A COPY OF THE RAWZAT AL-SAFĀ WITH TURKISH MINIATURES

by
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A series of miniatures by a Turkish artist has recently been discovered in a manuscript of the Rawzat al-Safā fi Sīrat al-Athīrā wālī-Muhammad wālī-Khūlaḥā, the well-known Persian history compiled by Mîr Khwānd (Muḥammad b. Khivandshâh b. Muḥīmūd) who died in 933/1528. This manuscript (Or. 5736 in the British Museum collection) contains only the sixth of the seven volumes (qisas) which covers the history of Amīr Timūr (Tamerlane) and his successors to the death of Abū Saʿīd in 873/1469. The copyist, 'All b. Muḥammad Tustari, gives the date of transcription as 1088/1579-1600. The hand is a calligraphic nashkh with section headings in blue and gold. A number of words, including some which are not by any means unusual or obscure, like numerals, have been provided with Turkish glosses in red in a smaller but not less elegant hand of approximately the same date. There are eleven full-page miniatures representing the work of an extremely talented artist. The colours are entirely Persian but the vigorous and exuberant layout of each composition, the shortening of the forequarters of some of the horses, the frequent use of profile and full face, and the Turkic racial types which are displayed with a great skill in characterization indicate the Turkish origin of the painter. Other features which leave us no doubt that we are dealing with a Turkish artist are the treatment of a scene at the court of Bayezid I (1739), a mosque with pointed minaret of the Ottoman type (3038) and the elaborate, almost overloaded decoration of Ulugh Beg’s audience chamber. The miniatures are for the most part inspired by a Timurid chronicle, possibly a copy of the Zipār-nāma. Apart from their lively and realistic approach they have little in common with other “campaign” illustrations from the close of the 16th century. The dress of the armies of Timūr and other Turkic princes is very distinctive—the soldiers wear the usual splinted armour (called Tartar-Mongol by Pope) and a high-crowned white-banded (lacquered?) helmet with a brass top, adjustable vizor and cheek-pieces (perhaps of fur or felt) which, in most cases, are turned up to expose the face.

Some of these are cylindrical like Mamlûk helmets and some with brass neck-protectors; while others are triangular resembling the 15th-century European bychet (3036) or heavy headpieces with a patterned brim reminiscent of a Chinese or Japanese helmet (97a). In contrast to these peculiar headdress, many of the combatants are depicted wearing pointed brass helmets of ordinary Timurid or Safavid type with turbans twisted round them. In at least two cases the principal figures wear the large irregular turbans similar to those which appear in the later Safavid miniatures. The riders carry lances with tufts of horse-hair and daggers, sometimes without a guard like a short yatağan.

The difference in dress from the other illustrated copy of the Rawzat al-Safā in the British Museum collection is very marked, in that this and all later examples show the usual contemporary dress and no attempt has been made to give the figures such an original touch. The most outstanding contribution which the artist has made to realism is the face of Timūr—in some of the illustrations depicting incidents towards the end of his career his beard changes from brown to grey-white. Practically all the miniatures are "two-dimensional" and show two or more actions occurring at the same time which are placed in different registers with much skill.

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1 At least three copies of the Zipār-nāma of Sharaf al-Dīn Yanzī with Timurid miniatures are known—notably a copy dated 872/1467 with miniatures attributed to Bihâdî (published by Arnold in 1906) which is now at Princeton. For illustrations from the others see Robinson, The Khorasan Collection, pl. XXI (in New York, dated 899/1498) and Sakesian, La miniatures persane du XVe au XVIIe siècle, fig. 109 (Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi, Istanbul, dated 891/1486). The illustrations in the latter bear some resemblance to those in Or. 5736.

2 Pope, Savaq, iii, 2628 and Martin, Text, p. 29, fig. 17 (portrait of Timûr). The helmets are a military development of the Tartar bonnet (galbepa).


4 Add. 23356 (dated 1089/1671) contains ten miniatures in a rather coarse style. Another copy (Add. 18540) bears paintings on the binding which have no connection with the text.
Two of the illustrations reveal certain differences from the other nine. These are the scene when Timūr’s envoys are shown at the Ottoman court which has been already mentioned (173b) and the very last miniature where the costume is rather different from the others (402b). The former is typical of Ottoman “court” art—the Sultan dwarfs all the other figures which are grouped about him somewhat rigidly; and these in turn tower above the two small isolated figures of the Tartar envoys.

The question now arises as to whether the same artist was responsible for the whole group of eleven miniatures. In all of them the convention appears whereby the most important characters are shown larger than the others; but in no. 4 (173b) the treatment of the court scene with its accurate representation of Ottoman costume suggests that another artist, more experienced in depicting this kind of subject, may have been brought in to paint this miniature. With the exception of the envoys, all the figures are large in 4 and it thus contrasts strongly with the other pictures where the artist works on a smaller scale for the most part, crowding the picture with detail and movement. But perhaps this is evidence of some patriotic feeling on the part of the artist who has deliberately made all the Ottoman Turks larger than the others. There are not sufficient grounds for attributing 4 to another artist, when we take this into account.⁴ The same applies to 11 where there are some differences in detail but none so striking—as for example, the brass helmets of the troops behind Hasan Beg.

Here again the artist aims at a definite contrast—in this case between the stalwart and menacing soldiers cutting down the smaller fugitives among the rocks on the right—or what is more likely, he is trying to show that the figures are diminished in size by distance.⁵ A description of the miniatures follows. Some of them seem to have been detached from the manuscript at one time and folded, suffering some damage in the process, ⁶ (fig. 74). The attack of Timūr’s army on Balkh, held by the forces of Amīr Ḥusayn who had built a strong fortress there. In the foreground Timūr is seated in an elaborate pavilion receiving Husayn’s envoy. The non-combatant inhabitants of Balkh are wearing turbans for the most part to distinguish them from the Tatars. Some, however, wear turbans twisted round brass helmets, while some on the extreme left wear helmets very like those of the Tatars. Ḥusayn, wearing a golden diadem with aigrette, watches the progress of the battle and the negotiations from a tower in the citadel. Women and other onlookers gaze apprehensively from behind the battlements. The face of a man with protruding teeth occurs in this scene and reappears in others. Two types of trumpet are shown, one straight and one curved. The ground is

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⁴ Perhaps in this miniature the artist reverted to his normal style as an illustrator of chronicles, except for the portrayal of the two envoys.
⁵ Compare the relative size of the figures on the ramparts in I and 8 with those in the foreground.

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74. Timūr attacks Balkh
75. Timur's envoys before Bayazid

coloured blue-grey, and the stone masonry and bricks of the town walls indicated.

2 (f. 97a). A battle between Timur and Toqtamish, Khan of the Golden Horde. Timur is to be seen in the left background, followed by lancers and standard-bearers. On the right Toqtamish appears with his troops, one of whom wields a war-drill having three tails. There is a kettle-drummer in the top left-hand corner. The ground is buff-coloured.

3 (f. 122b). Another battle between Toqtamish and Timur who is on the right, holding a flanged mace (shaspar), at the head of a body of horse and foot including archers kneeling to aim their arrows. Toqtamish,
surrounded by his lancers and accompanied by his standard-bearer, is routed by the Tatars who have almost surrounded him and cut off his escape. Timur's standard bears a dragon's head and elaborate trident finial.

4 (f. 172b) (fig. 75). This miniature shows something of the pomp and dignity of the Ottoman court. The two rather insignificant figures wearing the distinctive Tatar dress in the centre are envoys sent by Timur, one of whom is reading a letter to Bayazid I, a magnificent figure in a furred pelisse seated upon a throne. In the foreground are 'Azebs with shouldered muskets (?), and pages on the left by the throne wearing tall gilded hats and red hoods. On the right are a group of Qapijs bearing gold staffs, while in the right foreground a Janissary officer stands with two of his men. In front of the throne are a party of 'ulama with the large turbans often seen in Turkish miniatures. Here and there are single sipahis of Rumeli wearing their peculiar bonnets with projecting points surmounted by a plume. The walls are covered with coloured octagonal tiles and mural painting.

5 (f. 177b) (fig. 76). A jargch or hunt in the Mongol fashion in which the riders form a ring round the quarry. According to custom, the hunters enter in order of rank and despatch the game. Two princes are in the centre. One is wounding a lion while the other transfixed with his arrow a leopard in the act of pouncing on a deer. Many animals appear in this picture—gazelles, wild asses, hares, foxes, wild boar and a bear which is being attacked by troops from the tightly-drawn circle. Some of the dead gazelles have already been attached to the riders' saddles. A man with a saluki is to be seen near the stream under the tree by the rocks on the right. Another hound is attached by a leash to one of the horsemen. This hunting scene is a good study of animal life and vigorous action. The view of the horses from the rear and full face is somewhat unusual.

6 (f. 232b) (fig. 77). Timur is here seen in the wooded country of Mazanderan on his expedition to fight Sulthan Husain. Troops are winding their way through the mountain defiles to cross a deep ravine by means of an improvised bridge. One trooper leads his horse across: another, less careful, rides on a pack-horse. Another on the right bears a club, while one rider carries a war-flail with three tails. Timur is resting under a canopy in a grassy clearing. In the top right corner the forces of Sulthan Husain made a sortie from their fortress from the embrasures of which trumpets are protruding. In the foreground a fox sits in a tree. Behind Timur a bear hiding up a tree is menaced by a snow-leopard. The green of the vegetation is in two shades; the ground is coloured bluish with brown for the hillocks.

77. Timur in Mazanderan

7 (f. 277a). A battle between the armies of Abu Bakr Tabrizi, the son of Miranshad, and Qara Yusuf Qaraqoyunlu who is shown wearing a scaled cuirass seated upon a richly caparisoned and armoured horse in the centre. He is attacking a man-at-arms with his sword. On the right rides Abu Bakr bearing a mace, followed by three men carrying ensigns.
78. Encounter between Shâh Malik and Amîr Shaykh Nûr al-Dîn

Beside his horse's head a man (probably a ḥārîr) with an axe or halberd is walking. Facing him are the followers of Qara Yâsûf, wearing large turbans, in some cases twisted round brass helmets. They also have three ensigns each in a different colour. The ground is here pale green.

79. Ulugh Beg dispensing justice

8 (f. 303h) (fig. 78). The encounter between Shâh Malik and Amîr Shaykh Nûr al-Dîn. The latter is being dragged from his horse into the arms of Harqadâq whose horse is being held while he runs up to seize Nûr al-Dîn. Two swordsmen are rushing on the left to support Harqadâq. All the horses are greatly excited. Another two men brandishing swords
80. Mirzā Abū'l-Qāsim fording the Oxus

are coming out of the city to attack Harqadāq. On the right a body of cavalry rides across the bare ground (coloured grey) with lances and drawn swords. Spectators look out of every turret, embrasure and window. In the left background is a mosque of Turkish type with dome and slender pointed minaret.

9 (f. 345b) (fig. 79). Ulugh Beg dispensing justice in Khurāsān. He is seated upon an elaborate throne, flanked by one of his cupbearers (ṣāqī), and his swordbearer. Two men are kneeling before him. One of these, a dark-skinned man, is holding a letter or petition. The dignitaries of the court are sitting before him in three rows, forming a triangle facing their sovereign. They are engaged in animated conversation. One of them in the back row is turning to watch the servants bringing refreshments accompanied by two stewards with their wands of office. These are ordering two cooks out of the chamber somewhat officiously. On the right a dish of pilaf is held by a servant while another pours wine into a goblet. Two others are bearing a large tray with a number of drinking cups on it. Two attendants carry robes of honour. In the doorway on the extreme right the curtain is being held back to allow a sāqī to enter the hall. The doorway is guarded by an usher leaning on his staff. In the middle of the half-circle of dignitaries stand an incense-burner and a vase with tapering neck containing plants. Part of the leaves are growing through apertures in the sides of the vase. Flagons of wine and bowls of fruit are being set out. The windows look out on to a pleasure garden with a single large plane tree. The walls are decorated with mural paintings of foxes and deer.

10 (f. 348a) (fig. 80). Mirzā Abū'l-Qāsim and his supporters crossing the Oxus at the ford of Qunduz on their way to Transoxiana by way of Panj-i-Dīb. The winding course of the river is shown running down the folio as in a map. At the top the leading figure whose horse is shown climbing on to the bank is followed by four men riding their swimming horses. One carries a sheaf of arrows to keep it dry, another a pennant, a third is plainly an amīr, and the last carries the prince's standard. On the bank below, grooms are holding three restive horses while troops stand at the edge of the water where Abū'l-Qāsim has embarked in a boat rowed by two men, preceded by a man in a skull and followed by another boat containing his horse, groom and one oarsman. On the next bank are two grazing horses, and a man, carrying his weapons, barefooted and with rolled-up trousers, prepares to go into the river. One man is already wading across the river, holding his saddle and clothes in a bundle above his head. He tries to persuade a skewbald horse to enter the river and a man is urging it from behind with a stick. In the rear rides another amīr accompanied by three men. One man is knee-deep in the water, leading his horse. In midstream a swimmer in difficulties clutches his horse's neck for support; another swims past his horse with a bundle of accoutre-

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* A term used for the upper Amu-Daryā (Oxus), the basin of five rivers.
8r. The head of Ḫūrmishī shown to Mīrzā Hasan Beg

ments on his head while another man drives his horse out of the water. A ferryboat containing four men is being towed to land by a man on the bank. Two more horses are held by a soldier to whom a second man is gesticulating. This miniature with some kind of activity going on everywhere is perhaps the finest in the series.

11 (p. 282) (fig. 81). This illustration has several different features from the others, notably the huge turbans of irregular outline, the brass armour and spiked helmets, two of which are of a Turkish type provided with a nasal, and the landscape and action in the extreme right could almost be early Mughal. In this scene the head of Ḫūrmishī is being shown to Mīrzā Hasan Beg as the head of Jahānshāh Ḏaraqquyunlu. Behind Ḏazar Beg, who wears a cloth of gold turban with aigrette, are three standard-bearers, lancers and trumpeters whose cheeks are puffed out with blowing their instruments. Behind an amīr beckons to two horsemen who are leading two prisoners with ropes tied round their necks. In the foreground a massacre of the occupants of two tents is taking place, with wine-drons overturned. There are more bound captives, archers and lancers. The detail is shown minutely—even the flight-feathers of the arrows in a quiver. Some of the figures are shown full-face and some are in profile, as in the other four miniatures.

In all these illustrations, especially the last, the eclectic quality of Ottoman painting is evident but none of them belong entirely either to the court or the popular style. The reason is probably the following: in view of the subject the artist for greater accuracy and realism chose the best examples he could find among illustrated copies, contemporary or near contemporary with the scenes he was describing, and made his own interpretation of them, giving here and there his own contribution to the subject in a way which would be certain to appeal to his patron. The result has been a series of miniatures of high quality in a category not hitherto recorded by those who have written about Ottoman miniatures. Their vigour and freshness show what a Turkish painter of outstanding ability could achieve.

*For similar turbans typical of Turkish miniatures from the 16th century onward, compare those in a recently acquired single miniature (c. 1600) in the Department of Oriental Antiquities (1962, 10–12, 01).*