



Iran

Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies

ISSN: 0578-6967 (Print) 2396-9202 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rirn20

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To cite this article: Charles Melville (2021) Akbar's History of the Timurids, *Iran*, 59:2, 203-224, DOI: [10.1080/05786967.2021.1911735](https://doi.org/10.1080/05786967.2021.1911735)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/05786967.2021.1911735>



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Published online: 20 Jun 2021.



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Akbar's History of the Timurids

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ABSTRACT

In around 1584, while based in his capital at Fatehpur-Sikri, Akbar commissioned a history of Timur and his successors, including his own reign up to that date. The result, the *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya*, an impressively large and heavily illustrated manuscript, now preserved in Patna, with 132 full-page paintings on 332 folios, has not received the same level of attention as Akbar's other historical commissions from around the same period, notably the *Tarikh-i Alfī* and the *Baburnama*. In particular, little or no attention has been paid to the text. This paper seeks to put the manuscript both in its immediate historical and historiographical context and in its relationship with these other illustrated works, created to celebrate Akbar's political and spiritual authority and dynastic inheritance. It can be shown that the portion of the *Tarikh-i Alfī* that covers the same period – including the reigns of Babur, Humayun and Akbar – draws almost verbatim on the *Khandan-i Timuriyya*. This suggests that the same author might have been responsible for both works and is consistent with other indications that the production of the manuscript might have been later than generally supposed.

KEYWORDS

Timur; millennial history;
Akbar; Mughal manuscripts;
Indo-Persian arts of the book

Although Indo-Iranian interactions go back as far as the human record permits us to trace them, a new era of particular vitality arose with the penetration of northern India from the eleventh century onwards, by conquerors bringing with them the Islamic faith and political and literary traditions that were already primarily Persian. This was the case whether the invaders were of Turkic (Ghaznavid), Iranian (Ghurid) or Turko-Mongol stock, issuing from eastern Iran and Transoxania: broadly speaking, the maturing wider Persianate or Perso-Islamic world.¹

The importance of Central Asia in completing the triangular framework of these trans-regional connections became particularly evident in the early sixteenth century, when the geopolitical map of the area became defined by the almost synchronous rise of three new imperial dynasties, the Safavids in Iran, the Shibanids in Transoxania and the Mughals (or Baburids) in north India. The two latter states arose directly out of the collapse of the Timurid Empire, reduced by the end of the fifteenth century to its territories in eastern Iran and Transoxania. The Mughals were direct descendants of Timur through their founding father, Babur (d. 1530), who also claimed descent from Chinggis Khan, as did

the Shibanids who replaced him in the former Timurid capital, Samarqand. Thus, in the early sixteenth century, three powers emerged that saw themselves one way or another as heirs of the Timurids, or perhaps more specifically of Timur, whose wide-ranging conquests across the region, consolidated by his successors, provided a recent and compelling model of political power and charismatic rulership. It is unsurprising that all three regimes needed to position themselves vis-à-vis the preceding dispensation, whether to distance themselves from it or to embrace it. Empires have a long afterlife, especially such a dazzling one as the Timurids'.²

Historical writing is one important way in which claims to legitimacy are articulated. As Maria Szuppe and others have shown, Persian historians drew some explicit links between Timur and the Safavids, especially as the regime matured under Shah 'Abbas (r. 1587–1629), who could be portrayed as the founder of the "imperial" period of Safavid history and for whom Timur could be seen as a model.³ This was accompanied by a tendency to write dynastic rather than universal chronicles, but also to move away from espousing earlier Turko-Mongol sources of legitimacy in favour of 'Alid

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¹See the introductory remarks to several essays in Canfield, ed., *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective*; the topic is recently enshrined in Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*. For the interactions in the first centuries of Islam in the realms of material culture, see Flood, *Objects of Translation*.

²Alcock, "The Afterlife of Empires," 369–73; see also Robinson, *In the Shadow of the Mongol Empire*, for the early Ming founder's efforts to justify overturning the "illegitimate" Yuan Mongol Empire in China, and comments also on the Timur's own use of the Mongol heritage, 37–42.

³Szuppe, "Timour et les Timourides," 316–24; Quinn, "Notes on Timurid Legitimacy."

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ones.⁴ As for the illustration of historical texts in manuscripts produced under the Safavids, Timur's exploits continued to provide an important source of inspiration, whether in copies of 'Ali Yazdi's *Zafarnama* (ca. 1429) made well into the reign of Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524–76), or dominating the illustration of the universal histories by Mirkhvand (1469) and Khvandamir (1524) up till around 1600, in the first part of the reign of 'Abbas.⁵

In Central Asia, the Timurid heritage was naturally of more immediate significance for the "neo-Chinggisid" dispensation that was established by the Abu'l-Khayrid Shibanid khans with the conquest of Samarqand in 1501. This involved both a restoration of Chinggisid norms and the appanage state,⁶ and a strong element of continuity with Timurid and Perso-Islamic cultural patronage.⁷ Nevertheless, initially at least, the Shibanids were anxious to dissociate themselves from "the pagan legacy of the Mongols" and the "negative cultural qualities of the Turco-Mongol heritage".⁸ The fluctuating weight given in Shibanid and later Central Asian historiography to Chinggisid and Timurid antecedents respectively shows, however, that both retained their vitality regardless of their waning potential for political legitimation.⁹ As recently discussed in Ron Sela's pioneering book on the *Legendary Biographies of Tamerlane*, Timur's career in particular ceased to be a formative element in the identity of the new Central Asian states, but resurfaced in the eighteenth century and in a new political context.¹⁰ The point is reinforced by the little evidence we have from the illustrated manuscript histories that were produced at the time.

Mas'ud b. 'Uthman Kuhistani's *Tarikh-i Abu'l-Khayr Khani* was composed for Abu'l-Ghazi Sultan 'Abd al-Latif Bahadur Khan (Kuchkonji, r. 1540–52), which provides an approximate date of composition but the copy itself is undated (sixteenth c.).¹¹ The work is devoted, as the title indicates, to the career of the Shibanid ruler Abu'l-Khayr (d. 1468), who essentially founded the fortunes of the dynasty. Nevertheless, the chronicle is in the form of a universal history in four sections (*daftar*), containing (1) the prophets and the caliphate up to the rise of Chinggis Khan (ff. 1v–

130v); (2) the rise and rule of Chinggis Khan and the Ilkhanate in Iran (ff. 131r–192r); (3) the career of Timur and his successors (ff. 192v–209v); and finally (4) the rise of the Shibanids (ff. 210v–240r). The manuscript contains 28 paintings, distributed as follows: Section one, 13 paintings; section two, 10; section three, 2; and section four, 3. It is clear immediately, therefore, that the Timurid history is the briefest; furthermore, neither of the two paintings concerns the career of Timur – both illustrate scenes involving Abu'l-Khayr Khan fighting his successors.¹² The only other illustrated chronicle of which I'm aware from this milieu and period is the anonymous *Tarikh-i Nusratnama*, a dynastic history of the Mongols from Chinggis Khan to Muhammad Shibani Khan, composed in Chaghatay Turkish around 909/1504, evidently to celebrate the conquest of Samarqand. The manuscript, undated, can be attributed to Bukhara ca. 1550–60.¹³ It contains 16 paintings, none of which, in the current rather disturbed state of the manuscript, contains a scene from the life of Timur.¹⁴

Thus far, we have seen that historical literature provides a good indication of the political self-identification of royal patrons and their contemporaries: as Anooshahr expresses it, "historiography [...] was the medium par excellence for premodern states in the Persianate world to express their visions of themselves and their place in the world".¹⁵ This is reinforced by the choices involved in illustrating manuscript chronicles. The arts of the book and such combinations of text and image are also one of the most striking manifestations of the close connections between India and Iran and give voice and view to the shared literary and artistic Persianate culture of these two neighbouring civilisations. A particular example of this is the Indo-Persian manuscript that is the topic of this paper.

The *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya*

The anonymous *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya* is a history of Timur and his successors, down to the first

⁴Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 25, 28–9; Quinn and Melville, "Safavid Historiography," 225–6. Aldous, "The Qazvin Period," 38–40, locates the origins of Safavid dynastic historiography in the latter part of the reign of Shah Tahmasp. For the emergence of the 'Alid component, see e.g. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 37–46, 54–5.

⁵Melville, "The Illustration of History," 165–72.

⁶McChesney, *Central Asia*, 124–5; McChesney, "The Chinggisid Restoration," 278–82.

⁷McChesney, "Islamic Culture," 243–8; for some further discussion, see Schwarz, "Safavids and Ozbeks," 362–4.

⁸Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Eurasian Empires*, 84, 86.

⁹McChesney, "The Chinggisid Restoration," 283–6; See also Melville, "Perceptions of History."

¹⁰Sela, *Legendary Biographies*, 9–18.

¹¹Tashkent, al-Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies, MS no. 9989.

¹²Abu'l-Khayr Khan in battle with Ulugh Beg (f. 201v); Abu'l-Khayr besieging a city (f. 203r).

¹³BL. Or. 3222; see Rieu, *Catalogue of Turkish Manuscripts*, 276–80. Thanks to Michael Erdmann for providing images from this manuscript.

¹⁴Brend, "A Sixteenth-century Manuscript."

¹⁵Anooshahr, *Turkestan*, 140, referring specifically to Indo-Persian historiography but applicable more widely.

Mughal emperors, commissioned by Akbar the Great (r. 1556–1605), while he was based at Fatehpur Sikri and commonly dated ca. 1584–6.¹⁶ As remarked by Milo Beach, one of the few scholars of Mughal art to pay much attention to it, “the manuscript has been surprisingly neglected. As the first known Mughal historical manuscript, it is an important precursor for all later illustrated histories”.¹⁷ Indeed, the history, sometimes called the *Timurnama*, is generally mentioned briefly in passing or not at all in studies of Mughal painting.¹⁸ One reason for this might be the relative inaccessibility of the unique manuscript, carefully preserved at the Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna (formerly Bankipore), certainly in comparison with the several contemporary copies of the *Baburnama* and *Akbarnama* produced soon afterwards. Although the manuscript has been digitised, the file is only available in the Library and the volume itself can only be viewed by special arrangement.¹⁹ As importantly, the text has not been published nor studied: such attention as the manuscript has received has focused entirely on the paintings and the artists involved.²⁰

My introductory remarks here are based on an all-too-brief inspection of the manuscript on 26–27 February 2020 and aided by the detailed description by S.P. Verma, available in the reading room but still in typescript.²¹ Some important information is also provided by John Seyller.²² Black and white photographs of all the miniatures were listed and reproduced by Wali ud-Din Khuda Bakhsh in 1920,²³ but very few of the paintings have been published – often the same ones – in modern scholarly literature. A set of 12 colour reproductions was printed in a random order and without any details by V.C. Scott O'Connor under the title, *Timur Nama*; one or two

other colour images have been published occasionally.²⁴

Before turning to a consideration of the manuscript, it is necessary to recall a few details of the context in which it was produced. The Mughals' Timurid heritage and Babur's early preoccupation with recovering his ancestral dominions were enshrined in both literature and art, starting with Babur's own memoirs, written in Chaghatay Turkish. As Irfan Habib has shown, however, the memory of Timur's violence and his massacre and sacking of Delhi in 1398 was not an automatic nor positive basis for asserting the legitimacy of the new dynasty in India, and Babur did not base claims to rule on Timurid descent.²⁵ This point is further developed by Ali Anooshahr, who shows that it was not until the reign of Humayun (r. 1530–56, with a lengthy interruption) that Indo-Persian historiography lent itself to a more engaging representation of Timur and his fundamental role in the Mughals' genealogy. An early Persian translation of the *Baburnama*, Khvandamir's *Qanun-i Humayuni* and the anonymous *Tarikh-i Ibrahimi*, all composed under Humayun, redress the negative image of Timur and reassert Humayun's Timurid heritage.²⁶

Visual confirmation of this trend is provided by the fragmentary painting on cloth, known as the “Princes of the House of Timur”, that was made ca. 1550–55 by Persian artists from Safavid Iran, probably Mir Sayyid ‘Ali, who migrated to Humayun's court at Kabul.²⁷ While the subject and exact identity of the original figures is open to doubt, the painting in its purely Persian style of Shah Tahmasp's court artists provided a precedent for many later dynastic or genealogical depictions of Timur alongside his descendants and conferring legitimacy upon them, as in various album pages made

¹⁶Verma, *Art and Material Culture*, xix–xx; Verma, *Persian, Ottoman and Indian Miniatures*, 145–6. For an early notice of the work, see “Notes on a Unique History” by A. Muqtadir, who also catalogued the Bankipore manuscripts. See also Storey, *Persian Literature*, vol. 1 pt 1, 298–9. Das, *Mughal Masters*, 10, locates the completion of the manuscript in Lahore, after 1586 (see also below).

¹⁷Beach, *Early Mughal Painting*, 84, cf. Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, 48. He presumably intended the first known *illustrated* Mughal historical manuscript. See also Beach, *The Imperial Image*, index and esp. 218–20; the revised edition of this work has no further material on the manuscript, except to note, pp. 39 n. 39, 196 n. 8, that a full publication is now (2012) planned.

¹⁸Barrett and Gray, *Painting of India*; Losty, *The Art of the Book*, 79; Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 20; Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 53; Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*. Some exceptions are noted below.

¹⁹I am most grateful to Shayesta Bedar for her considerable hospitality and kindness during my visit and her invaluable assistance in facilitating my access to the manuscript.

²⁰A brief exception is Muqtadir, “Notes on a Unique History,” 267–9.

²¹Verma, *Persian, Ottoman and Indian Miniatures*, 145–67, with references to several of his own earlier publications that I have been unable to consult, beginning with “Miniatures of the Ta'rikh-i Khandan-i Timuriya,” *Roopa-Lakha* 48, no. 1–2 (1976): 56–60.

²²Seyller, “The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts,” 276, 309–10. Not consulted by Verma.

²³Khuda Bakhsh, *Descriptive List*, 4–13. A copy of this is available in the British Library, London, shelf mark 14773.I.3 and another in Cambridge University Library, shelf mark 898.a.135, cf. Storey, *Persian Literature*, 299. I am most grateful to Ursula Sims-Williams for her help in identifying these copies.

²⁴O'Connor, *Timur Nama*, has 12 colour plates of varying quality, of folios 2v, 53v, 22v, 57v, 7v, 118r, 72r, 4v, 55v, 28r, 121r and 134r. The cover of the Album reproduces Shah Jahan's inscription on the second fly leaf, see below. One image (f. 58v) and two details (from ff. 2v, 72r) are used to by Rumer Godden, *Gulbadan*, 35, 41, 43, to illustrate a different text. See also Vaughan, “Begams of the House of Timur,” 127, 131.

²⁵Habib, “Timur in the Political Tradition,” 298–300. See also Anooshahr, *Turkestan*, 115–31, regarding Mirza Haydar Dughlat's nostalgia for the Mongol ruling aristocracy and contemptuous condescension towards the Chaghatay, mixed with embarrassment about their violence and paganism.

²⁶Anooshahr, *Turkestan*, 155–60. For Khvandamir in India and other historians of Humayun, see also Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 128–30.

²⁷British Museum, 1913.2–8.1. See Falk, “Princes of the House of Timur,” 6; Elgood, “Who Painted Princes of the House of Timur?,” 30. Losty, *The Art of the Book*, 73; Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 63, 65, fig. 59; Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 31–6, fig. 1, 13.

for Jahangir (r. 1605–27) and Shahjahan (r. 1627–58) and the frontispiece of the Windsor *Padshahnama*.²⁸

On his accession to the throne aged thirteen, on Humayun's unfortunate and premature death in 1556, Akbar still had work to do to consolidate Mughal rule, still only tenuously re-established by his father after a long exile, spent partly in Iran. Always devoted to the arts, by the early 1580s, following a string of conquests and previous commissions, Akbar turned to ordering the production of illustrated historical works, as a vehicle for promoting his imperial image and celebrating the dynasty's legitimate place in the supra-regional context of the eastern Islamic world. The first such commission was the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, or millennial history, inaugurated in 1582 but not completed until around 1594. The text exists in numerous manuscript exempla, but Akbar's original illustrated copy is widely if sparsely dispersed and the illustration cycle has not been recovered.²⁹ The significance of the millennial "message" of the *Tarikh-i Alfi* can be readily understood, especially in view of the development of Akbar's attitudes towards religion and the spirituality of his own nature, coinciding as it did with the conclusion of the immediate crisis surrounding his religious pronouncements in 1579–82.³⁰

It is perhaps worth suggesting that the history of Timur – the next work to be commissioned, just two-three years later – can also be thought to reflect a complementary messianic outlook. Although the illustration of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* represents a thoroughly secular and mundane narrative, there can be little doubt that Akbar and his courtiers were aware of the way in which Timur's charismatic persona had been fashioned by his chroniclers, particularly 'Ali Yazdi, to present him as far more than a military conqueror and warlord: as Lord of the Planetary Conjunction

and spiritual guide, master of temporal and spiritual authority, a second Alexander and so on.³¹ Azfar Moin in particular has developed this theme in the context of both Safavid Iran and Mughal India.³²

As we shall see, the production of two large-scale illustrated chronicles at the same time raises some important questions about their relationship. Akbar followed up the commission of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* with other texts that also looked back to his dynastic forebears, namely the translation of the *Baburnama*, illustrated in several surviving copies from ca. 1589,³³ to 1597–8;³⁴ the Mongol history of Chinggis Khan, a version of the *Jami' al-tavarikh*, dated 1596;³⁵ the *Zafar-nama* of 'Ali Yazdi, another history of Timur, ca. 1598–1600;³⁶ and finally his own history, penned by Abu'l-Fazl, the *Akbarnama*, also surviving in two contemporary illustrated copies from 1589–98 and ca. 1600.³⁷ There is no need to dwell here on these well-known, luxurious manuscripts, discussed and illustrated in all studies of Mughal art.³⁸ Rare comparisons with the illustrations in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* underline the significance of the manuscript for the development of the later Mughal style,³⁹ which makes its relative neglect the more unfortunate. Equally interesting are the unasked questions of its authorship and the significance of the text as a source for later historical compilations.

The Patna Manuscript

The unique manuscript of the "History of the Timurid dynasty" is kept at the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, no. 551 (HL 107). It has 338 folios and is defective at the end and apparently at the beginning; it has large dimensions, measuring 392 × 255 mm (page) and 244 × 155 mm (written surface).⁴⁰ Given

²⁸Such as the "Johnson Album," IOL 64 no. 38 and the "Minto Album," V&A, IM. 8-125; Goswamy and Fischer, *Wonders of a Golden Age*, 90–3; Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 30–2, fig. 30, 58, fig. 56; Beach, "The Padshahnama," 117–18, fig. 3. For the overpainting and repurposing of the heavily reworked picture, see especially Seyller, "Recycled Images," 64.

²⁹See e.g. Beach, *Imperial Image*, 91–9; 2nd ed. 77–80.

³⁰Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 130–8; see also Huseini, "The First Islamic Millennium," for a recent discussion of the development of the "Din-i Ilahi".

³¹Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks*, 251–4; Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 23–37.

³²Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, chaps. 3 and 4.

³³Partly in the Victoria and Albert Museum, for which see Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 86–92 and dispersed pages in the Freer Gallery, Beach, *Imperial Image*, 2nd ed., 61–6.

³⁴The British Library copy, Or. 3714, dated 1006/1591, was published by Suleiman, *Miniatures of the Babur-nama*, and is available at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Or_3714. For the Moscow MS, dated ca. 1593, see Vorobyova, *Babur-name*, with a concordance of the images in the London, Delhi and Moscow copies, 158–63, brief English summary, 165–6. Thanks to Firuza Melville for help with this. Another portion of the Moscow MS is in Baltimore, W.596, see online at <https://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W596/description.html>. The Delhi National Museum has a fourth copy, 50.336, dated ca. 1597–8.

³⁵Partly dispersed, and mainly in Tehran, Gulistan Palace Library, MS no. 2254, dated 1004/1596; see Beach, *Imperial Image*, 99–102, 2nd ed. 80–2, with references; also Blair, *A Compendium of Chronicles*, 106–8; Kamola, *Making Mongol History*, 263–4.

³⁶Bubbar, *Masters of the Mughal and Rajput Courts*, 6–17; a work that has received little or no attention, but is mentioned in Abu'l-Fazl's *A'in-i Akbari*, I, 115 (*A'in* 34) as one of the highlights of artistic production under Akbar, frequently cited, e.g. Muqtadir, "Note on a Unique History," 271; Das, *Dawn of Mughal Painters*, 6–7.

³⁷Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 36–85; Beach, *Imperial Image*, 83–91, 102–23; 2nd ed. 67–76, with bibliographies.

³⁸See Brand and Lowry, *Akbar's India*, 57–85 and *passim*, in addition to studies cited throughout this paper.

³⁹Verma, "Painting under Akbar," 151–3; Beach, *Early Mughal Painting*, 114–28. See also n. 73 below.

⁴⁰The recorded dimensions vary slightly in different publications: those noted are my measurements in situ.

the difficulty of obtaining accurate and consistent measurements of the dimensions of similar codices and the fact that many manuscripts and individual detached folios have been re-margined or trimmed for mounting or rebinding, it is perhaps the size of the pictures that best creates its impact.⁴¹ They range from around 315–380 mm in height to 215–248 mm in width, averaging ca. 345 × 235 mm, now leaving, as can be seen, very little margin.⁴² Overall, this makes the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* much smaller than the enormous pages of the *Hamzanama*, completed previously, but similar to the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, which was still in production at the time the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* was commissioned,⁴³ and close to the *Chingiznama* or *Jami' al-Tavarikh* of 1596 (page ca. 390 × 290, paintings ca. 340 × 210). The paintings, if not the pages, are certainly larger than those in Akbar's other illustrated historical works such as the *Baburnamas*, *Akbarnamas* and the *Zafarnama*.⁴⁴ All this merely serves to emphasise the large scale and physical presence of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* – it creates a striking appearance: a virtual state document “and almost ceremonially large and impressive”,⁴⁵ as well as Akbar's concern to establish beyond doubt his image as a universal ruler descended from glorious imperial forebears.

Apart from the paintings, there is little decoration in the manuscript and, as currently bound, very narrow margins; the names of the artists involved are generally written below each painting.⁴⁶ The text frame is ruled in blue and thick gold lines, the latter set between two pairs of thin black and gold rulings. These are generally somewhat faded and corroded; the inner text frame (when text appears within the painting) is ruled in two thin black and gold lines. There are 20 lines per page, sometimes 21.

One interesting point that confirms Akbar's engagement with the production of the manuscript is the rare example of his handwriting, seen in an inscription “Amir Timur Shah Sahib Qiran” above the first painting, on fol. 2v, which depicts the young Timur playing at being king.⁴⁷ The quality and importance of the manuscript is also indicated by how it was valued: as a Class 1, grade 3 manuscript and given the very high value of 150 muhrs, 8,000 rupees, the fourth highest ever noted.⁴⁸

John Seyller provides a detailed analysis of the seals and inscriptions on the opening folios of the manuscript, which apart from elucidating the numerous librarians' inspections (*'arz-dāda*) that the volume underwent throughout the Mughal era, contain two useful notes on its contents:

Entered in it are all the *Zafarnama*. A history covering the time of His late Majesty [Akbar] to some of the history of the Lord of the Conjunction [Timur]. And the individual who previously assembled [the accounts] from the beginning of the days of the reign of His late Majesty is not known.⁴⁹

This history, which includes a compendium of the affairs of the Lord of the Conjunction (*ḥaẓrat ṣāhib-qirān*), the world-conqueror [Timur], and his glorious descendants and the events of the days of the *'arsh āshyānī* [Akbar], may God illuminate his proof, to the 22nd year [of his reign], was composed in the time of Shah Baba [Shah Jahan's grandfather, Akbar]. This has been written by the Padshah Shah Jahan, son of the Padshah Jahangir, son of the Padshah Akbar.⁵⁰

The second of these merely records more accurately the emphasis on the reign of Timur and the early years of Akbar (year 22 is equivalent to 984–5/1577–8). More remarkable is the first inscription, putting the focus on

⁴¹See Sims, “The Garrett Manuscript,” 358–9, n. 13, for a table of folio sizes of Akbar's comparable historical manuscripts; these are purely indicative, given the variations recorded elsewhere. Secondary sources seldom if ever record all three dimensions of page, written surface and picture.

⁴²The dimensions of each painting are conveniently recorded by Verma, *Persian, Ottoman and Indian Miniatures*. One effect of the modern rebinding was to trim many of the catchwords, as mentioned by Muqtadir, “Note on a Unique History,” 267.

⁴³Completed in 1594, with originally perhaps 300 paintings, Beach, *Imperial Image*, 94. Folios of ca. 420 × 245 mm and paintings ca. 410 × 225 have been recorded.

⁴⁴Published dimensions of paintings are often lacking or can appear to refer to the whole painted page rather than just the picture, see references in nn. 33–35 above. Bubbar, *Masters of the Mughal and Rajput Courts*, 6, distinguishes the “original manuscript folio” (180 × 96 mm) from the “re-margined folio” (280 × 195 mm) of the *Zafarnama*, perhaps intending the written surface from the full page. The three paintings illustrated all fit within the ruled margins of the written surface.

⁴⁵Beach, *Imperial Image*, 22.

⁴⁶See Beach, *Imperial Image*, 218–20, for a list of the artists involved, both designers and colourists, numbering around 70; Verma, *Art and Material Culture*, 124–9, also provides a list of the artists working under Akbar and the productions in which they were involved.

⁴⁷Reproduced in Brand and Lowry, *Akbar's India*, 72 fig. 8. See Smart, “Akbar, Illiterate Genius,” 105; Seyller, “The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts,” 244. Smart argues that Akbar was dyslexic rather than illiterate. For this picture, see also below.

⁴⁸At least, at the date of Seyller's publication, “The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts,” 274, 276.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 309. He refers this to f. 1r, which he illustrates in fig. 24, p. 266; the image is not sufficiently clear to read and I follow Seyller's translation here. Verma, *Persian, Ottoman and Indian Miniatures*, 146, refers to this as the “first flyleaf”. See also Muqtadir, “Notes on a Unique History,” 268, who also records the name of (Francis) Gladwin.

⁵⁰My translation; cf. Khuda Bakhsh, *Descriptive List*, 4; Seyller, “The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts,” 310; Verma, *Persian, Ottoman and Indian Miniatures*, 146. Seyller refers to this as f. 2r, Verma as the “second flyleaf”. My notes, doubtless too hasty, do not record the folio of this second inscription or of the further (third) set of inscriptions that Seyller refers to the “flyleaf”. According to my notes, the flyleaf contains numerous seals; f. 1r contains the title; ff. 1v–2r are blank; f. 2v contains the first painting, of Timur playing at being king, followed by further full-page paintings, with no text, on ff. 3v, 4v, 5v, and 6v, with blank pages in between. The text itself starts on f. 7r. See also below.

the reign of Akbar and only some of the history of Timur, a statement clearly undermined by the actual contents and also the paintings – 82 (over half) of which illustrate the life of Timur, with another 32 of his descendants up till the career of Babur, leaving only seven pictures of Babur, three of Humayun and eight of Akbar.

I will turn to the cycle of paintings, which have attracted the most attention from art historians up till now, in the concluding section of this paper. First, I would like to take up the question of the authorship of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya*, its sources and its use by later writers – that is, how it fits into the historiography of the period it covers. The discussion is hampered by the current difficulties of gaining access to libraries and collections for comparative textual study and more importantly by the fact that I do not have a copy of the whole manuscript. These preliminary remarks, therefore, are based on investigation of a brief but representative selection of the pages that contain both text and painting – a large number of the pictures (61) are full page and contain no written passages.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the evidence leads to a clear conclusion and raises some points about the context and production of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* that will require further research.

Text and Sources

The first inscription noted above states specifically that “all the *Zafarnama*” is incorporated into the text of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya*, and indeed this is as one would expect, ‘Ali Yazdi’s history of Timur quickly becoming the standard account of the conqueror’s career. The *sahib-i Zafarnama* is mentioned in the second line of the text as it currently begins (f. 7r), as part of what is evidently the author’s response to his commission, suggesting that maybe only one page of text is missing from the beginning of the manuscript – the command that the world obeys being for him not to “blacken the pages except by explaining events (*sharḥ-i aḥvāl*) that are aimed at the delights of the art of history (*lazzat-i fann-i tārikh*)”, that is to produce a work of history that is a pleasure to read (see Figure 1).

It is immediately clear that not only is the author summarising and apologising for the brevity of his work – the aim being to describe truthfully and clearly

the essence of the dynasty of the Sahib Qiran – but also that he is not merely absorbing verbatim passages of the *Zafarnama* into his own narrative.⁵² Such an abbreviation makes it interesting to determine what was retained and what was omitted and to question whether he used other sources and introduced material not found in ‘Ali Yazdi’s history. A further question that can be explored is whether there are any verbal or textual relationships between the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* and other historical works covering the same period that were being commissioned and composed in Akbar’s ateliers.

As it happens, the second of these questions can be answered very easily. Although the dependency on ‘Ali Yazdi’s history for the career of Timur is obvious – as noted later – I cannot be sure, without access to the whole text, if there is any pattern or method in what is omitted and whether anything is added from other sources. But it can be demonstrated beyond question that in every case where I have examined the text of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya*, it can be found repeated word for word in the *Tarikh-i Alfi*. This is true from the very beginning – the start of the text on f. 7r (Figure 1) is found verbatim in the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, at the start of year 763 AH (1362), generally taken to mark the rise of Timur and a new phase of history.⁵³ This suggests that in fact, there may be nothing missing from the beginning of the Patna manuscript and it starts as intended.

As noted earlier, the *Khandan-i Timuri* is stated (in Shah Jahan’s inscription) to have concluded, seemingly abruptly, in year 22 of Akbar, basically 985/1577. In fact, the last picture, on the penultimate page (f. 337v) depicts a battle between Akbar and Muhammad Husayn Mirza in Gujarat and the martyrdom of Sayf Khan Kukeltash, recorded in 981/1573, Akbar’s year 18.⁵⁴ Thus there are indeed a few folios now missing at the end. It nevertheless remains a strange coincidence that all copies of the *Tarikh-i Alfi* used for the printed edition also end – apparently incomplete – the same year, 984–5/1576–7,⁵⁵ despite the fact that the final version was presented to Akbar in 1002/1594 and was then complete up to the year 997/1589.⁵⁶ This provokes all manner of speculations, but the textual parallels between the two works show clearly that the *Tarikh-i Alfi* must have drawn entirely on the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* not only for the life of Timur but also for the period of his

⁵¹Verma, *Persian, Ottoman and Indian Miniatures*, 150, says there are 59 full-page pictures “bereft of text”.

⁵²Unlike Mirza Haydar Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, 23–78, who explicitly repeats ‘Ali Yazdi’s text under the rubrics *naql az Zafarnāma*.

⁵³Tattavi and Qazvini, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 4623–4. Cf. Manz, *Rise and Rule*, 45–7.

⁵⁴See Tattavi and Qazvini, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 5888–9. Differently reported in Abu’l-Fazl, *Akbarnama*, V, 172–5.

⁵⁵So, according to the editor, see Tattavi and Qazvini, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 5929 and n. 1. Storey, *Persian Literature*, 120–21, however, also notes several MSS of the *Tarikh-i Alfi* continuing to 994/1586 and one to 997/1588–9.

⁵⁶Beach, *Imperial Image*, 2nd ed., 77, citing the progress reports of Bada’uni, *Muntakhab al-tavarikh*.

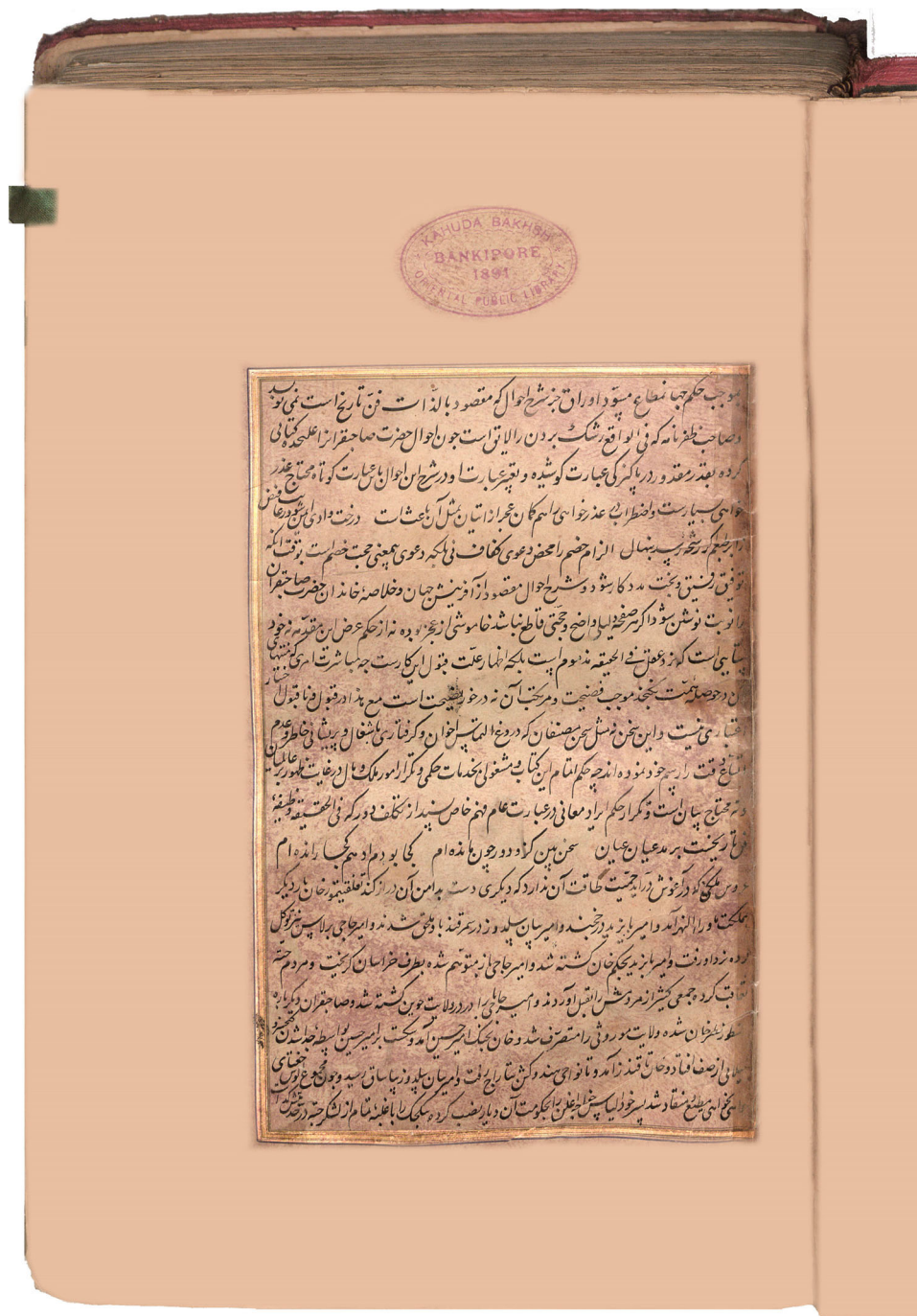


Figure 1. Incipit, *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya*, MS. HL 107, fol. 7r. Photo © Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna.

descendants and again from Babur to Akbar for events in Hindustan. The *Khandan-i Timuriyya* draws exclusively on the *Vaqi'at-i Babur* (*Tuzuk-i Baburi*, *Baburnama*) for the account of the last Timurid, Sultan-Husayn Bayqara (r. 1470–1506), translating word for word (*lafz bi-lafz*) from the “Turki” original without changing anything, and frequently cites the same authority for the history of Babur and Humayun.⁵⁷ Although

the author of the later passages, concerning Akbar, is unknown to the royal librarian, one possibility at least is that it was written by Asaf Khan Qazvini, who incorporated the work into the final, third, volume of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*. This might, indeed, explain the relatively rapid completion of the work after the very slow initial stages. The introduction to the third volume, starting with the reign of Ghazan Khan (694/1295), composed

⁵⁷ Muqtaḍir, “Note on a Unique History,” 269; hence also the indirect source for the relevant passages in the *Tarikh-i Alfi* up to the start of the reign of Humayun.

by Asaf Khan (Ja'far Beg), records his assuming responsibility for completing the work after the murder of Shaikh Ahmad Tattavi on 15 Safar 996/15 January 1588.⁵⁸ This is some time after the date generally assigned to the completion of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* but either shows that the text of the latter was finished by then – to be copied straight into the *Tarikh-i Alfi* by 1002/1594, when it was presented to Akbar – or perhaps that production on it was still in progress but work on Timurid-Mughal history from Akbar's year 22 onwards was then switched to the *Tarikh-i Alfi* for completion.

As for the impact of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* on other works produced around this time, it can at least be said that despite the coverage of the same events and some minor convergences of phrasing noted in a few cases, it does not seem to have been a major source for the *Akbarnama*.⁵⁹ The fact that Akbar went on to commission a copy of 'Ali Yazdi's *Zafarnama* may suggest he was not entirely satisfied with the summary treatment in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya*, which may also partly explain its "disappearance".⁶⁰

The Pictorial Cycle

As noted, the *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya* contains 132 large paintings – comprising 16 double-page pictures and 100 single page,⁶¹ of which 78 illustrate episodes of the life of Timur. This is greater than any other effort to visualise his activities, the nearest precedent being the famous manuscript of 1436, commissioned by Ibrahim-Sultan, with 37 paintings.⁶² If the author's text was heavily (or even entirely) dependant on 'Ali Yazdi's *Zafarnama*, maybe the same could be said of the paintings, following earlier choices of scenes even if not the manner of their execution.

One such source might be anticipated to be the so-called Garrett manuscript, commissioned by the Timurid ruler Sultan-Husayn Bayqara and dated 872/1467–8,

which contains six double-page paintings.⁶³ This manuscript was kept in the Mughal royal library and was highly valued by Akbar, who was presented with the book sometime around 1572 and inscribed it with the word "Farvardin", another rare example of his handwriting.⁶⁴ If Akbar chose the subjects for depiction it is reasonable to suggest this might have been a model, though necessarily only for twelve paintings. Apart from a picture supposedly showing Timur enthroned (f. 5v), however, the only scene in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* that certainly follows the Garrett *Zafarnama* is the episode of Timur's attack on the Georgians who had taken refuge in the caves at Nerges in 798/1396 (f. 69v, see Figure 2).⁶⁵ This particular episode is not illustrated elsewhere, although the topic of troops being lowered in "boxes" (*sunduq*) to attack the Georgians defending themselves in caves was a popular one and is illustrated once more in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* (f. 122r, see Figure 3), regarding Timur's campaign in Abkhazia in 806/1403, a scene also depicted in Ibrahim-Sultan's *Zafarnama*.⁶⁶

A similar episode at the start of the Indian campaign in 800/1398, in which Timur attacked the Siyah-pushan by lowering men and horses down from the snow-covered cliffs, is depicted in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* (f. 73r, see Figure 4), close to the heavily abbreviated text that moves straight on to the subsequent assault on the citadel depicted at the bottom left of the picture.⁶⁷ The closest equivalent to this interpretation of the event is a painting in a manuscript dated 1009/1600–1601, of provincial Mughal style, which may well have been informed by this model.⁶⁸

Another popular, if grisly, subject is Timur's penchant for building towers of skulls of his defeated foes. The *Khandan-i Timuriyya* contains two such scenes, one after the massacre in Isfahan in 789/1387 (f. 38r, see Figure 5),⁶⁹ the other after the fall of Tikrit in 796/1393 (f. 58v).⁷⁰ The former is a typically close and literal

⁵⁸Tattavi and Qazvini, *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 4244; see also Anooshahr, "Dialogism and Territoriality," esp. 223–7 for an assessment of Ja'far Beg's role in disseminating the message of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*.

⁵⁹See n. 54 and other examples below, nn. 86, 87. Muqtadir, "Note on a Unique History," 269, notes that the author was an eyewitness of most of the events which he narrates.

⁶⁰The manuscript is not one of those listed by Abu'l-Fazl, *A'in-i Akbari*, A'in 34, see n. 36 above.

⁶¹Verma, *Art and Material Culture*, xx; repeated in Verma, *Persian, Ottoman and Indian Miniatures*, 146, whose list of pictures, however, includes two additional pairs that he specifically identifies as left and right sides of the same painting (69r/69v and 193r/194v, *sic*).

⁶²Including 13 double-page pictures; researched in detail by Sims, "Ibrāhīm-Sultān's Illustrated *Zafar-nāme*."

⁶³See esp. Sims, "The Garrett Manuscript of the *Zafar-name*," ahead of a considerable historiography on this famous manuscript, e.g. Natif, "The *Zafarnama* [Book of Conquest]."

⁶⁴See Arnold, *Bihzad and his Paintings*, 2–4; Seyller, "The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts," 280; Smart, "Akbar. Illiterate Genius," 104–5.

⁶⁵See 'Ali Yazdi's account, *Zafarnama*, 829–32 and the text on the previous page, fol. 69r, in the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 4861–2 (under 799 AH). This is one pair that Verma identifies as left and right side of the same scene, though they are not facing pages, see above, n. 61. Both were executed by the same team of designer and painter. He reverses the order of the pictures in his list, p. 159.

⁶⁶See 'Ali Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, 1213; Sims, "Ibrāhīm-Sultān's Illustrated *Zafar-nāme*," 208–9, fig. 31. A similar occasion on the campaign of 802/1400 as reported by 'Ali Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, 1016, is illustrated in at least two other manuscripts, see Melville, "Horrors of War," 169–70.

⁶⁷'Ali Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, 870–72; cf. *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 4869.

⁶⁸British Library MS, Or. 1052, f. 182v, reproduced in Melville, "Horrors of War," 179 and fig. 6. Other depictions include the tower of skulls that followed, not referred to in the text of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya*.

⁶⁹The text here closely follows 'Ali Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, 588; cf. *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 4776.

⁷⁰Cf. 'Ali Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, 746. The painting is reproduced in colour in Godden, *Gulbadan*, 41, to illustrate an episode in Babur's war against the Rajputs.



Figure 2. Timur's troops lowered in boxes to attack the Georgians in 1396, *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya*, MS. HL 107, fol. 69v. 357 × 220 mm. Photo © Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna.

translation of the key meaning of the text, with a scribe registering the number of heads being brought in by the troops, who soon, however, wearied of the sport when the market collapsed. Interestingly, neither episode is depicted in other copies of the *Zafarnama*, which instead illustrate several other occasions of “minarets” of decapitated heads.⁷¹

In terms of omissions, it is remarkable that there is only one scene of Timur hunting (f. 42v), despite the

frequency with which he hunted and the popularity of the royal hunt among the Mughals. The one occasion depicted was in 791/1389, but not the hunt later that year near Bukhara, the subject of a painting in Ibrahim-Sultan's copy of the *Zafarnama*, as well as in Akbar's copy of ca. 1600.⁷² The hunting scene in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* has been published and discussed by Beach, who sees it as a model for a picture of Akbar hunting near Palam and suggests that the same may be

⁷¹Melville, “Horrors of War,” 170, 179–80 and figs. 4–7.

⁷²See Sims, “Ibrāhīm-Sulṭān's Illustrated *Zafar-nāmeḥ*,” 199 and fig. 7; Bubbar, *Masters of the Mughal and Rajput Courts*, 6–9.



Figure 3. Timur's troops lowered in boxes to attack the Abkhazians in 1403, *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya*, MS. HL 107, fol. 122r. 342 × 220 mm. Photo © Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna.

true for the other scenes of Akbar's reign later depicted in the *Akbarnama*.⁷³

Apart from such scenes where the subject matter, if not the actual incident concerned, is common to the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* and earlier *Zafarnama* paintings, even a cursory glance through the list of illustrations suggests that there are inevitably many subjects depicted here for the first time,⁷⁴ despite the numerous illustrated copies

of the *Zafarnama* and a large number of subjects depicted.⁷⁵ One example is the picture of Timur and his men crossing the Oxus to attack Nikpay Shah in 768/1367 (f. 16v, see Figure 6), a dramatic scene ending in a battle on the facing page. The text condenses the account of two separate river crossings, and it is thus not without interest that Akbar's later copy of 'Ali Yazdi's *Zafarnama* includes an image of the first one, placed above the rubric

⁷³Beach, *Early Mughal Painting*, 115–19; see also Verma, *Art and Material Culture*, 15–16, pl. XII, 18, pl. XIII.

⁷⁴For the full list, see Khuda Bakhsh, *Descriptive List*, and the unpublished study by Verma, *Persian, Ottoman and Indian Miniatures*, 153–67. Both lists contain several inaccuracies and need a complete revision, which is beyond the scope of the present paper.

⁷⁵For a previous estimate, of around 20 MSS and about 120 separate subjects, see Melville, "Visualising Tamerlane," 84.

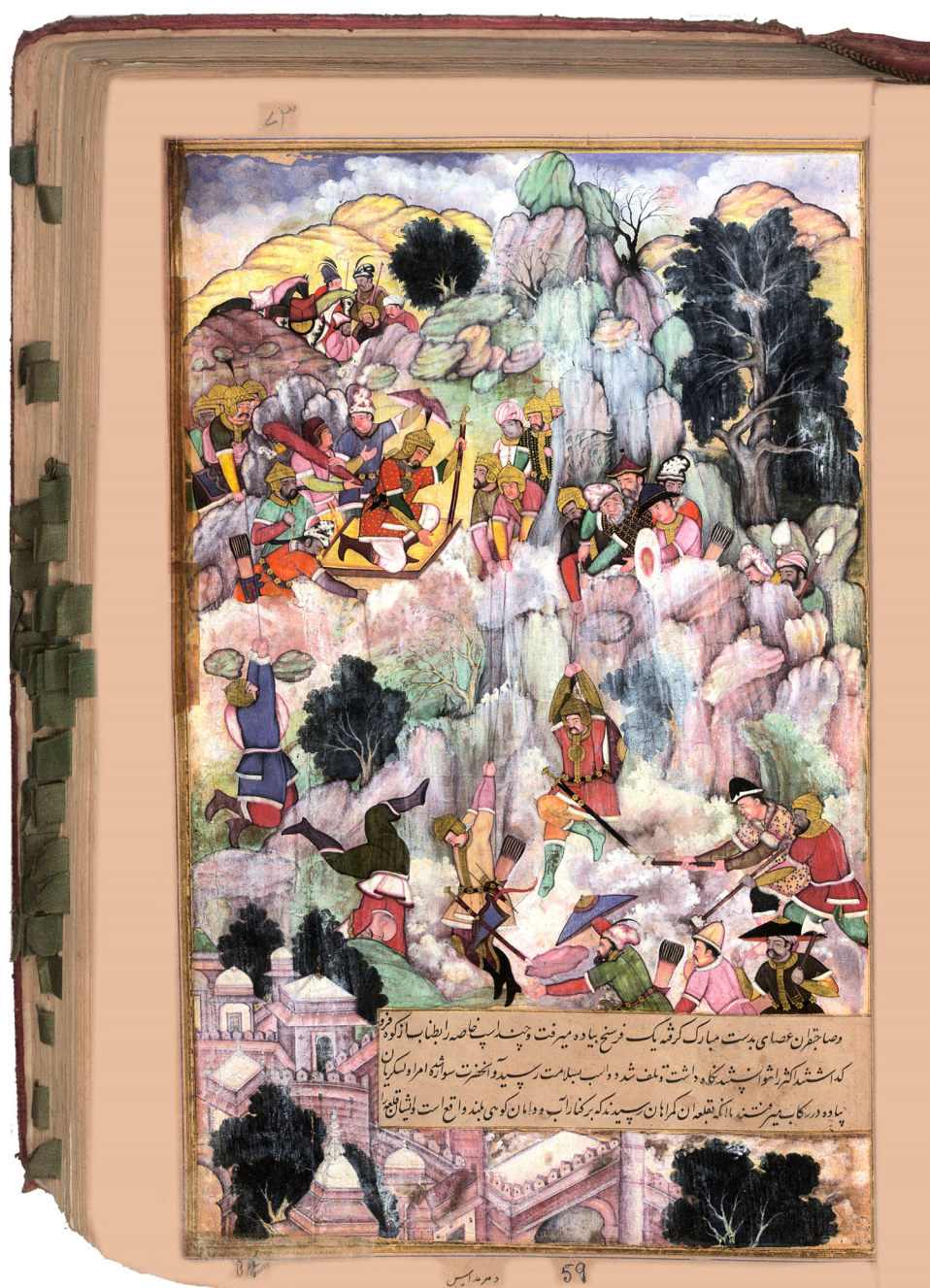


Figure 4. Timur's troops lowered from the mountainside to attack the Siyah-pushan in 1398, *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya*, MS. HL 107, fol. 73r. 360 × 228 mm. Photo © Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna.

for the second.⁷⁶ Another river crossing, of the Qarun on Timur's Khorezm campaign of 773/1372 against Husayn Sufi, is given a similarly lively treatment by a different artist (f. 24v, see Figure 7), a scene not previously illustrated.⁷⁷

In general, the paintings attempt quite a literal reading of the narrative of the text, at least at some key

moment; as has been noted, however, others present a “synoptic view” of a series of scenes in one composition, allowing the narrative to unfold visually.⁷⁸ One result of the abbreviation of the text (that is, ‘Ali Yazdi’s presumed source text) is to create some ambiguity in exactly which passage in a small text panel is being

⁷⁶The text in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* is not verbally close to ‘Ali Yazdi’s account, *Zafarnama*, 347–51, though the picture refers mainly to pp. 349–50; cf. *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 4661–2. The painting in Akbar’s *Zafarnama* is placed in text in the edited text on p. 347 (where there is also a painting in the India Office Library MS, Islamic 137, f. 50r), above the rubric that is actually found on p. 349; see Bubbar, *Masters of the Mughal and Rajput Courts*, 14–17.

⁷⁷See ‘Ali Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, 426–8. The text is repeated in *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 4692, under the year 775 AH, though there are no entries under 772 or 773.

⁷⁸See comments in Verma, “Painting under Akbar,” 151–3, Verma, *Persian, Ottoman and Indian Miniatures*, 149–50; cf. Beach, *Early Mughal Painting*, 89 and fig. 62.

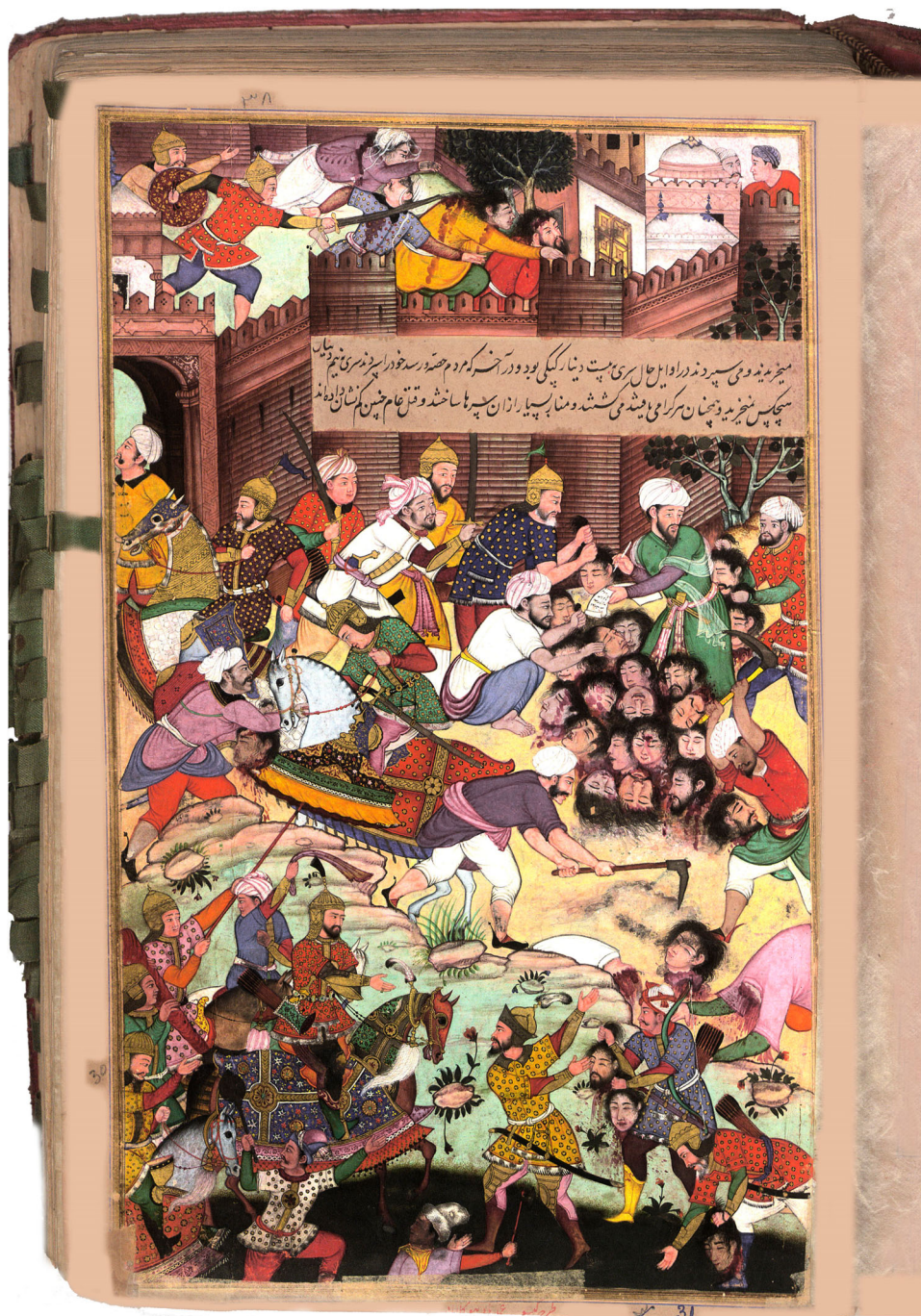


Figure 5. Timur's troops bring the heads of the inhabitants of Isfahan to build a minaret of skulls in 1387, *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya*, MS. HL 107, fol. 38r. 375 × 225 mm. Photo © Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna.

depicted. Apart from the river crossings mentioned above, an example of this is the Egyptian ambassador's presentation of gifts from Sultan Faraj to Timur in 807/1404.⁷⁹ Compared with Yazdi, the passage on the Egyptian embassy itself is rather short and the text includes the arrival of many other princes and chiefs to pay

homage to Timur.⁸⁰ The arrival of the remarkable giraffe, on the left-hand side of the composition (f. 132r), is placed in the text where other princes and chiefs are being greeted, whereas the right-hand side (f. 131v) provides the text about the presentation of the giraffe, but appears to represent Timur's embrace

⁷⁹Cf. Sims, "Ibrahim-Sultan's Illustrated *Zafarnama*," 138, 140, fig. 6, who noted the presentation of a giraffe by the Egyptian ambassador as one example of a subject illustrated in the 1436 *Zafarnama* (ff. 399v–400r) being emulated in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya*.

⁸⁰Ali Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, 1259; cf. *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 4981.

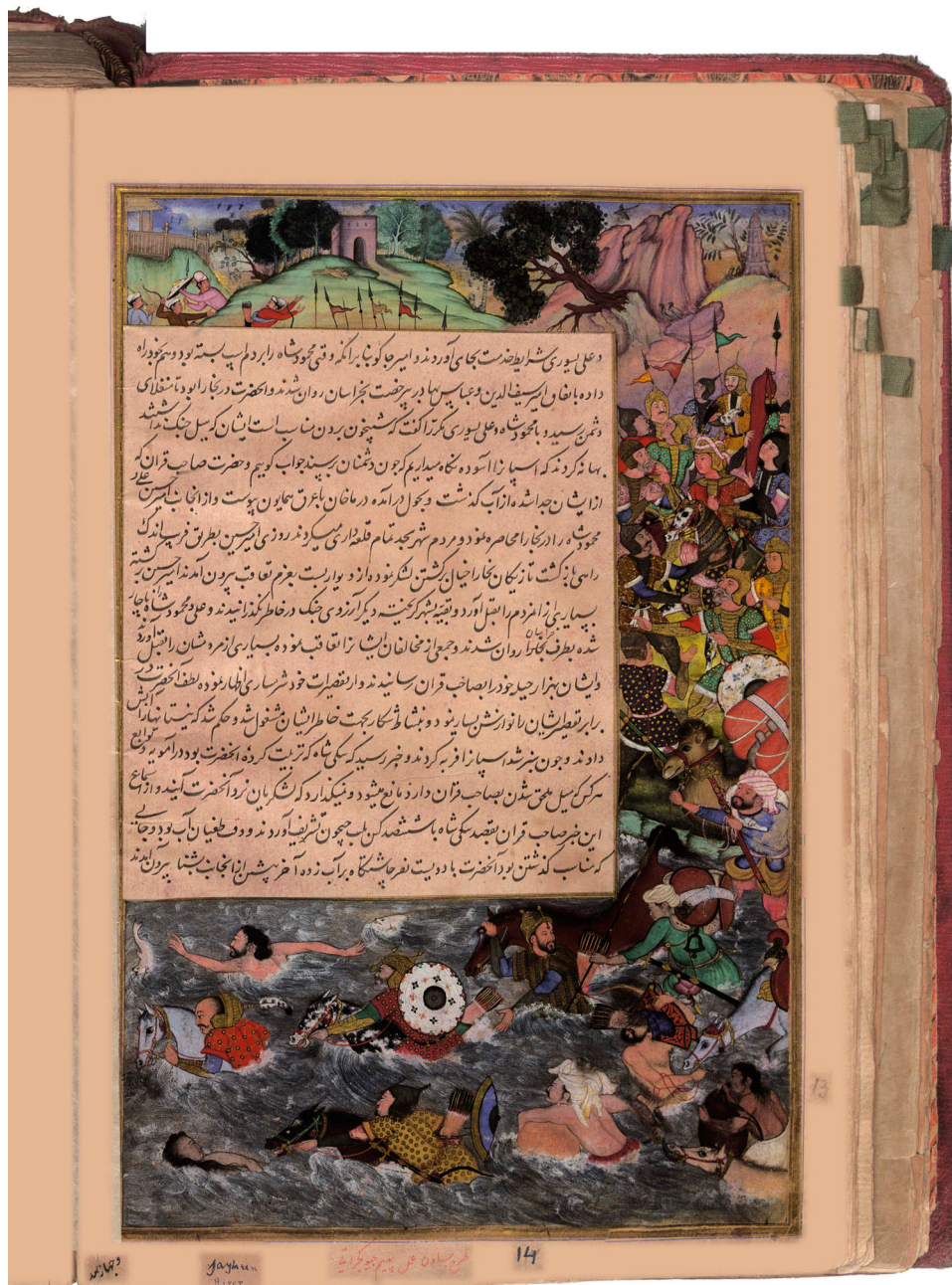


Figure 6. Timur and his troops cross the Oxus in 1367, *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya*, MS. HL 107, fol. 16v. 345 × 220 mm. Photo © Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna.

of Amirzada Pir Muhammad.⁸¹ This is in contrast with the illustration in the Ibrahim-Sultan manuscript of 1436, which devotes the whole double-page composition to the Egyptian embassy.⁸² In brief, the picture is in the wrong order compared with the text, but on the other hand, it does convey the multitude of events

connected with Timur's great *quriltay* outside Samarqand shortly before his death.⁸³

More generally, the large number of pictures illustrating the career of Timur means that, as noted, many episodes are depicted for the first time. A thorough review of the choice of scenes and their

⁸¹ And identified as such by Verma, *Persian, Ottoman and Indian Miniatures*, 162; cf. Khuda Bakhsh, *Descriptive List*, 9.

⁸² The text immediately above the double painting, however, concerns first, the Egyptian embassy and then Khalil Sultan's arrival from Turkestan, ahead of a number of other amirs. Timur's embrace of Pir Muhammad follows after the page with the painting, Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, 1260.

⁸³ Akbar's *Zafarnama* includes a scene of an earlier Egyptian embassy following Timur's victory at Damascus in 803/1401, reproduced in Bubbar, *Masters of the Mughal and Rajput Courts*, 10–13; cf. 'Ali Yazdi, *Zafarnama*, 1075. Timur turns to his left to greet the elderly envoy; the gifts arrive from his right.



Figure 7. Timur's troops cross the Qarun river to attack Husayn Sufi in 1372, *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya*, HL 107, fol. 24v. 339 × 248 mm. Photo © Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna.

relation to the text will be necessary before it is possible to assess what aspects of Timur's life seemed most important to Akbar, but it is clear that the vast majority of the pictures focus on military events: battles, sieges and expeditions. Only a handful (ca. ten) depict courtly scenes (always in camp), and there are two or three others that cannot be readily categorised, as well as the solitary hunting scene.

The focus of this article is on Timur, but it is interesting that almost all pictures after the death of Timur are newly created scenes, without precedents so far noted elsewhere, such as the attempted assassination of Shahrukh in 830/1427 (f. 177r). Another peculiarity, possibly unconnected, is that from approximately this point (f. 170v) down to Babur's siege of Qandahar in 913/1507 (f. 253r, see Figure 8),⁸⁴ none of the paintings incorporates a passage

⁸⁴The text is found almost verbatim in *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 5493. It is a greatly abbreviated version of the *Baburnama*, see tr. Thackston, *Baburnama*, 251–5, i.e., not a word for word transcription.

of text and for the present, therefore, I can ascertain neither the likely sources of information nor explore the text-image relationships. The paintings are quite evenly distributed among a large group of the 70-odd artists involved in the creation of the manuscript. The capture of Qandahar is the only event in the reign of Babur that includes text within the pictures. Thereafter, two of the paintings for the reign of Humayun and almost all those of Akbar, contain text (see Figures 9 and 10).⁸⁵ In each case the text is repeated in the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, but finds only a remote verbal echo in the *Akbarnama*.⁸⁶

It is possible that this increasing combination of text and painting can be explained either by a greater familiarity with the history of the period of Humayun and Akbar, or perhaps by the existence of visual models. It is unfortunate that, remarkably, no illustrations from the later passages of the *Tarikh-i Alfi* have survived, but in view of the close textual parallels between the two works, and the fact that they were probably being written and illustrated at around the same time, it may not be too fanciful to suggest that the iconography for both sets of paintings was also developed together. Certainly, the way the text panels are included within the large, full-page paintings, is not dissimilar. Further work, in turn, is needed to evaluate the impact of the pictures in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* on later illustrated copies of the *Baburnama* and *Akbarnama*, in terms of both choice of subjects and design (either separately or combined), beyond the few examples noted to date.⁸⁷ There is no doubt, however, about the more than superficial similarities between the paintings of many scenes in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* and the images in the *Baburnamas* in the V&A and the British Library, together with the way the text is placed within the dominant picture surface – hardly surprising in view of the fact that many of the same artists were working all three manuscripts in the same decade. As for the slightly later *Akbarnama*, Milo Beach notes the “close stylistic parallel” between the V&A portion of the work and many of the paintings in the “*Timurnama*” and raises the important question of the reuse of illustrations originally intended for an earlier biography of

Akbar, made redundant by the commissioning of Abu'l-Fazl's history.⁸⁸ Pursuing such comparisons and their consequences for the relationships between the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* and the other historical manuscripts of the period must await a separate study.⁸⁹

One final note on the pictorial cycle of our manuscript is needed, to draw attention to the unusual sequence of paintings now included at the start of the volume. As noted earlier,⁹⁰ the manuscript starts with a series of five paintings without text, each with a blank page on the reverse, currently: (f. 2r) blank, (f. 2v) Timur playing with other children, (f. 3r) blank, (3v) scene in a mosque,⁹¹ (f. 4r) blank, (f. 4v) a court celebration with musicians, (f. 5r) blank, (f. 5v) a court scene with “Timur” receiving a visitor, (f. 6r) blank, and (f. 6v) Timur returning from a *majlis* with Amir Husayn – according to an inscription. The text then starts on f. 7r (see Figure 1). With the possible exception of the first – Timur playing as king (f. 2r, with Akbar's inscription) – it must be questioned whether these one-sided pages actually belong to the manuscript, or at least to this place in the volume, bearing (as they do) no relation to the (non-existent) text. They might have been part of a different production, not completed, and inserted later into the volume as frontispieces. One fact supporting such an interpretation is that these paintings are significantly smaller than those in the rest of the volume, averaging 282 × 174 mm. The first picture (f. 2v, 275 × 180 mm) is designed by the master artist, Daswanth, whose suicide in 1584 is taken to help to determine the approximate date of the commission and its commencement, at least, in Fatehpur Sikri. It seems entirely plausible, however, that the painting could have been created earlier and found a natural home at the start of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya*, although when and for which work it might have been made requires further investigation. Folios 4v and 6v were designed by Basawan, who succeeded Daswanth as the major figure in Akbar's atelier, but who played no part in the illustration of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* after ff. 61v–62r.⁹² One might speculate that he was taken off working on this manuscript to work

⁸⁵ Muqtdadir, “Note on a Unique History,” pl. 2 and 3, reproduces two paintings without text (the birth of Humayun, f. 254r and his capture of Champaner, f. 277v).

⁸⁶ The accession of Humayun (f. 273v), Humayun's pursuit of Bahadur Shah (f. 276r), Akbar supporting the jogis (f. 322r), Akbar's defeat of 'Ali-Quli Khan (f. 323v), the submission of Raja Surjan of Ranthanbor (f. 328v), Akbar hunting wild asses (f. 331r), his defeat of Ibrahim Husain Mirza (f. 333v) and his defeat of Muhammad Husain in Gujarat (f. 337v) are reported in identical terms in *Tarikh-i Alfi*, 5625, 5648, 5831, 5834, 5852, 5866, 5876 and 5888–9 respectively.

⁸⁷ See above, nn. 39, 73. It is worth remarking that there are no illustrations in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* for the reign of Akbar between his birth (f. 284r) and his encounter with the feuding jogis at Thanesar in 974/1567, the 12th year of his reign (f. 322r). The latter event is described in more detail in Abu'l-Fazl, *Akbarnama*, IV, 256–9 and also illustrated (by Basawan) in the V&A *Akbarnama*, IS 2-1896 61-62/117, reproduced in Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, 52–3, pl. 35.

⁸⁸ Beach, *Imperial Image*, 85, 2nd ed., 67, also Beach, “Jahāngīr's Jahāngīr-Nāma,” 228.

⁸⁹ The choice of subjects in Akbar's *Zafarnama*, from the few examples seen, appears close, see nn. 72, 76, 83, although the execution of the pictures clearly differs greatly.

⁹⁰ See n. 50 above.

⁹¹ Reproduced in Brand, “The City as an Artistic Centre,” 106 and fig. 7.9.

⁹² Beach, *Imperial Image*, 214, 218–19.



Figure 8. Babur captures Qandahar in 1507, *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya*, HL 107, fol. 253r. 348 × 210 mm. Photo © Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna.

on another project, possibly the first *Baburnama*, presented in Muharram 998/November 1589, in which he

was heavily involved,⁹³ and soon after, the first *Akbar-nama* and later historical texts.⁹⁴ Basawan may have

⁹³See Smart, "Six Folios," 113, 123, 132; no. 96 (f. 319), the work of Basawan, is as she notes so strikingly close to examples in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* (e.g. f. 15r) that they could have been "made simultaneously on neighbouring boards in the Mughal painting studio". So, it must be observed, is the calligraphy on this page – and that on no. 92, p. 127, also composed by Basawan (though not on the facing page, no. 91, p. 126).

⁹⁴Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, with examples. It is interesting that the Victoria and Albert copy covers events up to 985/1577, the same year as several copies of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, see above, n. 55, and the presumed completion of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya*. Basawan was also involved in the *Chingiznama/Jami' al-Tavarikh* of 1004/1596, see Beach, *Imperial Image*, 224.



Figure 9. The Accession of Humayun in 1530, *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya*, MS. HL 107, fol. 273v. 348 × 227 mm. Photo © Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna.

designed the paintings on ff. 4v and 6v in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* separately, or later, and they were not used as originally intended. The manuscript, whenever started, must have taken some time to complete and there seem be reasonable grounds for supposing work could have extended into the late 1580s and even beyond.⁹⁵

Conclusions

In the course of investigating the manuscript of the *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya* in the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in Patna, it has been possible to raise only some of the questions surrounding this well-

⁹⁵ As in the case of the Jaipur *Razmnama*, of which the text was completed in 1584 but the paintings were still being executed in 1585 and 1586. Both Daswanth and Basawan were heavily involved in illustrating this Persian translation of the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*. Beach, *Imperial Image*, 68, 215–18. Basawan presumably turned from working on the *Razmnama* to the *Khandan-i Timuriyya*, before concentrating on the *Baburnama*.



Figure 10. Raja Surjan hands over the keys of Ranthanbor to Akbar in 1569, *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya*, MS. HL 107, fol. 328v. 336 × 206 mm. Photo © Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna.

known but curiously under studied work, let alone to answer them satisfactorily. Research has been hampered by the immediate difficulties raised by the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions this has placed on travel and the accessibility of books and manuscripts in various libraries and museum collections. More importantly, the text of the history has not been published and is accessible to the present author only when it is

included within the illustrated pages of the manuscript, which are fortunately available in their entirety in black and white reproductions.

While it has not been possible to identify with certainty the author of the work, or all the sources on which it is based, there is a strong likelihood that for the history of Timur, at least, it is essentially a summary of 'Ali Yazdi's *Zafarnama*, as one would anticipate and

as indeed seems to be clear from the opening passage of the text (f. 7r, see Figure 1) and the inscription on the first flyleaf. There has been an assumption that the manuscript is defective at the beginning (which might be taken to explain why the author remains unknown); nevertheless, it has been shown that this first passage also happens to appear word for word at the start of the section of the *Tarikh-i Alfī* that introduces the final portion, on Timur and his descendants. This suggests, first, that the *incipit* is indeed the start of the text and that it may not be defective. Secondly, further investigation has revealed in every case where it is accessible, that the text of the *Khandan-i Timuri* is found verbatim the *Tarikh-i Alfī*: and not merely for the life of Timur, but also for Babur, Humayun and Akbar. This in turn, thirdly, raises the possibility that the author of the *Tarikh-i Alfī*, Asaf Khan Qazvini, was also the author of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* and reproduced the text in the larger work, which was being compiled at the same time or shortly afterwards. The coincidence that many manuscripts of the *Tarikh-i Alfī* end in the same year, 984–5/1577–8, as the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* (which is missing two or three years at the end) is suggestive of some unexplained link between the two productions and that the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* was still in progress alongside the *Tarikh-i Alfī* in Akbar's Lahore atelier, after Akbar left Fatehpur Sikri in 1585. A possible relationship with the illustrations of the first *Akbarnama*, the text of which was presented to Akbar in 1006/1598 and complete to that date, contributes to the uncertainty surrounding the date at which the illustrations in that manuscript were executed, perhaps in the early 1590s.⁹⁶

The investigation has not attempted to identify the source for the author's history of the later Timurids, for which short passages of text are only accessible for a few paintings of the early years of Shahrukh, up to around 819–20/1416–17, for which 'Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi's Timurid history appears to be an underlying source. The *Tarikh-i Alfī* evidently parts company with the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* here at least.⁹⁷ It is striking that from f. 170v to f. 253r, that is up to the account of Babur, none of the paintings includes text. The fact

that the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* does refer to the *Baburnama*,⁹⁸ is not in itself remarkable, as clearly the text must have been well known by this date, and accessible already in a Persian translation made for Humayun. But it is again suggestive at least that the translation of the *Baburnama* presented to Akbar by the Khan Khanan in 1589 was perhaps being made and illustrated at the same time as the *Khandan-i Timuriyya*.⁹⁹ The similarity in layout and design of many paintings in the two commissions also suggests that their illustrations were being produced in parallel.

As for the accounts of Humayun and Akbar, beyond the possibility that they are the work of the same writer as the compiler of the *Tarikh-i Alfī*, the name of the individual who assembled the information on the early years of Akbar remains unknown. The sources used for this part of the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* and their relationship with other histories of the first half century of Mughal rule, including the *Akbarnama*, are still to be investigated. This must await the availability of the complete text, as well as a more thorough study of the manuscript, including its codicological and paratextual features. This might also help elucidate the issues surrounding the arrangement of the first few folios of the manuscript and its sequence of stand-alone paintings; it is noticeable, for example, that there are multiple computations of the figure numbers inscribed on the paintings and a lack of clarity about the different foliations.¹⁰⁰

Overall, the *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya* commissioned by the Emperor Akbar at an important stage in his reign is an iconic example of a work written in Persian and almost certainly by a Persian, concerning a Turko-Mongol warlord from Central Asia and his descendants in India. It emblematically links the history and culture of the three regions and gives proof of the power of artistic patronage to promote a political and ideological message.¹⁰¹

Acknowledgments

Thanks go to Andrew Peacock and Mahmood Alam for the organisation of the conference in Hyderabad that spawned this volume and BIPS for supporting it. Many peoples'

⁹⁶Beach, *Imperial Image*, 83–5, drawing attention to the close affinity of some of the paintings with those in the *Khandan-i Timuriyya*; 2nd ed., 67, see above, n. 88; dating discussed also in Stronge, *Paintings for the Mughal Emperor*, 42–5.

⁹⁷The *Khandan-i Timuriyya*, f. 165v, depicts Mirza Bayqara's submission to Shahrukh at Shiraz in Ramadan 818/November 1415, cf. *Tarikh-i Alfī*, 5099. The next painting, f. 166v, above a blank space left for the rubric and year to be filled in, contains text that, unusually, is not to be found repeated in the *Tarikh-i Alfī*, but closely follows the report of 'Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi, *Matla'-i Sa'dayn*, 236–7 (*sub anno* 819 AH). Below the space is the report of the birth of 'Ala al-Dawla, son of Baysunqur in Jumada I, 820/June 1417, once more repeated in *Tarikh-i Alfī*, 5109, and following Samarqandi, *Matla'-i Sa'dayn*, 238. The blank space is one of the few indications, in the accessible passages of text, that the *Khandan-i Timuriyya* is organised annalistically, see also f. 24r. Muqtadiri, "Note on a Unique History," 267, remarks that spaces for the rubrics have been left blank throughout, indicating the production was unfinished.

⁹⁸Also reported by Brand and Lowry, *Akbar's India*, 71.

⁹⁹Beach, *Imperial Image*, 77; 2nd ed., 61, notes the existence of "some illustrations – especially those with no text on the page – that seem to be earlier".

¹⁰⁰Muqtadiri, "Note on a Unique History," 267, remarks on several lacunae and some replacement folios. See also above, n. 50.

¹⁰¹See also Brand and Lowry, *Akbar's India*, 123–8, "Akbar and the power of images".

assistance has made the completion of this research possible in testing times. I am grateful to Barbara Brend for responding to various questions (as usual), and to Ursula Sims-Williams, Yasmin Faghihi and Jo Salisbury for help with accessing library materials, as well as S.N. 'Abbas (Kaify) in Rampur and Delhi. Particular thanks to Shayesta Bidar at the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in Patna, without whose help this work would not even have got started. I am also most grateful to Asok Kumar Das for his valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This research has been supported by a Leverhulme Trust Emeritus Fellowship, EM-2018-033\5.

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