranian tradition at set times of the year were new to Arab culture. After some initial ambivalence about the true nature of the gifts and how to account for them, Arab Muslim rulers incorporated this practice into the newly developing Islamic culture, accepting them as a form of tribute.¹¹ Given the parallels in the two cultures, the practice of gifting textiles or clothing to honor the recipient remained the same in spirit even after the Islamic conquest of Iran.

The practice of giving and receiving gifts between ruler and subject continued into the Safavid era. The Shah would bestow honor on his subjects by granting them with *khila’t*, which had taken the form specifically of robes of honor distributed at court ceremonies. These honorific garments of varying cost were disseminated to high-ranking officials, military commanders, and

others who had performed well. The higher the status of the recipient, the finer and more elaborate the *khila't*: the finest of these included not only a cloak-type overcoat or *bālāpūsh*, but also a vest, shirt, trousers and turban, as well as horse trappings and weaponry inlaid with precious gems.¹² The occasions included not only *Norūz* and *Mihragān*, but other celebratory events, including births, weddings, coronations, and important events in the lives of royal children, such as circumcision, during which the ruler would hold feasts and the guests would each receive one or more robes of honor.¹³

The gifts were not only bestowed upon Iranian subjects of the crown, but envoys from foreign countries. High-ranking envoys could expect metal-thread silks containing 5-15% gold (Per. *zarī-bāf* to *zarrīn sangīn*, respectively). Lower-ranking envoys were presented with lower grade silk or even cotton robes.¹⁴ The evidence for these exchanges exists in literary accounts as well as depictions of ambassadors dressed in luxury garments in the Safavid fashion.¹⁵

One familiar example of an ambassador in Safavid dress can be found in depictions of Englishman Robert Sherley, who traveled to Iran with his older brother Anthony on a commercial venture on behalf of the Earl of Essex.¹⁶ There is a wealth of documentation on the travels and troubles of Anthony Sherley, who presented himself and his party of 30 Englishmen in royal Safavid fashion to Shah 'Abbās I in December 1598 in Qazvin. Their splendid attire was documented by one member of the party, George Manwaring, in a first-person account:

In this sort was Sir Anthony and we of his company appointed: first, Sir Anthony in rich cloth of gold, his gown and his undercoat, his sword hanging in a rich scarf to the worth of a thousand crowns, being set with pearl and diamonds, and on his head a turban according, to the worth of two thousand dollars, his boots embroidered with pearl and rubies; his brother, Mr. Robert Sherley, likewise in cloth of gold, his gown and his undercoat, with a rich turban on his head.¹⁷

The account goes on to describe the remaining members of the party in robes of silver with damask and taffeta undercoats, crimson velvet, and similarly precious silks. Based on Manwaring's account, it is not clear at this early juncture in the Sherley-'Abbās relationship if the expensive garments were gifts from the Shah, or garments acquired by the retinue in preparation for their royal audience.¹⁸ In the earlier case of Anthony Jenkinson, an English ambassador sent by Elizabeth I to the court of Shah Tahmāsp in 1562, Jenkinson writes: "two gentlemen encountered me with two garments of that country's fashion...down to the ground, one of silk, and the other of silk and gold, sent unto me from the king and after they caused me to put off my upper garment ...they put the two garments on my back, and so conducted me unto the king," implying that the *khila't* was presented to its recipient prior to his audience with the shah.¹⁹

Whether the garments were gifts from the court or purchased voluntarily by the English party, the donning of Safavid garments would prove fateful for Robert, who would spend the next thirty years of his life in service to Shah 'Abbās as his ambassador. First, however, the honor fell to his older brother: in 1599 Anthony Sherley was dispatched on the first Persian diplomatic embassy to Europe with the Iranian Hussein Ali Beg, while Robert was involuntarily detained in Iran. Traveling through Moscow then Norway, the embassy was received by Emperor Rudolph II in Prague, and in Rome by Pope Clement VIII. They finally arrived at the court of Phillip III in Madrid in 1602. The embassy had left Iran with "32 camel-loads" carrying precious gifts for their diplomatic missions, which included luxury silks. Ever the charlatan, Anthony sold or traded a portion of the gifts in Venice to fund his extravagant lifestyle; following these transgressions, he would never return to the Safavid court.²⁰

Robert stayed in Iran for a decade, working with the shah's military and learning Persian. In 1607, he married a Circassian-Persian "kinswoman of the queen," Sampsonia, who converted

to Christianity and changed her name to Teresia.²¹ The following year, Robert was sent on the trail of his delinquent brother with a royal credential declaring him ‘Ambassador to the Princes of Christendom.’ His magnificent wardrobe, at this juncture bestowed upon him as *khila’t* by the Shah, was remarked upon wherever he went; surely it was a sight to see a European dressed as a Safavid courtier.²²

On the part of Shah ‘Abbās, the selection of a Christian European ambassador was a strategic move, designed to foster trust between Iran and Western Europe. In addition to mutually advantageous economic goals, diplomatic missions between the courts of Europe and Iran were also political and military. The common enemy of the Turks, whose expansion from the capital in Istanbul extended both East and West, was equally imposing to all neighboring nations; in the event of an Ottoman invasion, enforcements would be needed on either front. Discussions to this effect had begun during the early sixteenth century between ‘Abbās’ predecessors Isma’īl and Tahmāsp, and more recently in the early part of Shah ‘Abbās’ reign when Pope Clement VIII sent a letter requesting a political alliance in 1592.²³ Therefore, the missions of the Sherleys happened to coincide with a pre-existing conversation about creating an alliance between European nations and Iran.

Although the diplomacy itself never gained solid footing—there were no agreements ever procured between the Safavids and any European nation to form a “Perso-Christian” alliance against the Ottomans—the missions themselves have left a great deal of material for discussion, due to the elaborate gifts exchanged on both sides. Diplomatic embassies dispatched to Iran brought luxury goods and rare items specific to the indigenous nations: Tartar and Arab envoys often presented horses; Dutch envoys representing the East India Company included spices and sugar in their repertoire and, like other emissaries, included a sum of money in their offerings as

well. The Russian czar typically sent gerfalcons, sable fur, and hard liquor. Safavid rulers were also interested in receiving dogs and live wild and exotic animals.²⁴

Outgoing Safavid embassies always included silk textiles as a major component of the gifts. Diplomatic missions to Venice, an important commercial trading partner, were dispatched in 1600, 1603, 1607, 1610 and 1632. Among other gifts for the Doge, the delegation brought silk presentation rugs and luxury textiles. The 1603 delegation of Fathī Beg and Mohammad Amīn Beg sent by Shah ‘Abbās was immortalized in a painting by Carlo and Gabriele Caliari, “Doge Marino Grimari Receiving Persian Ambassadors,” which depicts the Doge’s men inspecting a length of what appears to be a Safavid gold metal-thread voided velvet.²⁵

Extant fragments from the 1603 diplomatic offering include a stunning figural voided velvet depicting the Virgin and child, now at the Museum of Palazzo Mocenigo. The velvet depicts the Virgin seated with the child Christ in her lap, approached by a figure (perhaps a “Magus” of Iranian origin) presenting her with a *khil’at*. The arched flames encircling the Virgin’s head are indicative of the Safavid pictorial practice of representing holy figures with a fiery halo.²⁶

Shah ‘Abbās’ missions combined business with politics, and he often sent overlapping embassies to the same courts—perhaps to compensate for the potential capriciousness of the host court towards his envoys, or the possibility of the envoys never reaching the host court. This may have been a well-founded practice: in the same year that the Doge was presented with his precious gifts by Fathi Beg and company, the “official” ambassadors Anthony Sherley and Hussein ‘Alī Beg were refused entry into the city to present their credentials.²⁷ The gifts appear never to have made it to the Venetian court.

‘Abbās continued to dispatch various embassies composed of a combination of Iranian and European merchants, missionaries and adventurers, some of whom yielded political power on his behalf; in most cases, there was a great deal of ambiguity as to the actual role of these emissaries. Overlapping diplomatic missions from 1608-1611 included sending Robert Sherley as ambassador to the court of Madrid, while simultaneously sending the Iranian Denghīz Beg with the Portuguese friar Antonio de Gouvea to the same court simultaneously. This overlap often caused confusion and led to misunderstandings between the court of the host country and the titled or self-titled “ambassadors” who were intended as envoys.

In keeping with his business-as-politics agenda, Shah ‘Abbās charged Gouvea and Denghīz Beg with selling 50 bales of highly prized raw silk throughout Europe. Gouvea produced a customs document claiming the silk as a gift to the Hapsburg king, Philip III; the king offered it to his queen Margaret, and she in turn donated the costly materials to the local Augustinian order. ‘Abbās was furious at the mishandling of his business interests in Madrid, and while Gouvea escaped his wrath, the unfortunate Denghīz Beg was sentenced to death as retribution for the loss of the silk.²⁸ As noted with the adventures of Anthony Sherley, this was not the first or last time that merchandise and gifts went missing in the shuffle of diplomatic exchange.

The value of gifts given and received were closely calculated and reciprocated; if a delegation arrived with gifts deemed unworthy, the Shah showed his displeasure by refusing to honor the envoys with *khila’t*. Such was the fate of the Spanish envoy Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa, who arrived in Isfahan in 1618, sent by Philip III to compensate for the misunderstanding with Gouvea. Figueroa arrived with between 400-600 gifts that included weapons, luxury items with gold and silver inlay and precious gems, textile-related items including 5 barrels of cochineal dyestuff, a gold travel costume, and other precious stuffs from the Spanish king. Despite the

generosity of the Spanish king, Shah ‘Abbās’ displeasure with the loss of the 50 bales of silk was not appeased; after Figueroa’s four-year journey, he was offered only one audience with the king, and he and his retinue were not awarded the traditional *khila’t*.²⁹

Conversely, the group of ambassadors that visited Shah Safī (r.1629-42) in 1637 on behalf of the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, Frederick III, each received “a hundred and five assorted pieces of silks” during their farewell audience.³⁰ Comparable to other diplomatic missions, the Duke’s goal was to obtain trading rights through Safavid territory, a mission that failed despite the lavish gift-giving.³¹

Among the Safavid diplomatic appearances and offerings, figural silks played a significant role. Although a flurry of diplomatic activity happened during ‘Abbās’ reign, he was not the first Safavid shah to offer silk textiles as diplomatic gifts. In 1583, the court of his predecessor and father Muḥammad Khudabanda (r. 1578-87) offered the Ottoman sultan Murad III (r.1574-95) a green velvet coat with figural embroidery depicting a Safavid courtier.³² The Ottoman caftan, while in keeping with the Iranian practice of gifting luxury garments, may also demonstrate the Safavid interest in propagating figural imagery as a style specific to their workshops. Although the singular figure is embroidered rather than woven, the quality of the silk and the fineness of the embroidery showcase the skill of the makers. Set into a cartouche in the center of the back of the kaftan, the figure closely resembles paintings from the Tahmāsp era: a male youth wears a *tāj Safavī* while holding what appears to be an oblong book of poetry in his right hand. The Ottoman repertoire of textile design motifs was notably devoid of figural silks, which historians attribute to the Sunni restriction on the display of figural imagery as a propagation of idolatry.³³ Therefore, it is likely the garment was not sent with the expectation that it was to be worn by the recipient, but

rather as a gesture of diplomatic good will achieved through gift-giving; and perhaps, given the Ottoman-Safavid friction, the figural image is a facetious gesture as well.

A satin lampas figural coat was also sent as a diplomatic gift to Russia during the reign of either Czar Ivan Ivanovich (1554-1581) or Czar Feodor Ivanovich (1557-1598). Though the details of the gift are not known, the robe is of sixteenth century Safavid manufacture and features a figure hurling a rock at a dragon; possibly a narrative scene from the *Shāhnāma*.³⁴

Interestingly, another example of a Safavid figural coat found its way from the Russian Czar to Queen Christina of Sweden in 1644. Made of silk velvet, the design features large scale figures holding long-necked wine bottles and cups, modeled on ‘Abbāsī style painting in the first decades of the seventeenth century. In addition to reaffirming the worth and international reputation of Safavid figural silk garments as luxury items, this particular gift may also be an important example of regifting in diplomatic exchange, as it most likely traveled from the Safavid court to Russia before it reached Sweden.

Gift-giving practices in general during this era involve the passing on of costly objects, such as the figural Safavid-woven Bikaner coat discussed in Chapter Two that Jahāngīr gifted to his father-in-law. Far from the modern connotation of an unwanted object becoming “regifted” as a sign of rejection, this gesture demonstrated respect and affection from the giver to the recipient.

In addition to the role that figural silks played on the international stage, accounts of Shah ‘Abbās’ interest in silk seemed to have a propagandist angle as well. As the descendent of the Sufi Shaykh Safī (d. 1334) for whom the dynasty was named, one of the goals for Safavid leaders was to promote themselves as the spiritual and religious leaders of Iran. ‘Abbās was conscientious

about balancing the luxury befitting a king with the ascetic principles underlying Shi'a mystic practices.³⁵ He therefore promoted luxury silks, but restrained his use of them as a gesture of piety.

Pietro Della Valle, an Italian traveler who visited the Safavid court during the reign of Shah 'Abbās (1612-1616), describes the ruler thus:

This simplicity of character was shown in many ways. Except on state occasions, he dressed inconspicuously and discouraged ostentation in the dress of others.³⁶

Although Shah 'Abbās is documented as preferring simple cloth, his ambassadors with their shimmering *khila't* became a walking advertisement for dressing in the Safavid manner: a prime opportunity to market figural silks as the zenith of Safavid silk-weaving.³⁷ No one exemplifies this goal better than Robert Sherley, who is immortalized in two portraits wearing his Safavid *khil'at*.

While in Rome in 1622, Robert Sherley commissioned portraits of himself and his wife by Anthony Van Dyck. Robert is dressed in a figural silk *bālāpūsh*, an overcoat with long narrow sleeves meant to be thrown over the shoulders like a cloak, similar in cut to the Moscow coat. His *bālāpūsh* is made of figural golden silk patterned with a design of a seated female figure holding a wine bottle, and a kneeling male figure. Although the painterly style of the Van Dyck portraits offer few details beyond the curvilinear floral arabesques that circling the figures, it does not appear to be a narrative design. The later portrait provides a more detailed depiction of the *bālāpūsh*, as well as the intricate design of the coat underneath: a figure hurling a rock at a dragon, almost identical in design as the Moscow coat, but with a different color palette.

The Sherley portraits were created as pairs with his Circassian-Persian wife.³⁸ In both portraits, Teresia wears floral Safavid silk fashioned into a European dress: perhaps another example of marketing Iranian luxury textiles to a Western consumer.³⁹ It's curious that while Robert is styled at the height of elegance in figural imagery, Teresia's gowns are composed of

floral designs, indicating that the target consumers for the figural silks were men. For both male and female garments, there is a conspicuous presence of gold and silver.

The Sherleys caused a great commotion and interest in their “oriental” dress, not to mention some confusion as to whose interests the Englishman represented. In 1624, King James I (r.1603-1626) ordered Robert Sherley to discard his turban and *khila’t* to obtain his audience at the English court. Regarding the figural silk garments, the King said to his subject: “You will say they are Persian, but let them be changed,” indicating the ruler’s awareness that Sherley’s attire was a symbol of allegiance to the Safavid shah.⁴⁰

Other ambassadors depicted wearing figural silk include Sherley's rival, Naqd 'Alī Beg, who was also sent to the court of James I by the English East India Company, mostly with the aim of discrediting Sherley. Naqd 'Alī Beg is depicted by Richard Greenbury in 1626 wearing a figural silk *khila't* in his portrait.⁴¹ His *bālāpūsh* is also made of figural silk (possibly velvet), with large-scale standing male figures and life-size flowering plants, similar in design to the Queen Christina coat. The coat underneath is of a silvery floral silk, possibly a satin lampas. Both ambassadors seek legitimacy in the eyes of the English court, and therefore used portraiture to achieve this end; in light of the circumstances, it is significant that they are both cloaked in figural silks as the "official" representatives of Iran, verifying this style as the height of Safavid elegant fashion.

Portraits of other Safavid ambassadors in figural silk *khila't* include Zaynul Khan Shamlu, who was sent to Prague in 1604, followed closely by Mehdi Quli Beg, traveling via Russia and Aleppo and arriving at the same court in 1605. Both ambassadors are depicted in engravings by Aegidius Sadeler, court artist for Emperor Rudolph II, as well as by the painter Essaye le Gillon.⁴² The two portraits of Zaynul Khan Shamlu include detailed renderings of his figural *khila't*, a polychromatic design featuring large-scale standing female figures amidst flowering plants on a silvery ground.⁴³ The portrait of Mehdi Quli Beg by Sadeler includes an abstract rendering of a figural silk, but this differs from the staggered roundels of the *bālāpūsh* in le Gillon's painting.⁴⁴ All the figural silks depicted seem to fall into the non-narrative grouping. The 1605 engraving of Mehdi Quli Beg includes a handwritten Persian inscription, which is translated: "Here come: as Ambassador of the Most Exalted, Supreme, Revered, Fortunate King, Shah 'Abbās, to

whom I will give my life in devotion, to the court of His Excellency and Highness Emperor Rudolph.”⁴⁵

As the Safavids managed their alliances on all borders, they also participated in a continuous diplomatic exchange with Mughal India in the time of Akbar and Jahāngīr, as well as the independent provinces outside the Mughal realm, corresponding with the dates of the *Khamṣa* silks. Much of the diplomatic activity is documented in the royal annals by both dynasties, but the accounts of the reception of the ambassadors and the gifts given and received are not always consistent.⁴⁶ The earliest embassy between Iran and India was in 1563-4, when the Deccan sultans sent ambassadors; followed by an exchange with Ali Adel Shah from Bijapur, whose envoys brought gifts and "received in return personal robes of honor, and such items as jeweled crowns, horses with gold saddles, and dagger belts" from the court of Shah Tahmāsp. This exchange is documented after the fact in the Safavid *Tarikh-i ‘Alam ara-yi ‘Abbāsi* (Per., History of Shah ‘Abbās) by Iskandar Beg Munshī, Shah ‘Abbās’ personal secretary.⁴⁷ Beginning his massive work in the latter half of the monarch’s reign (completed 1629), Munshī—as the agent of the Shah and his predecessors—prepares a historiography that emphasizes the sovereign’s generosity and good will, as well as that of his predecessors.

Primary accounts of the diplomatic exchanges of Mughal ambassador Amīr Muḥammad Ma’ṣūm al-Bhakkarī, and Safavid ambassador Amīr Ma’ṣūm, are also reported favorably towards the respective rulers. Al-Bhakkarī reached Iran on behalf of Akbar in 1604, and Amīr Ma’ṣūm was discharged by Shah ‘Abbās the same year, with a letter describing his recent victories in Azerbaijan.⁴⁸ In the *Akbarnama*, al-Bhakkarī is documented by Abul Fazl as having been met with honor, warmth and friendship by the

Safavid shah, who inspected the gifts on arrival. But in the *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam ara-yi ‘Abbāsī*, Munshī records that ‘Abbās did not inspect the Mughal gifts for four months, and from these accepts only a sword, as an omen of military success.⁴⁹

The disparity between these self-serving historiographies leads create some uncertainty about the verity of events and gifts recorded in these dynastic annals. The reference by Abul Fazl in the *A’in-i Akbarī* to the silk textiles sent by Shah ‘Abbās to Akbar coincides with these reciprocal diplomatic missions; however, the silks are documented in the Mughal report as having been presented by Manuchihr Beg, a Georgian Christian. Therefore the “300 pieces of brocade—all woven by the hands of noted weavers—and fifty masterpieces of Ghiyas-i Naqshband” lead one to question if this sum includes the offerings of Amir Ma’sūm, or if this is simply an amount meant to embellish Safavid recognition of Mughal power.⁵⁰

Given the discrepancy of the documentation of the missions themselves, and the goal of self-aggrandizement in both courts, perhaps this is also an exaggeration. As there are only a handful of known textile designs signed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn, it seems that “fifty” might be a number selected to inflate the actual number of silks that could be definitively attributed to his workshop.⁵¹ Perhaps the number refers to multiple fragments of a smaller number of designs, which were not described in detail in Abul Fazl’s account. These proclamations should not always be taken at face value.⁵²

The alternative accounts of diplomatic exchanges continue into Jahāngīr’s reign, when Shah ‘Abbās sends an embassy in 1611 headed by Yadgār-’Alī Sultan Talish to belatedly commemorate his succession of the Mughal throne. The *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam ara-yi ‘Abbāsī* records the gifts offered in great detail. Munshī states:

Among the gifts were sent...one thousand five hundred pieces of precious fabrics, velvets, gold and silver-shot textiles, beautiful gold and silver brocades, European and Chinese silk brocades and velvets, as well as goods and textiles from Yazd and Kashan, and all sorts of gifts and presents worthy of the rank of both giver and recipient that would take too long to enumerate.⁵³

The *Jahāngīrnāma* also documents the diplomatic exchange, but the Mughal record emphasizes J Jahāngīr's reciprocal gesture, rather than the generosity of his neighboring monarch. Of the exchange with Yadgar-'Alī Sultan, Jahāngīr writes:

He presented for my inspection the gifts my brother Shah 'Abbās had sent. There were fine horses, textiles, and suitable rarities of every description. After he presented his offerings I gave him, on this same day, a sumptuous robe of honor [khil'at] and thirty thousand rupees (which would be one thousand tumans in the reckoning of Persia).⁵⁴

Taking care to specify the quality of the *khil'at* and the money offered in response, Jahāngīr does not specify the actual number of silk textiles received at his court. He dispatches the Mughal ambassador, Khan 'Alam, back to the Safavid court with Yadgar-'Alī Sultan, who is gifted forty thousand rupees of jeweled goods and cash, but no textiles.⁵⁵

Based on the documentation of diplomatic exchange between the two realms, it seems possible that at least one of the two satin lampas designs depicting Layla and Majnun silks signed by Ghiyāth was sent to the Mughal court. This would have provided access for the royal weavers to reverse engineer the textile, a tedious process that would involve recreating the *naqsheh* based on the woven structure of the cloth. Alternately, Safavid weavers working at the court could create a new *naqsheh* based on the design—also potentially falling into the category of a “designer knock-off.” Considering the analysis in Chapter Two of the stylization and costume depictions of the figures, it would be consistent that the dark satin lampas depicting Layla and Majnun, which includes the servant and the *Naskhi* signature, was the original; the later weavers eliminated the servant and left the

lovers alone, in keeping with Amir Khusrau's narrative, to create the red satin lampas design with *Kufic* signature.⁵⁶

The use of figural silks at the Mughal court can be traced to various depictions in paintings dated to the reign of Jahāngīr's early seventeenth century reign. These depictions, supported by various first person accounts, supply us with more information about the way these textiles were perceived and used in the Mughal context.

The *Jahāngīrnama* provides a passage with an intriguing description of the textiles used at court during the Nawruz celebration of his eleventh regnal year (March 9, 1616):

The hall's courtyard had been spread with cloth and shainianas [screens], and its sides were decorated with European canvases, gold-spun brocades with images, and rare textiles.⁵⁷

As other primary sources have only documented the presence of gold or silver, and specified only velvets as a technique, this passage specifying "gold-spun brocades with images," tells us that figural silks were used as hangings. Perhaps the *Khamisa* silks were among those that Jahāngīr mentions in this passage, categorized as a figured silk or one of the "rare textiles."

The ruler does not mention whether these silks were made domestically, or acquired from abroad. However, it is well documented that the Safavids continued to send diplomatic gifts of textiles to the Mughal court. Jahāngīr writes briefly in his memoirs about the gifts received from Shah 'Abbās on March 11, 1621:

On the ninth of Farvardin [March 19]...Muhibb-Ali and Aqa Beg, emissaries of the ruler of Iran, presented 24 horses, 2 pack horses, 3 camels, 7 hunting dogs, 27 bolts of gold brocade, 3 of gold-spun velvet, 1 bottle of fine ambergris, 2 pairs of carpets, and 2 felt coverlets. Two mares with foals my brother [Shah 'Abbās] had sent with them were also viewed.⁵⁸

It is interesting to note that Jahāngīr specifies a total of thirty “bolts” of luxury silks in this passage, rather than “pieces,” indicating that the fabric was in long, continuous lengths. This further indicates that the large numbers (five hundred, fifteen hundred) mentioned in the earlier accounts were probably comprised of smaller fragments, referred to as “pieces.”

Another diplomatic mission from the Safavids to the court of Jahāngīr, headed by Muḥammad Rezā Beg, is recorded in the travel memoir of Sir Thomas Roe, English ambassador to the court of Jahāngīr from 1615-1619. This exchange, which took place on October 19, 1616, is not documented in the *Jahāngīrnama*. Roe describes the dress of Muḥammad Rezā Beg, which included a rich turban strung with rubies, pearls and turquoise, edged in gold piping that culminated in a feathered aigrette. Roe writes the following about the ambassador’s arrival:

His owne trayne were about 50 horse, well fitted in Coates and Cloth of Gould, their bowes, quivers, and Targetes richly garnished, 40 shott, and some 200 ordinary Peons and attenders on baggage.⁵⁹

Despite this grand arrival, Roe reports that Muḥammad Rezā Beg was subservient during his royal audience. The Safavid ambassador prostrated himself before Jahāngīr, and presented him with a letter from Shah ‘Abbās, whom he claims has consented to financially aid the Mughals against the Turks. The Englishman writes about the ambassador’s response upon receiving the customary *khil’at* from Jahāngīr:

The King, according to Custome, gave him a handsome turbant, a vest of gould, and a Girdle, for which agayne hee made three Teselims [bowing to the waist] and one Sizada or grand curtesye [prostrating his head on the floor].⁶⁰

Roe reports on the gifts sent by the Safavids, including silk textiles:

7 camells laden with with veluett, two Sutes of Europe Arras (which I suppose was Venetian hangings of veluett with Gould, not Arras), two chestes of Persian hangings... one Camell laden with Persian Cloth of Gould, 8 Carpettes of silke...⁶¹

Roe informs his readers that velvet is used frequently as furnishings, including bolsters, cushions, valences and hangings edged with pearls and jewels, that adorn royal tents in encampments.⁶² On the varying quality of velvets, he comments that Chinese velvets are considered inferior to those produced elsewhere.⁶³

The Mughal preference for Safavid velvets continued into the reign of Shah Jahān, as documented by the Hindu state secretary Chandar Bhan in *Tārīkh-i Rajahā-yi Dihlī* (Per. A history of the Kings of Delhi). Chandar Bhan notes that on *Norūz* the palace walls were decorated with *makhmal-i kāshān-i* (velvets from Kashan); and that while on military campaigns, the royal tents in the encampment included lavish decoration with hangings of luxury silk, including Safavid velvets.⁶⁴ The never-ending pursuit of territory through various military campaigns, as well as the Mughal penchant for nomadic life, provided ample opportunities to display rich silk textiles in these temporary royal domiciles.⁶⁵

In other situations, precious stuffs are spread on the ground for the ruler to ride upon when approaching a destination, such as Jahāngīr's visit to Asaf Khan, on March 27, 1616. In preparation to receive his royal visitor, Jahāngīr writes that his brother-in-law "had spread the road with velvets and brocades I was told are worth ten thousand rupees."⁶⁶

Jahāngīr documents several occasions in the *Jahāngīrnama* during which his son Khurram (the future Shah Jahān) is gifted *khil'at* and lengths of cloth made of precious stuffs.⁶⁷ These may be the figural silks represented in portraits painted during his reign. "The Emperor Shah Jahān with his Son Dara Shikoh" painted by Nanha in 1620, from the Shah Jahān album at The Metropolitan Museum (55.121.10.36), depicts the future shah

leaning on a bolster made from figural silk with Safavid-style figures. The male courtiers that comprise the design are depicted in colorful robes of lilac purple, jade green and cobalt blue, punctuated with the botanical sprays discussed elsewhere throughout this study. The figures are alternately seated and standing, holding wine bottles and conversing with one another. The wide turbans of the figures are consistent with early seventeenth century Safavid fashion, indicating a date of manufacture contemporaneous with the painting. Considering the accuracy with which Mughal court painters depicted the world around them—from Mansūr's botanical representations, to the portraiture of Nanha and his contemporaries—it is reasonable to assume that this is a realistic depiction of an actual textile, rather than a visual metaphor sometimes employed by painters.⁶⁸

Other figural silks also appear in contemporary album paintings, such as the portrait of Inayat Khan (MMA 55.121.10.29), also part of the Shah Jahān album.⁶⁹ The courtier is depicted holding a quiver made of gold figural silk with standing female figures, as well as pants made of red figural silk with male figures, perhaps *khil'at* gifted to him from his sovereign. However, the male figures do not display the wide Safavid turbans seen on the bolster silk; rather, they are wearing close-fitting hats with a soft, elongated center and small upturned brims. Their multilayered garments include a hip-length jacket with short sleeves, painted gold perhaps to represent a metal-thread brocade, and at least one figure wears a floor-length robe underneath. A seated figure also displays the same cap and jacket, perched on what could represent a small throne.⁷⁰

Another depiction of a courtier in gold figural silk appears in the *Padshāhnāma*, a superbly illustrated manuscript documenting the major events in the reign of Shah Jahān. Completed between 1630 and 1657, the jewel like paintings include detailed portraiture as

well as textiles and garments. Fol. 50B and 51A depict Shah Jahān receiving his three eldest sons and his father-in-law, Asaf Khan, during his accession ceremonies in Lahore. On the left side of fol. 50B (dated 1630), one of the guests at the court wears the large striped Safavid turban of the ‘Abbāsi style and a gold silk *bālāpūsh* with large scale seated male figures. The person represented has been identified as Rizā Bahadūr, a high-ranking military commander (d. 1629), who appears throughout other folios of the manuscript as well.⁷¹ In the hierarchical arrangement of the painting, Rizā Bahadūr is placed approximately in the middle, indicating a relatively high rank in Shah Jahān’s court. In other *Padshāhnāma* depictions, Rizā Bahadūr does not wear a figural silk garment; perhaps the *bālāpūsh* depicted in Fol. 50B was also a *khil’at* gifted to him by the sovereign.⁷²

Were figural textiles such as these regifted from the cache of diplomatic gifts from the Safavid court, or were they silks produced in Mughal workshops in the Safavid style? Clearly, the large numbers of silk textiles being sent with multiple ambassadors to the Mughal court must have provided the *naqshbandān* employed at the royal *kārkhāna* with inspirational material for new or similar designs.

Jahāngīr also obtained textiles as offerings from his subjects, who in turn received them from Persian sources. On August 5, 1619, he writes in the *Jahāngīrnāma* of a visit to the Gulafshan garden near the Jamuna river:

Because the garden mentioned above is in the care of Khwaja Jahān, he presented as an offering pieces of gold brocade of novel design that had recently been brought to him from Persia. I selected what I liked and gave him back the rest.⁷³

Although there is no way of identifying the “novel design” of the Persian silks, this passage clearly represents the creative inspiration that came to India by way of Iran, and the potential adaptation of motifs. Despite the open question of where the silk was produced,

images such as these clearly indicate that such textiles were precious and intended for royal use.

Diplomatic gifts of textiles from the Safavids to the Mughal court continued throughout the seventeenth century. There is ample documentation on gifts from Shah ‘Abbās II sent to the court of Mughal ‘Alamgīr in 1661. The ambassador, Budāq Beg, was recorded by French physician Francois Bernier as having brought a large pearl, and several lengths of “brocade” of floral design among other gifts.⁷⁴ In the latter half of the seventeenth century, there was a decline in figural silk production in favor of single-floral designs resembling botanical studies or designs with the popular *gol-o-bolbol* motif (Per. flower and bird).

Again paralleling its western neighbor, Indian textile design also proliferates with the botanical floral designs that appear across media. Though many of these designs also correspond with poetic language and metaphor, the *Khamisa* designs do not appear again on silk textiles in Iran or India after the mid-seventeenth century.

NOTES

¹ Linda Steinmann, “Shah ‘Abbās and the Royal Silk Trade, 1599-1629,” *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)*, vol. 14, No. 1 (1987): 68.

² *Ibid*, 68-70.

³ *Ibid*, 71.

⁴ *Ibid*, 70.

⁵ This practice of bearing tribute for the king is immortalized on the stone carvings at Persepolis (*Takht-i Jamshīd*) outside Shiraz, Iran, which depicts dignitaries from different provinces in the Achamaenian empire lined up to present gifts to the sovereign.

⁶ For a discussion of the dual function of *pishkash*, see Ann Lambton, “Pishkash: Present or Tribute?” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 57, No. 1, In Honour of J. E. Wansbrough (1994): 145-158.

⁷ Michael Moroney, “Gift Giving in the Iranian Tradition,” in *Gifts of the Sultan: The Art of Giving at the Islamic Courts*, ed. Linda Komaroff and Sheila Blair (Los Angeles : Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2011), 35-36.

⁸ Moroney, “Gift Giving in the Iranian Tradition,” 36.

⁹ H. Algar, “Al-E Aba,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/7, p. 742; an updated version is available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/al-e-aba-the-family-of-the-cloak-i> (accessed on April 7, 2017).

¹⁰ The poem is in praise of Prophet Muḥammad, who is said to have cured the poet al-Busiri of paralysis by appearing to him in a dream and wrapping him in a mantle or cloak. See Patricia Baker, “Islamic Honorific Garments” *Costume: The Journal of the Costume Society*, Vol. 25, Issue 1, 1991: 25.

¹¹ The governor of Iraq, Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (r. 694-714), introduced gift-giving during Nawruz (the vernal equinox) in his court; the custom was subsequently abolished the Umayyad caliph Umar II (r. 717-720), then reinstated by Yazid II (r.720-724). Moroney, “Gift Giving in the Iranian Tradition,” 37.

¹² Europeans also referred to *bālāpūsh* as a “surveste.” Patricia Baker, “Islamic Honorific Garments,” 33. Although the *khil’at* was often accompanied by additional items, such as precious objects and animal trappings, the main reference throughout this paper is to the actual garment(s).

¹³ Moroney, “Gift Giving in the Iranian Tradition,” 46-47.

¹⁴ Baker, “Islamic Honorific Garments,” 32. For a list of gold velvet types and their Persian names, see Willem Floor, *The Persian Textile Industry: In Historical Perspective, 1500-1925* (Québec : L'Harmattan, 2002), 202-203.

¹⁵ For a discussion of Safavid-European diplomatic missions with reproductions of portraits of several Safavid ambassadors, see Rudolph P. Matthee, “Iran’s Relations with Europe in the Safavid Period” in ed. Axel Langer, *The Fascination of Persia* (Zurich: Verlag Scheidegger & Speiss AG, 2013), 6-39.

¹⁶ The two portraits of Robert and Teresia Sherley by Antony Van Dyck (1622) and an anonymous artist (1626) referenced in this study reside respectively at Petworth House, National Trust, UK; and in the Trust of the Earl of Berkeley. Both pairs of portraits were exhibited most recently in two contemporaneous exhibitions in London: the Anonymous portraits in “Shah ‘Abbās: The Making of Iran at the British Museum,” and the Van Dyck portraits in “Van Dyck and Britain” at the Tate Gallery, both in 2009. All four portraits of the Sherleys have been reproduced in Canby, *Shah ‘Abbās: The Remaking of Iran*, no.s 15 and 16, 56-57. In the same publication are Van Dyck’s sketches, including notes for the gold brocade for Robert Sherley’s *khil’at*; see cat. no. 18, 59.

¹⁷ George Manwaring, *The Three Brothers: Or, The Travels and Adventures of Sir Anthony, Sir Robert, & Sir Thomas Sherley, in Persia, Russia, Turkey, Spain, etc.* (London: Hurst, Robinson & co., 1825), 67. Also reproduced in Sir E. Denison Ross, ed. *Sir Anthony Sherley and his Persian Adventure Including some Contemporary Narratives Relating Thereto* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1933), 204.

¹⁸ Manwaring reports that Anthony Sherley had purchased cloth of gold during their stay in Aleppo, en route to Iran. See Manwaring, *The Three Brothers*, 40. He does specify that a courier was sent by Shah ‘Abbās prior to his arrival in Qazvin with horses for the English party, indicating the possibility that the rich stuffs were also brought to them, 67. Baker notes that royal audiences were preceded by a *khil’at pūshān*, an individual who would greet the newcomers outside the town and dress them for the occasion. See Baker, “Islamic Honorific Garments,” 33.

¹⁹ Anthony Jenkinson, *Journey of Anthony Jenkinson into Persia* (London: Hakluyt, 1973), 96. This source is also quoted by Jennifer Scarce in her essay “Safavid Dress and Europe,” (ed. Langer 2013). Scarce indicates that it is not known whether Jenkinson took his *khila’t* home with him, or whether or not he had his portrait painted wearing them. Patricia Baker also notes the continuity of this at the Ottoman court: a Swedish envoy records a similar process of being approached by court pages with the garments before the royal audience. See Baker, “Islamic Honorific Garments,” 30.

²⁰ Anthony Sherley had sold several of the items that Shah ‘Abbās had given him for the initial 1599 embassy to Rome, Prague and Madrid in order to fund his cupidity and extravagant tastes. With a reputation for being a conman, who managed to beguile princes and merchants alike with his charisma, and embezzled his way through Europe and the Islamic world for the next thirty years. See Ross, ed. *Sir Anthony Sherley and his Persian Adventure Including some Contemporary Narratives Relating Thereto*.

²¹ See Kate Arthur, "'Robert and Teresa Sherley's embassy to the court of James" in *Women and Islam in Early Modern English literature*, ed. Bernadette Diane Andrea (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), for more information about the fascinating life of Sampsonia/Teresa Sherley and her role in Robert Sherley's diplomacy.

²² Gary Schwartz, "The Sherleys and the Shah: Persia as the Stakes in A Rogue's Gambit" in *The Fascination of Persia*, 84.

²³ Ibid, 80.

²⁴ The gifting of live animals as diplomatic gifts was reciprocal between the Safavid and Mughal courts. Jahāngīr documents that Shah 'Abbās has sent him a zebra with a diplomatic mission in 1621, and a royal horse that he regifted to the Hindu Raja Man Singh. See Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīrnāma*, 360 and 94.

²⁵ For a color reproduction, see ed. Axel Langer, *The Fascination of Persia*, fig. 4, 14.

²⁶ With the Grimani painting as its starting point, the 1603 diplomatic exchange between Fathi Beg and the Doge became the focus for the exhibition, "Gifts By Shah 'Abbās The Great To The Serenissima: Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Venice and Safavid Persia," curated by Elisa Gagliardi Mangilli. At the Palazzo Ducale, Chamber of the Scrutinio, from February 28, 2013-April 27, 2014. The Virgin and Child velvet is included in the exhibition and on the web site <http://palazzoducale.visitmuve.it/en/mostre-en/archivio-mostre-en/gifts-by-shah-'Abbās-the-great-to-the-serenissima/2013/01/4803/project-8/> Accessed March 29, 2017.

²⁷ Schwartz, "The Sherleys and the Shah," 82.

²⁸ Marianna Shreve Simpson, "Gifts for the Shah: An Episode in Hapsburg-Safavid Relations during the Reigns of Philip III and 'Abbās I" in *Gifts of the Sultan*, 132.

²⁹ Ibid, 137-8.

³⁰ Most of the primary source information for the Holstein-Gottorp embassy is from Adam Olearius; his passage regarding the *khil'at* of the ambassadors is reprinted in Bier, *The Persian Velvets at Rosenborg*, 73. Bier notes that the collection was probably brought to Gottorp by the Persian Embassy that departed Isfahan in 1638 (11), arriving in Gottorp in 1639 (70). It is worth considering whether the Persian velvets at Rosenborg were among the "500 pieces of assorted silks"; if so, the diplomatic gifts to the crown and personal gifts in the form of *khil'at* seem to have been delivered to the ambassadors simultaneously.

³¹ Bier, *The Persian Velvets at Rosenborg*, 73.

³² For a color reproduction see Tim Stanley, "Ottoman Gift Exchange: Royal Give and Take" in *Gifts of the Sultan*, cat. no. 155.

³³ Necipoglu, “Early Modern Floral: The Agency of Ornament in Ottoman and Safavid Visual Cultures,” 141. Also noted by Tim Stanley et al, *Place and Mosque: Islamic Art from the Middle East*, (V & A Publications, London: 2004), 58.

³⁴ Jennifer Scarce, “Safavid Dress and Europe” in *Fascination of Persia*, 59. For a color reproduction, see fig. 20 on the same page.

³⁵ Supporting his dual identity as king and dervish, Shah ‘Abbās is documented as preferring plain cloth to the type of luxurious figural silks that he was promoting through his ambassadors. This paradox of the “dervish king” and his “dervish silk” is discussed extensively in my Master’s Thesis, “Donning the Cloak: Safavid Figural Silks and the Display of Identity,” San Jose State University, 2007; published under my former surname, Nazanin Hedayat Shenasa.

³⁶ See Pietro Della Valle, trans. Winifred Blunt, *Pietro’s Pilgrimage* (London: James Barrie, 1953), 152.

³⁷ Scarce remarks that the display of metal-thread figural silk garments was the norm for Ambassadors, an opinion that this author corroborates. See Scarce, “Safavid Dress and Europe,” 66.

³⁸ Canby, *Shah ‘Abbās: The Remaking of Iran*, 56.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴⁰ Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Material of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 57.

⁴¹ For a color reproduction, see Matthee, “Iran’s Relations with Europe in the Safavid Period,” fig. 6, 29.

⁴² Essaye le Gillon and Aegidius Sadeler are speculated to have made the portraits of the diplomats independently from one another, based on the variation in detail in dress, and the absence of the falcon in le Gillon’s portrait of Mehdi Quli Beg. See Waldemar Deluga, “The Oriental Portraits of Aegidius Sadeler,” *Print Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (December 2008), 424-426.

⁴³ *Ibid*, figs. 1 and 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, figs. 3 and 4.

⁴⁵ Translation by Dr. G. Malek Hedayat, May 2015.

⁴⁶ Jamsheed K. Choksy and M. Usman Hasan, “An Emissary from Akbar to ‘Abbās I: Inscriptions, Texts, and the Career of Amir Muḥammad Ma’sūm Bhakkarī,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, Vol. No. 1 (April, 1997): 27.

⁴⁷ Iskandar Beg Munshī, trans. Roger M. Savory, *History of Shah ‘Abbās* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978-1986), 193. Although Munshī’s work is the most comprehensive historiography

written about Shah ‘Abbās I, other historiographies were written during the Safavid era; for a complete listing, see Sholeh Quinn, “Historiography vi. Safavid Period,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2012, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/historiography-vi> Accessed April 24, 2017.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Choksy and Hasan, “An Emissary from Akbar to ‘Abbās I,” 27.

⁵⁰ Abul Fazl, *A’in-i Akbarī*, n. 745; available online <http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D00701023%26ct%3D260%26rqs%3D107> Accessed November 1, 2016.

⁵¹ Publications following Ackerman’s articles in the 1930s cite Ghiyāth as having signed seven silk designs. See Skelton, “Ghiyāth al-Dīn,” n. 9, 262.

⁵² It is also important to consider errors in translation; there were multiple words used to describe textiles in Persian that do not necessarily correspond with English translations or concepts. This issue is beyond the scope of this paper, but warrants investigation.

⁵³ Wheeler, trans. *Jahāngīrnāmanama*, n. 2 on 122, after Iskandar Beg Munshī 2:782f.

⁵⁴ Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīrnāma*, 122.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 148.

⁵⁶ In one of his own lyrical verses, Ghiyāth al-Dīn references Naskh calligraphy, recorded in Sadiqi Beg’s *Majma’ al-Khavass*: “Now that the bird of your beauty has flown on the wings of a beard/The letters in *naskh* script (the beard) are written on your face.” See Skelton, “Ghiyāth al-Dīn,” Appendix C, 260. It is also worth noting that of Ghiyāth’s eight signed designs, he used both *Kufic* and *Naskhi* calligraphic styles for his signature.

⁵⁷ Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīrnāma*, 189.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 359.

⁵⁹ William Foster, ed. *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the court of the Great Mogul, 1615-1619* Vol. I (London: Hakluyt Society, 1849), 295.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 296.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid, 144.

⁶³ Roe describes a meeting of the governor of Surat on October 9, 1615, during which the governor inspected the gifts brought for Jahāngīr from the English court. Included in the gifts was a carriage lined with “ill veluett of the Chinoyse” (Chinese velvet); Roe reports that the Governor scorned it as “little and poore” (67), a response that Roe reports to King James via his letter to the East India Company, dated November 24, 1615 (97).

⁶⁴ See Rajeev Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015). Chapter Three, “Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary,” examines this historical source, reproducing two passages referencing the use of “velvets from Kashan” (*makhmal-i kāshānī*) in the royal context. See 128 and 131.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of the Mughal preference for nomadic life, see Lisa Balabanlilar, “The Emperor Jahāngīr and the Pursuit of Pleasure” in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Third Series, Vol. 19, No. 2 (April, 2009): 173-186.

⁶⁶ Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīrnāma*, 191-192. The laying of precious cloth and jewels on the ground for a ruler to ride upon when approaching his destination is a pre-Islamic Persian custom, and is referenced in Niẓāmī’s “Khusrau and Shīrīn.” See Chelkowski, “Mirror of the Invisible World,” 39.

⁶⁷ See Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīrnāma*, trans. Thackston, 184, 197, and 259 for passages specifying gold silks given to Prince Khurram (the future Shah Jahān).

⁶⁸ There is a small subset of images in Persian painting dated to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that include composite figural imagery, sometimes represented as clothing that covers the body of the subject. For examples, see “Seated Princess” at the Freer Sackler Galleries (S1986.309) and “Man Reading” by Muḥammad Sharif Musavvir and Muraq Samarqandi at The Louvre (OA 7109), once facing pages that formed the frontispiece of a book of Persian poetry (ca. 1600, Uzbekistan). Though the male and female figures seem to be clothed in figural garments, the composite design does not reflect any extant examples; this stylistic rendering may be an enigmatic metaphor, yet to be deciphered by Western scholars.

⁶⁹ “Portrait of Inayat Khan” is published in Thackston’s translation of the *Jahāngīrnāma* (104) and also in Welch et al, *The Emperor’s Album* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), cat. no. 26. The full page folio includes three other portraits; Inayat Khan is depicted in the upper right quadrant.

⁷⁰ These garments and the small hat are similar to those depicted on a figural silk at the Metropolitan Museum (MMA 38.112.1), dated to the sixteenth century; however, there is a conspicuous absence of either the earlier *tāj Safavī* or the wide ‘Abbāsī turban in the Mughal depiction.

⁷¹ Milo Cleveland Beach and Ebba Koch, *King of the World: The Padshāhnāma* (London: Royal Collection, 2003), cat. no. 10-11. Other folios depicting Rizā Bahadūr include fol. 43B, fol. 48B

and 49A, and fol. 192B. For the mention of Rizā Bahadūr's death in battle on October 7, 1629, see Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīrnāma*, 454.

⁷² See Ebba Koch, "The Hierarchical Principles of Shah-Jahāni Painting," in *King of the World: The Padshāhnāma*, 167-168.

⁷³ Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīrnāma*, 307.

⁷⁴ Susan Stronge, "Imperial Gifts at the Court of Hindustan" in *Gifts of the Sultan*, 171.

Chapter Four: Narrative Imagery, Iconography and Identity

Having documented the relationship between painting, poetry and textiles, as well as the dissemination of silks through diplomatic exchange, one must speculate upon the real purpose that narrative imagery from the *Khamisa* may have served. One can question why a narrative scene on a silk textile would be recreated, and how the patrons would decide which narratives and scenes would be reproduced in this medium. Furthering the range of interpretation, all extant *Khamisa* fragments in this group have been disassembled from their original forms; therefore, one must look at the potential end uses and meanings associated with both apparel and furnishings, and consider how the iconological significance may shift with these applications.

As several examples of figural garments have already been discussed throughout the study, use of the *Khamisa* silks as high end apparel produced for the open market will comprise the first part of the discussion. Beginning with the premise that dress offers the potential to fashion one's identity, the function of narrative imagery plays a key role in communicating with the viewer.¹ First, however, the designer must have predicted a popular demand for the textile in order to produce it in the first place.

Loom-woven textiles are produced with the intention of producing large amounts of cloth with the same pattern, as opposed to embroidered or tapestry-woven textiles which are created as individual pieces. For an independent weaving workshop in Safavid Iran, the expense of investing in raw materials, the labor-intensive process of creating the *naqsheh*, and the weaving process which requires at least two people (the weaver and the draw boy), rely upon the anticipation of forthcoming sales. Therefore, any designs woven on the loom

for sale in the open market point to a universal familiarity with the stories in the *Khamisa* among wealthy consumers.

The process for creating clothing in the seventeenth century was first to select the fabric through a merchant, then have a tailor create the garments required. Textile craftsmen and merchants congregated at the *bazaar*, a covered marketplace where craftsmen would display their wares, as well as the location of guild meetings and other activities.³ In Isfahan, the royal bazaar established as part of the *Maidan-i Shah*, the large central square designed by Shah ‘Abbās which included the royal palace and mosques built between 1598 and 1608, included sections granted by royal decree for the use of various trades.⁴ Members of the urban guilds were organized by profession and specialty, and in textile and clothing production these included the following: weavers of gold brocades (*zarī-bāfān*) including gold and silver lace (respectively *gulābatun-dūzān* and *naqda-dūzān*), weavers of silk brocades (*sha’r-bāfān*) and other high-end apparel fabrics, dyers and printers of silk and cotton (*chūt-sāzān*), tailors (*darzīyān*), and other industry professionals.⁵

The largest expense for consumers was purchasing the cloth, as Safavid garments varied little in design, and could be cut and sewn relatively quickly based on pre-existing patterns. Standard loom width for Safavid velvets and lampas silks ranged from 65 cm to 75 cm (approximately 25.5 in. to 29.5 in.), so generally four to five lengths of fabric were required to create a robe with a central opening down the front, such as the figural silk *bālāpūsh* at the State Armory Museum in Moscow discussed previously.⁶ A cross-over robe, such as the *jama* worn in India from the time of Akbar, required more width and several pieces of fabric joined together to create the full skirt.

The goal in creating clothing throughout the Islamic world was to waste as little fabric as possible; most garments were designed, based on these loom widths, to be joined at the selvages [woven edges], discouraging unraveling or fraying of the fabric. For garments requiring greater ease of movement, tapered panels would be inserted to widen narrow areas. Tunics were also flat pieces off the loom sewn together at the selvages, with a circular opening and a slit cut down the front and sometimes the sides to facilitate dressing. Pants were created in a similar fashion: one length of cloth was folded in half lengthwise to form a tube with the selvages stitched together to create each leg, and then joined at the top and fastened with a drawstring.⁷

These basic principles influenced the design layout of the cloth, guiding the *naqshband* as he designed the size and number of repeated motifs. Among Safavid silks, smaller figural motifs with elements placed closer together generally point to sixteenth century manufacture, while larger figural designs with more background space between motifs correspond with seventeenth century manufacture.

Within the group of *Khamisa* silks, the double cloth designs contain the smallest motifs, partly due to the technique's requirement of doubling the warp and weft to weave two cloths simultaneously.⁸ Including imagery from the stories of Laylā and Majnūn (fig. 10), Shīrīn and Farhād (fig. 11), and Khusrau and Shīrīn (fig. 13), these textiles need to be viewed at close proximity for the characters and scenes to be recognized. Fragments of the Laylā and Majnūn double cloth (fig. 10) at the Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum have been cut in triangular shapes, indicating the fashioning of this silk as a garment. This reflects the personal choice of the wearer: when selecting his/her cloth, the patron was motivated to wear a *bālāpūsh* depicting the lovers, representing his/her internal

state. Therefore, the viewer in this scenario is meant to be close to the fabric, indicating that only an intimate friend or lover would be apprised of the iconographic significance of these small-scale *Khamisa* silks.

As figures grew larger on cloth, a shift also happened in the impression that the figural silk garment made on its viewer, from a statement intended for intimate relationships to an impression meant to be made from a distance. Considering the grandeur of state ceremonies at both Safavid and Mughal courts, larger iconography corresponds with the display of identity at a gathering of courtiers, in which the ruler was seen from a distance. The *Khamisa* silks with large-scale figural designs include the signed and unsigned Khusrau and Shīrīn velvets (figures 2, 3, and 4), as well as the Majnūn velvet (fig. 9).

Much of the change in scale of textile design during the reign of ‘Abbās has been commented upon by scholars as a reflection of the trends in painting. As court painter Rizā ‘Abbāsī’s style and production shifted from courtly illustrated manuscripts to single album page paintings, other painters also emulated his style, producing large single figure paintings with ink-washed backgrounds and minimal decoration. The shift is explained by Sheila Canby in *Persian Painting*: “Released from the strict *kitāb khāna* system, artists who in another era might have been patronized solely by members of the court now sold their works to anyone who could afford them, either locally or abroad.”⁹

Although this explains the reason for this new development in the medium of painting, it does not justify the change in scale in figural silks, particularly those woven at workshops not connected to the court. *Naqshbandān* at workshops in Yazd, Kashan, and

other urban centers had been free to sell their wares on the open market, as well as the court, for centuries. There was no reason for independent textile designers to create new *naqshehā* based on the need for a more marketable textile, and the labor involved was not necessarily decreased by a change in scale of the motifs. The discussion again finds itself asking the crucial question of how intricately painting and textile design were linked, and why the two mediums parallel the same trend in the early seventeenth century.

If, in fact, textile design follows figural painting trends of increased scale in the seventeenth century, this may indicate the reverse of the “designer knock-off” theory: it may have been independent workshops who first put the famous characters on double cloth in the mid-sixteenth century, and sold or presented them to the court, after which the royal *naqshbandān* created luxury versions with the same imagery to serve their own purposes of display.

The answer may be found in the end use of the silks. Furnishing textiles require larger motifs than apparel, especially when hung from tall ceilings or in large tents. Mughal velvets generally ranged in width from 72 cm to 79 cm (28 in. to 31 in.), which could be hung across a wall or used to create an enclosure: a valid explanation for the increase in scale of silks used by monarchs who spent much of their time either in encampments or participating in state ceremonies.¹⁰ However, extant large-scale figural garments, such as the *bālāpūsh* depicted in the portraits of Robert Sherley and Naqd ‘Alī Beg, also inform our understanding that these silks could be fashioned into whatever use preferred by the consumer.

Whether utilized as apparel or wall hangings, the *Khamisa* silks were displayed as portable poetry. Mystic poetry, in turn, is imbued with abundant use of textile metaphors, borrowed from the reverence for the artistic process as well as the skilled craftsmen who joined Sufi orders from the medieval era onwards.

Even before Nizāmī's codification of the legend, Majnūn had become a symbol of the enlightened soul in Sufi circles. From the eighth century, these Islamic mystics—conventionally referred to as “Sufis” supposedly because they wore hair shirts made of *suf* (Ar., wool)—sought unconventional paths on the road to enlightenment, many of which did not include traditional religious practice. The goal was for the seeker to remove the “veils” that separate the seeker and the Divine, resulting in *fanā*, a total annihilation of the ego.¹²

Nizāmī and later poets emphasize the character of Majnūn as having the ability to conquer the *nafs al-amara*, the physical needs of the self, to elevate the soul: Majnūn, who had lost himself in his love for Laylā, was able to unite with the divine Beloved through his unfulfilled desire for his earthly beloved. This connection between longing, suffering and enlightenment would inform not only the literary world, but the life of ascetic mystics referred to as *darvīsh*, whose actions mirrored those of Majnūn. These mendicants, wandering homeless in an ascetic state like Majnūn himself, often recited verses as the madman did.¹³ Though *darvīsh* were often in conflict with the traditional ‘*ulema* (religious men of learning), who considered this type of worship heretical, they also reminded society of Majnūn's journey from love to enlightenment through his adoration of Laylā through poetry.

In the Translator's Preface to Nizāmī's *Laylā and Majnūn*, Rudolph Gelpke writes:

Nizāmī understands the three elements of the traditional Majnūn—his love, his insanity, and his poetical genius—as aspects of one, indivisible unity. Only when he is driven out of the paradise of his love does Majnūn become both insane and a poet.¹⁴

Majnūn is also compared to a *darvīsh* by Nizāmī himself who describes the beloved's effect on her admirer:

Laylā could bewitch with one glance from beneath her dark hair, Majnūn was her slave and a dervish dancing before her.”¹⁵

The link between poetry and madness is further corroborated by the character Nawfal, the sympathetic '*amīr* who tried to assist Majnūn by waging war on Laylā's tribe, when he acknowledges:

The man sitting in front of him was perhaps a madman, a fool—but there was no doubt that he was a poet, and among poets a master whose equal was not to be found in the whole of Arabia.¹⁶

By design, Nizāmī's narrative links Majnūn's talents as a poet with his lovelorn state and is both the result and the perpetuation of his madness. Nizāmī further likens Majnūn's condition to the *darvīsh* with whom the twelfth century audience was familiar, when he describes him as a “drunken madman” who danced in front of every camp site, calling Laylā's name, chained and punished by the old woman.¹⁷

Throughout his narrative, Nizāmī refers to Majnūn's unrequited love and resulting lunacy as a thread with a knot in it. Majnūn's father experiences a rare moment of hope regarding his son's condition when he decides to ask for Laylā's hand in marriage:

His sadness gone, he [Majnūn's father] was full of confidence that he could untie the knot in his son's thread.¹⁸

The forlorn father encourages his love-mad son to be happy again by declaring:

‘Bliss can undo all knots; it is the turquoise seal of God.’¹⁹

Majnūn also relates his life to textiles when he justifies his madness to his father declaring:

‘You know only too well how things are with me, but you also know that it is not ourselves who hold fate’s thread in our hands.’²⁰

Throughout his epic work, Nizāmī also incorporates garment metaphors. Majnūn’s father laments his son’s madness as the casting of the evil eye when he asks rhetorically:

‘Whose thorn has torn the hem of your robe?’²¹

Torn and discarded garments are also literal and display Majnūn’s relationship to civilized society. After befriending Nawfal, Majnūn complies with societal norms by bathing and donning fine clothes and a turban; after Nawfal’s abandonment of the war against Laylā’s tribe, Majnūn wanders through the wilderness of Najd where thorns literally tear his garment asunder.²²

Garments also cloak the natural world that surrounds the lovers. After a lonely night for the separated lovers, Nizāmī describes the sunrise:

Once more the young day donned its morning coat, woven from shimmering brocade.²³

Other references are present as well: the light pushes through the “curtain of night,” and silk brocade becomes “the soft grass” at the oasis where Majnūn rests his weary head.²⁴

Nizāmī becomes a craftsman himself when he weaves together love and responsibility in the tale of *Khusrau and Shīrīn*. The Sasanian ruler’s relationship to his beloved is presented as an edifying device, reminding readers that Khusrau must put his responsibilities as king before his desire for Shīrīn. However, Khusrau’s promiscuous nature also plies him away from his infatuation when he weds Maryam, then Shekar, leaving the loyal Shīrīn waiting in the shadows. This inconstancy is supplanted by the

brocaded tale of Farhād's steadfast devotion to her, and her admiration of his character. Nizāmī then adds the shimmering threads of this sub-plot into the tangled weft of the main characters, when Khusrau creates the ruse for Farhād's death. At the end, when the knots have been loosened and the happy couple is together, the cloth is torn apart by Shiruyeh's coup and the murder-suicide of the lovers. Despite all this, Nizāmī concedes that fickle fate is the corroborator with humans in this sad tale.²⁵ The entire narrative is draped in precious silks, which are literal as well as metaphorical, and serve to remind the reader of the wealth and grandeur of the Sasanian era of kingship. Amīr Khusrau's version of the tale is equally laden with both literal and metaphorical references to precious stuffs, from "the pearly veil" that Barbad celebrates in song, to the white silk that covers the distance between them as Khusrau rides to his wedding party at Shīrīn's palace.²⁶

In her publication *A Two-Colored Brocade*, Schimmel remarks upon the importance of thread as a metaphor for romance in Persian poetry when she states: "all the sorrows and worries which the soul undergoes in love are, as it were, materialized into knots that cannot be untangled."²⁷ Schimmel also relates the common metaphor of thread as fate in *Sabk-i Hindi*, the Indian poetic practice developed from the Persian prototype. Schimmel states, "the idea that one spins and weaves one's own fate from one's actions and thoughts is particularly well known in the Indian tradition."²⁸

The omnipresence of weaving and textile-making metaphors in medieval Persian verse are also explored by Jerome Clinton in his essay, "Image and Metaphor: Textiles in Persian Poetry."²⁹ Clinton notes that listeners of poetry were most likely amateur poets, who appreciated the process of *sh'er-bafi* or *sukhan-taraz*, literally translated as the "weaving of words" and "embroidery of speech" respectively.³⁰

Silk and garments feature prominently in poetic metaphor as early as the medieval era, when Persian poetry began to flourish throughout the region. During the same time span that Ferdowsi was codifying the history of Iranian kingship in his *Shahnāma*, Ghaznavid poet Farrukh-i Sistani (ca. 980-1038) states that “every garden receives/a colored robe of honor from the splendor of the prince,” rendering nature as the monarch granting *khil’at* to his garden-courtiers.³¹ His most famous *qasida* begins with a journey with a caravan from Sistan with a caravan of merchants specializing in fine robes “spun from the heart and woven by the spirit.”³² In light of his predecessors and contemporaries, it is not unusual that Nizāmī was also using textile-based imagery to illustrate the human condition.

Comparing the arts of poetry and weaving becomes an accepted convention by the thirteenth century, as documented by Shams-i Qays Raz-ī, who authored a book on prosody entitled *Al-Mu’jam fi Ma’air-i Ash’ar-il ‘Ajam*. Shams-i Qays writes:

Most poets believe that gifted poets can criticize poetry, and only they can speak of its faults and failings, but this is wrong. Since a poet in versifying discourse is like a master weaver who weaves precious stuffs and works various images into them—graceful branches and leaves, precisely detailed sketches. But no one but merchants and clothiers through whose hands priceless stuffs of every kind and the products of every region have passed in abundance can determine their price. None but they know what is appropriate to the padishah’s wardrobe and what is proper for the costume of every kind of the classes of the great.³³

The art forms of textile-making and poetry merge into a singular artistic expression during the Safavid era, with *Khamisa* depictions woven into the cloth itself. Ghiyāth al-Dīn also literally wove poetry into his textiles, including a coat that was presented to Shah ‘Abbās, documented in the *Tazkira* of Nasrabadi. According to Nasrabadi, Ghiyāth al-Dīn created a coat of gold brocade, along the edge of which was woven his original quatrain in praise of the monarch:

Oh King, your greatness equals the sky and your face, the sun/I wish the coat could last throughout your life/For one such as you my gift is inadequate/(Though) I hope that you may wear it in clemency for my fault.³⁴

And to which the Shah replied that he would wear it with pleasure. This is the very garment that Phyllis Ackerman had equated with the red satin lampas depicting Laylā and Majnūn (fig. 7).³⁵ Shah ‘Abbās’ reported acceptance of this grand gift, despite his preference for simplicity and humility in dress, demonstrates the need to balance the acceptance of an opulent garment from one of his artist-courtiers with his role as a descendent of a Sufi shaykh: a “Dervish King.”

A monarch who could command respect from the battlefield to his opulent palace, ‘Abbās also represented himself as pilgrim and ascetic who rejected the world in search of religious and spiritual fulfillment. Shah ‘Abbās upheld a policy of acceptance towards Jews and Armenian Christians, who made up much of the textile industry as dyers and merchants, respectively, as well as welcoming the Carmelite Friars, who had come to Iran as missionaries and diplomats on behalf of Pope Clement VIII in 1604. To these pious ambassadors, Shah ‘Abbās granted a royal residence in Isfahan, where they established their monastery under Father John Thaddeus of St. Eliseus (1574-1633). Much of the Carmelites’ residency in Iran was documented in personal accounts, which were translated and published in English in the twentieth century, and provide a fascinating view of ‘Abbās and Safavid society.

Fr. Paul Simon, the first superior of the Carmelites, comments in 1608 upon the effect of the monarch’s fashion choices on his courtiers:

His usual dress is of linen, and very plain: similarly the nobles of his realm, following suit, *whereas formerly they used to go out dressed in brocade with jewels and other fopperies*: and if he see anyone who is over-dressed, he takes him to task, especially if he is a soldier.³⁶

Regarding Safavid dress styles in Isfahan, Simon also states:

Their garb is a long garment, different from that of the Turks; they tie shawls around their waists, and almost all of them go clothed in cotton stuffs of various colors in imitation of the King.³⁷

Despite his business agenda focused on creating a market for fine silks through trade and diplomacy, it is clear from these first person accounts that Shah ‘Abbās was not openly promoting the use of luxury silks in his newly established capital at Isfahan as early as 1608. This was not a passing phase for ‘Abbās. In 1624, Carmelite Father John Thaddeus states:

He [Shah ‘Abbās] dresses in Persian style, with simplicity, in a long robe; very rarely does he use gold brocade in his clothing unless he be wearing the crown and royal robes in all his majesty. On some of his festival days for the most part he wears red silk, with a scarlet tunic: in time of warfare red twill and cotton only, going poorly clad and even wearing rope shoes.³⁸

The ruler’s fondness for red may illuminate the prevalent use of that color for the double cloth designs (figures 10-12), as well as the satin lampas (fig. 7) and velvet (fig. 8) depicting Laylā and Majnūn, comprising nearly half the group. The slightly earlier Italian visitor, Della Valle, also notes ‘Abbās wearing a red and white striped turban at a banquet at Ashraf at the Caspian Sea in 1618, which he removed and placed on the ground during the meal.³⁹

In addition to his carefully selected wardrobe, the Safavid ruler also managed his image through other visual means. Kishwar Rizvi’s publication, “The Suggestive Portrait of Shah ‘Abbās: Prayer and Likeness in a Safavid Shahnāma,” explores the hypothesis that ‘Abbās had his portrait painted as literary characters from the *Shahnāma* as a form of visual propaganda in a manuscript completed ca. 1605.⁴⁰ Throughout his reign, ‘Abbās’ main trajectory was to assert himself as the dynastic leader of the Iranian people in the tradition

of kingship, here accomplished by representation as the “repentant hero.”⁴¹ Neither of these, however, depict the Safavid shah as the ruler Khusrau Parvīz; instead, they connect him with the characteristics of other kings in the *Shahnāma*.⁴²

Shah ‘Abbās’ other public displays of piety include pilgrimages and architectural renovations to the shrines of the eighth Shi’a Imam Rezā in Mashhad, and the Safavid ancestral shrine and Sufi institution of Shaykh Safi in Ardabil. In 1608, the same year that Father Simon notes his simplicity of dress, ‘Abbās made a pious endowment of his entire collection of manuscripts and precious objects to these two shrines.⁴³

This paradox of the “Dervish King” is mirrored in the early seventeenth century Mughal realm as well. ‘Abbās’ contemporaries, Akbar and Jahāngīr, also relied on visual modes to publicly represent their spiritual states. Akbar was depicted by his royal painters in the 1580 *Akbarnāma* on pilgrimage to the shrine of Mu-in al-Dīn Selīm Chishti in Ajmer, for whom his son Selīm, the later Jahāngīr, was named. The ruler is depicted barefoot, in an unpatterned white garment, paying homage to the shrine after the birth of his son has fulfilled his prayers for a male heir.⁴⁴

In addition to being celebrated in the *Akbarnāma*, Jahāngīr recounts these auspicious events in his memoir, the *Jahāngīrnāma*.⁴⁵ Even his accession to the throne in 1605 was, by his own report, prophesied through a dream by a Sufi Shaykh, Husayn Jāmī, who had been banished from the Mughal realm for a time during the reign of Akbar due to the influence of his enemy, the influential Abul Fazl.⁴⁶ Jāmī asks for a pardon after Jahāngīr’s accession to the throne, which was granted—a public show of the affinity that the ruler would maintain for the Sufi *darvīsh*.

Much like his father, Jahāngīr depicts himself as a seeker of mystic knowledge in the painting “Jahāngīr Preferring a Sufi Shaykh to Kings” (by Bichitr, ca. 1615-18). The ruler—seated upon an hourglass that functions as his throne, with putti flitting at the base and in the sky—accepts a book from a Sufi *pir* while the powerful monarchs of Europe and the Islamic world await his acceptance of their more costly gifts. Four lines of Persian calligraphy adorn the top and bottom innermost borders of the composition, and are translated:

Shah Nureddin Jahāngīr son of Akbar Padshah is the emperor of form and content through God’s grace. Although in form kings stand before him, nonetheless in content he always keeps his regard upon dervishes.⁴⁷

Jahāngīr further elaborates in the *Jahāngīrnāma* on his philosophy and relationship to mystics and affinity for Sufi practice in November, 1615. The sovereign writes:

Around this time Kwaja Hashim Dahbedi, who keeps dervishdom thriving in Transoxiana today, and in whom the people of that realm have the utmost belief, sent me, by one of the dervishes of his order, a fur garment, a bow, and a letter conveying his best wishes and the loyalty his ancestors had for the members of this dynasty.⁴⁸

Jahāngīr includes the verses shared between his great-grandfather Babur and the master of the Sufi order, Khwajagi. Jahāngīr mirrors the dynastic founder’s affinity for the *darvīsh* when he responds with an impromptu quatrain of his own, written in his hand, praising the master:

My love for you is greater than ever/and the memory of you, O dervish, is good fortune/ As happy as my heart is with good news of you/we are happier that your kindness is more than ever.⁴⁹

Then Jahāngīr relates that he ordered all those with poetic talent to compose verses in kind, and records the following quatrain by courtier Masihu’z-Zaman, which he deems “excellent”:

Although we have the job of being king/we remember the dervishes more and more every moment/If one dervish's heart is gladdened by us/we reckon it as the supreme achievement of our reign.⁵⁰

Considering the circumstances of Jahāngīr's birth and accession to the throne, it is no wonder that he both esteems and relates to the Sufi *darvīsh*.

In both the Safavid and Mughal worlds, visual representations emphasizing the relationship between these powerful kings and wise mystics show the humility and the divine grace of these rulers.⁵¹ This self-identifying gesture as "Dervish King" may also have been transferred through textiles via the *Khamisa* silks depicting Laylā and Majnūn, and their use should also be treated as representations of this concept, particularly if the silks were fashioned into garments.

Much like his father Akbar, Jahāngīr had a keen interest in clothing, granted *khil'at* to courtiers and diplomats listed in detail in his memoirs, and implemented sumptuary laws with regard to the donning of certain garments.⁵² He states in the *Jahāngīrnāma*:

I had had several articles of clothing made for myself, and I ordered no one else to wear them unless I granted the privilege. One was the *nadiri* jacket, which is worn over the *qaba*. In length it comes down below the waist and has no sleeves. It is fastened up the front with buttons. The people in Persia call it a *kunli*. I named it *nadiri*.

Jahāngīr continues by linking the practice to the precedent set by his father, Akbar:

Another garment is the *tusi* shawl, which my exalted father adopted exclusively for himself. Another is the *qaba* with a woolen collar and embroidered sleeves. He also adopted this to his own exclusivity. Another is the *qaba* with a border from which the fringes are cut off and sewn onto the hem, collar, and sleeves. Another is the vest of Gujarati satin. Another is the turban and cummerbund of woven silk shot with gold and silver threads.⁵³

The creation of these sumptuary laws by Jahāngīr contains an inherent paradox: the ruler who identifies himself with Majnūn simultaneously demands that luxury clothing be

reserved only for himself and his entourage. This characterizes the “Dervish King.” Conversely, the wandering Majnūn becomes a ruler when he is fashioned by both Nizāmī and Amīr Khusrau as a “king” to the wild animal kingdom. The *Khamisa* silks featuring the madman fall in line with this paradox as well: luxurious silk depicting a half-nude mystic, created for rulers who were representing themselves as *darvīsh*.

In turn, the poets also refer to themselves as “beggars,” such as when Amīr Khusrau complains to his royal patron:

If day and night I attend not the court of your Majesty to perform my humble services, it matters little, for when a hundred crowned heads bow before you daily you can easily forgive the absence of a beggar.... If I stand before you day and night how can my mind produce poetry?⁵⁴

The poet struggled with reconciling his temporal and spiritual goals, and this conflict ironically leads him to declare himself as a beggar while also asking Al’ā al-Dīn for greater compensation:

Do not think lightly of the poets' work, for each of their sweet words spells a life. Of what value is the pure gold to you when after your death it would no longer be of any service? You should buy an eternal life with gold.⁵⁵

Despite his responsibilities to the Delhi court and his demands for earthly reward, Amīr Khusrau’s devotion to his spiritual master, Nizam al-Dīn, remained constant. Of Turkish ancestry and Indian birth like Amīr Khusrau, Nizam al-Dīn trained with the Sufi master Farid al-Dīn Ganjshakar, leader of the mystical order founded by Mu’in al-Dīn Chishti in the twelfth century—the same order to whom Akbar had prayed for a son. Perhaps this is the final link between the thirteenth century author of the *Khamisa* and the Mughal rulers of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and a potential clue as to the reason the Laylā and Majnūn silks depict a scene from Amīr Khusrau’s narrative rather than Nizāmī’s.

As furnishing fabrics, the *Khamisa* silks perpetuate the reminder to both patron and viewer of the “Dervish King” paradox. More portable and visible than manuscript paintings, tent or palace hangings serve as both decorative device and *memento mori*: despite the grandeur of the court, worldly concerns and possessions are easily overshadowed by love which transports the soul. The textiles depicting Khusrau and Shīrīn simultaneously represent the strength and wealth of the patron, and remind the ruler of his potential downfall and eventual demise. The complicated relationship between the protagonists reflects both Iranian and Indian family and political dynamics at the turn of the seventeenth century.

In the Mughal context, the narrative of Khusrau and Shīrīn may be a reference to the relationship between the Iranian-born Mehrunissa/Nur Jahān and her on-again off-again lover, Jahāngīr, whose marriage was opposed early on by Akbar and later resented by Jahāngīr’s court. The parallels in the text are significant, with Mehrunissa as the high-born Shīrīn hailing from a different culture but stealing Khusrau’s heart, and Anarkali as the courtesan Shekar.

The relationship of the Safavids to the Sasanian Khusrau has been noted as well. Scholar Ulrike al-Khamis discusses depictions of the Safavid ‘alām, a metal-topped lance supporting a banner taken into battle proclaiming Shi’a beliefs, which appears in a battle scene of a ca. 1540 *Khamisa* of Nizāmī at the Royal Museum of Edinburgh. The painting (A.1896.70) depicts the battle scene between Khusrau and Bahram Chobīn, the insurgent general, and faithfully follows Nizāmī’s narrative in its description. Al-Khamis hypothesizes that the inclusion of the Safavid ‘alām equates Tahmāsp’s efforts to establish his political and religious agenda with the efforts of Khusrau to retain his throne. Other

anachronisms in the scene bring the viewer into the sixteenth century, such as the *tāj Šafavī* worn by the central figure of Bozorg Omid, an essential male headdress expressing Twelver Shi'a belief.⁵⁶ These symbolic icons of Shi'a practice, when incorporated into the stories of the Iranian rulers, who serve as the edifying examples of kingship, also serve the dual purpose of connecting the current monarch to the legendary one described by Nizāmī in his epic poem.⁵⁷

The story potentially takes on yet a different significance. 'Abbās suffers from a deep paranoia about his sons overthrowing him, much like Khusrau's father Hormuzd, who banishes him from Iran. 'Abbās had succeeded in supplanting his own father, Muhammad Khudabanda, in a calculated political move with the support of the administration who wanted the seventeen-year-old prince on the Safavid throne. Terrified of being on the receiving end of this plan, 'Abbās had his three eldest sons either executed or blinded as a response to their perceived insurgency, despite solid proof. The ruler regretted these actions for the latter half of his life.

Further connections with the Sasanian King Khusrau and the Safavids were drawn by Qazī Mīr Aḥmad, a Safavid court administrator who authored the *Gulistān-i Hunar* (Per., The Rose Garden of Art) between 1596 and 1606. A work focused on painting and calligraphy, it functions partly as a treatise on the two art forms, and also as a *tazkira* naming famous calligraphers, poets and painters up to the Safavid era. Typical of any work of royal patronage, Qazī Ahmad includes a number of panegyric references to the Safavid dynastic leaders, comparing them to the Sasanian Khusrau. Ahmad refers to dynastic founder Ismail as the "glorious Chosroes [*sic*] of eternal memory," to Tahmāsp as "that Khusrau of the Four Climes",⁵⁸ while 'Abbās is "fit for the throne of Chosroes" as well as

“a world-conquering Chosroes [*sic*], leading the army of the Lord of the Time.”⁵⁹

NOTES

¹ My 2007 publication “Donning the Cloak: Safavid Figural Silks and the Display of Identity,” laid the foundation for the hypothesis that garments depicting narrative scenes represent the inner self of the wearer, proposing a direct correlation with the poetic protagonists and the consumer of the cloth. To my knowledge, the hypothesis connecting dress to identity with this particular group was not explored in depth prior to my publication. See Nazanin Hedayat Shenasa [Nazanin Hedayat Munroe], “Donning the Cloak,” 1-7. Certainly, the Safavid era was not the first time that figural textiles were produced in Iran, but the corpus of existing material provides evidence of its popularity during this era.

³ Keyvani, “Artisans and Guild Life in the later Safavid Period,” 168.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 57. Iranian primary language sources define more exactly the types of weaving and embroidery that include gold and silver; a silk brocade indicates a compound cloth that could include gold or silver, but did not necessarily do so. Weavers utilizing precious metals, either in the form of flat strips or wound around a fabric core, were accorded a higher status than weavers of silk brocade. See the Glossary in this publication for more detail.

⁶ *Ibid.*, fig. 20, 59.

⁷ Kumar, “Costumes and Textiles of Royal India,” 290.

⁸ Based on my experience as a weaver, double cloth designs tend to be small due to the doubled number of warp threads. For example, if the sett of each cloth is 16 ends per inch (EPI), the warp would require 32 EPI. Similarly with the weaving process, a repeat that can be executed with 8 rows of weft requires 16 rows when weaving double cloth, as the design is simultaneously being woven on the top and bottom cloths.

⁹ Canby, *Persian Painting*, 98.

¹⁰ Jain, “Mughal Velvets at the Calico Museum,” 16. For details on the process of weaving velvets, see Jasleen Dhamija, “Indian Velvets,” in *Handwoven Fabrics of India*, ed. Jasleen Dhamija and Jyotindra Jain (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, 1989), 54.

¹² There are several Sufi brotherhoods that include both Sunni and Shi’a followers. Two of the more popular examples are the Mevlevi order, founded in the thirteenth century by thirteenth century shaykh and poet Jalaluddin Rumi in eastern Turkey, whose family originated from Balkh, Afghanistan; and the Nakshbandi order founded by fourteenth

century shaykh Bahauddin Naqshbandi Bukhari in India, whose name indicates that came from a family of textile designers from Bukhara, Uzbekistan. For more information on the development of Sufism and Mysticism in Islam, see Michael A. Sells, ed., trans., *Early Islamic Mysticism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996). For the connection to the Majnūn legend, see p. 69.

¹³ For perspectives on the role of Majnūn as a mystic ideal, see Julie Scott Meisami, *The Sea of Precious Virtues: A Medieval Islamic Mirror for Princes* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah press, 1991); also Asad Khairullah, *Love, Madness and Poetry: An Interpretation of the Majnūn Legend* (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 1980).

¹⁴ Nizāmī, *Laylā and Majnūn*, xiv-xv.

¹⁵ Ibid., 14. The development of Sufism is later than the late seventh century, during which Qays ibn Mulawwah (the “real” Majnūn on whom Nizāmī’s character is based) is believed to have lived. Therefore, Nizāmī’s reference to Majnūn as a *darvīsh* dancing before Laylā is a contemporary reference, for the benefit of his twelfth century audience.

¹⁶ Ibid., 50.

¹⁷ Ibid., 78.

¹⁸ Ibid., 17.

¹⁹ Ibid., 33.

²⁰ Ibid., 32.

²¹ Ibid., 34.

²² Ibid., 53 and 71.

²³ Ibid., 13.

²⁴ Ibid., 76 and 74.

²⁵ Chelkowski, “Khusrau and Shīrīn” in *Mirror of the Invisible World*, 43.

²⁶ Brend, *Perspectives on Persian Painting*, summary of “Shīrīn and Khusrau.”

²⁷ Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade*, 222.

²⁸ Ibid., 224.

²⁹ Jerome Clinton, “Image and Metaphor: Textiles in Persian Poetry,” in ed. Bier, *Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart*, 7-11.

³⁰ Ibid., 8.

³¹ Scholar Annemarie Schimmel devotes Chapter 16 to this concept in *A Two-Colored Brocade* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), in which she cites several Persian poets who reference textiles in their works. See 221 for the quote by Farrukhi.

³² The Persian lines of Farrukhi Sistani's qasida are translated by Schimmel, *ibid.*, 223:

I went from Sistan with the caravan that carried the [festive] dress (*hulla*)
I wore a dress spun from the heart and woven by the spirit,
A garment of fine silk, woven from the word,
A garment with delicate ornament, made by language.
Each thread of its warp [was] twisted by the spirit with pain,
Each thread of its weft [was] cut from the heart...

An alternate translation is offered by Clinton, "Image and Metaphor," 8.

³³ Clinton, "Image and Metaphor," 10-11.

³⁴ Skelton, "Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Alī-yi Naqshband," Appendix A, 257.

³⁵ Ackerman, "Ghiyāth, Master Persian Weaver," 255.

³⁶ *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia, Vol. I* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode Publishers, Ltd., 1939) 158. Italics reproduced from original text.

³⁷ Ibid., 156.

³⁸ *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, 285.

³⁹ David Blow, *Shah Abbās: The Ruthless King Who Became an Iranian Legend* (New York: I.B.Tauris, 2009), 156.

⁴⁰ See Kishwar Rizvi, "The Suggestive Portrait of Shah Abbās: Prayer and Likeness in a Safavid Shahnāma," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (June 2012), 226-250.

⁴¹ Rizvi writes: "The image of piety appropriated by Shah 'Abbās was disseminated through various means...The representation of kingship combined Shi'i authority and Iranian modes of authority." Ibid., 234.

⁴² Ibid, 239-241. The likenesses of Shah 'Abbās in Rizvi's article are cited as Gushtasp and Kay Kavus.

⁴³ Kishwar Rizvi, "Architecture and the Representations of Kingship," in *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* ed. by Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville (Leiden and New York: Brill, 2013), 376-377.

⁴⁴ For a reproduction of “Akbar’s Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Mu-in al-Dīn Chishtī” in The Victoria and Albert *Akbarnāma* see Ibid., fig. 6, 382.

⁴⁵ Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīrnāma*, 21-22.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁷ This painting is part of the ten dispersed folios originally belonging to the St. Petersburg Album (formerly The Leningrad Album), which was looted from the Mughals by the Zand dynasty in the mid seventeenth century, and kept in Iran until their dispersal and sale to European and American collectors. Now at the Smithsonian Institution’s Freer and Sackler Galleries. For color reproduction and translation, see Beach, *The Imperial Image*, 126. An alternate translation by Richard Ettinghausen is on p. 128. The three rulers are identified as a generic Turkish sultan, King James I of England, and a Hindu.

⁴⁸ Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīrnāma*, 182.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ See “Jahāngīr Preferring a Sufi Shaykh to Kings” from the St. Peterburg album, by Bichitr ca. 1615-1618, at the Freer and Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Institution (F1942.15a).

⁵² Jahāngīr lists the gifting of *khil’at* including the *nadiri* vest at least fifteen times in the *Jahāngīrnāma*. See 198, 220, 223, 229, 283, 303, 355, 356, 370, 380, 396, 405, 413, 417, 468.

⁵³ Jahāngīr, *Jahāngīrnāma*, 223.

⁵⁴ Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, 9; after M. Mirza, *Life and Works of Amīr Khusrau* (Lahore, 1962), 110-111.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ See Ulrike al-Khamis, “Khusrau Parviz as Champion of Shi’ism? A Closer Look at an Early Safavid Miniature Painting in the Royal Museum of Edinburgh” in *The Iconography of Islamic Art: Studies in Honour of Robert Hillenbrand*, ed. Bernard O’Kane (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

⁵⁷ Al-Khamis, “Khusrau Parviz as Champion of Shi’ism?,” 202.

⁵⁸ Qazi Mir Ahmad, *Calligraphers and Painters*, trans. V. Minorsky (Washington D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 1959), 85 and 181.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 44-45.

Conclusion

Examination of the *Khamisa* silks in relationship to manuscript paintings, as well as the original poetry, brought several important points to light. The first is the probable reattribution of the scenes depicted on the *Laylā and Majnūn* silks to the slightly later Turco-Indian poet, Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī, based on manuscript paintings. The *Khusrau and Shīrīn* silks do not correspond with Amīr Khusrau's rendition of the tale, but are consistent with paintings depicting Nizāmī's original poem in extant manuscripts from the Safavid period. It is still difficult to determine whether the designs originated from the *kitāb khāna* or from a *naqshband*, such as Ghiyāth al-Dīn. Though both Nizāmī and Amīr Khusrau authored these works in Persian, their different cultural backgrounds and audiences add another dimension to the analysis of the *Khamisa* silks, adding to the ongoing discourse about iconographic exchange between Mughal India and Safavid Iran.

The date range of the whole group of textiles is 1550-1650, covering three dynastic reigns in both the Safavid realm and in Mughal India. From the 1550s onward, there was a voluntary migration of artists from Iran to the Mughal court following a loss of patronage; therefore, these narrative silks could potentially have been designed by Safavid weavers for Mughal patrons, or Safavid painters for Mughal *naqshbandān*. Illustrated *Khamisa* manuscripts of both Nizāmī and Amīr Khusrau were produced for the Mughal court in the late sixteenth century, contemporaneous with the production of the silks which have been thus far attributed to Safavid Iran.¹ There were also illustrated manuscripts of both *Khamisa* narratives in the Safavid *kitāb khāna*, so it is clear that the literature and corresponding images traveled throughout the Eastern Islamic world.

Silk production and end use in both empires also leads to several different hypotheses. Assuming the silk velvets with metal-thread brocading were the product of a *kārkhāna-i khaṣṣ*, and that the less costly satin lampas, plain velvet and double cloth fabrics were created by *naqshbandān* from independent workshops, there is still some question as to which designs were produced first. If the first *Khamṣa* scenes were produced for the court, this implies the royal patron sought to create an association with the legendary characters for his viewing audience. If the designs initiated from independent workshops for sale on the open market, this implies a familiarity and affinity among consumers with the characters within elite circles. Whether the silks were used as apparel or furnishings, the patron or consumer had the goal of creating an impression that associates his viewer with both king and dervish, lover and beloved.

Since what appears as a cohesive group of silks most likely represents scenes from the two different narratives of Nizāmī and Amīr Khusrau, this adds another element to the intentions of the patron, designer, and consumer. The differences in the narratives present different readings on the impression created by the display of specific scenes: Nizāmī's bathing scene combines kingship, destiny, and love that begins as a fateful erotic encounter, while Amīr Khusrau's lovers in the wilderness represent the manifestation of physical and spiritual union. This important distinction in the two versions of the stories has never been examined closely before with regard to this group of *Khamṣa* textiles. Without further primary sources to enlighten art historians about the inspiration for the *naqshbandān*, it is difficult to ascertain why they chose one poet's *Khamṣa* over another, but the question is intriguing.

Several stylistic details within the silks themselves also point to the potential patronage and manufacture beyond Iran, as Mughal and Safavid leaders exchanged artists, ideas and visual modes of representation. The scale of the figures, design layout, and details within individual motifs point to the possibility of at least one design originating in Iran, and being redesigned in India. The added detail of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's signature definitively answers some questions, but raises others, such as name brand recognition, and the potential of "designer knock-offs" in the open market. At a time when artists migrated from one court to another in search of patronage, and in light of the exchange of diplomatic gifts as well as commercial trade in this active period of cultural exchange, these silk textiles potentially carried the stories far beyond the Iranian borders in which they originated, inspiring responses from the Mughal artistic community.

Lastly, the potential reattribution of the *Khamisa* silks opens up another dimension of the relationship between painting and textile design, as well as highlighting strong associations with poetry in elite circles in Safavid Iran and Mughal India. Although there remain some open questions about textile production and the interpretation of certain designs in the early modern Islamic world, I hope the results of this study will add to the ongoing conversation in a meaningful and positive light.



Figure 1. “Khusrau Catches Sight of Shirin Bathing,” Fol. 50 from a *Khamsa* of Nizami (detail). Calligraphy: Sultan Muhammad Nur; Mahmud Muzahhib. Painting by Shaikh Zada. Folio from an illustrated manuscript. 1524-5, Safavid Iran. Overall Dimensions: H. 12 5/8 in. (32.1 cm) W. 8 3/4 in. (22.2 cm) The Metropolitan Museum of Art (13.228.7.3). Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913



Figure 2. Digital drawings based on a velvet fragment depicting repeat pattern of Khusrau and Shirin (details, Khusrau on horseback and Shirin bathing, on following pages). Drawings by Nazanin Hedayat Munroe, (c) 2018. Original fragment at Topkapi Museum (13/1697). Cut, voided silk velvet; voided areas woven with metal thread bound in twill (indicated by hatching). Mid-16th century, Iran. For a color reproduction of the velvet, see Jon Thompson, “Early Safavid Carpets and Textiles,” in Canby and Thompson, Ed., *Hunt for Paradise*, fig. 12.5.



Figure 2. Digital drawing based on a velvet fragment depicting Khusrau and Shirin (detail, Khusrau on horseback). Drawing by Nazanin Hedayat Munroe, (c) 2018. Original fragment at Topkapi Museum (13/1697). Cut, voided silk velvet; voided areas woven with metal thread bound in twill (indicated by hatching). Mid-16th century, Iran. For a color reproduction of the velvet, see Jon Thompson, "Early Safavid Carpets and Textiles," in Canby and Thompson, Ed. *Hunt for Paradise*, fig. 12.5.



Figure 2. Digital drawing based on a velvet fragment depicting Khusrau and Shirin (detail, Shirin bathing). Drawing by Nazanin Hedayat Munroe, (c) 2018. Original fragment at Topkapi Museum (13/1697). Cut, voided silk velvet; voided areas woven with metal thread bound in twill (indicated by hatching). Mid-16th century, Iran. For a color reproduction of the velvet, see Jon Thompson, “Early Safavid Carpets and Textiles,” in Canby and Thompson, Ed. *Hunt for Paradise*, fig. 12.5.



Figure 3a. (left) “Velvet fragment with design from Nizami’s *Khusrau and Shirin*.” Silk; cut velvet. Mid-sixteenth century, Safavid Iran.
Textile Dimensions: L. 15 3/8 in. (39 cm) W. 6 1/2 in. (16.5 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (1978.60).
Purchase, The Seley Foundation Inc., Schimmel Foundation Inc., Ruth Blumka and Charles D. Kelekian Gifts, and Rogers Fund, 1978



Figure 3b. (above) "Khusrau Sees Shirin Bathing." Silk; velvet, cut; pile warp substitution. 1524-1576. Safavid Iran. Cleveland Museum of Art. 1944.499.b
Overall: 21.7 x 15.7 cm (8 1/2 x 6 1/8 in.). Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund.



Figure 4. Fragment of Khusrau and Shirin.
Velvet, cut and voided silk with metal threads.
16th century, Safavid Iran.
63 cm x 44.5 cm (25" x 17.5")
The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. (3.318)
Acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1952



Figure 5. Drawing of Fragment of Khusrau and Shirin
illustrating detail of signature, "Work of Ghiyath" (on horse's saddle,
lower right of medallion--reversed to show proper direction of Persian).
©Nazanin Hedayat Munroe, 2018.

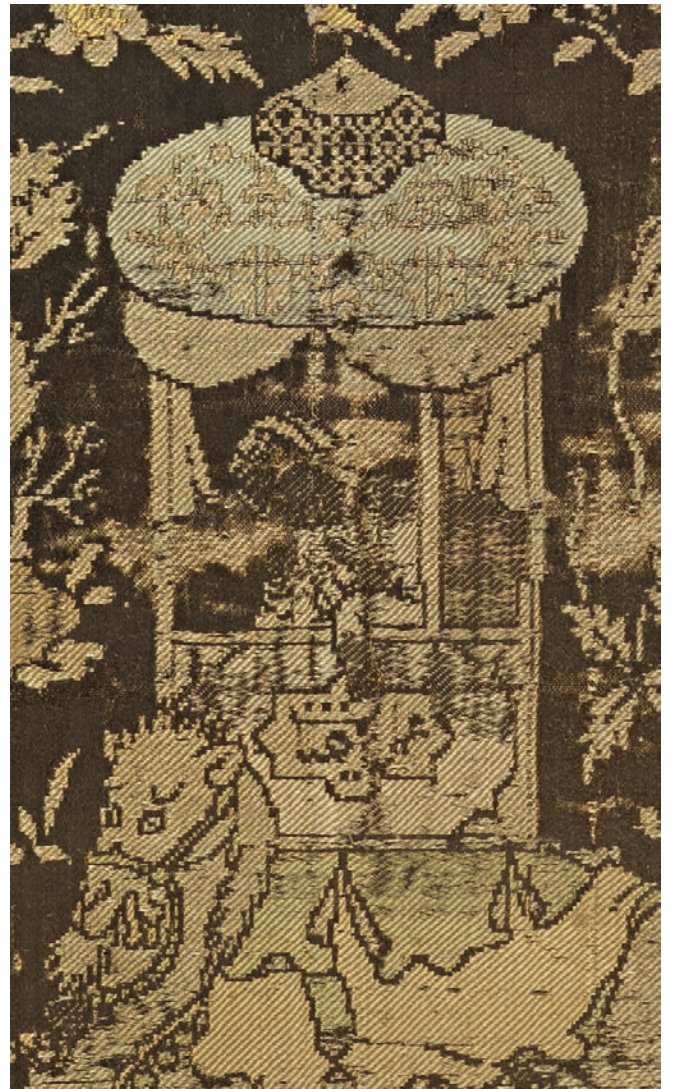


Figure 6. Textile Fragment Depicting Layla and Majnun. Detail (above right): signature, "Work of Ghiyath." Silk, lampas-woven; gilded parchment wrapped around silk core. 16th century, Safavid Iran. H x W: 64 x 28 cm (25 3/16 in. x 11 in.) Gift of John Pierpont Morgan Cooper-Hewitt Museum. (1902-1-780) <http://cprhw.tt/o/2AWir/>

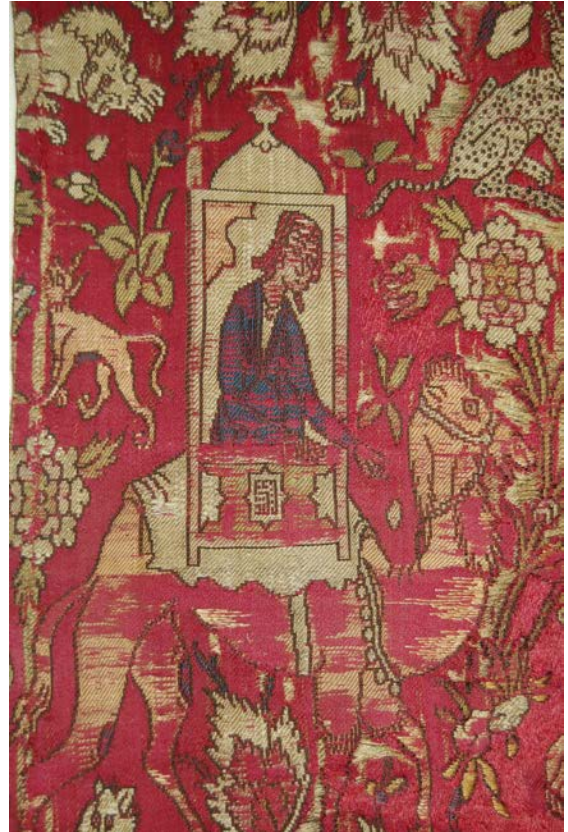
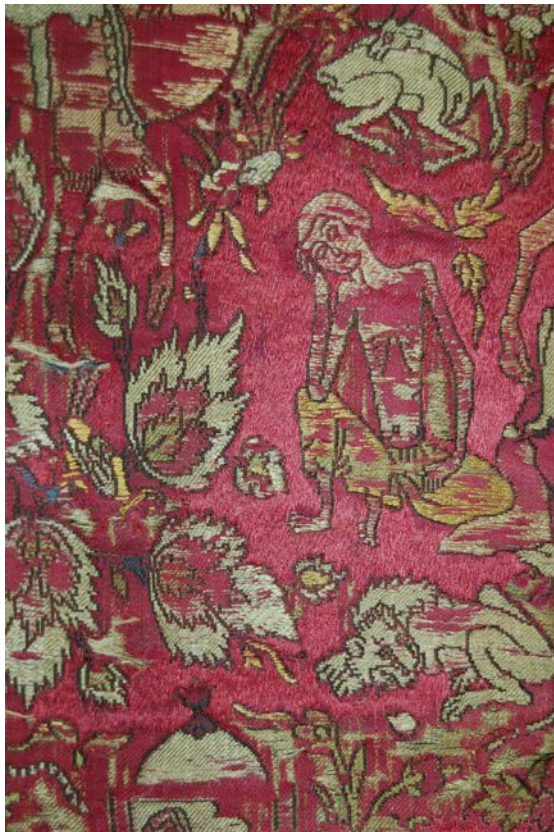


Figure 7. Textile Fragment depicting Layla and Majnun in the Desert (with details); signature, “Work of Ghiyath” (right). Lampas-woven silk and metal-wrapped threads. Late 16th/early 17th c., Safavid Iran. The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. (3.312). Acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1952. Photos Courtesy of The Textile Museum, 2006.



Figure 8. Digital Drawing of the repeat unit in a textile fragment depicting Layla and Majnun. Missing piece of fragment indicated by blank area in center. ©Nazanin Hedayat Munroe, 2018. Silk cut velvet. 1550-1600, Safavid Iran. Keir Collection. For a color reproduction, see Spuhler, *Islamic Carpets and Textiles in the Keir Collection*, No. 93.



Figure 9. Textile Fragment depicting Majnun (detail). Silk and voided cut velvet with metal threads. 16th century, Safavid Iran. Photos courtesy of The State Hermitage Museum. IR-2327.



Left:

Figure 10. Textile Fragment depicting Layla and Majnun. Silk double cloth with metal foil. 16th century, Safavid Iran. The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. (1969.36.1). Acquired from the Cooper Hewitt Museum

Below:

Figure 11 (left). Textile Fragment depicting Shirin and Farhad (detail). Silk double cloth with metal foil. 16th-17th century, Safavid Iran. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (46.156.7). Fletcher Fund, 1946.

Figure 12 (right). Textile Fragment depicting Khusrau and Shirin, Layla and Majnun, Yusef and Zuleikha (detail). Silk double cloth. Early 17th century, Safavid Iran. British Museum (OA 1985.5-6.1). ©Trustees of the British Museum.





Figure 13. Textile Fragment with the Story of Khusrau and Shirin
Silk double cloth. 17th century, Safavid Iran.
Yale University Art Gallery (1951.51.82) 20.96 x 27.31 cm (8 1/4 x 10 3/4 in.)
Hobart and Edward Small Moore Memorial Collection, Gift of Mrs. William H. Moore



Figure 14. Layla and Majnun in the wilderness with animals.
Folio from a Khamsa (Quintet) of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi.
Attributed to Sanwalah. Mughal India, c. 1590–1600.
Cleveland Museum of Art (2013.301)
Gift in honor of Madeline Neves Clapp; Gift of Mrs. Henry
White Cannon by exchange; Bequest of Louise T. Cooper;
Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund; From the Catherine and
Ralph Benkaim Collection.<http://clevelandart.org/art/2013.301>

Appendix A

Silks depicting characters from the *Khamasa*

Khusrau and Shīrīn

1. Velvet Fragment depicting Khusrau and Shīrīn.
 - a. Topkapi Museum, Istanbul. (13/1697) (Figure 2)
2. Velvet Fragment depicting Khusrau and Shīrīn.
 - a. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (1978.60) (Figure 3a)
 - b. Cleveland Museum of Art. (1944.499) (Figure 3b)
3. Velvet Fragment depicting Khusrau and Shīrīn, signed by Ghīyāth
 - a. Velvet cut into a lobed medallion (2 fragments). Kier Collection, London; currently on loan to the Dallas Museum of Art. Fragment depicting Shīrīn's horse with signature, "Work of Ghīyāth" [*Amal-e Ghīyāth*]. (K.1.2014.44) (Figures 4 and 5)
 - b. Velvet cut into a lobed medallion. The Textile Museum, Washington D.C. (3.318)
 - c. Velvet cut into oblong semi-circle depicting Shīrīn bathing. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. (1950.51.Dt.20)
4. Double cloth with scene of Khusrau and Shīrīn (Figure 13)
 - a. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven. (1951.51.82)

Laylā and Majnūn

5. Black and gold lampas silk depicting Laylā visiting Majnūn in the Wilderness. Signed "Work of Ghīyāth" [*Amal-e Ghīyāth*]. (Figure 6)
 - a. Boston Museum of Fine Arts (28.17)
 - b. Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum (1902-1-780)
 - c. Designmuseum Danmark, Copenhagen (B21/1931)
6. Red and gold lampas silk depicting Laylā visiting Majnūn in the wilderness. Signed "Work of Ghīyāth" [*Amal-e Ghīyāth*]. (Figure 7)
 - a. The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. (3.312)
7. Velvet depicting Laylā and Majnūn in the wilderness. (Figure 8)
 - a. Kier Collection, London

8. Velvet with scene of Majnūn in the wilderness. (Figure 9)
 - a. Fashioned into a chasuble. State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (IP-2327)
9. Double cloth with scene of Laylā and Majnūn in the wilderness. (Figure 10)
 - a. The Textile Museum, Washington D.C. (1969.36.1)
 - b. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (916-1897)
 - c. Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum (1902-1-379)
 - d. Musée des Tissus, Lyon
 - e. Boston Museum of Fine Arts (48.382)
10. Double cloth with scenes of Shīrīn and Farhād (Figure 11)
 - a. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (46.156.7)
 - b. The Textile Museum, Washington D.C. (3.280)
 - c. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven. (1937.4625)
11. Double Cloth with scenes of Khusrau/Shīrīn, Laylā/Majnūn, and Yūsūf/Zuleikhā (Figure 12)
 - a. The British Museum, London. (OA 1985.5-6.1)

Appendix B

Summary of Amīr Khusrau's *Shīrīn and Khusrau*

The romance begins with the death of Hormuzd. Khusrau inherits a relatively stable empire, but also struggles with the ongoing threat of insurrection by Bahrām Chobīn. Eventually he is defeated by his rival, and Khusrau rides away from his kingdom into exile. As he travels alongside the painter Shāpūr, his companion tells him stories of his travel to cheer him; Khusrau listens apathetically until Shāpūr describes an Armenian painter who has created the portrait of a sweet woman (Shīrīn) on silk, that he has copied.¹ Khusrau demands immediately to see it, and upon gazing at her image, and begs to know her identity. Shāpūr informs him that this is Shīrīn, Queen Mihīn Banū's niece, known for her wisdom, intelligence, bravery and beauty: qualities that make her worthy of a king. Inspired by this ringing endorsement, Khusrau rides toward Armenia, where he happens upon Shīrīn and her retinue on the hunting ground. The two are rendered speechless at their first meeting, and Shīrīn is thrilled to realize that this is the famous king Khusrau, with whom she is familiar by name and legend and has secretly longed to marry. She greets Khusrau humbly, kissing the ground in front of him and his stirrup; he in turn dismounts and kisses Shīrīn's foot. Despite his insistence that he is en route to Byzantium, Shīrīn convinces him to accept her hospitality at the palace, and Khusrau is received with much respect by Mihīn Banū.

A royal reception is prepared for the visitors and the wise men of the court. After an evening of wine drinking, Khusrau is offered a bedroom and five or six maidens for his pleasure, which he refuses. He is thinking only of his desire of Shīrīn, and she is in turn longing for him. The lovers declare their mutual affection and pass several days in revelry,

but Shīrīn refuses to consummate the relationship. He confides in her about his trouble with Bahrām Chobīn and his intention to ask for assistance from the Byzantine Emperor, and she offers the use of Shabdiz, the fastest horse in the kingdom. He promises to return for her hand once he has regained his throne, but when he reaches Rum, he is obligated to wed the Emperor's daughter, Maryam, in exchange for the support of the Byzantine army.

Khusrau rides to Mada'in on an elephant with the army behind him, and bloody warfare leads to the defeat of his adversaries. The battle ends with the escape of Bahrām Chobīn into the desert, where Khusrau loses track of him. Restored to his rule, Khusrau expands his territory to Syria and towards Constantinople. This alarms the Byzantine Emperor, who fears for his territories and secretly sends two hundred ships of coins, jewels and silver to Antioch. The ships get blown off course, and end up in Persian territory. Khusrau accepts this treasure as a divine gift and adds the riches to his royal treasury, giving a generous amount to his courtiers and subjects. The court musician, Bārbad, composes songs about the "treasure brought by the wind" and "the pearled veil" that belonged to the Emperor, which Khusrau has given him as a gift. Keeping the treasure of Byzantium has created tension between the two rulers, and Maryam becomes a constant reminder of this. Unhappily wed with Maryam, Khusrau neglects her and she dies of grief. Pretending to pine for his wife, Khusrau laments the absence of Shīrīn, and sets off for Armenia.

Shīrīn is pleased at his return. The couple is reunited, and pleasure parties are resumed with the respective retinues in attendance. One starry night a tent is pitched in a meadow, and Shīrīn and Khusrau sit together like king and queen on the throne as they reside over the betrothal of ten youths with ten maidens. As the joyous occasion culminates,

Khusrau and Shīrīn declare their love for each other and spend the evening drinking wine and kissing. In the morning, Khusrau calls the priest to marry the couples, and insists that he and Shīrīn also become husband and wife. Shīrīn demurs, indicating that she is not convinced of the constancy of his love. Though Khusrau pledges his steadfastness, he is rebuffed by her cool response; he weeps, then loses hope and departs in a rage towards his palace in Moshku.

After arriving home, Khusrau drinks to drown his misery. Shāpūr suggests he take company with Shekar, a beautiful woman from Isfahan.² Local legend in Isfahan claims that the popular Shekar frolics in lover's games with men during the day, but preserves her chastity by sending her maidens to them in her place at night. Shekar is familiar with the stories circulating about the love between Shīrīn and Khusrau, and of the king's devotion to his beloved, which endears him to her. Khusrau becomes interested in the prospect of taking up with this mysterious beauty, and sets off for Isfahan with ten camel-loads of jewels. When Khusrau arrives at a secluded lodging in Isfahan, he sends a skein of pearls to Shekar, who holds back her enthusiasm, but goes to meet Khusrau at his lodging and offers him rare gifts. The two spend the evening side by side playing music, and Shekar invites Khusrau to her house, where they proclaim their mutual affection. The priest is called in the morning to marry them, and Khusrau and Shekar consummate their relationship.

Shīrīn hears of the marriage, and is distraught. Spending her days hunting to divert her attention, she passes by Mount Bisūtūn and sees a smooth passage cut impressively into the rock. Admiring the workmanship, she spots the sculptor: a tall, strapping young man wielding an axe. Rushing over to him, she asks him about the magic he uses to create

his work, and though her face is hidden behind her veil, he falls in love with the sound of her voice. He introduces himself as Farhād, an accomplished artist. Shīrīn will not reveal her name, but commissions him to cut a channel from the pasturelands where her goats graze to her residence, so she can have fresh milk. Shīrīn invites Farhād to her palace, and he reveals after some prodding from her that he is a prince from the East, who was disowned by his father for pursuing his love of the arts. He promises to enter her service, requesting that the only reward he seeks is a glimpse of her face. Shīrīn agrees; he is speechless at her beauty.

As he toils, Farhād becomes overwhelmed by his love for her. He weeps and laments his separation from her; even when Shīrīn visits him at the site, it only makes him feel worse. Farhād leaves the work site to wander the desert and becomes a madman, rolling in the thorns, befriended by wild animals. Word reaches Khusrau that Shīrīn has transferred her affections to Farhād, and becomes so consumed by jealousy that he loses his taste for Shekar. He sends Shīrīn a letter first reproaching her, then begging for reconciliation. Shīrīn sends a reply in kind, reproaching Khusrau for marrying both Maryam and Shekar when he claimed his devotion to her, and vouches for her fidelity.

Khusrau returns to Armenia and visits Farhād at the work site disguised as a shepherd. The sculptor has wasted away, and is covered in dust and blood. Not recognizing Khusrau, Farhād admits under questioning that Shīrīn has kept her distance, despite his steadfastness. Khusrau is determined to eliminate his rival, but doesn't want to shed innocent blood; instead, he sends a servant to falsely inform Farhād of Shīrīn's death. Upon hearing this, the sculptor strikes his head upon a rock and dies, his blood flowing into the milk channel he has carved for his beloved. Shīrīn hears of Farhād's death as the result of

Khusrau's ruse; she weeps for her admirer, and arranges for his corpse to be washed and buried. To retaliate against Khusrau's cruel deed, Shīrīn sends an old handmaiden named Māh Sāmān to Isfahan, where after a year the old woman works her way into Shekar's confidence, then poisons her. Upon hearing the news, Khusrau weeps for Shekar and understands that this is the retribution for the actions that brought about the death of Farhād.

Khusrau departs towards Armenia, and eventually returns to Shīrīn. She refuses to meet him in person, sending servants to lead him to the palace door, then calls to him from her rooftop. The two exchange criticisms on the behavior of the other, but overcome by their mutual affection, eventually reconcile. Elaborate pavilions are erected across the palace grounds, expensive gifts are exchanged, and the lovers are finally married.

They pass many happy years together, but this nuptial bliss leads Khusrau away from his duties as king. His counselors seek to replace him with Shiruyeh, the son of Maryam and Khusrau, who has arranged for his father to be stabbed in the royal garden. Shīrīn finds Khusrau's corpse and stabs herself as well, placing her wound over her husband's so their blood will mingle and they will remain together through eternity. The poet ends with a reflection on the transience of life, and assures his readers that the couple is together in the afterlife in a domed paradise.

¹ Here Amīr Khusrau, like Nizami, uses a double entendre: the Persian *Shīrīn* is both a woman's name and also means "sweet."

² Another double entendre is employed here: the Persian *Shekar* means "sugar," intended to heighten the rivalry of the two women.

Appendix C

Summary of Amīr Khusrau's *Majnūn and Laylā*:

The romance commences with the joyful birth of Qays, celebrated by the family and tribe. An astrologer prophesies that although the child is blessed with good looks and virtues, he will go insane from love. At the age of five, he is sent to school where the boys and girls are segregated on separate sides of the classroom. Across from him is the beautiful Laylā, and the two form a mutual affection. As their friends spread gossip about the budding romance, Laylā's mother hears of the situation and warns her daughter that her reputation and life are at risk. Her father orders her to live in seclusion, and high walls are built around her. Laylā weeps within her palace prison, and laments her situation to her mother, who is physically present for her daughter, but helpless to change her fate.

Qays continues to attend school, but can only sing of his love for Laylā as he descends into madness, oblivious to the mocking and stone throwing of the children around him. He leaves home and wanders into the wilderness, and his erratic behavior earns him the epithet "Majnūn" (Ar., *possessed by jinn*). When his father hears of the situation, he visits his son in the wilderness, beseeching him to return home and forget about Laylā. Majnūn insists that he cannot escape his fate, but returns home with his father. His mother, seeing his lovelorn state, sends her husband to ask for Laylā's hand in marriage.

Although Majnūn's father is met with respect, Laylā's father denies his request, insisting that any further discussion would result in a fight. Majnūn's father requests assistance from Nawfāl, the chieftain of his tribe, who again requests the betrothal of the young lovers upon threat of warfare. Laylā's father still refuses, and a fierce battle between the tribes ensues; after a week, Majnūn's tribe suggests settling the issue by killing Laylā.

Majnūn begs Nawfāl to kill him in her stead, and the fighting ends abruptly; as the tribe returns home, Majnūn seeks to lie in solidarity among the dead on the battlefield. After a crow tries to peck out his eyes, Majnūn again wanders off into the desert. A sympathizer goes to Laylā's palace and tells her of the situation, and she weeps for her beloved.

While Majnūn is wasting away in the desert, Nawfāl approaches his father suggesting to marry Majnūn to his daughter Khadīja. Appalled at the thought of betraying Laylā, Majnūn is nevertheless a dutiful son, and complies with his father's wishes. After an elaborate wedding celebration, Majnūn meets his wife in the bridal chamber, but all he can do is weep. Ashamed of Majnūn's unwillingness to consummate the marriage, his parents and friends are aghast. News reaches Laylā, who almost dies of sorrow at the news of the marriage and sends a messenger to carry a letter to Majnūn. She reproaches Majnūn for his lack of fidelity, but sends a blessing for his wife. Majnūn replies in kind with a declaration for his singular affection for Laylā, his obligation to marry for the sake of his parents, and promise to divorce Khadija before he has even seen her face. Laylā is reassured of his love, but their separation ensues.

Majnūn is visited in the desert by his friends, who convince him to socialize with them in a garden in the springtime. Oblivious to the party, Majnūn is captivated by the song of a nightingale, and composes verses for his absent beloved, Laylā. Returning to the desert wilderness, Majnūn is surrounded by wild animals that empathize with his savage, unkempt state. One day as he wanders in the midday heat, he finds a wounded stray dog near Laylā's camp, and cradles it in his lap. He praises the dog for his fidelity and declares that if the dog places his face in the dust at Laylā's doorstep, it is by proxy Majnūn.

After another year of weeping for her lover, Laylā falls ill. In a fever-induced state, she dreams that she sees Majnūn; she washes his dwelling with tears and composes love poetry for him. When Laylā awakens to find herself alone, she is alarmingly distraught; her companions are speechless, and cannot stop her from preparing a camel and palanquin to journey into the wilderness in search of Majnūn. She finds him in a rocky outcrop on the mountainside, his head resting on thorns, surrounded by wild animals. Instead of attacking, his horde flees upon seeing her, and Laylā takes Majnūn's head on her lap and weeps over him. As her scent reaches him, he awakens, only to faint upon sight of her. Reviving one another and speaking of their shared dreams, the lovers embrace but do not consummate the relationship. The two remain together until sunset; Majnūn is terror stricken as Laylā prepares to return home. They part in tears, singing the verses they have composed for one another. Majnūn continues to wander ceaselessly with his animals, lamenting the inseparable nature of joy and pain. Laylā sings of death as the only escape for her misery.

One day as Laylā is in the garden with her companions, they are visited by one of Majnūn's sympathizers, who sings some verses to Laylā in an effort to get her attention. She begs for news of her beloved, and the singer falsely tells her that Majnūn has died. Laylā falls to the ground, and the effects of this ruse cannot be undone. She is returned home, but never recovers. As Laylā nears her inevitable death, she asks her mother to sew a piece of Majnūn's tattered garment to her shroud, praying that they will be united in death.

Majnūn hears the news of Laylā's illness, but reaches her residence as the bier is carried out followed by the mourning family. To the shock of all, he smiles and bows to the ground, joyfully singing that he will soon be reunited with his beloved. As her body is

laid in the earth, Majnūn leaps into the grave and embraces the body. The family is outraged, and they leap into the grave and kill him with daggers. Though Laylā's family tries to pull the two corpses apart, they are immediately interlocked and the lovers cannot be separated. The elders of the tribe declare that the love of Laylā and Majnūn was one of divine mystery. The lovers are buried together, and the poet ends his rendition of the tale with a postscript on the transient nature of life and the happy condition of his poetic predecessor, Nizāmī, who is done with the world.

Glossary

Textile terms

Brocade A type of woven fabric in which there are discontinuous *weft* threads on the surface of the cloth that are supplementary to the basic structure, and contribute to the overall pattern. The general term “brocade” is often used to denote fabrics with complex patterning

Compound Weave A weave structure in which there is more than one set of *warps* and more than one set of *wefts*

Design Repeat In weaving, the minimum number of threads required to create the full unit of a design, which is then multiplied throughout the textile. The basic design unit can be arranged as a straight or point repeat; in a straight repeat, the design unit does not change direction throughout the design. In a point repeat, the design unit mirrors itself horizontally or vertically, and sometimes both, creating a fourfold symmetrical design

Drawloom A loom which can create figured fabrics using compound weave structures, such as *lampas*, through the mechanics of a series of figure harnesses that control the lifting and lowering of *warp* threads. The traditional drawloom functioned with at least two people, the weaver who controlled the treadles (floor pedals) and the “draw boy” who was responsible for lifting and lowering the harnesses controlling the threads according to the design, creating the pattern. The Persian-style drawloom is believed to date back to the Sasanian era (fifth or sixth century AD)

Double Cloth A textile in which two cloths are woven simultaneously, requiring two complete sets of *warps* and *wefts*. Often the resulting textile is woven in at least two contrasting colors for effect, such as the red and white double cloths (figures 10-12) or the polychromatic double cloth (figure 13), and are reversible. The most popular weave structures used to create double cloth are *tabby* (plain weave) or *twill*

Figural Cloth (also Figured) A cloth with a detailed pattern including animal or human figures, often woven in *silk*; see *drawloom* and *lampas*

Lampas A *compound weave* structure used to create *figural cloth*, usually incorporating metal or metal-wrapped threads. Lampas-woven *silks* are generally formed by a combination of two interconnected weave structures: a foundation or ground weave, and a pattern weave comprised of *tabby*, *twill*, and/or *satín* bindings. Requiring two *warps*, lampas was developed to incorporate the stiff metal on the surface of the cloth without compromising the flexibility of the cloth or intricate design details of the imagery (also see *Satin Lampas*)

Layout (also Design Layout) The repeat patterning on a textile, which determines the placement of the design repeat unit. Basic layouts can be arranged in straight repeats, in which the main unit is set up like a grid; brick repeats, which alters the horizontal placement

in each row; or drop repeats, which alter the vertical placement in each row. From these basic layouts, more specialized repeats such as the ogival or lattice layout were developed

Loom An instrument created to facilitate the weaving of cloth. The basic floor loom is comprised of at least one *warp* beam onto which the length of the *warp* is wound, and maintains tension while the weaving process takes place. *Warp* threads are also attached to heddles, which have an opening through which each thread passes before going through the beater to the front beam. The weaver controls the position of the *warp* threads in an up or down position using treadles (floor pedals), creating an opening or shed for the *weft* to pass through

Metallic yarn (also Metal-wrapped thread) In order to incorporate gold or silver into a textile, the metal must be flattened into a thin sheet of metallic foil (lamella), then cut into thin strips and wrapped around a core thread, usually silk. Wrapping can go in primarily two different directions, referred to “S-twist” or “Z-twist,” the former more commonly seen in Safavid silks and the latter in Mughal examples. Sometimes the thin strips are used flat. This provided the figural silks in the *Khamisa* group with their iridescent sheen and added value

Motif The primary visual element of a design composition

Satin A weave structure in which each *warp* thread passes over four or more rows of *weft* and under one (notated as 4:1); a *weft*-faced version of this is usually called “sateen”

Satin Lampas A *lampas silk* in which one of the interconnected weave structures is *satin* (figures 6 and 7 of this publication); also see *lampas*

Selvage The edges of the woven fabric built up across the width of the fabric as rows or picks of *weft* go back and forth; from the term “self-edge”

Silk A type of soft, lustrous animal fiber made from the secretions of the silkworm. The silk industry by the early modern period was dependent on the cultivation of the Bombyx Mori moth, which feed exclusively on mulberry leaves.

Silk is produced when the silkworms spin their cocoons with a continuous filament of fibroin, an insoluble protein. The larvae are then boiled in a large vat, and the filament is unwound from the cocoons carefully in a continuous length. The filament is covered in sericin, a sticky substance which is removed or “degummed” from the silk.

As a fiber, silk is desirable for its luster and ability to take dye easily, as well as its soft texture and durability. Trade routes brought silk fiber and cloth from the Far East to Rome from at least the first centuries BC; sericulture was developed in Iran and Byzantium around the sixth century AD

Tabby (also Plain Weave) A basic weave structure in which the *warp* and *weft* are interlaced by an alternating system of one *weft* thread passing over and under one *warp*

thread. Tabby is one of the main structures used to create the ground fabric in *compound weaves* such as *lampas*

Twill A weave structure in which each *warp* thread passes over two or more *weft* threads, forming a diagonal pattern throughout the fabric; when the sequence is reversed, this creates a chevron pattern referred to “reverse twill.” Twill is one of the main structures used to create the ground fabric in *compound weaves* such as *lampas*

Velvet A textile whose rich, supple surface is created by supplementary *warp* yarns that are raised above the ground weave to form pile. This is achieved by two *warps*, one for the ground fabric which is a flat weave, and a supplementary *warp* which is formed into loops during the weaving process by the insertion of a thin metal rod, and then later cut with a sharp knife or trevete; the loops can also be left uncut, forming looped pile. Variation in color were achieved by adding “supplementary warps” weighted down with bobbins, freeing weavers of the need for additional *warp* beams, a technique mastered in Iran. Sometimes areas of ground cloth are unadorned with pile, creating a three-dimensional surface for the patterning; this is referred in common parlance as “voiled velvet,” somewhat erroneously as the pile was not “voiled” per se, but simply left unwoven

Warp The vertical elements in the grid of a textile, held parallel to one another under tension during the weaving process. Each warp thread is technically referred to as an “end.” Woven fabric in which the warp dominates on the front is referred to as “warp-faced.” In compound weave structures such as *lampas*, warps creating the main fabric are “ground warps”; warps introduced as patterning elements which are not integral to the structure of the cloth are “supplementary warps”

Weft The horizontal elements in the grid of a textile, interlaced with the warp during the weaving process. A row of weft is technically referred to as a “pick.” Woven fabric in which the weft dominates on the front is referred to as “weft-faced.” In compound weave structures such as *lampas*, wefts creating the main fabric are “ground wefts”; wefts introduced as a patterning element, which are not integral to the structure of the cloth, are “supplementary wefts”

Persian language terms

Kārkhāna A general term for a workshop

Kārkhāna-i khāṣṣ A state-sponsored workshop; also Kārkhāna-i saltanatī

Khamsa (also **Khamseh**) From the Arabic word for the number “five,” the Khamsa represents the quintet of narrative epic poems written by Nizami Ganjavi in the twelfth century. The poems are *Maḡhzan al-Asrār* (The Storehouse of Mysteries); *Khusrau and Shīrīn*; *Laylā and Majnūn*; *Haft Paykar* (Seven Beauties); and *Iskandarnāma* (Story of Alexander). The quintet is also known as *Panj Ganj* (Five Treasures) in Persian

Kitāb khāna A book making workshop, which included calligraphers, painters, bookbinders and other specialists. A kitāb khāna could be either state-sponsored or private, serving the needs of the court or of an independent wealthy patron

Naqshah Design; also a generalized term for a decorative motif or repeat pattern

Naqshband Textile designer; literally, a “drawer with threads”; pl. naqshbandān; v. naqshbandī, textile design

Shāhnāma The Persian “Book of Kings” authored by Abol Qasem Ferdowsī (completed 1010 AD). Comprised of approximately 60,000 rhyming couplets in Persian, the Shāhnāma codifies the legend of Iranian kingship throughout the region from the beginning of civilization to the time of the Islamic conquest (650 AD)

People

‘Abbās I (r.1587-1629) The fourth Safavid ruler, grandson of *Tahmāsp*, and patron of the arts and architecture. Shah ‘Abbas was the first Iranian ruler to centralize the silk industry and promote diplomacy and trade with Europe

Abul Fazl ‘Allamī Vizier of *Akbar*, the third Mughal ruler, and the author of the *Akbarnāma*, a third-person historiography of the Mughal empire (completed 1590) which includes the *A’in-i Akbari* (Akbar’s Regulations; or, The Institutes of Akbar)

Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī (1253-1325) Turco-Indian court poet who authored a *Khamasa* (completed 1302) with the same themes as Nizami Ganjavi, as well as authoring several other poetic and prose works in Persian and Hindi

Akbar (1542-1605) The third Mughal ruler (r.1556-1605) and a great patron of the arts, Akbar’s reign was defined by cultural and religious fusion at court and throughout his empire, integrating Indian, Persian and Central Asian ideas and styles, as well as the establishment of several indigenous industries including textiles modeled on the Iranian *karkhana* system

Bābūr A Central Asian descendent of Tīmūr and Ghengis Khan, Bābūr was a chieftain ruling a small principality from his capital in Kabul, and the founder of the Mughal dynasty in 1526. In addition to his military accomplishments, Babur wrote a memoir that would be emulated by his great-grandson, *Jahāngīr*, providing scholars with information about the early Mughal realm

Ghiyāth al-Dīn Yazdī (also **Ghiyās**) (1530-1593/5) Safavid textile designer from Yazd who signed several of his works, including three of the *Khamasa* silks. A wealthy man who later adhered to mystic Sufi practice, the expert designer also worked for the *kārkhāna-i khaṣṣ* late in his career for *Shah ‘Abbās*

Homayūn The second Mughal emperor, Homayun consolidated his power with the help of the Safavid Shah *Tahmāsp* after spending time at his court in 1553-4. A great bibliophile, Homayūn met his tragic end just one year after regaining Mughal territories when he fell down the steps of his library

Iskandar Munshī Beg The private secretary of Shah ‘*Abbās I*, and the author of the *Tarīkh-i ‘Alam ara-yi ‘Abbāsī* (History of Shah Abbas), completed in 1629

Khusrau (r. 591-628) Known as the last great Sasanian king, the Persian Khusrau II became the stuff of legends. Also known as *Khusrau Parvīz* (Victorious King), there is a section devoted to his reign in Ferdowsī’s *Shāhnāma*, as well as highlights throughout Nizāmī’s narrative *Khusrau and Shīrīn* in the *Khamasa*

Laylā The legendary Bedouin girl that Qays ibn Mulāwwah [*Majnūn*] fell in love with, and the female protagonist of the love story *Laylā and Majnūn*, codified by Nizāmī Ganjavī

Majnūn (Ar. “possessed by jinn,” i.e. crazy) The epithet for Qays ibn Mulāwwah, the legendary lover who went insane due to his love for a girl named Laylā, and the male protagonist of the love story *Laylā and Majnūn*, codified by Nizāmī Ganjavī

Nizāmī Ganjavī (1140-1209) Author of the *Khamasa*, the quintet of epic poems (see *Khamasa* for complete list of works). Nizami was commissioned by the Saljūq princes to create each of his epic poems in Persian, legitimizing their rule in Iran. Following Ferdowsī’s *Shāhnāma*, Nizami’s *Khamasa* is the most illustrated literary work in the Persian-speaking world. His style, subject matter and meter was “imitated” or responded to by several later poets, including Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī, Hātefī, Hilālī, Jāmī, and ‘Alī Shīr Navā’ī, among others

Nizām al-Auliya (d. 1325) Sufi shaykh and spiritual leader of the poet Amīr Khusrau Dihlavī

Shīrīn The beloved of the Sasanian King Khusrau, presented by Nizami in his *Khusrau and Shīrīn* as the heiress to the Armenian throne. Historically, Shīrīn was a very beautiful Christian woman and lived during the late sixth and early seventh centuries, documented in several contemporary primary sources including the *Chronicle of Seert* and the *Annals* of Eutychius

Jahān (r.1627-1664) The fifth Mughal emperor, son of Jahāngīr, and the famous patron of the Taj Mahal. Jahān’s patronage of the arts included the decorative arts as well as architecture, disseminating an imperial iconographic repertoire of naturalistic floral motifs

Jahāngīr (r.1605-1627) The fourth Mughal emperor, son of Akbar, who was a great patron of painting and manuscript production, as well as other court-sponsored arts. His memoir, the *Jahāngīrnāma*, provides scholars with a fascinating look at the early seventeenth century Mughal elite lifestyle

Sherley, Robert An Englishman who traveled to Iran in 1598, Sherley stayed in the country and became Ambassador to Shah ‘Abbas from 1608-1628, traveling to several courts throughout Europe

Sherley, Teresia Originally named Sampsonia and of Circassian origin, Teresia was related to one of the ‘Abbas’ wives. She married Robert Sherley in 1607, converted to Catholicism, and changed her name to Teresia

Shī’a (derived from **Shī’at ‘Alī**, the family of ‘Alī) One of two major sects of Islam, the Shi’a are the group that believes in the rightful succession of the Prophet Muhammad’s cousin, Ali ibn Taleb, as the second caliph of Islam. There are several groups of Shi’a belief, whose differences focus on which saint in will come as the messiah during the Apocalypse; in Safavid Iran, it was the belief in Imam Mahdī as the twelfth and final messenger, defining “Twelver Shi’ism.” Other differences in the practice of the religion are derived from the interpretation of the *hadith* (Ar. canonical sayings of the Prophet)

Sunnī (derived from **Sonnāt**, tradition) One of two major sects of Islam, the Sunni are subdivided into four additional subsects (Hanafi, Hanbālī, Māleki and Shāfi’i). The Sunnis collectively believe that the succession of the caliphate after the death of the Prophet Muhammad was rightfully handed to his companions (Abu Bakr, Omar, Usman) prior to reaching ‘Alī as the fourth caliph

Tahmāsp (r.1524-1576) The second Safavid Shah, Tahmasp maintained Shi’ism as the state religion of Iran, incorporating the special headwear referred to as the *taj Šafavī* or *taj Haidarī*, a white turban with twelve folds over a red cap with a tall baton emerging from the top as symbol of allegiance. Much of his reign was spent defending Iranian borders from Ottoman invasions on the northwestern borders, and the Uzbeks on the eastern borders. However, Tahmasp was also a lover of manuscripts and maintained an elaborate *kitāb khāna*; he commissioned several literary works, including the famous “Houghton” *Shāhnāma* and a *Khamṣa* of Niẓāmī, among many others

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