
The Illustration of *Mīrkhwānd's Rauḍat al-ṣafā*,

RAS Ms. P. 38



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Abstract

The celebrated universal Islamic history, *Mīrkhwānd's Tārīkh-i Rauḍat al-ṣafā*, written in Herat in the late Timurid period, became a model for later Persian histories, but has not yet been the subject of any substantial critical analysis as a work of historical literature, or in terms of its manuscript transmission. Although numerous copies exist of different volumes of the text, only a handful have been illustrated, providing another dimension to the reception and 'reading' of the chronicle. This paper focuses on the fourth volume of *Mīrkhwānd's* history, on the Persian dynasties up to the rise of Timur, four copies of which have been illustrated, among them the Royal Asiatic Society's manuscript no. P. 38. After detailing the ten pictures in the manuscript, the article concludes with a discussion of their character and purpose.

Keywords: *Mīrkhwānd*; Herat; 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī; Timurid; Sulṭān-Ḥusain-i Bāyqarā; Persian history; Sir Charles Warre Malet

Among the precious manuscripts belonging to the Royal Asiatic Society is a copy of volume four of the *Tārīkh-i Rauḍat al-ṣafā* (History of the Garden of Purity), a work of 'universal history' in six volumes, compiled by Muḥammad b. Khwāndshāh b. Maḥmūd (d. 903/1498), generally known as *Mīrkhwānd*.¹ He composed his chronicle in Herat under the patronage of 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī (d. 906/1501), the Naqshbandi Sufi, Chaghatay poet and statesman at the court of the last Timurid ruler, Sulṭān-Ḥusain-i Bāyqarā (r. 875–912/1469–1506), see Fig. 1.²

[‡]The original version of this article was published without the Abstract and Keywords. A notice detailing this has been published and the errors rectified in the online and print PDF and HTML copies.

¹Sholeh A. Quinn, *Historical Writing during the Reign of Shah 'Abbas. Ideology, imitation and legitimacy in Safavid chronicles* (Salt Lake City, 2000), pp. 14, 39–40.

²CUL, Ms. Gg. 4.23, f. 177r, for one of *Mīrkhwānd's* eulogies on 'Alī Shīr and his reasons for writing (also in Gg. 4.22), as noted by E. G. Browne, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1896), pp. 106–107; cf. *Mīrkhwānd, Tārīkh-i Rauḍat al-ṣafā*, (ed.) 'Abbās Parvīz (Tehran, 1338/1960), vol. IV [hereafter: *Rauḍat*], pp. 695–696. For Navā'ī's patronage, see e.g. Maria Subtelny, "Art and politics in early 16th century Central Asia", *Central Asiatic Journal*, 27 no. 1–2 (1983), pp. 121–148, especially pp. 123–129.

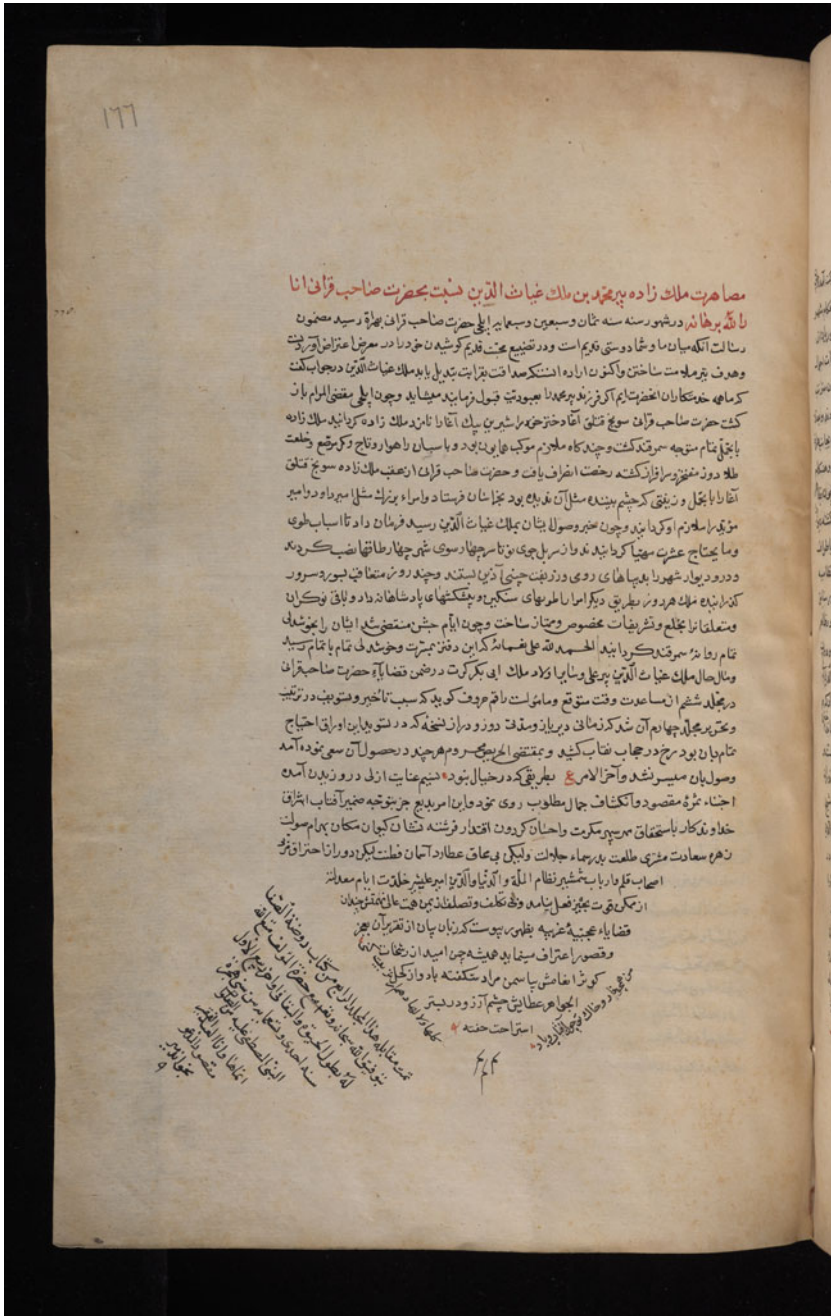


Fig. 1. Khwāndamīr's note of checking the manuscript of Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*, Cambridge University Library, Ms. G. 4.23, fol. 177r, reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

The chronicle is arranged as follows:

- Vol. 1 – The creation of the world to the death of the last Sasanian shah, Yazdagird
- Vol. 2 – The Prophet Muhammad and the ‘Rightly guided’ caliphs
- Vol. 3 – The 12 imams, the Umayyads and the ‘Abbasid caliphate
- Vol. 4 – The dynasties contemporary with the ‘Abbasids
- Vol. 5 – Chinggis Khan and his successors
- Vol. 6 – Timur and his successors to the death of sultan Abū Sa‘īd in 873/1469.

A seventh volume and conclusion (*khātima*), down to 929/1523, was added by his grandson, Khwāndamīr, who also compiled a very similar work of his own, the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* (930/1524), largely based on the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*.³

Mīrkhwānd’s work enjoyed a great success, reflected in the enormous number of surviving manuscripts, found in all the major library collections, most notably in Istanbul,⁴ though very rarely in complete sets: either copies were dispersed rather quickly, or else only specific volumes were made to order. There are remarkably few copies dating from the 15th century,⁵ though a few manuscripts of the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā* that survive record the involvement of Khwāndamīr in establishing the text.⁶ Possibly it was due to the grandson that the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā* become more widely known; the vast majority of the catalogued copies date from the period of approximately a century from the 1550s to the 1640s. It is still to be determined which were the most ‘popular’, or frequently copied volumes. It would also be interesting to establish how many of the separate manuscript volumes could be matched to related copies and reassembled into complete sets. So far as illustrated examples are concerned, however, it appears that there are relatively few, given the current state of cataloguing;⁷ there remains the possibility

³See e.g. C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature. A bio-bibliographical survey*, vol. I, pt. 1 (London, 1970), pp. 101–109; Quinn, *Historical Writing*, pp. 15–16, 40–42; Shahzad Bashir, “A Perso-Islamic universal chronicle in its historical context: Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn Khwāndamīr’s *Ḥabīb al-siyar*”, in *Historiography and Religion*, (ed.) Jörg Rüpke, Susanne Rau and Bernd-Christian Otto (Berlin, 2015), pp. 207–233.

⁴Storey, *Persian Literature*, pp. 92–95 (mss) and 95–101 (details of editions and translations); enormously expanded by Ye. E. Bregel’, *Persidskaya Literatura*, vol. I (Moscow, 1972) [hereafter Storey/Bregel’], pp. 361–370 (mss), with major collections in St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Tashkent, and elsewhere. For Istanbul, see F. Tauer, “Les manuscrits persans historiques des bibliothèques de Stamboul”, *Archiv Orientalní*, 3 no. 1 (1931), pp. 104–113 (75 entries, multiple volumes); for Tashkent, Biruni Oriental Institute, D. Yu. Yusupova and R. P. Jalilova, *Sobranie vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii nauk Respubliki Uzbekistan* (Tashkent, 1998), pp. 44–60 (83 entries, multiple volumes).

⁵The earliest recorded copy (vol. 2) is Leningrad State University Library, Ms. 154, dated Herat, 902/1497, made by ‘Alī-Shāh b. Muḥammad ... al-Khūsāfi, see A.T. Tagirdjanov, *Opisanie tadhikskikh i persidskikh rukopisey* (Leningrad, 1962), pp. 49–50, who considers that this important manuscript post-dates the CUL copy recorded by Browne, but I believe some uncertainty surrounds this; see next note. I am as always grateful to Firuza Melville for her assistance with Russian materials and helpful discussions.

⁶Browne, *Catalogue*, p. 107 and Storey/Bregel’, p. 361, omit to note that Khwāndamīr supposedly checked the text of Ms. Gg. 4.23 (vol. 4) at the end of Rabi’ I, 901/December 1495, in the presence of the author, i.e. two years before the death of Mīrkhwānd (see Fig. 1). Neither this nor vol. 5 (bound together) nor vol. 1 is dated, but vols. 2 and 3 (similarly bound together) are dated 978/1571 and 980/1572 respectively. If, as it seems, Gg. 4.22 (vols. 1–3) and Gg. 4.23 (vols. 4 and 5) are part of the same production, this suggests a close connection with the complete six-volume Ms. Hamīdiye 946–947 in Istanbul, transcribed in 987–88/1579–80, with similar notes recording the copy being collated by Khwāndamīr in 901/1496. Volumes 2 and 4 of the luxuriously-illuminated copy dedicated (but completed posthumously) to Sulṭān-Ḥusain-i Bāyqarā, Nūr-i ‘Osmāniye 3173, dated 930–34/1524–28, also contain notes that they were checked by Khwāndamīr, at the very time he was composing his own *Ḥabīb al-siyar*; Tauer, “Les manuscrits”, pp. 105, 106; Storey/Bregel’, pp. 363, 365.

⁷See Charles Melville, “The illustration of history in Safavid manuscript painting”, in *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran. Empire and society*, (ed.) Colin P. Mitchell (London and New York, 2011), pp. 163–197, especially pp. 168–171, for a preliminary analysis.

that the presence of pictures is sometimes overlooked. Perhaps because of its sheer bulk, Mīrkhwānd's famous chronicle has been very little studied from either an historiographical or a codicological point of view, although due to its rather early 'discovery' by European authors it played an important part in forming the narrative of Persian history in western scholarship.⁸

Ms. P. 38 and Volume Four of the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*

The RAS copy contains volume four—the dynasties contemporary with the 'Abbasids, that is, the specifically mediaeval Persian history *par excellence*, from the Tahirids to the Khwarazmshahs, but then including also the autonomous dynasties in the Iranian provinces from the Muzaffarids to the Injū'ids, the atabegates and the Kart dynasty of Herat. It therefore follows the traditional division of Iran's history in Persian historiography. This is a long and eventful period, stretching from the early 9th to the late 14th century, which embraced the collapse of the caliphate and the Seljuq and Mongol invasions of Iran. There are innumerable moments in this drama worthy of, and lending themselves to, illustration.

Ms. P. 38 contains ten paintings, to which I shall turn in a moment: it will be interesting to see whether they reflect and indeed depict the highlights of this era. First, I must say something about the manuscript itself—while noting that it has already been described by Basil Robinson in his catalogue of the paintings in the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society,⁹ many of his attributions of the subjects illustrated need revising. It is a handsome volume, with 270 folios and two flyleaves at front and back, bound within a modern black half calf leather binding that was made in 1929. Either then or earlier, the pages were trimmed and now measure 312 x 220 mm, with a ruled text area of 200 x 114 mm, containing 20 lines of text per page. The volume was presented to the Society from the estate of Sir Charles Warre Malet in 1828. Malet (1752–1815), 1st Baronet, was an officer of the East India Company at the court of the Peshwas of Mahrattas in western India; there is a painting by Thomas Daniell (1749–1840), of Malet presenting a scroll to the Peshwa Madhavrao II, formalising an alliance against Tipu Sultan of Mysore.¹⁰ His return from India in 1798 provides the *terminus ante quem* for his acquisition of the manuscript, the worm holes in which clearly indicate its Indian provenance.

A clue to its previous ownership is a note on one of the flyleaves recording the birth of two children: one, Muḥammad Ḥusain, born on the 7th of Ramaḍān 1194 (31 August 1780) and the other, Muḥammad Ḥasan, on 21 Rajab 1196 (8 July 1782). That both sons were born in a port (Kibayat [Cambay?] and Surat respectively) suggests the father was a merchant, presumably an Iranian Shi'i, and that Malet acquired the manuscript between 1782 and 1798.

P. 38 begins with an index of contents (ff. 1r–8v), compiled on 21 Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1157/25 January 1745, and six folios of replacement text (ff. 11–16), as noted by Robinson, presumably in view of the damage to the beginning of the volume—but not to the opening folios, ff. 9–10, which include an illuminated *'unvān* and the normative *incipit*.¹¹

Thereafter, there are no other paratextual elements except for the addition of the paintings, not even a colophon to record the date of the conclusion of the copying nor the name of the scribe,

⁸See the recent assessment by Ali M. Ansari, "Mīrkhwānd and Persian historiography", *JRAS*, 26 no. 1–2 (2016), pp. 249–259, especially for Mīrkhwānd's didactic purposes in writing.

⁹B.W. Robinson, *Persian paintings in the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London, 1998), pp. 63–67.

¹⁰Tate Gallery: T12511, available at <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/thomas-daniell-137>.

¹¹Published in black and white in Robinson, *Royal Asiatic Society*, p. 63.

Table 1. Illustrated manuscripts of volume four of the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*

Mss of vol. 4	Place and Date	Dimensions	Folios	Paintings
RAS, P. 38	Shiraz, c. 1580–90	312 x 220	270	10
NLR, Dorn 273	Shiraz, early 17 th c.	300 x 180	342	11
Berlin, or. fol. 169	Shiraz, 1012/1604	285 x 170	264	11 (12)
IOM, D 203	Baghdad, 1016/1607		233	5

see f. 270r (which has been remargined). Otherwise, it is nice clean copy of the text, perhaps not completely finished: as we shall see, some of the text headings and illuminations are left blank.

So much for the manuscript; I shall now put the existence of this fourth volume of the work in context.¹² First, it is one of only four illustrated copies of volume four that have so far been identified, the others being (1) Dorn 273 in the National Library of Russia in St Petersburg; (2) or. fol. 169 in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin;¹³ and (3) D 203 in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, also in St Petersburg.¹⁴ Clearly, it will be of interest to compare the illustration cycle of these four manuscripts, details of which are seen here (see Table 1) and discussed below (see Table 2).

Secondly, the existence of the RAS volume four suggests that it should have been part of a set of all six volumes, presumably all illustrated. However, Robinson and Rührdanz estimate it to date from c. 1580–90, and I am not aware of any illustrated copies of other volumes of the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā* of this date. Comparison with leaves from volumes one–three of a manuscript dated 979/1571 in the Sackler Gallery shows no connection either in the calligraphy or the painting,¹⁵ and the same can be said of the Chester Beatty Ms. Per. 254, produced in Shiraz in 1003/1595, containing volume two of the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*.¹⁶ The fact is, the text appears to have been relatively seldom illustrated. No set of all six illustrated volumes is known and, as mentioned above, the relationship between the few existing volumes of different dates has not been established entirely.¹⁷ It is quite possible that even in a complete copy of all volumes, some were not illustrated (as being of less interest, or for other reasons). As I have noted elsewhere, volume

¹²In what follows, I am happy to acknowledge the paper by Karin Rührdanz, “Shiraz to Baghdad: The pictorial programme of Mirkhwānd’s *Rauḍat al-Ṣafā* (vol. IV)”, presented at the workshop on ‘The Illustration of History in Medieval Manuscripts’, at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, Hamburg, 3–4 March 2017, particularly regarding the Berlin manuscript. Her focus is more specifically on stylistic developments as evidenced by various copies of the manuscript. Our research started independently but developed in mutual consultation and I am grateful to her for allowing me free use of her unpublished work, which is acknowledged as KR where appropriate in the references, and for commenting on this paper.

¹³For a description, see Ivan Stchoukine, Barbara Fleming, et al., *Illuminierte Islamische Handschriften*, vol. XVI (Wiesbaden, 1971), pp. 80–82, no. 28. The manuscript originally included a picture in the evident lacuna between f. 164 and 165, as noted by W. Pertsch, *Die Handschriften-Verzeichniss der Königlichen Bibliothek*, bd. 4, *Verzeichniss der Persischen Handschriften* (Berlin, 1888), p. 393, note 1; KR suggests this could have depicted Jalāl al-Dīn Khwarazmshah confronting the Mongols. The manuscript is available online at https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN67178157X&PHYSID=PHYS_0001&DMDID=

¹⁴Lavishly illustrated but inadequately catalogued in *Collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Science (St. Petersburg)*, The Cultural Legacy of Uzbekistan, vol. VII, (ed.) I. F. Popova, O. A. Vodneva, Ye.V. Tanonova, et al. (Tashkent, 2017), pp. 228–245.

¹⁵See Glen D. Lowry, Milo Beach, et al., *An Annotated and Illustrated Checklist of the Vever Collection* (Seattle and London, 1988), pp. 192–195.

¹⁶See A. J. Arberry, B.W. Robinson, et al., *The Chester Beatty Library. A catalogue of the Persian manuscripts and miniatures*, vol. III. *Mss. 221–398* (Dublin, 1962), pp. 30–31 and plates 21–23.

¹⁷Tauer, “Les manuscrits”, pp. 106, 108, notes three ‘16th-century’ mss in Istanbul that I have not yet seen, of vols. 1 and 6.

Table 2. Illustrations in Volume four of the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā'*
 Page numbers refer to the page and 'break-line' (- sign indicates line up from the bottom of the page) in the printed edition where the painting is inserted.

RAS P. 38	Dorn 273	Berlin or. fol. 169	IOM D. 203
f. 34v/p. 56.-5	f. 9v/p. 17.17		
	f. 33v/p. 66.15		f. 35v/p. 99.15
f. 60r/p. 110.13		f. 48r/p.118.10	
f. 68r/p. 125.-3	f. 65r/p. 127.-8		
f. 92r/p. 178.-5	f. 106v/p. 207.15		
f. 109v/p. 216.1			f. 77v/p. 219.-7
		f. 90r/p. 223.6	
f. 124v/p. 248.14	f. 139v/p. 273.4	f. 110r/p. 273.5	
		f. 113v/p. 281.-5	
f. 152r/p. 308.5		f. 126r/p. 313.11	
	f. 168r/p. 330.-6		f. 120r/p. 348.-5
		f. 140r/p. 350.-6	
f. 179v/p. 367.11		f. 148r/p. 373.9	
	f. 196v/p. 386.12	f. 165-/p. 415-420*	
	f. 212v/p. 419.-1	f. 177r/p. 454.-4	
			f. 154r/p. 455.19
	f. 246r/p. 493.-3	f. 207v/p. 535.12	
	f. 268r/p. 539.13		f. 193r/p. 571.-2
f. 219r/p. 577.-2		f. 229r/p. 592.15	
f. 237r/p. 620.2			
	f.324r/p. 652.17	f. 256r/p. 674.-2	
10	11	11 (12)	5

* The lacuna between f. 164 and 165 falls between *Rauḍat*, pp. 415.13 and 420.6 and might therefore have contained a painting close (in subject) to that in Dorn 273.

six, on the Timurids, was apparently the most popular, at least among those that have survived.¹⁸

At any rate, this means that for the volume under consideration, we cannot view its paintings as part of a whole illustration cycle of the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā'* for clues as to the considerations behind the overall choice of scenes for depiction in this copy. We must therefore take RAS P. 38 at face

¹⁸Melville, "Safavid manuscript painting", p. 168.



Fig. 2. An encounter between Tāsh and Abu'l-Ḥusain Sīmījūrī. Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*, RAS Ms. P. 38, fol. 34r. The Royal Asiatic Society holds all reproduction rights.

value, identifying the subjects chosen for illustration, how they relate to the text, and whether they follow earlier examples or provide a model for later ones, given that they were all produced within a relatively short time span, during the reign of the Safavid Shah 'Abbās I (r. 1587–1629).

Illustrations

I will first briefly consider all ten illustrations, setting them in their immediate verbal context, before drawing some general observations.

f. 34r: An encounter between Tāsh, commander-in-chief of the army under Nūḥ b. Maṣṣūr b. Nūḥ the Samanid (r. 976–97), and Abu'l-Ḥusain Sīmījūrī (see Fig. 2).

Tāsh moved to attack Abu'l-Ḥusain in Nishapur and was strengthened by the arrival of 2,000 Dailami troops. On hearing this news, Abu'l-Ḥusain fled under cover of darkness, and Tāsh's army went in pursuit, gaining much plunder. Tāsh took control of Nishapur and wrote to Nūḥ, hoping for forgiveness and making excuses for his conduct.¹⁹

Clearly, therefore, the picture does not follow the immediate text very closely, depicting the battle that was implied rather than the taking of plunder. It is, in fact, a standard battle scene and it is not clear why it was of particular interest—compared with many others at this period towards the end of the Samanid era—and particularly the major encounter that soon followed between Abu'l-Ḥusain (who was reinforced by Fā'iq) and Tāsh, who was defeated

¹⁹Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat*, p. 56, lines 8 to 3. See Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh* (history of the Samanids, Buyids and Ghaznavids), (ed.) M. Raushan (Tehran, 2007), p. 30, probably Mīrkhwānd's immediate source.



Fig. 3. Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna and the dervish gambler. Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*, RAS Ms. P. 38, fol. 68r.

and fled (to Gurgan) after a severe battle.²⁰ It is possible the painting was intended to illustrate both scenes.

f. 60r: Battle between Maḥmūd of Ghazna and the Indian Raja.²¹

The surrounding text narrates how the Indian ruler in fear of the invader concentrated his forces between two mountains and blocked both the entrance and exit of the pass with a wall of mountainous elephants. The Muslim forces, however, met them with volleys of arrows and spears and the battle raged fiercely.²²

The painting thus follows the text quite closely. The campaign is not dated. Although no particular figure on the Muslim side is singled out in the painting, Mīrkhwānd particularly describes the valour of the commander of the advance guard, Abū ‘Abd-Allāh al-Ṭā’ī, which indicates the battle of Nardin that preceded the Qannuj campaign of 407/1017.²³

Maḥmūd’s Indian campaigns were indeed one of the most renowned aspects of his reign and are illustrated in Rashīd al-Dīn’s chronicle (see below), but not in other surviving copies of the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*; the Berlin copy celebrates his other famous feat, the smashing of the idols at Somnath.²⁴

²⁰Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat*, p. 57; for a brief background to the complex events of the time, see R. N. Frye, “The Sāmānids”, in R. N. Frye (ed.), *Cambridge History of Iran, vol. IV. From the Arab invasion to the Saljuqs* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 156. Stmjūrī is often called Abu’l-Ḥasan.

²¹Reproduced in black and white in Robinson, *Royal Asiatic Society*, p. 64.

²²Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat*, p. 110, lines 11–16.

²³See Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-tauwārikh*, as in n. 21, pp. 145–146, again Mīrkhwānd’s likely source.

²⁴Ms. or. fol. 169, f. 48r; online at: https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN67178157X&PHYSID=PHYS_0101&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001

f. 68r: An interior scene of Maḥmūd of Ghazna in his palace (see Fig. 3).

The painting illustrates an anecdote about Maḥmūd, one of several stories that follows the report of his death in 421/1030. The story concerns a destitute dervish (*rind*) who was a gambler and had won two pairs of birds, one of which he gave to the sultan. This continued for three days, but on the fourth the rogue arrived empty-handed and depressed, and claimed that his enemies had won 1,000 *dinars* off him. Maḥmūd laughed and gave him half (500 *dinars*) and forbade him to gamble on his behalf again. Mīrkhwānd remarks that there are several such pleasant stories about Maḥmūd, but they are not appropriate to the pursuit of history (*irād-i ānhā munāsib-i siyāq-i tārikh nīst*).²⁵

This makes it clear that the painting is chosen for its entertainment value rather than to illustrate a serious historical event, a point I shall return to. It would, however, be very difficult to understand the story from the illustration alone; few of the narrative elements are included (and not the two birds, for instance). It is, in fact, a generic scene of the ruler holding court.

f. 92r: An event in the reign of Khusrau b. Fīrūz b. Abū Kalījār, one of the last of the Buyid rulers of Iraq (r. 1049–56).²⁶

The incident described concerns a fracas in the souk of Baghdad between the Turkish troops of the Seljuq chief Tughrel Beg and the locals, in Ramaḍān 447/December 1055. Al-Malik al-Raḥīm (Khusrau) went to the caliph in person to be quit of any responsibility for the affair.²⁷

This again seems a relatively minor incident in the history of the period; the picture does not appear to represent the text and it is not clear what moment in the narrative it illustrates, nor who are the main protagonists—possibly the caliph (al-Qā'im) and Toghrel Beg are seated and Khusrau b. Fīrūz is the petitioner approaching the throne. The captives appearing in the bottom left hand corner, whose presence provided Basil Robinson with his title, are not mentioned but perhaps suggest that Khusrau brought some of the perpetrators of the violence against the Turks as part of his disclaimer. Clearly, there is no reference to the souk or any violent action.

f. 109v: An encounter between the Isma'ili troops of Buzurg-Umīd and the people of Qazvin in early 523/late December 1128.²⁸

The text records the plundering attack of the Nizaris on Qazvin, their departure with their substantial booty and the pursuit by the Qazvinis. One of the nobles of Qazvin was killed and the rest fled. Shortly afterwards, the army of Iraq arrived and laid siege to the castle of Lamassar.²⁹

²⁵Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat*, pp. 125, line 5, to 126, line 1.

²⁶Reproduced in black and white in Robinson, *Royal Asiatic Society*, p. 65.

²⁷Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat*, p. 178, lines 13–24, with several departures from the printed text and especially five lines before the picture (9–13) omitted. See C. E. Bosworth, "The political and dynastic history of the Iranian world (AD 1000–1217)", in J. A. Boyle (ed.), *Cambridge History of Iran, vol. V. The Saljuq and Mongol periods* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 46, for earlier sources and more recently, A. C. S. Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire* (Edinburgh, 2015), pp. 49–50.

²⁸Reproduced in black and white in B.W. Robinson, *Persian Paintings. Victorian and Albert Museum* (London, 1965), pp. 15–16 and plate 26.

²⁹Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat*, pp. 215, line 2, to 216, line 4, following Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārikh* (history of the Isma'ilis), (ed.) M. Raushan (Tehran, 2008), p. 138, who, however, gives the date as 1 Ramaḍān 523/25 August 1129 and the start of the siege of Lamassar as 14 Sha'bān 524/30 July 1130.



Fig. 4. Siyurghatmish struck by Muḥammad Jurmāʿī in battle. Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*, RAS Ms. P. 38, fol. 219r. The Royal Asiatic Society holds all reproduction rights.

This is once more a generic battle scene; it is not clear who are the Qazvinis and who are the Nizaris, nor who is winning, although those charging from the left seem to have the upper hand (and should therefore be the Nizaris).

f. 124v: Sultan Masʿūd (r. 1030–41), the Ghaznavid successor of Maḥmūd, feasting in a pavilion, c. 427/1034.³⁰

The reason for his abandoning himself to pleasures was the bad advice of his courtiers, who counselled him against going out to meet the growing threat of the Seljuqs.³¹

The painting is a standard scene of courtly feasting, with drinking and music. It has no specific elements to link it to the story; note that the heading before the verse [*shiʿr*] is left blank here.

f. 152r: This painting depicts the capture of Aḥmad-i ʿAṭāsh, the Ismaʿīli *dāʿī*, in 500/1107 and his being led a prisoner on a camel into Isfahan after the fall of Dizhkuh (Shahdiz) to the troops of Sultan Muḥammad b. Malikshāh (r. 1105–18).³²

This was certainly an important breakthrough in the Seljuqs' struggle against the Ismaʿīlis and brought Sultan Muḥammad much prestige. The painting is quite illustrative of the scene; the text mentions large crowds coming out of the city to witness the event. One of them asked him why, as an astrologer, he was unable to foresee his fate; the painting is

³⁰Reproduced in colour in Robinson, *Royal Asiatic Society*, p. 48, plate 28.

³¹Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat*, p. 248, lines 11–16.

³²Reproduced in black and white in Robinson, *Royal Asiatic Society*, p. 66.



Fig. 5. A battle between Saljūqshāh, atabeg of Fars, and the Mongols. Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*, RAS Ms. P. 38, fol. 237r.

placed in such a way that it draws attention to the moral of the story as much as to the facts.³³

f. 179v: The defeat of al-Malik Mu'ayyad Ay-Abā, ruler of Nishapur, at the hands of the Khwarazmshah Tekish, in 569/1174.³⁴

Another battle scene, but here evidently reflecting a particular event, which B.W. Robinson incorrectly associates with the Ghurid Sultan Quṭb al-Dīn. The picture attempts quite successfully to illustrate how the troops of Tekish were in ambush waiting for those of Mu'ayyad, as they came out of the waterless desert in small detachments.³⁵

This was an important moment for the establishment of Tekish's sultanate (r. 1172–1200), but the scene was perhaps chosen for its narrative interest rather than its historical significance.

f. 219r: A combat during the internecine wars of the Muzaffarids and their rivals in southern Iran on the eve of Timur's invasions (see Fig. 4).

This concerns the 'revolt' of Siyurghatmish, leader of the Aughānī tribes, against the Muzaffarid ruler of Kirman, Sulṭān-Aḥmad, who had succeeded Shāh-i Shujā' in 786/1384. The text relates how Siyurghatmish was struck by Muḥammad Jurnā'ī a with a

³³Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat*, p. 308, lines 1–9. The answer was that he foresaw himself entering Isfahan with a large entourage, but not this way! For this episode, see David Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers. A history of Isfahān in the Saljūq period* (London and New York, 2010), pp. 180–181, with the sources.

³⁴Reproduced in black and white in Robinson, *Royal Asiatic Society*, p. 67.

³⁵Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat*, p. 367, lines 7–15; date from 'Aṭā-Malik Juvainī, *Tārīkh-i jahān-gushā*, (ed.) Mīrzā Muḥammad Qazwīnī, vol. II (London, 1916), pp. 18–19, translation J. A. Boyle, *The History of the World Conqueror* (Manchester, 1958), pp. 290–291, whose account is probably Mīrkhwānd's immediate source. Cf. W. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion* (London, 1968), pp. 337–338.

blow of his mace, fell from his horse and was decapitated by one of the servants of Pahlavān ‘Alī Qūrchī, who sent Siyurghatmish’s head along with others, as well as the rich booty, to Sulṭān-Aḥmad in Kirman. In recognition of his services, Pahlavān ‘Alī was made chief of the Augḥānī tribe.³⁶

The battle is, naturally, merely one among countless others at this period. Nevertheless, the image is close to the text, at least in so far as the decapitation of Siyurghatmish is depicted at the centre of the composition. Note that the heading beneath the picture, ushering in a new section, is left blank.

f. 237r: A battle between the Salghurid atabeg of Fars, Saljūqshāh, and Mongol troops sent to restore order in the province (see Fig. 5).

Saljūqshāh and his supporter, Mengli Beg, were defeated. The latter first killed ‘Alā al-Daula, atabeg of Yazd, before escaping to Basra and thence to Egypt; Saljūqshāh tried to take refuge at the shrine of Shaikh Murshid in Kazarun, but was refused. The Mongols eventually caught up with him and he was executed at the foot of Qal‘eh Safid in 662/1263.³⁷

This was part of a sequence of struggles between the competing forces in southern Iran at the time; Saljūqshāh’s death paved the way for the atabegate of Abesh Khatun, the last Salghurid. Perhaps it held some particular significance for the ateliers in Shiraz where Ms. P. 38 was copied. The picture evidently shows the moment when Mengli Beg shoots and kills ‘Alā al-Daula of Yazd, though it is hard to make out exactly what is shown. The defacement of ‘Alā al-Daula seems to be deliberate but is not explained.

Discussion

To start with some general observations, of the ten paintings, six are battle scenes, three are court scenes with the prince enthroned, and one (the capture of ‘Aṭṭāsh) illustrates a particular event. As can be seen, the battle scenes all take place against a high rocky background, and are quite crowded and of a consistent colour palette, and spill out in a structured way into the margins, as they were clearly designed to do from the start.

In the court scenes, on the other hand, there is little to connect the elements in the margin with the main discourse in the centre of the composition; furthermore it appears from the outline of the marginal rulings that the extra space they provided was something of an afterthought.³⁸ All paintings have a very similar format, using the extra column in the margin, and having a passage of two or more lines of text above and below the picture, suggesting a planned, formulaic, insertion of the picture. In no case does the text itself seem to have been modified as a result of the insertion of the painting (though there are a number of minor textual variants compared with the printed text, and with the early Cambridge Ms. Gg. 4.23); however, there are passages of diagonal script preceding three of the paintings.³⁹ This is partly a decorative feature—although the illumination that one would

³⁶Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat*, pp. 577, line 19 to 578, line 2, possibly drawing from Ḥāfīz-i Abrū, *Jughrāfiyā*, (ed.) Ṣādeq Sajjādī, vol. III (Kirman) (Tehran, 1378/1999), pp. 176–177.

³⁷Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat*, pp. 619, line -3 to 620, line 6. There is some shared language with Ḥāfīz-i Abrū, *Jughrāfiyā*, (ed.) Ṣādeq Sajjādī, vol. II (Fars) (Tehran, 1378/1999), pp. 175–176. For the background, see Denise Aigle, *Le Fārs sous la domination mongole. Politique et fiscalité (XIII^e-XIV^e S.)*, Studia Iranica Cahier 31 (Paris, 2005), pp. 115–118.

³⁸See for example ff. 68r, 124v.

³⁹See ff. 67v, 109r, 124r.

normally expect to find in such passages is absent—and partly a way to manipulate the text so that the picture can be inserted in the correct place. This also indicates that the link between the text and the image was deliberate: in other words, the paintings illustrate what they were intended to illustrate, which prompts the questions, what and why?

As for their intention, one could be a purely decorative function to enhance the enjoyment of reading. While this is possible, the paintings are not evenly spread throughout the manuscript, as one might expect if it were their placement rather than their topic that was important. There are intervals of 34–26–8–24–17–15–28–27–40–18 folios between the pictures: not totally disparate, but certainly irregular (see Table 2).⁴⁰ Possibly, it was designed to include approximately one example of each of the dynasties covered, for there are scenes for the Samanids (1), Ghaznavids (3), Buyids (1), Ismaʿilis (1), Seljuqs (1) Khwarazmshahs (1) and atabegs (2), although in some cases there is an overlap (e.g. Buyids/Seljuqs; Ismaʿilis/Seljuqs). The actual ruler, however, is seldom depicted and it is hard to distinguish any particular emphasis on affairs in Fars as one might expect from an atelier in Shiraz.⁴¹

That there is some bunching around the reign of Maḥmūd of Ghazna, as one might expect, gives rise to another consideration, namely that his reign was rather heavily illustrated in the *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* of Rashīd al-Dīn, with c. 16 pictures, including six of the campaigns in India.⁴² Rashīd al-Dīn's history is a major source for Mīrkhwānd's work, as he acknowledges in his introductory list of authorities, which concludes with Rashīd al-Dīn and Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū.⁴³ The paintings in the Edinburgh Rashīd al-Dīn are of course very different and could not have served as a visual or iconographical model, but the existence of the Rashīd al-Dīn illustration cycles, repeated more or less closely in the reworkings by Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū (cf. the paintings in H. 1653, H. 1654 and the dispersed *Majmaʿ al-tawārīkh*),⁴⁴ might have suggested several scenes worth illustrating in this section of the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*. In fact, however, only one topic is directly followed in P. 38, namely the encounter between Tāsh and Abu'l-Ḥasan Sīmjūrī.⁴⁵ Instead, the comparison highlights the difference between the choices made. Whereas the *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* and Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū's chronicles illustrate scenes of genuine historical significance, or at least provide a sequence of royal coronations, the illustrator of P. 38 has clearly deliberately not chosen to follow them (and the same goes for the different scenes depicted in the other three manuscripts of volume four).⁴⁶

Of the large range of dramatic events that occurred in the period, from the eclipse of the Samanids onwards, including the struggles of the Ghaznavids against the Seljuqs and the latter against the Ismaʿilis and the murder, for instance, of Nizām al-Mulk, to the capture of Sultan Sanjar by

⁴⁰KR notes the same point in connection with the Berlin Ms. or. fol. 169.

⁴¹As observed also by KR, referring to RAS P. 38.

⁴²See Sheila S. Blair, *A Compendium of Chronicles. Rashid al-Din's illustrated history of the world* (London and Oxford, 1995), pp. 116–117.

⁴³Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*, vol. I, p. 18. Some indicative references to the *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* and the *Jughrāfiyā* of Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū are made in the notes above.

⁴⁴See Mohamad Reza Ghiasian, *Lives of the Prophets. The illustrations to Hafiz-i Abru's "Assembly of Chronicles"* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 102–103 (Dispersed ms.), 302–308 (H. 1653) and idem, "The Topkapi manuscript of the *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* (Hazine 1654) from Rashidiya to the Ottoman court: A preliminary analysis", *Iranian Studies* 51 no. 3 (2018), pp. 399–425, especially pp. 420–422 (H. 1654).

⁴⁵See D.T. Rice, *The Illustrations to the 'World History' of Rashid al-Din*, (ed.) B. Gray (Edinburgh, 1976), no. 41, showing the whole folio with the preceding (Arabic) text; H. 1654, f. 173v. The conquest of Narin/Nardin also seems to have caught the imagination of the artists (e.g. H. 1653, f. 296r).

⁴⁶As discussed in KR's unpublished paper.



Fig. 6. The marriage of the Seljuq Sultan Malikshāh. Mīrkhwānd, *Rauḍat al-ṣafā*, National Library of Russia, Ms. Dorn 273, fol. 139v.

the Ghuzz and on into the affairs of southern Iran after the fall of the caliphate—we can see that this is all missing from the cycle of paintings in P. 38. Instead, we see a handful of generic battle scenes of relatively minor military confrontations, and court scenes that might also be taken at first

sight simply to be depicting the dual aspects of warfare and princely authority that permeate the historiography and the legitimising iconographies of the period. In some cases, however, the pictures seem to be chosen and placed in such a way as to draw attention to a didactic message or entertaining story—such as Maḥmūd and the gambler, Mas'ūd neglecting the defence of the realm by feasting, or Aḥmad-i 'Aṭṭāsh being questioned about his powers of prognostication.

Why these particular scenes were chosen, of course, defies any firm conclusion, and whether they were made at the request of a client from the commercial ateliers in Shiraz, or a speculative choice by the artist(s) themselves, is not known. It is likely that the scenes were chosen simply to enhance the attractive appearance of the book, with little reference to earlier models—though none of them, except perhaps the capture of Aḥmad-i 'Aṭṭāsh, required any visual inventiveness. The fact that other illustrated copies of volume four had totally different sets of images shows clearly that no standard iconography had evolved for illustrating the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā* (see Table 2), though occasionally there are paintings placed in fairly close proximity. The only subject depicted more than once is the marriage of Mal-ikshāh, which is visualised quite differently in the two manuscripts concerned (see Fig. 6).⁴⁷ The absence of any such scenes in the later, even more scarce, illustrations of the *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, shows furthermore that they did not form the basis of a later tradition.

Karin Rührdanz's conclusion that the illustrations of the two manuscripts of the early 17th century display “a tendency to read the *Rauḍat al-ṣafā* as a book of lively stories rather than a collection of sober facts” surely holds good also for Ms. P. 38. Whatever the serious and high-minded intentions of Mīrkhwānd's own endeavour, he also mentions the need for historical writing to be entertaining.⁴⁸ By the time these texts were illustrated, in a non-royal context, there was perhaps little need to emphasize the meaning or the lessons of the history so remote from the new Safavid era.

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⁴⁷National Library of Russia, Dorn 273, f. 139v; compare with Berlin Ms. or. fol. 169, f. 110r, available online (follow the link in n. 25); despite being placed at the same place in the text, different moments are chosen, also noted by KR, who remarks on the close similarity between these two manuscripts in other respects.

⁴⁸Ansari, “Mīrkhwānd”, pp. 251–254.