
Bihzad's Lost Album



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Abstract

This article¹ suggests that some works in the *muraqqa'* of Bahram Mirza (Shah Tahmasp's brother) in 951/1544-45 (Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Library, H. 2154) may have come from the well-known album compiled and decorated by Bihzad, from which only the preface by Khwandamir remains. Dust Muhammad (the calligrapher) thus included the works of Bihzad that had previously been part of Bihzad's album, together with their captions, in Bahram Mirza's *muraqqa'*. In working on his album, Dust Muhammad followed the style of Bihzad, adding the inscriptions to the unsigned works in the same handwriting in similarly decorated panels. It suggests that Bahram Mirza's *muraqqa'* follows the same arrangement as that compiled earlier by Bihzad, which was probably one of Bihzad's most important works of the Safavid period when he worked in the court workshop of Shah Tahmasp in Tabriz.

Keywords: Bahram Mirza; Bihzad; Persian Painting

'The marvel of the age', 'the rarity of the world', and 'peerless' are the epithets which contemporary and later writers added in their treatises, biographies, and histories to the name of Kamal ad-Din Bihzad, the most famous painter in the royal workshop of the Timurid ruler Sultan Husayn Bayqara (1468–1506), who governed Khurasan from Herat. Evidently, they saw in the works of Bihzad the fullest embodiment of the ideals and the aesthetic vision that had been formed in the second half of the fifteenth century in Herat, then the most important centre for the art of the book in the eastern realm of the Islamic world. To use Barbara Brend's words, the work of the painter Bihzad "made such a profound impression upon his contemporaries that his name became a byword as the supreme Persian painter".²

More than a hundred years ago, Bihzad's works attracted the interest of European scholars, and since then his artistic legacy has been thoroughly studied, generating a substantial

¹A translation from an original article published in the Transactions of the State Hermitage Museum in Russia, 2021. A. Adamova, 'Ob al'bome (*muraqqa'*) Behzada' (On the album (*muraqqa'*) by Bihzad), Lukonin (1932–1984) Memorial Volume, *Transactions of the State Hermitage* (St Petersburg, 2021), pp. 209–225.

²B. Brend, *Islamic Art* (London, 1991), p. 145.

corpus of literature on his life and work.³ His name is linked with some of the radical changes that emerged in the painting of Herat between 1470 and the 1480s. The earlier Timurid imperial vision with its rigid formality, which had dominated the arts in the workshops of Sultan Shahrukh (r. 1405–47) and of his son Baysunghur (1397–1433), was rejected.⁴ The most notable new features in later Timurid painting, usually linked to Bihzad, are an increased interest in daily activities, the inclusion in compositions of various scenes from everyday life, and the individualisation of human figures. Bihzad's manner of painting and that of his followers became more painterly, with colours modulated with half-tones, and the palette became warmer.

Bihzad was the most brilliant representative of the new Herati painting style in the late fifteenth century, but he was not alone as his pupils worked in a similar mode. As a result, it is often difficult to distinguish between his works and those of other talented masters in the royal workshop, such as the famous Qasim 'Ali.⁵ Bihzad's compositions (either single figures and motifs or whole compositions) were often copied by the master painters working in Bukhara or in India.⁶ Consequently, any study of Bihzad's career necessitated the identification of his original works from the many paintings and drawings that have been inscribed with his name.

The references to Bihzad in literary sources are quite confusing, and many facts of his biography, including the dates of his birth and death, remain a subject of dispute. He was born in Herat somewhere in the middle of the fifteenth century, *circa* 1455, and he died in Tabriz in 942/1535–36, according to the chronogram in Dust Muhammad's Preface in the Bahram Mirza *muraqqa'* (Topkapı Palace Library, Istanbul, H. 2154).⁷ He is thought to have died sometime in his late seventies and spent most of his long life in Herat; he was there when the Uzbek ruler Shaybani Khan took the city in 1506, and when the Uzbeks were driven from Herat in 1510 by Shah Isma'il I (r. 1501–24), the founder of the Safavid dynasty. In 1522, Bihzad, together with the Safavid prince Tahmasp, moved to Tabriz, the Safavid capital,⁸ where Bihzad was appointed the head of the *kitabkhana* (royal library and scriptorium) by Shah Isma'il I, a post Bihzad held until his death.⁹

³R. Ettinghausen, 'Bihzad, Kamal al-Din', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edn, Vol. 1 (1986), pp. 1211–1214; T. Lentz, 'Changing worlds: Bihzad and the New Painting', in *Persian Masters. Five Centuries*, (ed) S. Canby, (Mumbai, 1990), pp. 39–54; P. Soucek, 'Behzad. Kamal al-Din', *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. IV (2000), pp. 114–116; D. Roxburgh, 'Kamal al-Din Bihzad and authorship in Persianate painting', *Muqamas* 17 (2000), pp. 119–146.

⁴T. Lentz and G. D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (Los Angeles, 1989), p. 297.

⁵M. L. Swietochowski, 'The School of Herat from 1450 to 1506', in *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia, 14th–16th Centuries*, (ed) Basil Gray (Boulder, CO, 1979), pp. 179–214.

⁶M. Ashrafi, *Behzad i razvitiye buharskoy shkoly miniatiury XVI veka* (Bihzad and the Development of the School of Miniature Painting in Bukhara in the 16th Century) (Dushanbe, 1987); Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, pp. 303–327.

⁷See C. Adle, 'Les Artistes nommés Dust Mohammad au XVI siècle', *Studia Iranica* (1993), fasc. 2, p. 240, n. 83: "born ca. 1465"; A. Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts* (New York, 1992), p. 95: "ca. 1467"; the date of his death is also not generally agreed.

⁸In 1516, Tahmasp, then two years old, was appointed the governor of Khurasan by Shah Isma'il and sent to Herat.

⁹O. Akimushkin, 'Zametki k biografii Kamal ad Dina Behzada' (Notes on the biography of Kemal al-Din Behzad), *Pismennyye pamiatniki i problemy istorii kultury narodov Vostoka* (Written Sources and Problems of History of Peoples of the East) (Moscow, 1979), XIV, 1, pp. 9–15, reprinted in *Srednevekovnyy Iran, Kultura, istoria, philologia* (Medieval Iran, Culture, History and Philology) (St Petersburg, 2004), pp. 351–367. But see in E. Bahari, *Bihzad*,

It is generally agreed that Bihzad's best work from the Timurid period are the paintings in the *Bustan* of Sa'di completed for Sultan Husayn Mirza in Herat in Rajab 893/June 1488 (Cairo, Dar al-Kutub, Adab Farisi 22).¹⁰ Bihzad's signature on four illustrations in this manuscript are generally regarded as genuine and accepted as authentic.¹¹ Scholars have noted in the illustrations of the *Bustan* the originality of composition, the jewel-like colours, the particular attention to detail, and, as already mentioned, the lively expression in his treatment of subjects, an interest in everyday life, and the individualisation of the figures. The personages in these and other works by Bihzad are depicted much more realistically than in earlier paintings; they are no longer types, but individuals, with some of them appearing as if drawn from life. These new tendencies in the art of Herat of the later fifteenth century created an environment conducive to the rapid development of the portrait genre.

When Bihzad created the illustrations for the 1488 *Bustan* he was about 30 years old. His authorship of many works created in Herat before and after the *Bustan* remains subject to dispute, as the signatures are not as reliable as those found on the paintings in the *Bustan*.

Little is known of Bihzad's work during the Safavid period.¹² There is no agreement on his works done in Herat after Shah Isma'il I took the city or in Tabriz under the second Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524–76). In the paintings of this period ascribed to Bihzad, scholars have detected signs of fatigue and a decline in his artistic ability. They suggest that because of his old age, he did not work as intensely as before and that he probably only supervised the process of creating illustrated manuscripts in the court workshop.¹³ Dickson and Welch find the works Bihzad created in Tabriz less sophisticated than those done for Sultan Husayn in Herat, an indication, as Akimushkin has suggested, that illustrated manuscripts were only produced under his guidance. One of these works, in their opinion, is the 931/1524–25 *Guy va Chowgān* of 'Arifi, copied by Shah Tahmasp, then 11 years old, with 19 miniatures by different masters of the royal *kitabkhana*.¹⁴

Also debatable are many other questions about Bihzad's activity after he moved to Tabriz, the city where, in the course of the two preceding centuries, its own school of painting had developed. When Bihzad arrived, Sultan Muhammad, an outstanding master with his own particular style, which differed greatly from that found in Herat, was already working in the royal *kitabkhana*. It is not clear what kind of changes occurred in Bihzad's style and what themes became most important in his works at the time. Thus, any new evidence casting light on the artist's life and activity in this period is of importance.

Master of Persian Painting (London, 1996), p. 188 that Bihzad went to Tabriz in 1529, when the Uzbeks again captured Herat.

¹⁰Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, cat. no. 146; L. Balafrej, *The Making of the Artist in Late Timurid Painting* (Edinburgh, 2019).

¹¹Roxburgh, 'Kamal al-Din Bihzad and authorship in Persianate painting', n. 6 on p. 141; Balafrej, *The Making of the Artist in Late Timurid Painting*, pp. 185–187, figs. 5.1–5.4.

¹²M. S. Simpson, 'Bihzad's second career at the Safavid Court', *Collected Essays in the International Congress Honoring Kamal al Din Bihzad*, (ed.) Behnam Sadri (Tehran, 2005) pp. 69–80.

¹³O. Akimushkin, 'O pridvornoy kitabhane Sefevida Tahmasba I v Tabriz'e' (On the Court *Kitabkhana* of the Safavid Tahmasp in Tabriz), *Srednevekovyy Vostok, istoria, kultura, istochnikovedenie* (The Medieval East: History, Culture, Sources) (Moscow, 1980), pp. 5–19, reprinted in *Srednevekovyy Iran, Kultura, istoria, philologia*, pp. 351–367.

¹⁴Saint Petersburg, Russian National Library, Dorn 441: see M. B. Dickson and S. C. Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), Vol. 1, p. 240 and notes 13, 14; O.V. Vasilyeva, *A String of Pearls: Iranian Fine Books from the 14th to the 17th century in the National Library of Russia Collections* (St Petersburg, 2008), pp. 65–71; English translation on pp. 121–122.

The album which Bihzad compiled and decorated, from which only the preface by Khwandamir is preserved, may, in my opinion, be one of Bihzad's main works completed during the Safavid phase of his career. I also hope to show that some works from the album assembled by Bihzad were later reused in that compiled by Dust Muhammad in 1544–45 for the Safavid prince Bahram Mirza, Shah Tahmasp's brother (Topkapı Palace Library, H. 2154), and that the general design of Bihzad's album may have served as the model for Bahram Mirza's *muraqqa*'.

Scholars typically try to identify Bihzad's work through some of its essential elements, such as a distinct palette, methods of constructing compositions, or treatment of space.¹⁵ As is well known, the practice of repetition of the works by great masters included entire compositions and single figures, in a recognised style, making the identification of a specific artist problematic.¹⁶ Also, the examination of a particular style of brushwork is made particularly difficult as opaque colours were applied as a solid layer after which the whole surface was polished, according to the traditional techniques employed in Persian miniature painting.¹⁷ Drawings and sketches are particularly important in seeking attribution as the hand of the individual artist is especially distinct. However, Bihzad's authorship of many graphic works bearing attributions to him has only been recently identified, because the line of variable thickness in drawings was thought to have appeared no earlier than the mid-sixteenth century.

Many line drawings and preparatory sketches for manuscript illustration are preserved among the works of art in Persian albums, the earliest of which date from the fifteenth century. Three albums of the early 1400s, all assembled in Herat under the Timurids, and four albums of the middle 1500s made for the members of the Safavid royal house have been studied and described by David Roxburgh in two important monographs.¹⁸ One publication discusses the prefaces to the albums, while the second describes their content and compositional themes. Both studies are essential references for the present article.

Numerous drawings, which illustrate various working methods of masters from the first half of the fifteenth century, are contained in the album assembled for the Timurid prince Baysunghur (Topkapı Palace Library, H. 2152)¹⁹ and in the Diez albums in Berlin, which closely relate to H. 2152.²⁰ Two other famous Istanbul albums in the Topkapı Palace Library, H. 2153 and H. 2160, assembled in Tabriz sometime during the first half of the sixteenth century, include mainly the works of local masters of the fourteenth and fifteenth

¹⁵A. Adamova, 'The repetition of compositions and the problem of the identification of artists in Persian painting', *The Art and Archaeology of Ancient Persia*, (eds) V. Sarkhosh Curtis, R. Hillenbrand and J. M. Rogers (London; New York, 1998), pp. 175–181. See, for example, Sh. Shukurov, *Horasan: territiriya iskusstva* (Khurasan: An Artistic Land) (Moscow, 2016), pp. 135–180.

¹⁶Adamova, 'The repetition of compositions and the problem of the identification of artists in Persian painting', pp. 175–181.

¹⁷D. Roxburgh, 'Disorderly conduct? F. R. Martin and the Bahram Mirza Album', *Muqarnas* 15 (1998), pp. 32–57; Roxburgh, 'Kamal al-Din Bihzad and authorship in Persianate painting', pp. 124–125.

¹⁸D. Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image. The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth Century Iran* (Leiden, 2001); D. Roxburgh, *The Persian Album 1400–1600. From Dispersal to Collection* (New Haven and London, 2005).

¹⁹T. Lentz, 'Painting at Herat under Baysunghur ibn Shahrukh', (unpublished PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1985), pp. 154–170; Roxburgh, *The Persian Album 1400–1600*, pp. 83–106.

²⁰D. Roxburgh, 'Heinrich Friedrich von Diez and his eponymous albums: Mss. Diez A. Fols.70–74', *Muqarnas* 12 (1995), pp. 112–136. See also J. Gonnella, F. Weis and C. Rauch (eds), *The Diez Albums, Contexts and Contents* (Leiden, 2007).

centuries. They also contain some materials from Baysunghur's *kitabkhana* and works of Chinese and European masters.²¹ There are no works that are attributed to Bihzad in these two albums.

Many works by Bihzad are, however, included in the aforementioned album that the artist himself compiled and decorated, as attested by Khvandamir in the album preface. It is also known that Bihzad's works formed part of the *muraqqa'* compiled in Mashhad for the Safavid prince Ibrahim Mirza (1540–77). This album was destroyed by Ibrahim Mirza's wife so that this precious collection would not fall into the hands of Shah Isma'il II, who ordered her husband's death.²² Therefore, Bahram Mirza's *muraqqa'* (Topkapı Palace Library, H. 2154), compiled in 1544–45, becomes all the more important. According to Roxburgh, in its original form the *muraqqa'* contained no fewer than 12 single-sheet paintings and drawings ascribed to Bihzad. As convincingly shown by Roxburgh, six of these works, originally mounted on two album folios, were extracted from the album in the early twentieth century and are now dispersed among museum and private collections.²³ Some of the dispersed paintings and drawings ascribed to Bihzad were published in 1912 by Martin,²⁴ the Swedish attaché in Turkey, who identified them as coming from the so-called Bellini album, which he had acquired in Istanbul.²⁵ Somewhat later, the works passed from Martin to the well-known collector Sakisian, and were again published by him in 1929 and then sold.²⁶ Collectors and dealers have willingly accepted the attributions to Bihzad, written on the works acquired by Martin in Istanbul. Noted specialists on Persian painting, such as Stchoukine, Kühnel, and Gray, however, believed that the illuminated captions bearing attributions were later additions and rejected Bihzad's authorship.²⁷ Likewise, the attributions on the remaining works in the Topkapı album H. 2154, shown in the exhibition of Persian miniature painting in London in 1931, were not recognised, but were attributed in the exhibition catalogue to mid-sixteenth century Bukhara.²⁸ In 1981, Dickson and Welch noted that the attributions to Bihzad on the paintings, directly or indirectly point to Bihzad's authorship. They also suggested that some of the works acquired by Martin could have come from H. 2154, adding that the attributions to Bihzad on the works still in the album deserved further attention.²⁹ Roxburgh's article of 1998 left no doubt that many of the works from the supposed Bellini album were originally mounted on folios extracted from H. 2154.³⁰

²¹E. Grube and E. Sims (eds), *Islamic Art. An Annual Dedicated to the Art and Culture of the Muslim World*, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1981).

²²V. Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters. A Treatise by Qadi Ahmed, Son of Mir-munshi (circa A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606)* (Washington, 1959), pp. 183–184.

²³Roxburgh, 'Disorderly conduct?'

²⁴F. R. Martin, *The Miniature Painting and the Painters of Persia, India and Turkey from the 8th to the 18th century* (London, 1912).

²⁵Named so because one of the paintings in the album was believed to have been created by Gentile Bellini. The portion of the album is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Roxburgh, 'Disorderly conduct?', n. 4, p. 54.

²⁶A. Sakisian, *La miniature persan du XIIe au XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1929).

²⁷Stchoukine found the albums compiled and the attributions added in the eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. I. Stchoukine, *Les peintures des manuscrits safavids de 1502 a 1587* (Paris, 1959), p. 80, no. 34.

²⁸L. Binyon, J. V. S. Wilkinson and B. Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting* (Oxford, 1933), p. 100, cat. no. 89.

²⁹Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, Vol. 1, pp. 118, 193 and n. 5 on pp. 246–247.

³⁰Roxburgh, 'Disorderly conduct?', pp. 32–57.

The H. 2154 album, consisting of 149 folios, each measuring 48.4 x 34.5 cm, contains specimens of calligraphy, paintings, and drawings dating from the fourteenth century until 1544–45, when the album was compiled by Dust Muhammad.³¹ The artist also composed the album's preface, essentially a history of art, which included a section dedicated to painting. Two earlier album prefaces survive today, but the albums for which they were composed are now lost. The first of these prefaces was written in 1491–92 by Murvarid (d. 1516) for the album of Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i.³² The second, undated, is by Khvandamir (circa 1475–1535), and was, as previously noted, meant for the album compiled and decorated by Bihzad.³³ The album with the preface by Murvarid seems to have been composed exclusively of calligraphic specimens.³⁴ By contrast the Bihzad album included calligraphy, paintings, and drawings, as the prefatory text clearly reveals. Khvandamir incorporated the preface for the Bihzad album into his manual (*insha'*) the *Nama-yi nami*, in 1519 or in 1522–23, while the preface, as Roxburgh suggests, was written in Herat during the last years of Sultan Husayn Mirza's rule, that is, before 1506.³⁵ The possible date of the preface, as well as of the album, will be discussed later.

In his preface, written in both prose and verse,³⁶ Khvandamir enthusiastically praises the album of fine specimens of calligraphy and the paintings by famous masters, comparing the album to “a sea containing pearls”.³⁷ Among the painters, Khvandamir writes, is the compiler and the arranger of the pages of this album, “the producer of wonderful forms”, “the wonder of the age” Master (*Ustad*) Kamal ad-Din Bihzad.³⁸ The preface does not say for whom the album was produced, nor does it elaborate on the nature of the works in the album by Bihzad. While there have been some scholarly suggestions that the folios of this album, probably once damaged and disjointed, were reincorporated into later sixteenth-century albums,³⁹ to my knowledge, no solid evidence has been forthcoming. There are, however, some grounds to suggest that a few works originally in the Bihzad album reappear in Bahram Mirza's *muraqqa'* of 1544–45 (H. 2154).

Dust Muhammad tells us that one day Bahram Mirza ordered him—“this poor slave, miserable speck of dust, distracted sinner, Dust Muhammad the Scribe”—to compile for his library “a *muraqqa'* where the dispersed folios of the past and present masters be brought from the region of dispersal into the realm of collectedness”.⁴⁰ It had been long believed that the compiler of that album, H. 2154, and the author of the preface, who also wrote the attributions in illuminated panels, was the painter Dust Muhammad, whose signed works are well-known to Persian painting specialists. A few of them appear in the Bahram

³¹Roxburgh, *The Persian Album 1400–1600*, pp. 245–307.

³²Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, pp. 22, 89–92.

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 92–93; see also p. 24 about the possible authorship of Amini for this preface.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 91, n. 35.

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 24–26; Roxburgh, *The Persian Album 1400–1600*, p. 250.

³⁶See translation into English: Sir Thomas Arnold, *Painting in Islam* (Oxford, 1928; reprinted Mineola, NY, 1965), pp. 34–37; Bahari, *Bihzad, Master of Persian Painting*, pp. 181–184.

³⁷Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, p. 93.

³⁸Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, pp. 34–37.

³⁹Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, p. 55; A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Le Chant du monde. L'art de l'Iran safavide, 1501–1736* (Paris, 2007), p. 52.

⁴⁰Wheeler Thackston, *A Century of Princes: Sources on Timurid History and Art* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), p. 338; Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, p. 55.

Mirza album.⁴¹ It was Soudavar who suggested that the descriptive captions on the works of Dust Muhammad in the Bahram Mirza album, such as “an excellent work by Master (*Ustad*) Dust”, are not likely to have been written by the painter himself, but more likely, he writes, by his contemporary and namesake, the calligrapher Dust Muhammad.⁴² In fact, the phrasing contrasts with the typically modest and self-deprecating signatures of Persian artists. Adle developed the hypothesis that the painter Dust Muhammad and the calligrapher were two different people, showing convincingly that the compiler of the album was the calligrapher Dust Muhammad ibn Sulayman, whose main achievement was the Bahram Mirza album. He personally copied into the album the text of the preface he composed (H. 2154, folios 86–176), and he wrote the names of artists in gold *nasta'liq* in ornamental panels. As for the painter Dust Muhammad, he was Bihzad's pupil and moved with him to Tabriz, where he participated in the illustration of the *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp. In the 1530s, following his teacher's death, he left Iran for India.⁴³

One can only wonder why a similar approach has not been employed when considering the descriptive captions on the works of Bihzad in the same album. Two works removed from H. 2154,⁴⁴ now in the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto and in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, feature the inscription “*amal al-'abd Bihzad*” (work of the slave Bihzad), which cannot be Dust Muhammad's attributions. They would have been phrased in such a way only if written by the painter himself. As previously mentioned, these attributions to Bihzad were once thought to be false and not taken into consideration until the late twentieth century. Now, thanks to Roxburgh's discovery that there can be no doubt that the works originally belonged to H. 2154, and that the appearance of the inscriptions on them at the time of the compilation of the album can be confirmed, the formula of the attribution, which contrasts so markedly with accepted norms, needs explanation. As mentioned above, the signature *amal al-'abd Bihzad* appears on the four illustrations in the 1488 *Bustan*, the authenticity of which is generally recognised.

The calligrapher Dust Muhammad moved from Herat to Tabriz in 1549. There he met neither Bihzad, who died in 1536, nor the painter Dust Muhammad, who left for India after Bihzad's death. Undoubtedly, he was very familiar with the works of both artists, so Dust Muhammad's attributions in the Bahram Mirza *muraqqa'*, compiled only eight years after Bihzad's death, deserve recognition and may be taken as documentary data. Both in the preface and in the attributions, Dust Muhammad always added the honorific *Ustad* (Master) or *Mawlana* (Our Lord) or some other expression of respect to the names of the painters, including that of the painter Dust Muhammad. The same holds true for the works of Bihzad, those preserved in the album and those extracted from it—with two exceptions.⁴⁵

One such extracted work is a small line drawing depicting two lynx, two antelopes, and a tree in the Aga Khan Museum collection in Toronto (Figure 1). The preserved fragments of the original frame with gold-sprinkled margins and the recognisable illuminated panel with

⁴¹Adle, ‘Les Artistes nommés Dust Mohammad au XVI siècle’, pp. 263–269.

⁴²Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, n. 74 on p. 259.

⁴³Adle, ‘Les Artistes nommés Dust Mohammad au XVI siècle’, pp. 262–263.

⁴⁴Roxburgh, ‘Disorderly conduct?’, p. 49, nos. 4, 5, figs. 7, 9.

⁴⁵Six paintings and drawings are preserved in the album, six are now in various collections; see Roxburgh, ‘Disorderly conduct?’, pp. 34–41, Appendix A, B.

an inscription above the image leave no doubt that the drawing belonged to H. 2154.⁴⁶ The inscription in gold *nasta'liq*, in clouds against a blue background with polychrome flowers, reads: *naql az kar-i mawlana vali savvarahu al-'abd bihzad* (copied from the work of *Mawlana Vali*, executed by the slave Bihzad). The question arises immediately: why would Dust Muhammad, who always added an honorific title to the artist's name in all his attributions, not follow the same rule here? In my opinion, only Bihzad himself could present his work in this way, at the same time paying respectful tribute to his predecessor Vali, who worked two generations earlier, by using the title *Mawlana*. The ascription would be quite natural and logical if the drawing had been in the album compiled and decorated by Bihzad. We may then propose that some works, previously in the Bihzad album, together with the ornamental panels bearing attributions, were included in the Bahram Mirza *muraqqa'*. It is probable that, while working on his album, Dust Muhammad followed the style of the album decorated by Bihzad, writing the attributions on the unsigned works in the same handwriting in similarly illuminated panels. There are no such panels in any other known sixteenth-century albums. They clearly follow the style of the headings (*unwān*) in the illuminated manuscripts, where the titles of the chapters are often written "in clouds" on coloured backgrounds decorated with polychrome flowers.⁴⁷ It is not surprising that Dust Muhammad copied this decorative element, and probably many others, from the Bihzad album, and it may be taken as a sign of respect to the recently deceased painter and of admiration for his album of which evidently only fragments survived. This is not a unique case of such repetition. Dust Muhammad tells us in the preface to the Bahram Mirza album that Prince Baysunghur ordered artists who had come from Tabriz to produce a *jung* in exactly the same format and size, and with the same scenes, as had been prepared earlier for Sultan Ahmad Jalayir.⁴⁸ Of equal interest is the similarity between the album with specimens of calligraphy from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries (Topkapı Palace Library, B. 410), composed, along with H. 2154, for Bahram Mirza a few years earlier (after 1537), and that assembled for Baysunghur in Herat between 1427 and 1433 (Topkapı Palace Library, H. 2310). As demonstrated by Roxburgh, B. 410 imitates the arrangement of the earlier one and even its illumination repeats its ornamental motifs.⁴⁹

The ink drawing "Two Lynx, Two Antelopes and A Tree" (Figure 1) imitates the work of Vali who, according to Dust Muhammad, was the teacher of Mirak *naqqash*, Bihzad's father and teacher.⁵⁰ Some of the drawing's motifs, as well as their treatment, show a relationship to Chinese models, as do many other drawings in H. 2154, confirming the interest of Persian artists of the fifteenth century in the works of Chinese masters.⁵¹ The tree with a twisted trunk and perforated rock are Chinese motifs often found in Persian art of this time. Similar

⁴⁶Roxburgh, 'Disorderly conduct?', p. 49, no. 4; see also Filiz Çakir Phillip, *Enchanted Lines. Drawings from the Aga Khan Museum Collection* (London, 2014), pp. 22–23, cat. 3.

⁴⁷It is interesting that Dickson and Welch use the word *unwān* to describe the panels that contain the artists' names in H. 2154, Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, vol. 1, n. 5 on pp. 245–247.

⁴⁸Thackston, *A Century of Princes*, p. 346.

⁴⁹D. Roxburgh, 'Bahram Mirza and his collections', in *Safavid Art and Architecture*, (ed.) Sheila Canby (London, 2002), pp. 39–40.

⁵⁰The black-and-white drawing (*qalam-i siyahī*) in H. 2154, f.83v is ascribed to *Ustad Mirak naqqash ustad-i Ustad Bihzad* (the teacher of the Master Bihzad), see Roxburgh, *The Persian Album*, p. 285.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, pp. 295–301.



Figure 1. “Two Lynx, Two Antelopes and A Tree”. Source: Toronto, the Aga Khan Museum collection, AKM95, 6.7 x 12.2 cm.

gnarled trees with large leaves, as well as the lynx on Bihzad’s drawing, repeat the elements of the drawing on folio 44a in Istanbul album H. 2153, representing a lion devouring a stag.⁵² The lynx perched on the rock is almost an exact copy; the other, with head turned back, is a variant of the prototype. However, unlike the drawing in H. 2153, where the landscape and the animals meld into one another to form a unified picture, there is no connection between different elements in Bihzad’s work. The perforated outlines of the antelope indicate the use of pouncing. The two antelopes are depicted in similar poses, each scratching its ear, as in the scenes of Bahram Gur hunting. This is a practice drawing or exercise, indicated by the word *naql* in the inscription, where the motifs and the drawing technique of Vali are studied. The drawing from H. 2153, which served as a model for Bihzad, has no signature, but copied by Bihzad it can certainly be attributed to Vali, as many other drawings in the same style are found in H. 2153.⁵³

The date of 1480–90, usually suggested for “Two Lynx, Two Antelopes and A Tree”, is therefore likely too late.⁵⁴ This is, in my opinion, the earliest of the known works by Bihzad, created when he was a young boy attentively studying the works by old masters under the guidance of Mirak *naqqash*, the head of Sultan Husayn’s *kitabkhana*. The drawing shows Bihzad’s talent, but it is unlikely that it was executed between 1480 and the 1490s given that the 1488 *Bustan* reveals his artistic individuality and genius.

⁵²B. Karamağaralı, *Muhammad Siyah Kalem’e atfedilen minyaturler* (Ankara, 1984), fig. 139, il. 131.

⁵³Karamağaralı, *Muhammad Siyah Kalem’e atfedilen minyaturler*, fig. 149; two manuscript paintings by Vali mounted in H. 2154 on f.131v; see Roxburgh, *The Persian Album*, fig. 160 on p. 290.

⁵⁴A. Welch, *Collection of Islamic Art: Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan* (Geneva, 1972–78), Vol. 3, pp. 64–65: “ca. 1495”; Sheila Canby, *Princes, Poets and Paladins: Islamic and Indian Paintings from the Collection of Prince and Princess Sadruddin Aga Khan* (London, 1998), p. 41: “ca. 1485”; Roxburgh, *The Persian Album*, p. 285, fig. 153: “ca. 1480–1536”; Phillip, *Enchanted Lines*, cat. 3: “ca. 1485”.

The second work ascribed in the illuminated panel *al-'abd Bihzad*, and thus probably previously part of the album assembled by Bihzad, is the portrait of the Uzbek ruler Muhammad Shaybani Khan (r. 1500–10) (Figure 2).⁵⁵

As shown by Roxburgh, the miniature was originally mounted on the folio from the Bahram Mirza album together with “Two Lynx, Two Antelopes” and some other works.⁵⁶ The inscription in the panel to the right of the figure reads: “portrait (*sūrah*) of Shaybak Khan”. Scholars have agreed with the identification of the person represented but many rejected the authorship of Bihzad. As explained by Grube, the form of “signing” the painting in such a conspicuous way would rather speak against than for the correctness of the attribution, agreeing at the same time that most probably the miniature was “a product of the Herat school of the early sixteenth century”.⁵⁷ The miniature was often attributed to the mid-sixteenth century and to a pupil of Bihzad or a follower of his style who worked in Bukhara, the Shaybanid capital.⁵⁸ In the recent literature, the date 1507–10 has been assigned to the portrait, the years Shaybani Khan governed in the city he conquered.⁵⁹

The dates 1519 and 1523–24 have been proposed for the compilation of *Nama-yi name*, which, as previously mentioned, includes Khvandamir's preface for the Bihzad album.⁶⁰ When the preface might have been written and the album assembled remains problematic. If the hypothesis that the portrait of Shaybani Khan comes from Bihzad's album is correct, it points to a date after 1510–11 for the album's creation and to the Safavid period. The poet Hatifi, on the miniature from H. 2154 ascribed to Ustad Bihzad (Toronto, Aga Khan Museum, AKM160)⁶¹ (Figure 3), wears the Safavid turban with a long red baton, indicating that it was painted after Shah Isma'il I's conquest of Herat in 1511.

Some other works in H. 2154 were probably also originally part of the album assembled by Bihzad. One such example is “A Dromedary and Its Keeper”, executed in opaque pigments and gold on plain paper ground (Washington DC, Freer Gallery of Art) (Figure 4).⁶²

In this painting Bihzad's name appears twice, in two similarly illuminated panels above the image. This is unusual, unless the inscription on the right—*savvarahu Bihzad* (Bihzad drew this)—is original and was preserved since its execution in the Bihzad album, while the one on the left that reads “outstanding work (*kar-e a'li*) of Master Bihzad” was added by Dust Muhammad.

If the tentative suggestion about the close ties of the two albums, one compiled and decorated by Bihzad for an unknown patron sometime after 1510–11, and the other done by

⁵⁵Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, cat. no. 136; Roxburgh, ‘Disorderly conduct?’, p. 49, no. 5.

⁵⁶See the reconstruction of the folio in Roxburgh, ‘Disorderly conduct?’, p. 34, fig. 1; see also Phillip, *Enchanted Lines*, p. 23.

⁵⁷E. Grube, *Muslim Miniature Painting from the XIII to XIX Century from Collections in the United States and Canada* (Venice, 1962), p. 75.

⁵⁸I. Stchoukine, *Les peintures des manuscrits timurides* (Paris, 1954), pp. 84–86; Basil Gray, ‘Herat under the Timurid Sultan, Husayn Bayqara’, *Marg* XXX (March 1977), p. 27; Ashrafi, ‘Behzad i razvitiye buharskoy shkoly miniatury XVI veka’, p. 103.

⁵⁹Bahari, *Bihzad, Master of Persian Painting*, pp. 171–173; Melikian-Chirvani, *Le Chant du monde*, pp. 53–58.

⁶⁰Roxburgh, ‘Disorderly conduct?’, pp. 24–25.

⁶¹Roxburgh, ‘Disorderly conduct?’, p. 49, no. 3; Sims, *Peerless Images*, pp. 271–272, no. 188; Phillip, *Enchanted Lines*, cat. 4, pp. 44–47.

⁶²Roxburgh, ‘Disorderly conduct?’, fig. 2.



Figure 2. “Portrait of the Uzbek ruler Muhammad Shaybani Khan” (r. 1500–10). Source: New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. 57.51.29.

Dust Muhammad for Bahram Mirza in 1544–45, is correct, then the latter may give us an idea about how the Bihzad album was arranged and decorated.

This article builds on Roxburgh’s thorough description of the Bahram Mirza album (H. 2154), its contents and arrangement. Some points in his speculations are most convincing, whilst others raise doubt. The opening of H. 2154 raises a number of interesting questions. Roxburgh believes that the removal of eight folios (and perhaps a few more) from H. 2154 did not change the original order of the folios, and that “the Bahram Mirza album offers a rare instance of a Safavid album that remains largely intact”.⁶³ According to Roxburgh, folios 1r and 2v in the present album formed a double frontispiece, which opened the album.⁶⁴ This is in strong contrast, however, to the practice that prevailed in the design of the double-page openings or frontispieces in manuscripts. Traditionally, the facing pages were symmetrical, mirroring each other in size, decorative margins, etc. This is the way

⁶³Roxburgh, ‘Disorderly conduct?’, p. 42; see also Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, pp. 217–218.

⁶⁴Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600*, pp. 245–249, 257.



Figure 3. "Portrait of Hatifi". Source: Toronto, The Aga Khan Museum collection, AKM160.

the first two folios of the preface in H. 2154 (folios 8v–9r) are designed.⁶⁵ Symmetry also rules throughout the album.⁶⁶ This suggests a symmetrical design for its double-page opening. Folio 1 is undoubtedly the first folio of the album, as it has on its recto the ex-libris of Bahram Mirza.⁶⁷ The verso of folio 1 carries a painting representing a court scene signed by Shah Tahmasp, with a dedication to Bahram Mirza. It is set in wide margins decorated with animals among trees painted in gold. The facing folio, 2r, is a composite folio, larger than folio 1v, with six paintings and drawings mounted on it together.⁶⁸ Such obvious discrepancy in size and design of the facing pages at the very beginning of the album is unusual. It

⁶⁵C. Adle, 'Autopsia, in Absentia: Sur la date de l'introduction et de la construction de l'album de Bahram Mirza par Dust-Mohammad en 951/1544', *Studia Iranica*, Tome 19 (1990), pl. X.

⁶⁶See Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600*, fig. 8 (f.29v–30r), fig. 146 (f.43v–44r), figs. 141–142 (f.144v–145r), fig. 132 (f.146v–147r). See also p. 295 for the symmetrical double-page opening of f.17v–18r.

⁶⁷Adle, 'Autopsia, in Absentia', pp. 219–256, pl. Xia.

⁶⁸Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600*, figs. 131, 134.



Figure 4. “A Dromedary and Its Keeper”, executed in opaque pigments and gold on plain paper ground. Source: Washington DC, Freer Gallery of Art, no. 37.22.

should be noted, however, that a similar discrepancy has been observed, and discussed by Simpson, in the pages opening an anthology made in Bahram Mirza’s *kitabkhana* (Topkapı Palace Library, R. 957), a fact which, as Simpson writes, “remains a major question”.⁶⁹ Could both the album and the anthology reflect Bahram Mirza’s particular taste? Was the content of the works on the facing pages more important than the similarity of their construction? As to H. 2154, there is another reason to doubt that the present folios 1v–2r originally opened the album. It is Dust Muhammad’s inscription above the enthronement scene, central on folio 2r.⁷⁰ Its wording—in *mouzu niz az jumla-i karha-yi Ustad Bihzad ast* (This subject is also one of the works of Master Bihzad)—suggests the existence of another work (or works) by Bihzad on a preceding folio (or folios). A composite page in H. 2154, folio 13iv, includes two paintings attributed to Mawlana Maqsud, and the caption on the second of them adds *in niz kar-i mawlana maqsud ast*.⁷¹ As the preserved albums show,

⁶⁹M. S. Simpson, ‘A manuscript made for the Safavid prince Bahram Mirza’, *The Burlington Magazine*, June 1991, p. 384.

⁷⁰The miniature, left unfinished, repeats the illustration from the famous fourteenth-century *Kalila va Dimna* pasted into the Istanbul album F.1422, see Ernst J. Grube, ‘Prolegomena for a corpus publication of illustrated *Kalilah wa Dimnah* Manuscripts’, in *Islamic Art: A Biennial Dedicated to the Art and Culture of the Islamic World*, Vol. IV (Oxford, 1990–1991), pp. 301–481, p. 325, fig. 1B and p. 356, fig. 84.

⁷¹See Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600*, p. 289 and fig. 160.

after a number of folios were extracted, they were all rearranged in order to disguise the album's incompleteness. It is likely that something like this took place with H. 2154, and at least one folio is absent after folio 1.

Another question is the interpretation of the inscription on one of the five drawings mounted on folio 55v in H. 2154. It depicts the *Mi'raj* of the Prophet Muhammad and is a preparatory sketch for the illustration in the 1494–95 *Khamsa* of Nizami (London, British Library, Or.6810, f.5b), with the whole composition, including the figures, the swirling clouds, sharp rocks, and all other details carefully worked out.⁷² The inscription in the lower left corner reads, *qalam-siyah-i nader al-asr ustad bihzad va ghayra* (black pen drawing by the wonder of the age Master Bihzad and others). Roxburgh considers it to refer only to this drawing and regards it as a collective work: "Dust Muhammad's ascription acknowledges collaboration, the presence of more than one author even in the drawing stage, in the underlying structure of what will become the painting."⁷³ The caption *savvarahu Bahram al-Husayni* (Bahram al-Husayni drew it), probably inscribed by the prince himself, appears inside one of the three paintings on folio 85r. They all belong to the same hand and are described by Roxburgh as the works of the prince: "the three works together show Bahram Mirza's eminence in design and coloring."⁷⁴ Could the inscription on folio 55v also refer to all the drawings, with *va ghayra* meaning "and other drawings" by Bihzad? Six ink drawings mounted on this folio demonstrate various forms of graphic expression of the technique called *siyah qalam* (black pen). In the *Mi'raj*, thin precise lines are used for figures, tonal washes, and hatching for landscapes. Weighted line, tonal washes, and stippling make the figures voluminous in the drawings "Qalandar dervish" and "Chained lion" in H. 2154, folio 83v, ascribed to Bihzad.⁷⁵ Although the majority of the drawings look preparatory, they are included in the album as valued works of art. They confirm the characterisation of Bihzad by Safavid authors as incomparable draughtsman, as the originator of novel designs and images, and as able to work in different manners.⁷⁶ Dust Muhammad's attributions suggest that the drawings are also part of Bihzad's oeuvre; as Roxburgh notes, "Without Dust Muhammad's attributions it seems improbable that modern connoisseurs would have arrived at the same grouping, especially if following the hallmark features derived from the close scrutiny of Bihzad's signed manuscript paintings."⁷⁷

This is true also for the portraits ascribed by Dust Muhammad to Bihzad, previously mounted on two folios extracted from H. 2154 and now in different collections. As mentioned earlier, Stchoukine and subsequent scholars attribute the portraits to the second half of the sixteenth century or later.⁷⁸ Roxburgh's important article of 1998 returned the portraits to the realm of the works of Bihzad.

The scope of the present discussion precludes a detailed consideration of the portraits. I only want to draw attention to the fact that, unlike the works preserved in the album,

⁷²Roxburgh, 'Kamal al-Din Bihzad and authorship in Persianate painting', pp. 119–146, figs. 2 and 3.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁷⁴Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600*, p. 289.

⁷⁵Roxburgh, 'Kamal al-Din Bihzad and authorship in Persianate painting', figs. 4 and 9.

⁷⁶Stchoukine, *Les peintures des manuscrits timurides*, pp. 21–23; Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, p. 95; Bahari, *Bihzad, Master of Persian Painting*, pp. 38–42.

⁷⁷Roxburgh, 'Disorderly conduct?', p. 124.

⁷⁸Stchoukine, *Les peintures des manuscrits timurides*, pp. 85–86 and the table of dates for the portraits on p. 84.

the extracted portraits took on a new life in Europe. Before they found themselves in museums, they passed through the hands of many owners and dealers, and were altered through various restorations and additions. Their original appearance sometimes changed so much that scholarly doubt about Bihzad's authorship is by no means unfounded.

Of particular interest in this regard is the "Seated Scribe" (Figure 5) previously mounted on one of the folios extracted from H. 2154 (now in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, no. P15e8), which is not by Bihzad, but is closely related to the "Seated Painter" (Figure 6) ascribed to him in the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, being almost identical in size and general outline.

Both portraits show a young man in Turkish turban seated on the floor in right profile absorbed in work.⁷⁹ The young scribe appears to be depicted from life, as the shadow on his face and hands and on the tablet he holds, suggests that the light stems from a single source and from behind the figure. His face is heavily modelled with washes and stippling, betraying the hand of a European artist, as is indicated in the caption. Written by Dust Muhammad, the inscription states "it is the work of the son of the muezzin who is among the famous European masters" (*'amal-i ibn-i nu'adhdhin ke az ostadan-i mashhur-i farang ast*). The sitter's large white turban wound around a ribbed top is more Turkish than Persian. Scholars agree that the painting is the work of a European artist, probably Gentile Bellini, done around 1479–80 at the Ottoman court when he worked for Mehmet II (r. 1444–46 and 1451–81). The painting conveys a strange impression because whereas the sitter's face, hands, turban, and plain sleeves are modelled with light and shade, his short-sleeved coat, covered with a large pattern of lobed medallions, appears flat. Infrared photography of the portrait has revealed later repainting in the area of the blue coat. A very precisely drawn Turkish kaftan is seen there with long sleeves, not worn but hanging and trailing horizontally along the lower hem of the coat.⁸⁰

There is no agreement as to the attribution of the related work, now in the Freer Gallery of Art (Figure 6). Some scholars consider it to be a faithful copy of the scribe's portrait produced in Turkey.⁸¹ Others have accepted it as a work of Bihzad, based on an inscription in the lower left-hand corner that states "it was painted by the slave Bihzad" (*sauvvarahu al-'abd Bihzad*).⁸² Doubts remain because it is not known when and how the work of a European artist would have arrived in Iran, and where Bihzad, in Herat until 1522, could have seen it. In 1544–45, however, and as mentioned above, the portrait of the scribe was in the Bahram Mirza album. Both works are trimmed along the edges showing they were previously

⁷⁹"Seated Scribe" was published by Martin in 1907 as Gentile Bellini's work and it gave the name to the album acquired by him in Istanbul, see Roxburgh, 'Disorderly conduct?', fig. 14 on p. 39, p. 50, no. 2; Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600*, p. 302, fig. 168; A. Chong, 'Gentile Bellini in Istanbul: myths and misunderstandings', in *Bellini and the East*, (eds) C. Campbell and A. Chong (London, 2005); A. Adamova and M. Bayani, *Persian Painting. The Arts of the Book and Portraiture* (London, 2015), pp. 492–495, cat. 35.

⁸⁰J. Meyer zur Capellen, *J. Gentile Bellini* (Stuttgart, 1985), Abb. 7, 8; see Adamova and Bayani, *Persian Painting*, p. 494, where the authors suggest that the painting might be a portrait of Shehzade Korkut (d. 1513), son of Bayezid II, grandson of Mehmed II, a calligrapher, musician, and poet, by a European artist during one of the audiences granted by the Sultan.

⁸¹E. Atil, 'Ottoman miniature painting under Sultan Mehmed II', *Ars Orientalis* IX (1973), pp. 115–117; S. Blair and J. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250–1800* (New Haven and London, 1994), n. 55 on p. 325: "a Turkish portrait of a Turkish artist".

⁸²Bahari, *Bihzad, Master of Persian Painting*, pp. 174–175; Melikian-Chirvani, *Le Chant du monde*, pp. 52–53, fig. 6.



Figure 5. "Portrait of a Seated Scribe". Source: Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, no. P15e8.

mounted on album folios. It is tempting to suggest that the scribe's portrait from H. 2154, and the image of the painter, known in Europe since the early twentieth century, were both once in the Bihzad album, which would make probable Bihzad's authorship for the "Seated Painter".

The "Seated Painter" is not a faithful copy of the scribe's portrait, but rather a Persian version of it. Its author, possibly Bihzad, changed many details in his miniature, but he retained all the compositional elements of the prototype and the huge turban, so that it would be possible for connoisseurs to recognise the work by his predecessor.⁸³ The painter's coat is adorned with an elaborate cloud collar with its tip protruding on the back, a particular

⁸³A. Adamova, 'Repetition of compositions in manuscripts: The Khamsa of Nizami in Leningrad', in *Timurid Art and Culture. Iran and Central Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, (eds) L. Golombek and M. Subtelny (Leiden, 1992), p. 74; on the problem of repetition of compositions, see also A. Adamova, 'Problem of the identification of artists in Persian painting', in *The Art and Archaeology of Ancient Persia*, (eds) V. Sarkhosh Curtis, R. Hillenbrand and J. M. Rogers (London, 1998), pp. 175–181.



Figure 6. “Portrait of a Seated Painter”. Source: Washington DC, Freer Gallery of Art, no. 32.28.

feature of Persian dress never adopted in Turkey.⁸⁴ He is shown completing a portrait of a man in Persian dress. Of note is the absence of a single light source in the portrait ascribed to Bihzad. As noted by Atil, this painting was also overpainted; the painter’s coat was originally red, as can be seen in places where the upper layer of blue pigment has flaked off.⁸⁵ What stands out in both portraits, of the scribe and of the painter, is that the background is plain. In

⁸⁴The protruding tip of a cloud collar on the back above the sash in the portrait of a scribe must have been misunderstood by a later, probably twentieth-century, European restorer, who changed the scribe’s upper garment most probably looking at the image of a painter.

⁸⁵Atil, ‘Ottoman miniature painting under Sultan Mehmed II’, p. 116.

many other portraits “hidden” in albums, the background for the sitter is paper.⁸⁶ This suggests that plain paper was probably the background in the portraits ascribed to Bihzad at the time of their inclusion in H. 2154.

Roxburgh has also drawn attention to the fact that many works by Bihzad in the album remained unfinished.⁸⁷ There is a strong likelihood that the works extracted from the album were “improved” and “finished” at the request of dealers, which changed their original appearance.

For example, on the portrait of Sultan Husayn,⁸⁸ once mounted in H. 2154⁸⁹ (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, no. 1958.59) (Figure 7), Martin wrote: “The portrait was surely intended to be executed in rich colour, as the ground is already covered with a thick paste of a most charming light green.”⁹⁰ It is highly unlikely that the portrait, executed in a weighted line of black ink with a cloud-collar in red ink design, and heightened with gold, was to be “richly coloured”.⁹¹ It was probably Martin’s wish to add a colour background to the portraits that he owned and intended to sell. Roxburgh noticed that a green background around Shaybani Khan (Figure 2) was painted, leaving a thin contour of unpainted paper between figure and ground.⁹² The portrait of Sultan Husayn undoubtedly looked different when Dust Muhammad wrote the caption *amal-i hazrat ustad bihzad* (The work of his excellency Ustad Bihzad). Later alterations, such as awkward overdrawing of the right arm and of the knees are evident in this work.⁹³ The portrait of the poet Hatifi (Figure 3) also once mounted on one folio with Shaybani Khan’s image (Figure 2), is similarly retouched: the contours of the figure and the hands are overdrawn.

By contrast, the portrait of a dervish from Baghdad, ascribed in a caption as *surat-i darvish-i baghdadi amal-i hazrat ustad bihzad* (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, no. 3094.5) (Figure 8) is almost untouched.⁹⁴

Yellowish paper serves as the background here, as in some of the portraits discussed above. Roxburgh has suggested that because of its “curious nature and anomalous techniques” this portrait has been ignored since Martin published it in 1909 and 1912 as it was thought to be a

⁸⁶See the portraits of Bihzad and Nava’i in Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600*, “The Portrait of a Dervish from Baghdad” (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, no. 3094.5), fig. 108 on p. 204; Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, fig. 91 on p. 254.

⁸⁷Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600*, p. 289.

⁸⁸M. Shreve Simpson, *Arab and Persian Painting in the Fogg Art Museum* (Cambridge, MA, 1980), cat. no. 26; Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, col. il. on p. 243, cat. no. 136.

⁸⁹Roxburgh, ‘Disorderly conduct?’, fig. 13, p. 59, no. 1.

⁹⁰F. R. Martin, ‘Two portraits by Behzad, the greatest painter of Persia’, *Burlington Magazine* XV, LXXIII (April 1909), p. 7.

⁹¹Simpson, *Arab and Persian Painting*, cat. no. 26; Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, col. il. on p. 243, cat. no. 136; Roxburgh, ‘Disorderly conduct?’, fig. 13, p. 59, no. 1; D. Roxburgh, ‘The pen of depiction: drawings of 15th- and 16th-century Iran’, in *Studies in Islamic and Later Indian Art from the Arthur M. Sackler Museum*, Harvard University Art Museums (Cambridge, MA, 2002), p. 49; E. Sims, B. Marshak and E. J. Grube, *Peerless Images, Persian Painting and its Sources* (London, 2002), cat. 186, pp. 269–271.

⁹²Roxburgh, ‘Disorderly conduct?’, p. 49; see, in colour, Bahari, *Bihzad, Master of Persian Painting*, fig. 103 on p. 172.

⁹³Roxburgh sees the corrections made by the artist himself—preliminary lines drawn incorrectly then masked by lead pigment. See Roxburgh, ‘The pen of depiction’, p. 49. I have not seen the portrait at first hand and I cannot be sure if my impression is correct.

⁹⁴Roxburgh, ‘Disorderly conduct?’, p. 51, no. 3, fig. 16 on p. 40.



Figure 7. “Portrait of Sultan Husayn Mirza”. Source: Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, no. 1958.59.

fake or a much later work with a spurious attribution to Bihzad.⁹⁵ In fact, this is really a very unusual work. A man clad in a heavy coat, wearing a darvish cap wrapped with a cloth, sits frontally with his eyes fixed on the viewer. His face is depicted more realistically than any other visage in Persian art of the fifteenth century. The use of washes and stippling add volume to his face and coat, suggesting the artist’s knowledge of European works of art.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 41.



Figure 8. "Portrait of a Dervish from Baghdad". Source: Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, no. 3094.5.

Bihzad's works in H. 2154 add much to our knowledge of this master. He left images of his contemporaries confirming the importance of portraiture in his work, especially when he still worked in Herat. If the suggestion that some paintings and drawings in H. 2154 originate from the album compiled by Bihzad is correct, it provides a probable date for the album itself, which, as the works discussed here show, must belong to the early Safavid period of his career. Of course, my very preliminary ideas about the content of the Bihzad album and its relationship to H. 2154, compiled by Dust Muhammad, need further investigation.

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