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Original Research Article

The Preface of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper) in the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa

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Abstract

Introduction: During the reign of Shah Tahmasp (930–984 A.H.), a Muraqqa was commissioned by Shah Quli Khalifa, the royal seal-keeper of Shah Tahmasp, and prepared under his patronage. Today, this Muraqqa is preserved in the Istanbul University Library under the catalog number nekfy01422. Accordingly, the aim of this article is to introduce this Muraqqa and, in particular, to examine its unique preface (dībācha). It seeks to answer the following questions: «In what year was the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa produced? What works does it contain and by which artists? To which historical periods does each of these works belong?»

Research Method: The research method is historical-analytical. Data were gathered from library sources and from the Muraqqa, accessed online via the Istanbul University Library.

Findings: The examination of the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa reveals that, unlike other Muraqqas, it consists of three sections: An opening preface (dībācha), a main body containing calligraphic panels and paintings, and a concluding preface. It was compiled between the years 936-965 A.H. or 945-965 A.H. for Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper), and its scribe was Shah Mahmud Nishapuri. The earliest calligraphic piece dates to 746 A.H., while the most recent one belongs to 945 A.H. Works by 33 calligraphers and two painters from the Injuid, Ilkhanid, Jalayirid, Timurid, and Safavid schools were identified. Single examples of calligraphy by Shah Ismail Safavid, Shah Tahmasp, Bahram Mirza, and Sam Mirza are included in this Muraqqa. Miniatures from 'Kalila and Dimna' of the Jalayirid period, as well as the preface of the Muraqqa of Amir Alishir Navai, written by Abdullah Morvarid, are also contained within it.

Conclusion: The results indicate that this Muraqqa was produced after Shah Tahmasp's repentance in 939 A.H. and his subsequent turning away from amusements and worldly pleasures. The existence of such a Muraqqa demonstrates that Shah Tahmasp did not completely abandon art and its patronage. Rather, his attention shifted away from commissioning large-scale manuscripts, which required immense expenditures of time and money, toward smaller-scale works such as single-sheet paintings and Muraqqa-making, which replaced the earlier monumental courtly productions.

Keywords

Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper), Preface (Dībācha), Muraqqa nekfy01422, Istanbul University

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Introduction and Problem Definition

Muraqqas are written and pictorial historical documents that can significantly contribute to a deeper understanding of historical periods and artistic developments in various schools. According to existing evidence, the oldest Muraqqas include the Muraqqa of Abd al-Qadir (807-822 A.H.), the Muraqqa of the Seven Masters (820-837 A.H.), and the Muraqqa of Amir Alishir Navai (897 A.H.), which have been identified from the Timurid period. During the reign of Shah Tahmasp Safavid, when the arts of miniature painting and calligraphy reached their peak of refinement and advancement, numerous Muraqqas were commissioned by Shah Tahmasp, Prince Bahram Mirza, and other figures. These are, like the illustrated manuscripts of that period, unparalleled in their kind. The Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa is one such example, compiled by Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper) (939-965 A.H.), and today preserved in the Istanbul University Library under the number nekfy01422. A significant feature of this Muraqqa is its possession of a preface (dībācha) both at the beginning and the end, composed in the tradition of Shah Quli Khalifa's library. The Muraqqa contains exceptionally precious and exquisite works by calligraphers of the Injuid, Ilkhanid, Timurid, and Safavid periods, as well as miniatures from the Jalayirid and Safavid eras, all of which are unique in their kind. Since not all Muraqqas produced in Iran include a preface, and only a limited number possess this feature, the study of prefaces is of considerable importance for tracing the historical trajectory of the arts in different periods. Yet, the more critical issue in this article is that the binding and folios of the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa have been disassembled and subsequently reassembled in an irregular and illogical sequence. This has also caused the preface pages to lose their unity and continuity, as they are scattered across various folios. As a result, those encountering this Muraqqa for the first time remain unaware of the existence of such a preface within it. The same applies to other works contained in this Muraqqa. Another noteworthy point is that this Muraqqa and its preface have never been published or studied in any source. The purpose of this article is therefore to introduce the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa and to examine its unique preface, addressing the following questions: «In what year was the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa produced? What works does it contain, and by which artists? To which historical periods and artistic schools can these works be attributed?»

Research Method

The methodology of this study is historical-analytical with a qualitative approach. Data were gathered from library sources, while the digital version of the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa was accessed online through the Istanbul University Library. The Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, catalogued under the number nekfy01422, is preserved Istanbul University Library and consists of 92 folios. All the illustrations included in this article have been selected directly from the Muraqqa. From the perspective of the visual material used in this study, the statistical corpus consists of 11 images and four calligraphic folios. Image 1 pertains to paintings attributed to Shah Tahmasp. Image 2 comprises calligraphic works bearing the signatures of Shah Tahmasp, Bahram Mirza, and Sam Mirza. Images 3 to 6 are dedicated to the calligraphy of Shah Mahmud Nishapuri. Images 7 to 15 encompass the entire text of the preface (dībācha) of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper), as contained in this Muraqqa. In accordance with the tradition of codicology in Iran, the abbreviated letters «ر» (recto) and «پ» (verso) are used in the foliation of this Muraqqa. In the present article, the discussion proceeds as follows: First, an overview of the eightfold classification of Muraqqas from the standpoint of content is provided; second, the subject of prefaces within Muraqqas is addressed; third, the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa is introduced and its contents

examined; and finally, the preface of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper) is analyzed in detail.

Research Background

Only a limited number of studies have been conducted on Safavid-period Muraqqas, and particularly on their prefaces. «Rahimi Pordanjani» (2023), in an article entitled «A Study on the Evolution of the Structure of Safavid Album Prefaces», described and compared the prefaces of Dust Muhammad, Qutb al-Din Muhammad Qesseh-Khan, Shah Quli Khalifa, Malik Daylami, Shams al-Din Muhammad Wasfi, Muhammad Mohsen, Khwaja Muhammad Mirak Salihi, and Murtaza Quli Shamlu. However, none of the original texts of the prefaces are provided in the article, and thus, readers are left without a direct textual basis for the analysis and comparisons offered. Moreover, the author did not directly consult the preface of Shah Quli, but rather relied on the account of Thackston. In another article entitled «A Defense of Painting: Analysis of Qutb al-Din Muhammad's Preface to the Shah Tahmasp's Album with an Analytical Historical-Sociology Approach», «Rahimi Pordanjani et al.» (2018) investigated the reasons for the appearance of prefaces, identifying three key factors: The author's background, literary tradition, and social context. Similarly, «Khodadadi Naeini» (2015), in «The Preface of Shah Muhammad Muzahhib's Muraqqa», examined the historical roots of the text, concluding that the beginning portion of Shah Muhammad's preface appears to have been borrowed from another Muraqqa dating to the first half of the 10th century A.H., while its ending was modified to suit the author's own intent. «Seki» (2002), in «The Preface of Qutb al-Din Muhammad Qesseh-Khan to the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa», emphasized the importance of this preface in the history of Safavid manuscript illumination and explored the role it played as a model for later art historians in subsequent Muraqqas. «Vahdati Daneshmand» (2004), in an article reviewing «The Prefaces on Images: Writing the History of Art in Sixteenth-Century Iran» by David J. Roxburgh, highlighted the author's approach. In the first appendix of this book, Roxburgh introduces the prefaces of Muraqqas by Marvarid, Khwandamir, Dust Muhammad, Shah Quli Khalifa, Malik Daylami, Mir Sayyid Ahmad, Shams al-Din Muhammad, Muhammad Mohsen, and Muhammad Salih. However, the original texts of the prefaces are not included, and only facsimiles of their opening pages are referenced. Notably, Rahimi Pordanjani, before translating and publishing this book, had already produced several articles (mentioned above) based on Roxburgh's model. Roxburgh's book was published in 2024 in Persian under the title « Prefacing the image: the writing of art history in sixteenth century Iran», translated and annotated by Hanif Rahimi Pordanjani, by Matn Publishing. As the research background shows, none of the above articles or books have specifically addressed the contents of the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa and its preface. This article is therefore the first attempt to provide a fresh presentation of this Muraqqa, including its preface and inner contents, to readers. The contents of this Muraqqa remind us that, contrary to common assumptions, the production of courtly artworks continued after Shah Tahmasp's repentance in 939 A.H. until his death. Moreover, it contains works from the Jalayirid and Timurid periods, which have been far less accessible to researchers. For example, the preface of Amir Alishir Navai Muraqqa, penned by Shihab al-Din Abdullah Morvarid, long considered lost, is among the folios included here. Each work preserved in this Muraqqa can, in fact, serve as a separate subject of study and help fill gaps in the scholarship on Persian painting.

Types of Muraqqas

In the major libraries and museums of Iran and the world, numerous Muraqqas are preserved, the study of which can provide valuable insights into the manner of compilation and arrangement of their contents. Muraqqas can be classified, based on their contents, into the following eight categories:

1. Muraqqas consisting of a single collection of artworks: These Muraqqas generally contain a single text or artistic work, such as calligraphy or painting. In such Muraqqas, the viewer may observe the continuity of a single text, such as supplications, prayers, courtly letters, or miniatures from a particular school of painting or across different periods. Examples include the Muraqqa of Ahmad Neyrizi's calligraphy (no. 4171, Library of the Islamic Consultative Assembly) and the Muraqqa of Forty Hadiths (no. per227, Chester Beatty Library).

2. Muraqqas devoted solely to calligraphic works of calligraphers from a single historical period: Example: Muraqqa no. 19.2015, Harvard Art Museums[1].

3. Muraqqas combining calligraphy and miniature painting from a single historical period: Example: Muraqqa no. 386, Morgan Library[2].

4. Muraqqas containing collections of calligraphy and miniature painting spanning multiple historical periods: Example: Majmaʿ al-ʿAjāʾib Muraqqa (no. nekfy01423, Istanbul University Library).

5. Muraqqas combining paintings, drawings, calligraphy, and Iranian engravings from different periods, alongside works of artists from the Mughal, Ottoman, and other foreign schools: Examples: Muraqqa no. 247, «Smith-Lazoff[3]» (Bibliothèque nationale de France) and the Jahangir Shah Muraqqa (no. PPN7177403x, Berlin State Library[4]).

6. Muraqqas commissioned or ordered by kings, princes, and courtiers, often possessing a dedicated preface: Examples: The Muraqqa of Amir Alishir Navai, the Muraqqa of Bahram Mirza, and the Muraqqa of Qutb al-Din Muhammad Qesseh-Khan.

7. Muraqqas compiled by certain Orientalists: The works in these Muraqqas were acquired over time by these individuals through purchase, gift, or by cutting out and detaching illustrations from manuscripts, which were then assembled into albums associated with them. Example: The Diez Album (Muraqqa) in the Berlin State Library.

8. Muraqqas devoted exclusively to the works of a single calligrapher or painter: Example: The Muraqqa of Rashid Deylami's calligraphy (no. 481941, Library of Congress) (Raeisi, 2024).

Prefaces in Muraqqas

Given that many of the illustrated works of the Timurid period were strongly influenced by the book arts and artistic traditions of the Jalayirid era, it appears that the practice of compiling anthologies (golchīn) and Muraqqas likewise originated under Jalayirid influence, mainly since many Jalayirid artists, after the death of Sultan Ahmad (813 A.H.), migrated to Shiraz to the court of Eskandar Sultan (r. 807-817 A.H.). «Ajand» identifies the most significant characteristic of Eskandar Sultan's patronage of manuscript production as his support for the creation of anthologies of literary and scientific texts (Ajand, 2008, 189). These anthologies were vast compilations of abridged philosophical, literary, scientific, and historical works, accompanied by illuminations, marginal ornamentations, miniature paintings, and calligraphy, together forming complementary artistic ensembles. In contrast to anthologies, which often comprised extensive volumes, Muraqqas were collections of one or several works of varying sizes and dimensions, differing in both their scale and their

methods of compilation. Mayel Heravi, in his book entitled «Book Design in Islamic Civilization», describes the Muraqqa as follows: «In the usage of classical book-artists and artisans, it refers to folios and pieces of calligraphy and paintings, connected in a particular manner and placed between two boards, such that when opened, all the folios and pieces are aligned in a single orderly row, and when closed, it resembles a book». (Mayel Heravi, 2018, 325-326). Thus, Muraqqas are collections of detached folios and fragments (raqʿa), which in English are often termed «albums» and, in Persian usage, also called daftar (notebook) or jūng (compilation) (Khalili & Safwat, 2000, 70). In a comprehensive artistic definition, a Muraqqa, jūng, or album can be understood as a volume consisting of single- or multi-leaf works of drawing, painting, flower-bird compositions, and calligraphy, accompanied by decorative illuminations (Tazhhib) and marginal ornamentation (tashʿīr). These works are integrated with auxiliary arts, including papermaking, cloud and wind design, découpage, mounting, gilding, ruling, and margining. The folios are bound in a book form or accordion-style and then combined into a single volume. Muraqqas may include a preface (dībācha) as well as a concluding section (anjāmeh). The dībācha is a prologue written by the patron or compiler of the Muraqqa, either in their own hand or by a scribe. It may begin with a tahmīdīya (praise of God) and encomium of the king or prince, followed by a statement of the purpose and theme of the Muraqqa. Some prefaces also contain reflections on the origins of the arts and their masters, such as the dībācha of Dust Muhammad in the Muraqqa of Bahram Mirza. The anjāmeh of some prefaces include prayers, as well as the name of the scribe and the date of completion. One of the most significant features distinguishing anthologies (golchīns) from Muraqqas is precisely the presence of the prefaces at the beginning of Muraqqas, written by the compiler or scribe, which conveys valuable information to readers. Accordingly, the most essential Muraqqas are those furnished with a written preface. The preface of Muraqqas functions much like art-historical texts, acquainting readers with the historical trajectory of the arts, the active artists of the period, and the patrons—kings, princes, viziers, and courtiers—who commissioned the works. The contents of each Muraqqa are thus invaluable historical documents from which significant information about their themes and contents can be derived. Each work can serve as a record identifying artists whose names may not appear in illustrated manuscripts or biographical sources. The absence of signatures in many illustrated manuscripts has often deprived readers of knowledge about their creators; hence, Muraqqa-making provided the opportunity for artists to have their names inscribed beneath the works they produced (Thackston, 2001, VII). notes that the oldest known Muraqqa is the Muraqqa of the Seven Masters, preserved under the number H2310 in the Topkapı Palace. This compilation consists of works by seven master calligraphers of the seventh and eighth centuries A.H., assembled for the library of Baysunghur Mirza. It includes works by Yāqūt al-Mustaʿṣimī, Mubarakshah, Arghuan Kameli, Ahmad Suhrawardi, Abd Allah Sayrafi, Pir Yahya Sufi, and Muhammad b. Haydar al-Huseyni. The dated folios of this Muraqqa span from 690 A.H. (a folio by Yāqūt, folio 102v) to 753 A.H. (a folio by Arghuan Kameli, folio 18r). The dates of the folios and the stylistic features of other works in the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa show that these belong to the periods of the Injuids, the late Ilkhanid and early Jalayirid eras, the Timurids, and the Safavids. Among these is a preface by Shihāb al-Dīn Abdullah. Muhammad Morvarid, written for the rare Muraqqa of Amir Alishir Navai in 897 A.H. Fortunately, this preface survives, albeit in disordered form, among the concluding folios of the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa. In Morvarid's Munshaʾāt, this preface is referred to as the «Inshā of the Hazrat Mir Muraqqa» (Morvarid Bayani Kirmani, 2019, 217).

The Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa

In addition to the numerous manuscripts produced during the reign of Shah Tahmasp, reference can also be made to Muraqqas such as the Bahram Mirza Muraqqa (951 A.H.), the Qutb al-Din Muhammad Qesseh-Khan Muraqqa (964 A.H.), the Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper) Muraqqa (965 A.H.), the Amir Husayn Beg Muraqqa (968 A.H.), and the Shams al-Din Muhammad Wasfi Muraqqa (984 A.H.). The dates of these Muraqqas indicate that they were produced after Shah Tahmasp's repentance and his renunciation of worldly amusements. The existence of such Muraqqas disproves the claims of some historians and researchers, showing that Shah Tahmasp did not completely abandon the arts or their patronage. Rather, his attention shifted away from the production of large-scale manuscripts, which required vast expenditures and considerable time, to smaller formats. The dating of the Wasfi Muraqqa (984 A.H.) clearly demonstrates that Shah Tahmasp continued to support the arts until the year of his death. «Canby» argues that «with the Safavid court's withdrawal of support for the arts, large commissions were no longer undertaken, and as a result, the production of single-page paintings and Muraqqa compilation replaced large courtly projects» (Canby, 2014, 20). The Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, with the preface (dībācha) of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper), is today preserved in the Library of Istanbul University under the number nekfy01422. The codex consists of 92 folios. It is evident that the binding of the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa was broken apart, and the folios were reassembled in a disorderly fashion. Whoever undertook this rebinding did so without regard for the logical order and coherence of the folios, thereby creating an entirely new arrangement. The disorder of the folios has led observers encountering the Muraqqa for the first time to assume that each folio is an isolated and independent work with no specific relation to the others. This significant problem can only be resolved through considerable time and meticulous effort, involving the careful reading of each folio and tracing the interconnections among the works. For example, the preface states that the first piece adorning this Muraqqa (the «Gulshan-e Maʿnā» or «Rose-Garden of Meaning») is a calligraphy by Shah Tahmasp himself: «Particularly since its first folio of the Gulshan-e Maʿnā has been graced by the beauty of 'the handwriting of this king,' the quintessence of perfection, this shadow of the arena of might and majesty» (Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, fol. 5r). Yet in the currently rebound Muraqqa, this folio has been misplaced into fol. 64v. The principal contents of the Muraqqa begin at fol. 2r and continue through fol. 90v. On fol. 2r, there is a gilded shamsa (medallion) with inscriptions and head-medallions (Sar-Toranj) above and below. Within the inscriptions and the center of the shamsa, there once existed text identifying the owner, but the name of the owner has been entirely erased and obliterated. Only the phrase «برسم کتبخانه» (According to library tradition) remains in the upper inscription of the shamsa. At the beginning of the preface, a gilded illuminated headpiece (sarluḥ) is found. The preface of Shah Quli Khalifa begins on fol. 2v and continues through fol. 5v, but fol. 6r (which continues the preface) has been displaced to fol. 42v, while the concluding section of the preface is located at fol. 54v. This disruption of the preface text itself clearly demonstrates that the folios of this Muraqqa were separated, disassembled, and then clumsily and irregularly rebound together. The same disarray characterizes all the folios of the Muraqqa, causing it to lose its original unity and coherence. This Muraqqa contains a collection of works by calligraphers, painters, and illuminators. According to the signatures (raqams) present in some of the works, the names of 33 calligraphers appear, including: Shah-Mahmud Nishapuri, Sultan Huseyn [Bayqara], Rustam Ali Shahi, Abdi Nishapuri [Abdi Shahi], Azhar al-Katib, Sultan Muhammad

Khandan, Muhammad Abrishami Mashhadi, Shaykh Muhammad al-Katib, Yar Ali, Muhammad Mumin, Mashhadi, Muhammad Mumin ibn Abdullah Morvarid, Sultan Ali Mashhadi, Nasrallah Tayib, Sayfallah Kirmani, Arghun Kamali, Ismail ibn Haydar al-Huseyni (Shah Ismail), Abdullah Sayrafi, Muhammad Qasim, Kamal al-Din Mahmud ibn Abd al-Haqq Sabzavari, Abdullah Heravi, Muhammad al-Hakim al-Hafiz al-Tarkibi al-Yazdi, Mawlana Yari Muzahhib, Tahmasp al-Husayni, Bahram Mirza, Sam Mirza, Nur al-Din Muhammad al-Purani, Zayn al-Din Mahmud, Ghiyath al-Din, Abdallah Muhammad al-Bukhari, Abdullah ibn Muhammad Marvarid, Yahya al-Jamali al-Sufi, and Vali Gilani. The earliest dated folio (fol. 53r) belongs to Yahya al-Jamali al-Sufi, copied in Shiraz in 746 A.H. for Abu'l-Isḥaq Injū. The Timurid-period folios bear the dates 821, 834, 853, 860, and 897 A.H., while the Safavid-period folios correspond to the years 920, 924, 925, 928, and 945 A.H. The last Timurid piece, dated 897 A.H., is by Shihab al-Din Abdullah ibn Muhammad Marvarid and Vali Gilani during the reign of Sultan Huseyn Bayqara—Marvarid wrote it for the preface (dībācha) of the Amir Alishir Navai Muraqqa (fols. 79r, 79v, 89r, 89v), while Vali Gilani copied a specimen in Shikasta-Taliq script after the hand of Khwaja Taj Salmani (fol. 81v). The latest Safavid-period work, dated 945 A.H., is by Rustam Ali Shahi, who transcribed a ghazal by Hafez in Chalipa-Nastaliq format (fol. 69v). In addition, painters such as Mawlana Qadimi [Qadimi Musavvir] and Ustad Haydar Ali have signed works included in this Muraqqa. Forty-six miniatures from the Jalayirid-era manuscript 'Kalila and Dimna' of Sultan Uways, as well as several Safavid calligraphic and pictorial folios lacking signatures, are also scattered throughout the collection. The dimensions of the folios are 476×340 mm, and all are ruled with ten parallel panels (dah-band) in various colors. The margins of all folios are decorated with cloud-patterned (abrī) and gold-sprinkled (zarafshān) paper. The gold-sprinkled folios of this Muraqqa closely resemble those of the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp. According to historians and biographers, after being summoned by Shah Ismail from Herat to Tabriz in 928 A.H., Shah Tahmasp displayed an ardent passion and deep affection for painting. It appears that the cultural and artistic environment of Herat, together with the training of Kamāl al-Dīn Bihzād and the teachings of Sultan Muhammad, nurtured and cultivated this artistic talent in the young Tahmasp. Eskandar Beg Turkman states: «His Majesty was a pupil of the renowned master Sultan Muhammad Musavvir, having brought drawing and the refinement of the pen to the highest degree. Whenever respite was obtained from affairs of state and the responsibilities of ruling, he would practice painting to refresh his mind» (Eskandar Beg Turkman, 2011, 222). It seems likely that the single folio paintings on fols. 53, 59, 64, 65, 66, 68, and 69 of the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, including portraits of certain courtiers, a copied miniature of a bird, and a drawing of a demon holding an angel in its arms, are products of the young Shah's own hand. The figures he painted are generally depicted with short stature and corpulent bodies, wearing Qizilbash hats. The design, coloring, and outlining of these figures bear a striking resemblance to the authenticated work of Shah Tahmasp preserved in the Bahram Mirza Muraqqa (951 A.H.) (Fig. 1). In the preface (dībācha), Shah Quli notes that Shah Tahmasp graciously contributed several pieces and paintings so that he himself might arrange and embellish them. These few pieces and paintings appear to refer precisely to the examples mentioned above. Shah Tahmasp also showed particular affection and interest in calligraphy. The presence of first-rank calligraphers in his royal atelier, such as Shah-Mahmud Nishapuri, Rustam Ali Heravi, and Mawlana Abdi Nishapuri, all honored with the title «Shahi», as well as other masters like Muhammad Abrishami Mashhadi, pupil of Sultan Ali Mashhadi, and Sheykh Muhammad Sabzavari, whose works are included in this Muraqqa, attests to the Shah's patronage and

support of these artists. From such masters, he himself learned the art of Nastaliq script. According to the text of the preface, the first folio of this Muraqqa, following the preface, contains a quatrain written in Chalipa-Nastaliq that belongs to Shah Tahmasp. Below it are two additional folios inscribed by Bahram Mirza and Sam Mirza (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Fol. 32v, Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, no. nekfy01422. Source: Istanbul University Library, n.d.



Fig. 2. Inscriptions of Shah Tahmasp, Bahram Mirza, and Sam Mirza. Fol. 64v, Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, no. nekfy01422. Source: Istanbul University Library, n.d.

Shah Tahmasp's style in painting and calligraphy has been affirmed by most experts. As «Qazi Ahmad» states in 'Golestān-e Honar': «In the beginning, he showed complete inclination toward practicing Naskh-Taliq script and drawing. He devoted his blessed hours to it and became an unrivaled master. In design and portraiture, he surpassed all painters. The blessed subtleties of his minute strokes and the miraculous movements of his exemplary penmanship deserve a hundred thousand praises and countless commendations». (Qazi Ahmad Qomi, 1987, 138).

Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper)

Before examining the main text of the preface composed by Shah Quli Khalifa, a brief account of the patron of this Muraqqa is in order. Based on the preface itself and the titles attributed to Shah Quli Zulqadr, in addition to his office as the royal seal-keeper (muhrdār) of Shah Tahmasp, he also held the position of 'caliph of the caliphs' (khalifat al-khulafa). According to Savory, the office of 'caliph of the caliphs' was the highest spiritual rank in the Safavid order after the 'perfect spiritual guide' (murshid-e kamil), and later within the Safavid state. Since the Qizilbash Sufis were mostly Turkic or Turkmen, the holder of this office was, by necessity, also a Qizilbash, usually a Turkmen. All Sufis of the order obeyed his instructions as though they were those of the spiritual guide (murshid). The leaders of the Safavid order, and later the Safavid monarchs, supervised their disciples both inside and outside Iran through the 'caliph of the caliphs' and his deputies, known as 'Sufi masters' (pirs), maintaining close contact with them (Savory, 2010, 15; Savory, 2003, 349). This demonstrates the exalted position Shah Quli enjoyed in the administration of Shah Tahmasp's reign, which later earned him the additional appointment as royal seal-keeper. Although limited information is available in Safavid-period sources about Shah Quli Khalifa, traces of his role can be found in «Kholasat al-Tavarikh» and «Tarikh-e Alam-ara-ye Abbasi». Before becoming the exclusive seal-keeper of Shah Tahmasp, he had been «one of the great amirs, governor of Lar and the Persian Gulf region» (Eskandar Beg Turkman, 2011, 184). He was of the Zulqadr tribe of Shiraz. «Kholasat al-Tavarikh» records the

following regarding the conferral of the seal-keeper position upon Shah Quli Khalifa: «In the ninth year of the reign of the august sovereign, that is, in the year 939 A.H., in the Sahibabad area of Tabriz, when Mahmud Beg Zulqadr, who was the seal-keeper, fell from his horse and passed away, his office was conferred upon Shah Quli Khalifa Qurghluy Zulqadr, who at that time was serving as 'Ishik-aqasi bashi'». (Qazi Ahmad Qomi, 1980, vol. 1, 223). In addition to his position as royal seal-keeper, Shah Quli Khalifa was also considered a powerful military commander who participated in most campaigns alongside the Shah and the court. In 943 A.H., when ʿUbaydullah Khan Uzbek advanced into Khorasan, Shah Quli Khalifa was among Shah Tahmasp's imperial army. By royal command, he proceeded to Tabas, bringing Prince Sam Mirza from the fortress there to the sovereign's court (Eskandar Beg Turkman, 2011, 93). In 945 A.H., during the war between Shah Tahmasp and the Ottoman Sultan, Shah Quli Khalifa was again among the victorious troops; on the twentieth of Rabi al-Awwal, they entered Van and captured the fortress (Qazi Ahmad Qomi, 1980, 243). In 951 A.H., when the Mughal ruler Humayun found his throne shaken and unstable, he sought refuge at the court of Shah Tahmasp Safavid. «When the royal encampment was located between Abhar and Soltaniyeh, Humayun arrived there» (Hosseini Khatunabadi, 1973, 470). On this occasion, Shah Quli Khalifa, together with Prince Bahram Mirza, Prince Sam Mirza, Qazi Jahan, and several leading amirs and statesmen, went forth to greet him. In 956 A.H., when Prince Alqas Mirza rebelled and fled to the Ottoman court of Sultan Suleiman, causing disturbances in Marivan, Shah Quli Khalifa, alongside Prince Bahram Mirza and Ibrahim Khan Zulqadr, led an army of twenty thousand to confront him, defeating him in the fortress of Marivan (Eskandar Beg Turkman, 2011, 104). The «Tarikh-e Alam-ara-ye Abbasi» mentions Shah Quli Khalifa for the last time in 965 A.H. When Shah Tahmasp had taken residence in Qazvin, a group of Turkmen gathered and rebelled against Ibrahim Khan Zulqadr, governor of Astarabad. For this reason, Shah Tahmasp appointed Shah Quli Khalifa as commander of a contingent of amirs to suppress the Astarabad uprising. According to Eskandar Beg's chronicle, while pursuing the rebellious Iyay-Ukhlu Turkmen in the burning heat of the Atrak desert, Shah Quli Khalifa was suddenly stricken with colic and passed away (Eskandar Beg Turkman, 2011, 147). The life of Shah Quli Khalifa demonstrates that, in addition to holding the esteemed office of royal seal-keeper in the Safavid court, he was a valiant military leader loyal to the king. Furthermore, the Muraqqa he commissioned testifies to his refined artistic sensibility and patronage of the arts.

Date of the Muraqqa

Concerning the time of compilation and arrangement of the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, two possible chronological frames may be considered based on the available evidence. First, Shah Quli Khalifa was appointed to the office of royal seal-keeper in 939 A.H., a title explicitly mentioned in the preface of the Muraqqa. Since he passed away in 965 A.H., it is plausible that the Muraqqa he sponsored was completed sometime between 939 A.H. and 965 A.H. Second, the earliest signed and dated piece within this Muraqqa is a calligraphic work by Rustam Ali Shahi, dated 945 A.H. The remaining dated folios are all earlier than this year. Thus, it is highly probable that the compilation of the Muraqqa was finalized between 945 A.H., the date of Rustam Ali Shahi's work, and the year of Shah Quli Khalifa's death in 965 A.H.

The Preface of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper)

The preface of the Muraqqa begins with praise of the Creator and the beauty of divine creation manifested through the grace of calligraphy, followed by laudation of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the Commander of the Faithful Ali (AS), and his descendants, and it concludes with a supplication. The main body of the preface, which commences with the phrase «amma baʿd» («now then»), contains several noteworthy points. First, the calligrapher or author of the preface introduces himself as the «narrator of this eloquent account», while identifying Shah Quli Khalifa, the seal-keeper, as the patron and commissioner of this distinguished Muraqqa. He addresses Shah Quli Khalifa with numerous honorific titles and notes that for a long time, he had been intent on gathering a collection of works by the great masters of calligraphy. From the narrator's words, it appears that Shah Quli Khalifa's original intention was limited to assembling calligraphic specimens, without including paintings, miniatures, or drawings. Yet, in the present Muraqqa, we encounter not only calligraphy but also a considerable number of miniatures and designs. Second, the text recounts that when Shah Quli Khalifa was planning to collect the calligraphies, Shah Tahmasp, out of generosity and affection, graciously bestowed upon him several unparalleled folios and paintings and instructed him regarding their arrangement and decoration. Thus, the Muraqqa was adorned and completed, likened to a «shooting star». Moreover, beyond those unmatched contributions, Shah Tahmasp also gifted Shah Quli Khalifa a calligraphic piece of his own hand to embellish this «beautifully inscribed treatise» and «garden of meaning». Because of the later disbinding and irregular rebinding of the folios of the Shah Quli Muraqqa, the Shah Tahmasp specimen, which should have been at the beginning, now appears on folio 64v. The first section of the Muraqqa concludes with a eulogy in verse, expressing gratitude and praise to the Shah. Thereafter, the primary sequence of calligraphic folios and miniatures begins. Upon their completion, the final portion of the preface reappears. In the current state of the manuscript, these two final pages of the preface are located on folios 21v and 27v. Overall, then, this Muraqqa may be divided into three sections: 1. The opening preface; 2. The main body, consisting of calligraphic specimens and miniatures; 3. The concluding preface. A particularly significant point in the closing portion of the preface is the narrator's statement that this Muraqqa «was completed for the library of the exalted, noble in office, preeminent among emirs, supreme deputy of deputies, the illustrious and renowned Amir, Shah Quli Khalifa, the Seal-Keeper» (Fig. 15). This statement demonstrates that Shah Quli Khalifa, in his capacity as 'caliph of the caliphs' and seal-keeper, maintained his own library, for which this Muraqqa was compiled. The concluding section of the preface does not contain any chronogram indicating the date of completion, nor does it mention the name of the scribe. However, the quality of the script, its fluency and eloquence, and the stylistic resemblance to the script of the Khamsa of Shah Tahmasp suggest that the hand responsible for the preface may have been that of Shah Mahmud Nishapuri, whose other calligraphic specimens are also present in this Muraqqa (Figs. 3-6).

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Figs. 3-6. Calligraphic exercises by Shah Mahmud Nishapuri, fol. 6r, fol. 11r, fol. 69r, fol. 75v, Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, no. nekfy01422. Source: Istanbul University Library, n.d.

Text of the Preface of the Shah Quli Khalīfa Seal-Keeper Muraqqa

ای نام تو دیباچهٔ دیوان کمال/ در کنه کمالت نرسد هیچ زوال/ در ساحت عزت و جلالت چو قلم/ سرگشته جهانیان زهی عز و جلال/ حمداً لک یا ذالمجد و المعالی، و لک‌الشکر صاحب‌الکبریاء و المتعالی، زهی از رشح کلک گوهربار دُررنثارت گلستان جهان تازه، و از زمزمهٔ اقلام دلپذیرت دبستان دوران پرآوازه، بحسن خط دلفریب صفحات جمال تو آرایی، و حرف صبر و شکیب از لوح خواطر امامل حال تو زدایی، بخط و خال چو رخ‌آرایی/ از دلم حرف صبر بزدایی/ گشته تن را توان و دل را قوت/ ناسخ نسخ نسخهٔ یاقوت (Fig. 7)، مثلثات اربع که در دفاتر خواطر مثبت است، ثلثی از آثار جود تست، و توقیع‌نامهٔ مهر سپهر خضرایی که در مرقعات ضمایر محققست ریحان ریاض وجود تو، خد شاهد دین را از خط غبار آب روی زیبایی تو دهی، و دیدهٔ عین‌الیقین را بنقط مردمک آثار سرمهٔ بینایی توکشی، مرقع سماوات رقعهٔ از رقاع ارقام تُست، و مصنف موجودات نسخهٔ از نعیم انعام تو. **نظم:** ای موجد این مرقع طرفه رقم/ از کلک تو یک رقم بود لوح و قلم/ بر صفحهٔ کن کلک تو ننهاده قدم/ عالم بوجود ناید از کتم عدم؛ نامهٔ انشاء انسانی که «خلق‌الانسان علمه‌البیان» از کمالات اکرامت نشأیست، «وعلم بالقلم علم‌الانسان مالم یعلم» از تعلیم‌خانهٔ اقلامت تعلیقهٔ، اگر نه نسخهٔ مهرت علاقه شکیبایی گردد، نسخ تعلیق نسخهٔ رعنایی شود و اگر کلک تصویرت (Fig. 8).

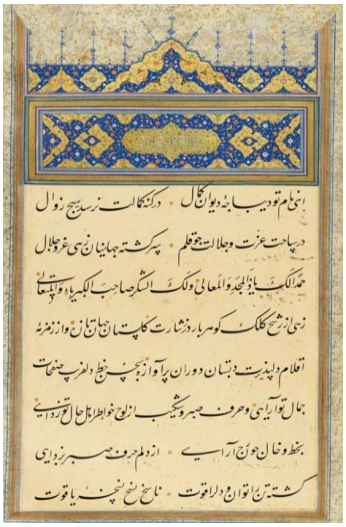


Fig. 7. Opening of the preface of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper). Folio 1v, Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, No. nekfy01422. Source: Istanbul University Library, n.d.

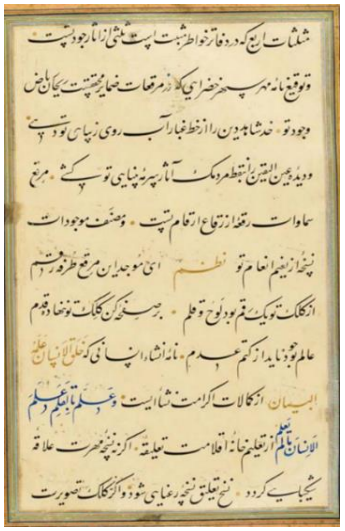


Fig. 8. Preface of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper). Folio 2r, Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, No. nekfy01422. Source: Istanbul University Library, n.d.

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و درود نامعدود بر صدر دیوان‌رسالت و بدر آسمان‌جلالت، مطلع دیوان‌هستی، و فهرست مجموعۀخداپرستی، صاحب‌المجدوالعلی، محمدالمصطفی، و علی‌المرتضی، و بر آل و احفاد امجاد ایشان که سالکان مسالک‌دین و ذاهبان مذاهب‌یقین‌اند، صلی‌الله علیه و آله‌الطیبین، المعصومین‌الهادین‌المهدین الی یوم‌الدین باد. اما بعد؛ چنین گوید راوی این روایت غرا، که آمر تزیین این مرقع‌نامی، و باعث ترتیب این مجموعۀ سامی، عالیحضرت سلطنت‌مآب، حشمت‌مناب، شوکت‌ایاب، ایالت و حکومت‌دثار (Fig. 9)، سعادت و اقبال‌آثار، خلیفه‌الخلفاءالکبار، شاه‌قلی‌خلیفه‌مُهردار، که علی‌الدوام و الاستمرار، خاطر آن عالیحضرت متوجه جمع خطوط که از آثار، کلک گوهربار، استادان روزگار، باشد می‌بود، تا آنکه این صورت بر مرآت ضمیر انور، و آیینۀ مهرگستر، عکس انداخته شعشعۀ آفتاب عنایت، و لمعۀ انوار رحمت‌شاهی ظل‌اللهی، قهرمان الماء و الطین، عون‌الاسلام و المسلمین، ناصب‌رایات‌العدل و الاحسان، قامع بنیان‌الظلم و الطغیان، ناصرالضعفاء و المساکین، ممهد قواعد ملت سیدالمرسلین، مرشدالخلق‌الی‌طریق‌القویم، و مهتدی الی‌صراطٍ‌مستقیم، مقوی‌شریعه غراءِالنبوی، و مشید احکام الزهراءِالمصطفوی، شاه‌تهماسب کز تجلی رای/ رای او راست رای مهرآرای/ مهر در ظل رافتش مشهور/ همچو او مشتهر بظل خدای/ قهر او آتشیست جان افروز (Fig. 10)

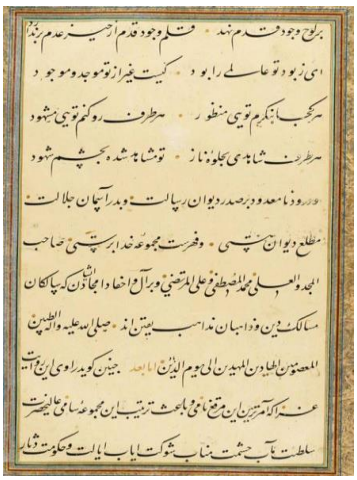


Fig. 9. Preface of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper). Folio 2v, Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, No. nekfy01422. Source: Istanbul University Library, n.d.

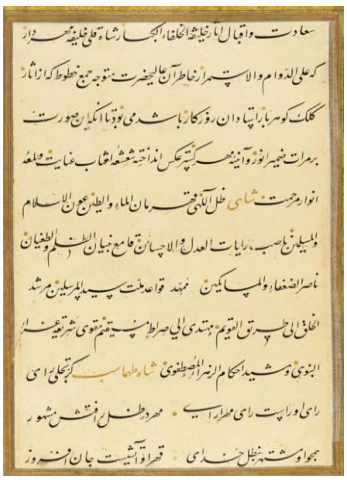


Fig. 10. Preface of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper). Folio 3r, Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, No. nekfy01422. Source: Istanbul University Library, n.d.

/ لطفش آب حیات جان افزای/ عدل او بادپای عالم‌گرد/ حکم او توسن جهان‌پیمای/ مهر از بهر پاس او در چرخ/ چرخ از بهر خدمتش بر پای؛ سلطان‌السادات و النقبا، مربی‌الفضلا و التقیا، خلدالله ملکه و سلطانه، و ابد فی‌الخافقین بره و احسانه، پرتو عاطفت بر ساحت احوال آن عالیحضرت افکنده قطعه و تصویری چند بی‌مانند شفقت نمود و بترتیب آن اشارت فرمود. لاجرم از توجه رای عالم‌آرایش، مرقعی ترتیب و تزیین یافت که مصدق مقال هذا شهاب‌ثاقب است، و مصداق اقوال «ولقد زیناالسماءالدنیا بزینه‌الکواکب»، مصباح خلوت‌سرای انس لمعۀنور اوست و چراغ مجلس‌فروز قدس از تجلی‌حضور او مخدرات حجره‌نظم است که بمشاطگی کلک تقدیر آراسته فلاجرم حوض در تعریف و شروع در توصیف آن متعبیر و متعذر می‌نماید (Fig. 11)، علی‌الخصوص که ورق اول آن گلشن معنی مجلی بزیور جمال از خط این پادشاه خطۀکمال و این ظل‌الله عرصۀ عز و جلال یافته. رواجی کزو یافت تیغ و قلم/ ز رستم نیاید ز یاقوت هم؛ آنکه ایجاد لوح و قلم منوط بوجود کامل اوست، و بنیاد این صحیفۀ زیبا رقم موقوف لطف شامل او؛ نظم: حبذا ای قلم طرفه رقم/ که زدی در ره اقبال قدم/ رقم ظل برخ نور زدی/ مشک بر صفحۀ کافور زدی/ بغبار خط مشکین‌آثار/ بردی از خاطر احباب غبار/ بر سمن سنبل‌تر ریخته‌ای/ سنبل و گل بهم آمیخته‌ای/ دانم این غالیه ساییت از چیست/ گوهرافشانیت از خامۀ کیست/ این شرف از اثر کلک‌شهست/ کش فلک قبۀ از بارگهست (Fig. 12).

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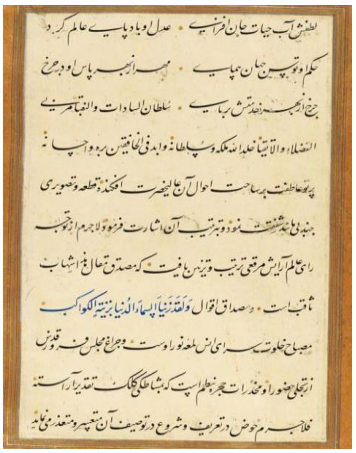


Fig. 11. Preface of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper). Folio 3v, Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, No. nekfy01422. Source: Istanbul University Library, n.d.

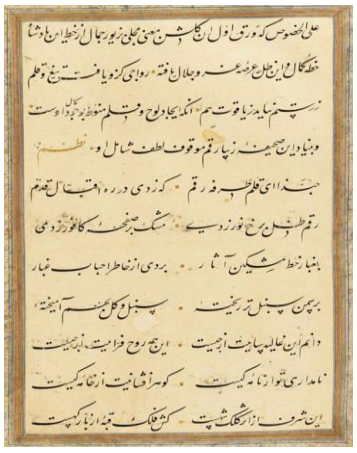


Fig. 12. Preface of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper). Folio 4r, Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, No. nekfy01422. Source: Istanbul University Library, n.d.

شاه دریاکف والاگوهر/ دُرّ بَحرِ هنر و بحر هنر/ شاه بیضا علم عالم‌رای/ رای او رایت گیتی‌آرای/ عدل او سایهٔاقبال فکن/ طایر ظلم ازو بال فکن/ دست او فاتح ابواب کرام/ کف او ضامن ارزاق انام/ شهریاری که بود زیر نگین/ همچو مهرش همهٔ روی زمین/ حد من نیست دعایش گفتن/ گوهر مدح و ثنایش سفتن/ لیک از آنجا که بود حرف انام/ بر دعا نیک بود ختم کلام/ یارب این شاه سپهرآیین را/ شاه با عزت با تمکین را/ هست تا بر ورق چرخ رقم/ رقم هستی این لوح و قلم/ باد در زیر قلم ایامش/ ثبت بر لوحهٔ هستی نامش (Fig. 13). صد شکر که یافت این مرقع اتمام/ وز دولت شاه دین پذیرفت انجام/ تا هست مرقع سپهر از مه و مهر/ منظور نظر مرقعت باد مدام/ تعالی‌الله چه زیبا مرقعی یافته اتمام، و چه رعنا اوراقی مرصعی پذیرفته انجام، که اگر رشک طبقات سبع سموات طباقا گویمش رواست، و اگر غیرت خط جمع فرشته و خیل ملک خوانمش سزا، و چون حسب‌الفرمان پادشاه کامکار عالی‌تبار و خسرو عالیجاه معدلت شعار رافع اعلام عدل و احسان، قامع بنیان ظلم و طغیان، نتیجه‌الایمه المعصومین خلاصه اولاد سیدالمرسلین (Fig. 14).

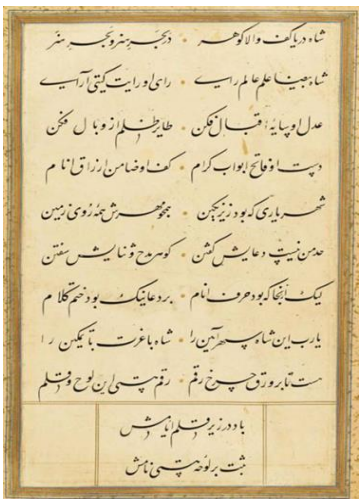


Fig. 13. Preface of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper). Folio 4v, Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, No. nekfy01422. Source: Istanbul University Library, n.d.



Fig. 14. Preface of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper). Folio 21v, Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, No. nekfy01422. Source: Istanbul University Library, n.d.



Fig. 15. Preface of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper). Folio 27v, Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa, No. nekfy01422. Source: Istanbul University Library, n.d.

ای قبلهٔ اقبال جهان خاک درت/ سرمایهٔ مقبلان قبول نظرت/ امروز تویی ساقی بزم توحید/ فردا بکنار حوض کوثر پدرت؛ معین‌الدنیا و الدین ناصرالاسلام و المسلمین؛ شاهی که دین و دنیا دارد باو تفاخر/ سلطان ابوالمظفر طهماسب‌خان بهادر/ خلدالله تعالی ظلال جلال‌سلطنته و عدالته و احسانه علی کافهالانام الی یومالقیام جهت کتابخانهٔ ایالت پناه نصفت دستگاه، عمدهالامرایی، خلیفهالخلفایی، امیر نامدار عالیمقدار، شاهقلی‌خلیفهٔمُهردار بحد اتمام رسید. امید از نظارگیان این بستان آنست که اگر تقصیری یا ترک ترتیبی واقع شده باشد قلم عفو از روی صفا بر صفحهٔ سهو و خطای آن کشند و بشرف قبول موصول گردانند و من‌الله الاجابه و التأیید انه حمیدٌ مجیدٌ (Fig. 15).

Conclusion

Examinations demonstrate that the Shah Tahmasp Muraqqa consists of three sections: The opening preface, the main body containing calligraphic pieces and paintings, and the closing portion of the preface. The style and manner of writing in the preface closely resemble the calligraphy of Shah Mahmud Nishapuri in the extant pieces of this Muraqqa as well as in the Khamsa of Shah Tahmasp. All folios are framed with regular ruling in colored bands. On the first folio of the Muraqqa appears an illuminated shamsa with inscriptions and headpieces (Sar-Toraj), though the inner text has been effaced, leaving only the phrase «برسم کتبخانه» (According to library tradition) legible. At the beginning of the preface, an illuminated frontispiece is placed. The opening part of the preface spans folios 1r to 4v, while its concluding section appears on folios 21v and 27v. According to the text of the preface, this Muraqqa was compiled and ornamented for the library of Shah Quli Khalifa Muhrdar (the Seal-Keeper) at the court of Shah Tahmasp. Given that Shah Quli Khalifa held the office of seal-keeper between 939 and 965 A.H., the compilation of this Muraqqa should be situated within this period, more specifically between 945 and 965 A.H., based on the dated piece by Rustam Ali from 945 A.H., which represents the latest recorded work during Shah Quli's tenure. The signatures (raqams) of the artists confirm that the works in this Muraqqa belong to the Inju, Ilkhanid, Jalayirid, Timurid, and Safavid periods. The oldest dated piece is attributed to Yahya al-Jamali al-Sufī from the Inju period, written in Shiraz in 746 A.H., while the latest is by Rustam Ali, dated 945 A.H. The Muraqqa further contains miniatures from the «Kalia and Dimna» of Sultan Uways Jalayir, unfinished folios from the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, single-page miniatures by Shah Tahmasp himself, Qadimi Musavvir, and Ustad Haydar Musavvir, as well as four polychrome illuminated pieces signed by Shah Ismail I. In total, works by thirty-three calligraphers and two painters have been identified through their signatures within this compilation. Each folio of the Muraqqa measures 476×340 mm, with margins decorated in cloud-patterned (abrī) and gold-sprinkled (zar-afshan) techniques. Another significant aspect of this Muraqqa is the presence of the preface to the Amir Alishir Navai Muraqqa, penned in Shikasta-Ttaliq by Shihab al-Din Abd Allah ibn Muhammad Morvarid in 897 A.H., as well as a treatise on physiognomy (ʿilm al-qiyāfa) authored by Muhammad Abrishami Mashhadi in 920 A.H.

Author Contributions

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Conflict of Interest

The author (s) declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest related to this research, in writing, and publication of this article

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Appendix

1. https://harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/352094
2. https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/113138
3. https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc95079c
4. https://digital-beta.staatsbibliothek berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN71774034X&PHYSID=PHYS_0018&view=overview-info

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