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On Some Manuscripts of Hatifi's *Timurnama*

Abstract: The versified 'history' of Timur (Tamerlane) by the Persian poet 'Abd-Allah Hatifi (d. 1521) achieved considerable success in his lifetime, which spanned the turn of the fifteenth – sixteenth centuries and also the eclipse of the Timurid dynasty and its replacement in eastern Iran by the Safavid dynasty (1501–1722) and in Transoxiana by the Uzbeks. This popularity is reflected in the large number of surviving manuscripts, both in Iran and in Ottoman, Indian and Central Asian collections, many of which are illustrated. This paper describes a number of illustrated manuscripts along with their paracontents, with the aim of drawing connections between them and comparing the milieux in which they were commissioned and received.

1 Introduction

The author of the *Timurnama* (Book of Timur), 'Abd-Allah Hatifi (c. 1454–1521), was the nephew of the famous Persian mystic and poet 'Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492) and came from Khargird, near Jam, in eastern Khurasan. He served at the shrine of another celebrated 'saint', Qasim Anvar (d. 1434), the mausoleum at Khargird erected by 'Ali-Shir Nava'i (d. 1501), the outstanding politician, patron and man of letters at the brilliant court of the last effective Timurid ruler, Shah Sultan-Husain Bayqara (r. 1469–1506). Hatifi was thus closely connected with a network of the literary elite of the epoch, invited at a young age to attend the poetic sessions (*majlis*) at the court in Herat (now western Afghanistan). Hatifi himself, however, preferred a life away from high society and spent his time mainly at Khargird, emulating not only the secluded lifestyle but also the work of the great epic poet, Firdausi of Tus (d. 1025), whose *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) inspired his own *Timurnama*, completed between 1492 and 1498. A decade later, after the collapse of the Timurids, he met the young Shah Isma'il, founder of the new Safavid dynasty (1501–1722), who commissioned Hatifi to write a verse epic about his exploits too (which he did not finish).¹

¹ See Bernardini 2008, 127–146, for the fullest treatment of Hatifi's life and work, incorporating his own earlier publications.

Shah Isma'il had come to Herat to meet the threat of the new power in the east, Muhammad Shibani Khan, a descendant of Chinggis Khan, who shortly after Sultan-Husain's death captured Herat (1507) having, more significantly, already seized Samarkand, Timur's capital (1501), initiating Uzbek rule in Transoxania. Among the losers in this contest for control of the eastern portion of Timur's former empire was Babur (d. 1530) – descended from both Chinggis Khan and Timur – who fled to Kabul and later founded the Mughal Empire. In short, Hatifi's literary milieu and the context in space and time in which he lived thus combined to explain not only the nature of his work – a heroic epic poem in celebration of the legendary exploits of Timur (d. 1405), the Chaghatay Mongol conqueror and founder of the now dying empire of his successors – but also its appeal to audiences and patrons appropriating or contesting his legacy, whether in Iran (the Safavids), Central Asia (the Uzbeks) or India (the Mughals).²

Hatifi wrote a *Khamsa* ('Quintet') in emulation of the *Khamsas* of Nizami Ganjavi and Amir Khusrau Dihlavi, but replaced the earlier poets' romances of Alexander/Iskandar with an epic about Timur, thus implicitly identifying Timur as another Alexander. While Hatifi acknowledged Nizami, he modelled his work on the *Shahnama* of Firdausi. Hatifi's poem, like Firdausi's, lies on the cusp of 'history' and 'epic' in the treatment of historical themes and subjects in distinct but clearly related and avowedly literary genres. Hatifi's main source of historical information about Timur was the *Zafarnama* ('Book of Victory') by 'Ali Yazdi (d. 1455) and illustrated manuscripts of 'Ali Yazdi's history (itself a sophisticated literary production with prose passages liberally interspersed with poetry), certainly provided models for the illustration of Hatifi's work.³ The *Timurnama* is found both as a separate volume, and sometimes copied together with other poems of his *Khamsa*.

In a recent publication I described several copies of Hatifi's *Timurnama* ('Book of Timur') found in Cambridge University Library and compared them, at certain points, with some splendid manuscripts kept in the National Library of Russia (St Petersburg).⁴ Since then, I have had the opportunity to examine some more illustrated copies of the *Timurnama* and add them to the ongoing

² Subtelny 2010, 187–196, condenses a lifetime's research into a succinct account of the cultural splendour of late Timurid Khurasan.

³ See Melville 2019, 100–104.

⁴ Melville 2018.

discussion here.⁵ The study has been undertaken in the context of my project on the illustration of history in Persian manuscripts,⁶ but in the following I aim to focus on these artifacts as books and draw attention chiefly to their codicological features and paracontents, such as seals and colophons, rather than on their visual programmes, although these too were not part of the author's original concept of this work – as indeed was rarely the case.⁷ Since none of these copies has been described previously, this brief analysis adds to our knowledge of the production, reception and dissemination of the work, so widely sought after by contemporary audiences.⁸ We shall arrange the six codices under discussion according to their main geographical associations.

2 *A Timurnama* in Walters Art Museum, W. 648

The first copy is in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore and is available in its entirety on the 'Digital Walters' website, W. 648.⁹ It measures 236 × 138 mm (page) and 160 × 72 mm (written surface), with 166 folios. Margins are ruled in blue, gold and black and the headings framed in gold and black rulings; rubrics are written in gold. The text is transcribed in 15 verses in two columns per page. It is undated but evidently of the sixteenth century. The colophon (fol. 166^v), mentions the scribe, Pir 'Ali al-Jami, who also transcribed the illustrated copy of the *Timurnama* in St. Petersburg (Dorn 447) from the Ardabil shrine, similarly undated (colophon, fol. 176^v), the five illustrations in which, however, are in a completely different style and of immaculate quality. Pir 'Ali al-Katib made another copy of the *Timurnama*, dated the end of Rajab 940 AH / February 1534 CE;¹⁰

⁵ A first presentation of some of these codices was given at a workshop in Leiden on 29 November 2019. I have since continued to note other copies, but here I will focus mainly on manuscripts I have seen in person.

⁶ Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship, EM-2018-033\5.

⁷ One might think of Matthew Paris's illustrations to his *Chronica Majora* as an obvious exception and possibly Rashid al-Din's production of illustrated manuscripts of his *Jami' al-tavarikh*; see Lewis 1987; Blair 1995.

⁸ For a 'provisional' but thorough list of manuscripts, see Bernardini 2003, 10–17.

⁹ <thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W648/> (accessed on 16 March 2021).

¹⁰ Sofia, SS Cyril and Methodius National Library, OP 994, fol. 153^r. The manuscript has two miniatures of indifferent quality: fols 19^r (accession of Timur at Balkh) and 68^r (battle against Toqtamish Khan).

it is not clear if other scribes with a similar name are the same person, but a certain Ghiyath al-Din 'Ali Jami also made a copy of the *Timurnama*.¹¹

The Walters manuscript contains two full-page paintings without text, recorded as being 'Safavid' but not showing many elements of Safavid painting of the early sixteenth century and perhaps more likely of Central Asian origin.¹² They illustrate two of the most commonly depicted scenes – the wedding of Timur's son Jahangir (fol. 37^v) and Timur's battle against Toqтамish, Khan of the Golden Horde (fol. 75^v).¹³ They have suffered from the trimming of the text block when the manuscript was rebound as a small and attractive volume, possibly in Rajab 1269 AH / April 1853 CE.¹⁴

Paracontents include a list of the section headings (fols 1^v–2^r) and two earlier 'Hindu-Arabic' pagination systems, one in red, starting from fol. 4^r – i.e. after the list of headings, which was a later addition to the volume and one in black, starting on fol. 8^r as fol. 5^r; the two systems then run in parallel to fol. 64^r, numbered 62^r in red and 61^r, correctly, in black. The Index corresponds with the red foliation (rubrics on a verso side are given the number of the facing recto page). An ownership seal of al-'Abd Yar Beg ibn Aq Muhammad is dated 1019 AH / 1610 CE (fol. 166^v);¹⁵ the name, currently unidentified, is also suggestive of a Central Asian owner.

This copy, therefore, was probably produced in Herat in eastern Iran in the first half of the sixteenth century, or Transoxiana (? Bukhara), where it quickly ended up and perhaps was completed with the pictures. It therefore invites comparison with the next manuscript, which, however, can more certainly be associated with Central Asia.

¹¹ Tehran, University Library, MS no. 6035, dated 950 AH / 1543 CE. Grateful thanks to Majid Saeli and to Karin Ruehrdanz (pers. comm.), who has also noted a *Divan* of Jami by 'Mir' 'Ali possibly in place of 'Pir' in Tashkent, MS no. 2205 dated 933 AH / 1527 CE. Maulana Mir 'Ali Jami was a celebrated pupil of Sultan-'Ali Mashhadi and Mir 'Ali (without the Jami), if not the same person, even more so, Minorsky 1959, 106, 126–131; a mistake over spelling is rather unlikely. The Pir 'Ali b. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jami, who made a copy of *Yusuf & Zulaikha* in 893 AH / 1488 CE, in Vienna, ÖNB, Mixt. 1480, was the son of the poet.

¹² Barbara Brend kindly endorsed this suggestion.

¹³ The appearance of elephants in the battle, however, suggests the iconography of the Indian campaign. The picture is set in the text at exactly the same verse as the Sofia manuscript, fol. 68^r and Dorn 447, fol. 77^v, i.e. the two copies associated with the same scribe.

¹⁴ The trimming has nevertheless preserved most of the catchwords. The date is found on fol. 4^r, originally fol. 1^r; the binding with its Ikat-fabric doublures is clearly of nineteenth-century Central Asian origin, supporting the suggested place of production (or repair) of the manuscript.

¹⁵ The full name was supplied by John Seyller.

3 Harvard Art Museums 1957.140

This manuscript was copied by Sultan Mas'ud b. Sultan Mahmud in 959 AH / 1552 CE (colophon, fol. 175').¹⁶ Page measurements are given as 244 × 156 mm and the text is transcribed in 14 verses per page, in two columns; margins are ruled in blue, gold and black and columns and headings in gold and black; rubrics are written in gold. Other evidence that the scribe was working in Bukhara at this date confirms the Central Asian production of the manuscript,¹⁷ which contains four miniatures in typical Bukhara style, two of them in a double-page illustration of the wedding of Jahangir (fols 34^v–35^r), the others depicting the defeat of Shah Mansur the Muzaffarid ruler of Fars (fol. 83^r) and the defeat of the Mamluks at Aleppo (fol. 137^v).

The manuscript has an elaborate colophon, identifying the dedicatee as al-Sultan b. al-Khaqan b. al-Khaqan Muzaffar al-Din Muhammad Darvish Bahadur Sultan, who can be identified as Darwish Khan, son of Baraq Khan son of Suyunjuk Khan, a line of the Shibanids. At the date given (959 AH / 1552 CE) he seems to have been governing Tashkent on behalf of his father, Baraq Khan, who had taken up control of Samarqand two years earlier; soon after the latter's death in 963 AH / 1556 CE he was acknowledged as Khan of Tashkent.¹⁸ He appears to have been a benevolent figure, unlike his father, and responsible for various benefactions in Tashkent.¹⁹ The timing of the scribe's prayers for his long reign, from distant Bukhara, may be explained by Darwish Khan's presence

16 <harvardartmuseums.org/collections?q=1957.140> (accessed on 31 March 2021). At the time of writing it has still been impossible to inspect the Harvard manuscripts in person; both in 2019 and previously for the whole duration of my three-month fellowship at the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (Harvard University) in 2014, when the museum was closed for renovation and the collection stored in sealed crates. I am grateful to Mary McWilliams for supplying a little extra information to what is available online.

17 The fine copy of 'Ali-Shir Nava'i's *Sab'a sayyara* ('Seven journeys') in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, Elliott 318, was copied in Bukhara by Sultan Mas'ud b. Sultan Mahmud in 960 AH / 1553 CE, see fol. 71^r; thanks to Karin Ruehrdanz for once more pointing me in this direction. As noted on several dated architectural inscriptions (e.g. fols 30^r, 47^r), this manuscript was made for the library of Sultan Abu'l-Fath Muhammad-Yar Bahadur Khan, i.e. the appanage ruler of Bukhara who was killed the following year, see Muhammad Yar 2006, 231, 235–236. It is wrongly catalogued as the work of the calligrapher Muhammad 'Ali.

18 Muhammad Yar 2006, 160–161. Thanks to Robert McChesney and Uktambek Sultanov for their help with this identification. Baraq Khan, also known as Nauruz Ahmad, called upon Sultan Muhammad-Yar's help in his efforts to win Bukhara in 958 AH / 1551 CE, Muhammad Yar 2006, 230.

19 Sultanov 2012, 327–330.

in the west of the realm in the company of his father while Baraq Khan was striving for supreme power in the Khanate, but the dedication to the son rather than the father seems rather striking.²⁰ Not enough is known about either man to be sure how they might have interacted. There are two seals, on fols 2^v ('Abd-Allah Muhammad Ibrahim) and 175^r (Husain Muhammad), both unidentified, but possibly from India.²¹

4 Harvard Art Museums 2014.392

The earliest copy to be discussed here is perhaps the most interesting, not only for its date almost within the lifetime of the poet, but also for its journey, which linked Iran, Central Asia and India most clearly. It was completed in 927 AH / 1521 CE by the scribe Mahmud ibn Ishaq Siyavushani.²² The calligrapher is well known: his father, Khwaja Ishaq al-Shihabi, was taken together with his family to Bukhara after the Shibanid ruler 'Ubaid Khan captured Herat in 935 AH / 1529 CE. While in Bukhara, Khwaja Mahmud became the pupil of the celebrated calligrapher Khwaja Mir 'Ali.²³ The same scribe, under the name Mahmud ibn Ishaq al-Shihabi, also copied the *Timurnama* in St. Petersburg, Dorn 446 (undated, sixteenth century).

The margins are elaborately ruled in blue, white, black, gold and green and the headings and columns in gold and black; rubrics are written in red.²⁴ The manuscript is of interest for various reasons. In the first place, it has been foliated in reverse order, as though it were a European book, with pages numbered from left to right, as is clear from the neat numerals seen on the top right-hand corner of what would be the verso side of an Arabographic volume. Secondly,

²⁰ Muhammad Yar 2006, 230, states that Nauruz Ahmad went from Tashkent with all his sons to capture Bukhara.

²¹ Thanks again to John Seyller for deciphering them. The seal on fol. 2^v is dated regnal year 25, suggesting an Indian owner.

²² This is listed as no. 279 in the exhibition catalogue of Kevorkian Collection, 1914, under the title *Zafarnama* (Karin Ruehrdanz, pers. comm.); the flyleaves contain other numbers relating to Kevorkian. There are c. 151 folios. The online record gives dimensions 250 × 155 mm (page), 180 × 85 mm (written area). My further comments are derived from analysing the images placed on <harvardartmuseums.org/collections?q=2014.392> (accessed on 31 March 2021).

²³ Minorsky 1959, 131–132. The calligrapher is not realistically to be confused with Pir 'Ali, see above, n. 11. See also Richard 1989, 147.

²⁴ On folios with a painting that extends beyond the standard written area, the text is within an inner margin ruled in blue, red, gold and black.

although it was evidently copied in Herat before Khwaja Mahmud was taken to Bukhara, it was very probably not completed by that time – at least, not the ornamentation. The evidence of this is the fact that the ten paintings were all produced in Mughal India, c. 1600, in spaces left blank for illustrations, and perhaps also the decorated margins. The seals on the final folio, together with an inscription at the bottom of the page that might have provided some clues as to the history of the book have been erased.²⁵ It is possible that Khwaja Mahmud took the manuscript with him to Bukhara and from there it found its way to India (though it would be surprising that the missing paintings were not produced in Bukhara first); perhaps more probably, it remained in Herat and was brought to India later, as happened to so many Persian manuscripts. Apart from the paintings, the provenance of the manuscript via a sojourn in India is clear from the worm holes in the paper margins and the eighteenth/nineteenth-century lacquered covers.

As for the illustrations, it is noticeable that they all occur in the later portions of the text, the first being a scene of Timur hunting in the region round Shiraz.²⁶ The subjects chosen for depiction are quite standard, including seven battle scenes and two feasts, although in two cases they illustrate events not so far noted elsewhere (see below, Table 1).

The next copy demonstrates a more direct link between Iran and India.

5 A *Timurnama* from Sotheby's 2019 auction

This copy was offered at Sotheby's London auction of 23 October 2019, undated but estimated to be from c. 1570–1580; it is bound together with Hatifi's *Khusrau & Shirin* (fols 1^v–75^v).²⁷ It measures 232 × 143 mm (page) and 150 × 78 mm (written surface), with elaborately ruled margins and columns and headings ruled in gold and black; rubrics are written in gold.²⁸ There are three illustrations of *Khusrau & Shirin* (Khurasan, c. 1570) and nine of the *Timurnama* (Qazvin, c. 1580)

²⁵ The date 1029 (?) AH / 1620 CE is inscribed on fol. 10^r (European foliation); the Museum notes perhaps more correctly record the date 1026 AH / 1617 CE.

²⁶ 'Abd-Allah Hatifi, *Timurnama*, ed. U'sha' 1958, 82, at line 21.

²⁷ Notes on fol. 1^r refer only to *Khusrau & Shirin*, paintings and a *chaharlah* (illuminated title page) and 76 folios, but this does not necessarily suggest the two poems were not initially bound together when they reached the Mughal library; see also below.

²⁸ Sotheby's 2019, 82, lot 140.

(from fol. 76^v).²⁹ The *Timurnama* is transcribed in fourteen lines (verses) in two columns per page and is incomplete at the end.³⁰

The opening folio (fol. 1^r, see Fig. 1) and the pages separating the two poems (fols 75^v–76^r, see Figs 2–3) are covered with seals, ownership notes, valuations, transfers and library checks (*‘arz-dida*), which indicate that the manuscript was formerly in the Mughal Royal Library before reaching the Hagop Kevorkian collection, as well as guest contents such as the records of the births of the owners’ children.³¹ The earliest seal, on fol. 75^v, belongs to the Mughal librarian Fath-Allah b. Abu’l-Fath, dated 1006 AH / 1597–1598 CE, but there is a very early inspection note dated 28 Day *mah-i ilahi* 32, i.e. referring to the era introduced by Akbar, that is 18 January 1588.³² It is a very unostentatious note at the bottom of fol. 76^r, which confirms that both poems of the manuscript were bound together, probably within a decade of its production. The *Timurnama* starts on the reverse side of the folio. There are numerous seals and inspection notes from the reigns of Jahangir (1605–1627) and Shah Jahan (1627–1658), up to year 2 of the reign of Shah ‘Alam (1707–1712).

The copy has evidently been trimmed to fit its current binding, but otherwise seems unexceptional; even though it was clearly treasured as a fine book and opens with a luxurious illuminated title page, it was estimated to be of third class (fol. 1^r).³³ As can be seen from the table below, the paintings depict standard, popular scenes frequently chosen for illustration – battles, courtly receptions and a hunt. Some have been deliberately wiped (fols 128^r, 173^v); others are marred by corrosive yellow pigments and some show retouching.

The fact that this copy entered the imperial Mughal library so soon after its production in Iran confirms the interest in the text that celebrates the exploits of the distant ancestor of the Timurid dynasty in India.

²⁹ They are numbered, up to 10, but there is no number 7; without closer inspection of the text it is not clear whether one image has been removed. The manuscript was sold previously at Sotheby’s on 22 April 1980, lot 307.

³⁰ The text ends on p. 232 of the printed edition, ‘Abd-Allah Hatifi, *Timurnama*, ed. U’sha’ 1958.

³¹ Three birth dates recorded in 1022 AH / 1613 CE, 1160 AH / 1747 CE and 1195 AH / 1781 CE, fol. 75^v.

³² I am indebted to John Seyller for all the information on the seals that follows; most of the librarians mentioned in the inspection notes are listed in Seyller 1997, 347–349, Appendix B.

³³ It was at some point valued at 80 rupees (fols 1^r, 76^r), but later dropped to 20 rupees (fol. 75^v). For this designation and other examples, see Seyller 1997, 274–276, Table 1.

6 *A Timurnama* in the Asiatic Society of Bengal, no. 651

This is further confirmed by the copy in the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Kolkata, the latest of the group under discussion, dated Dhu'l-Hijja 1041 AH / June 1632 CE, by an unnamed scribe (colophon, fol. 107^r). Its dimensions are 240 × 125 mm (page) and 160 × 72 mm (written area), with quite elegant margins ruled in blue, gold and black and columns and headings in gold and black. Rubrics are written in tomato red. There are 15 verses to the page, in two columns. The volume came from the library of the College of Fort William. It was clearly once a handsome book, introduced by an attractive double title page (fols 1^v–2^r) predominantly decorated in blue and gold with touches of red flowers and the text in a good scribal *nasta'liq* couched within 'clouds' of gold. The most striking feature now is the large number of replacement pages in sections throughout the text (e.g. fols 2–7, 22–25, 30–39, etc.) and especially towards the end (fols 77–103); these pages are not ruled with either column or margins. As several of the catchwords do not match (e.g. fols 57, 71, 89, 98), it is clear there has been some disturbance and very probably loss of illustrations.

As it is, the manuscript contains three paintings of quite acceptable quality and in surprisingly good condition, the first of which, the *Mi'raj* (Ascension) of the Prophet Muhammad (fol. 8^r), is not commonly found in *Timurnama* manuscripts.³⁴ Timur's battle against Amir Husain of Balkh (fol. 17^r) and another against the Indians (fol. 49^v) are commonly chosen subjects (see Table 1). In all cases, the format is the same: two verses above and two below the picture. The manuscript was clearly produced and illustrated in Iran, probably Isfahan, and found its way to an Indian collection.

7 The Free Library *Timurnama*, Lewis O. 43

The final volume presented here is the only one in the group that remained in Iran. It contains a different and more unusual circumstance than the others that is worth being given more attention. Now kept in the Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department, John Frederick Lewis Collection of Oriental Manuscripts, O. 43, it has 190 folios, with 12 lines per page in two columns. It

³⁴ One exception is in the Cambridge University Library, Add. 1109, see Melville 2018, 59–60.

measures 233 × 145 mm (page) and 142 × 67 mm (written area). Marginal rulings in blue, gold, blue and red; columns and headings ruled in gold and black, rubrics are written in red. It has a single, modern foliation and the catchwords are in place; in short, it is a neat and clean copy, with just a couple of seals and ownerships notes.

The colophon (fol. 190^v) records the name of the scribe, Muhammad b. Mulla Mir al-Husaini and the date of the completion of copying as Ramadan 991 AH / September 1583 CE. Muhammad b. Mulla Mir's signature appears on several manuscripts over a lengthy period, such as the *Timurnama* in St Petersburg, Dorn 445 (dated 987 AH / 1579 CE), as well as other poetic texts, including a *Shahnama*, dated 1016 AH / 1608 CE.³⁵ Seals on fols 171^r and 172^r are both dated 1210 AH / 1795–1796 CE,³⁶ the latter in the name of Husain Quli Ja'far, evidently the father of the owner of the two seals of Husain Muhammad Husain on fol. 190^v, dated 1255 AH / 1839 CE. This is confirmed by the inscription above the seals by Mir Muhammad Husain Khan son of General (Sarhang) Ja'far Quli Khan, governor of the regions and districts of Marand, dated 24 Jumada II, 1255 / 4 September 1839 CE (Fig. 4). He is possibly to be identified as Ja'far Quli Khan Dunbuli, a figure active in Azerbaijan in the reigns of Agha Muhammad Khan and Fath-'Ali Shah and later governor of Shakki.³⁷

The manuscript is available digitally in its entirety on the OPenn website where, however, the subjects of the five attractive and neatly executed paintings are not identified.³⁸ They appear to be contemporary with the production of the copy, though with the somewhat unusual extension into the margins in the form of the depiction of single figures breaking through the frame.³⁹

Examination of the textual setting for these pictures, however, reveals that they all replace 10–12 lines (verses) – or take up the space of what is, normally,

³⁵ Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Cochran 3 (13.228.16). Thanks again to Karin Ruehrdanz for other indications, such as that another copy of the *Timurnama* was made probably by Muhammad b. Mulla Mir's father, Mulla Mir b. Muhammad al-Husaini, in 973 AH / 1565 CE. See also Richard 2013, 832–833, for work completed in 1018 AH / 1609 CE.

³⁶ I am grateful to John Seyller for checking these seals; he reads 'Muhammad Islam' on the upper register of the oval seal on fol. 171^r.

³⁷ I am indebted to Assef Ashraf for this suggestion, based on references to 'Khavari' Shirazi, *Tarikh-i Zu'l-Qamain*, ed. Afsharfard 2001, vol. 1, 80–84; 96–97; 114–116; 194–196; 240 and Bamdad 2008, vol. 1, 248.

³⁸ <https://openn.library.upenn.edu/Data/0023/html/lewis_o_043.html> (accessed on 16 March 2021).

³⁹ See Brend 2000 for a discussion of this topic. Thanks to Barbara Brend also for her comments on these paintings.

one page of text (see Fig. 5).⁴⁰ But (and this is the particular oddity), the pictures do not appear to have been painted over the missing text. In other words, whereas it is not unusual to find examples of a manuscript in which illustrations have either been added to existing spaces left blank for a picture that was not executed at the time, as seen also above – or painted over text in an effort to enhance the market value of the volume – in this case, a lacuna appears to have been introduced deliberately into the text (verses have been omitted) to make room for a picture. It is as though someone at the point of designing the layout of the volume had planned pictures to illustrate text that has been excluded: so that the picture literally stands for the words it replaces.

If this is indeed the case, it is worth looking at the five examples a little more closely.

The first, on fol. 28^r, depicts Husain Sufi, the ruler of Khwarazm, entertaining Timur's envoy.⁴¹ The line above the painting is part of the envoy's speech: 'To the world, I am Qarachar Noyan; what was Qarachar? – I am Qara Khan!'⁴² The text resumes on fol. 28^v, at line 16: that is to say, 12 verses are omitted. These verses are the concluding part of the envoy's speech and have no narrative value that could lend itself to depiction; in other words, their omission has little or no impact on the meaning of the passage and none on its visual potential. The text resumes with the verse, 'He then gave tongue to his message, he finished saying all it was necessary to say'. The Khwarazmian ruler then replies.

The second painting, on fol. 58^r, depicts Timur's troops setting off on the second campaign to Iran, via Mazandaran. The line above the painting, 'The wheeling firmament's brain went blank from the fearsome blare of the trumpets of departure' (text, p. 67, line 14), exactly marks the moment the army set off. The text resumes (fol. 58^v) on p. 68, line 7 (see Fig. 5): so 15 verses from the printed edition are omitted. The passage is briefly descriptive of the march in general terms and mentions the arrival in Firuzkuh and the coming of various envoys, together with Timur's desire to put paid to all the discord (*fitna*) in Luristan and elsewhere. The text resumes with the army's arrival in Tabriz. Although the omitted passage could offer various details for a painting, an image, if larger and more sophisticated, could equally well stand for the action; but the

⁴⁰ All but one picture page does actually contain a verse or two as well, suggesting the text was abbreviated also, as in the example in Fig. 5: 15 verses are omitted in a space that would be filled by 11 verses.

⁴¹ In this case, the outer blue margin is drawn over the figure breaking through the frame.

⁴² 'Abd-Allah Hatifi, *Timurnama*, ed. U'sha' 1958, 30, line 4. For his conflation of Qarachar and Qara Khan, see also Bernardini 2008, 134.

painting itself lacks detail and indeed the falcon on the leading horseman's wrist suggests a hunting expedition rather than a military march.

The third scene, on fol. 72^v, comes in the chapter on Timur reviewing his troops after the Shiraz campaign against Shah Mansur Muzaffari. The verse above the painting (text p. 84, line 4 from bottom) reads, 'One spurred on [his horse] with a tufted tail, the tip of his spear was like racing hooves'.⁴³ The next 11 verses in the printed edition are omitted, the text resuming on p. 85, line 9, with Timur anticipating the next expedition and seeing his heavily armed heroes all present. The excluded verses not only describe the Rustam-like heroes lined up, but Timur mounting his steed, with a bejewelled helmet and a parasol above. It cannot be said that the painting that replaces this passage conveys anything of the scene, which has a military aspect but is rather an open-air picnic with attendants. It is difficult to imagine that the intention of the artist was to replicate the missing words with his image. This is a unique example of the illustration of this scene, but military reviews are not an uncommon subject for depiction.

The fourth scene (fol. 132^v) depicts one of Timur's battles on the Indian campaign in 1398. This is a very popular scene for illustration and is located in the text, in this manuscript, on p. 159, line 16: the carnage was such that 'many desires remained in the mind, many expectations stayed mired in the mud'. The next 10 verses are omitted, the text resuming on p. 160, line 6, 'The Indians fell into captivity, wise or foolish, young or old'. The omitted passage describes in colourful terms the fall of the Indians in battle ('Indian heads fell piecemeal under foot, [like] coconuts from the tree') and their captivity, roped like a caravan of camels, the Indian elephants useless like fallen chess pieces. In other words, there is plenty of material in these lines that could have inspired images to replace the text. In fact, on the contrary, the siege scene bears no relationship to either the missing text, or the verses before or after it. This shows that there was a considerable dislocation between the work of the scribe and artist.

The final painting, on fol. 140^v, is inserted in the chapter on Timur's winter quarters in Qarabagh and the arrival of envoys from the Ottomans, in 1401, a topic not otherwise depicted. It is a full-page painting, located between lines 4 and 16 of p. 169 in the printed edition, thus replacing 12 lines of text (a whole page: this one contains no verses). The verse before the picture (fol. 140^v), 'We were victorious over the Muzaffarids, with the customary punishment we twisted their ears', is followed in the omitted verses by a discussion, essentially following Timur's account of his conquests and encouraging the Ottomans to

⁴³ This is rather a loose translation; the exact meaning of the verse is not clear to me.

submit; a passage that does not lend itself to a narrative depiction, but which is adequately envisaged in the painting that replaces the text.

Of the five paintings analysed, two could be said to illustrate the omitted text – essentially, where the passage in question is a conversation and does not lend itself to any particular narrative elements to be visualised. The other three do not really illustrate the text at all – or only in the most superficial way: an expedition, a military review and a battle.

Even if the paintings are not contemporary with the calligraphy, the fact remains that they were inserted into a blank space that omitted, presumably deliberately, the exact number of verses that would have made up the page. This is a most unusual situation – the only alternative being that the underlying text was cleaned off so thoroughly that there remain no traces of it (only a more profound penetration of the painted area might confirm this). But even then, why go to such pains, later, to add a painting that could merely have covered the text, and why do such a poor job of the substitution of image for words? It is not as though it is a cheap production – on the contrary, it appears to be a handsome volume and if genuine (or even if a fake), it raises more questions than I can answer at present.

8 Illustration cycles

The illustrations in the six copies mentioned here are tabulated below (Table 1), with reference to their precise position in the printed text (page.breakline).

Table 1: Illustrations in manuscripts of Hatifi's *Timurnama*.

Manuscript/ scene	Harvard 2014.392	Walters W 648	Harvard 1957.140	Sotheby's Lot 140	Free Library Lewis O. 43	Asiatic Soc. Bengal 651
Mi'raj of the Prophet Muhammad						10.1
Timur fights Amir Husain				21.11		21.15
Timur enthroned				26.4		
Timur's envoy to Husain Sufi					30.4	

Table 1 (continued).

Manuscript/ scene	Harvard 2014.392	Walters W 648	Harvard 1957.140	Sotheby's Lot 140	Free Library Lewis O. 43	Asiatic Soc. Bengal 651
Wedding of Jahangir		45.8	44.2 (double p.)	44.2		
Timur departs on Iran campaign					67.14	
Timur hunts near Shiraz	83.21			83.12		
Timur reviews his troops					84.-4	
Battle against Toqtamish Khan	97.13					
Defeat of Toqtamish Khan	100.6	100.5		100.2		
Timur defeats Shah Mansur			107.18	107.12		
Battle against Sultan Ahmad Jala'ir of Baghdad	115.8					
Second battle against Toqtamish Khan	131.15					
Feasting after the defeat of Toqtamish	134.17					
Battle against the Indians				143.-3		141.-3
Conquest of India	159.13			156.2	159.-6	
Timur receives envoys from Rum					169.4	
Timur's siege of 'Aintab	177.11					
Timur fights the Mamluks at Aleppo			183.6			
Defeat of the Mamluk sultan at Damascus	194.7					
Timur and the captive Ottoman Sultan	224.2			226.-2		

On the whole, although the 33 paintings across the six volumes share only eight subjects between them and none appears in more than three copies, these are among the most frequently illustrated topics, such as the wedding of Jahangir, battles against Toqtamish Khan and the Indian campaign, as in manuscripts of the *Zafarnama* of 'Ali Yazdi also.⁴⁴

These two campaigns were joined, among Timur's greatest triumphs, by his defeat of the Ottoman sultan, Bayezid, at the battle of Ankara in 1402, not so strongly represented here, but an event that explains the interest in Hatifi's poem in Ottoman circles, the warlord being regarded there too as a model for emulation. It is noteworthy that the earliest recorded copy of the *Timurnama*, attributable to Herat in the author's lifetime, has the seal of Bayezid's son, sultan Selim I (r. 1512–1520);⁴⁵ and the second oldest, dated 905 AH / 1499 CE – also in Hatifi's lifetime, is an Ottoman copy.⁴⁶

The pictures are not always inserted at precisely the same point in the text, but are close to other examples noted elsewhere,⁴⁷ as are other subjects found only once or twice in these copies – the coronation of Timur is naturally one such popular subject. On the other hand, two or three of the subjects depicted in the Harvard codex 2014.392 have not so far been noted elsewhere. Further work is required to determine whether the introduction of pictures had any impact on the text, in terms of the addition or omission of verses, particularly in the immediate vicinity of the paintings. In so far as this question has been observed in these examples, apart from the strange case of the volume in the Free Library of Philadelphia, the text has appeared to be rather stable and the verses readily identifiable in the printed edition. It is worth noting, however, that the Philadelphia manuscript Lewis O. 43 contains the interpolated 49-verse section in praise of Muhammad and 'Ali (fols 10^v–12^v), that is also found in the Cambridge University Library copy, King's Pote 85.⁴⁸ This clearly sectarian passage either represents the Shi'i religious affiliation of the scribe – consistent with the Safavid context in which it was written, or points to the omission of this section in copies made in a more Sunni milieu. There is also a significant lacuna in Lewis O. 43 between fols 39^v and 40^r, where two folios have dropped out, 45 verses and one long rubric – equivalent to three lines – being missing. This lacuna is

⁴⁴ See Melville 2019, tables 2 and 3.

⁴⁵ Richard 1989, 360–61.

⁴⁶ Bernardini 2003, 10.

⁴⁷ Melville 2018.

⁴⁸ Melville 2018, 64. Lewis O. 43 does have a rubric for this heading, unlike the blank in the King's copy.

not sufficient to have included the passage on the funeral of Jahangir that is found, so far uniquely, in the St Petersburg manuscript PNS 411.⁴⁹ Neither passage is found in the other copy digitally accessible (W. 648 in Baltimore). A new edition, which can be expected to document numerous alterations and variations in the textual transmission, and perhaps explain some of them, is long overdue.

9 Conclusions

This brief survey of a number of manuscripts of Hatifi's *Timurnama* has revealed something of the wide variety of ways in which this popular work has been reproduced and preserved and how some of the volumes have travelled before ending up in different collections, in this case mainly in the USA. An important part of their existence before dispersal beyond the region was spent in the area between Khurasan (eastern Iran), Transoxania and northern India, that is between Herat, Bukhara and the Mughal courts. It was precisely within this region that the towering personality of Timur continued to exert the greatest and most immediate claim to attention, not only as the heartland of his rule and that of his Timurid successors, but as the scene of one of his most renowned conquests and ultimately as a source of dynastic legitimacy for Timurid-Mughal rule in India.

The concentration on illustrated copies of Hatifi's work possibly distorts the picture of how the work was received and appreciated, for the desire for a precious book already implies a rather specific clientele, like the Shibanid khans of Bukhara and Tashkent and a circulation of volumes among princely courts. It is striking that of the 62 manuscripts in Iranian collections, none appears to be illustrated,⁵⁰ nor any of the 19 preserved in the Biruni Institute in Tashkent. The handful of manuscripts discussed here, therefore, is not necessarily representative of the whole large corpus, but it is interesting to observe that the same scribe might produce more than one copy of the *Timurnama*, among them rather well-known calligraphers such as Mahmud b. Ishaq Siyavushani, Mahmud b. Mulla Mir Husaini and Pir 'Ali Jami.

The seals recording the ownership of the manuscripts at different times, and particularly the extensive library checks from the Mughal royal collection

⁴⁹ See Melville 2018, 58.

⁵⁰ Thanks to Majid Saeli for the catalogue list.

and other inscriptions found in the ex-Kevorkian volume sold at Sotheby's in 2019, offer some insights into the life of these manuscripts and their evaluation after their creation, while despite similarities in layout and format, with the 14–15 verses of the poem normally transcribed per page, the marginal rulings, treatment of the chapter headings, pagination, binding and re-binding make each slim volume an individual and personal work, typical indeed of books in the era before printing. The copies discussed here thus extend and contribute, in general terms, more examples of the typical illustration schemes found in the *Timurnama* manuscripts of the sixteenth century and their wide dissemination from Istanbul to Delhi and Bukhara highlights the value of achieving a better acquaintance with the transmission of the work.

Acknowledgements

Attempting to complete research in the circumstances of a pandemic, which has seen faculty departments, libraries and museums closed and accessible if at all mainly online, has inevitably meant that I have been more than usually reliant on colleagues for help and information, even for the most basic assistance in checking references for me. I am happy to acknowledge Assef Ashraf, Barbara Brend, Hamid Ghelichkhani, Robert McChesney, Mary McWilliams, Karin Ruehrdanz, Majid Saeli, Florian Schwarz, Uktambek Sultanov and Laura Weinstein for their readiness to answer my questions, and Firuza Melville always at hand with suggestions and ideas. Very special thanks to John Seyller, without whose expertise in deciphering and analysing seals this paper would have been much poorer. For welcoming assistance before 'lockdown', I am most grateful to Caitlin Goodman (Philadelphia) and Lynley Herbert (Baltimore) in the course of a visit in November 2019 and to Dr Adhikari (Kolkata) in March 2020.

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Fig. 1: Seals from fol. 1' of a *Timurnama* sold at Sotheby's, London, 23 Oct. 2019. Photo: author.



Fig. 2: Seals from fol. 75v of a *Timurnama* sold at Sotheby's, London, 23 Oct. 2019. Photo: author.



Fig. 3: Seals from fol. 76' of a *Timurnama* sold at Sotheby's, London, 23 Oct. 2019. Photo: author.

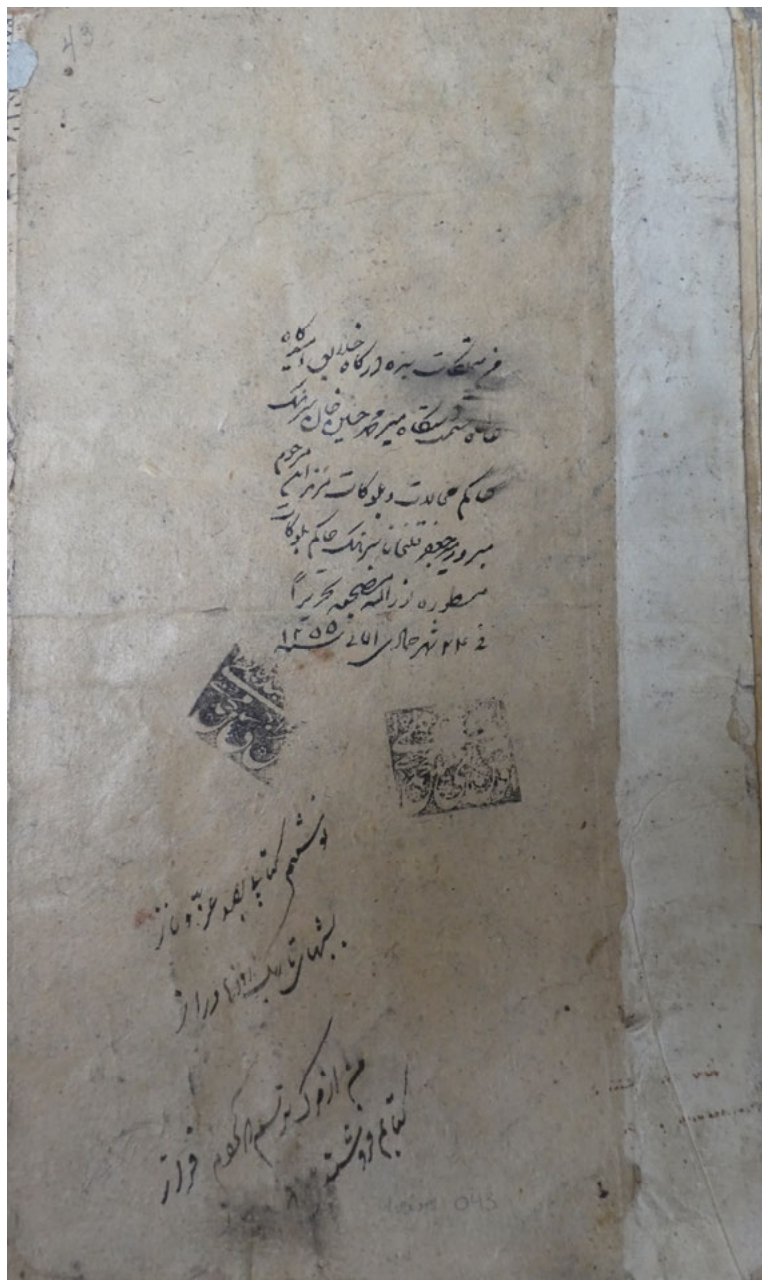


Fig. 4: Seals and inscription from fol. 190^v of a *Timurnama*: Free Library of Philadelphia, Lewis O. 43. Photo: author.

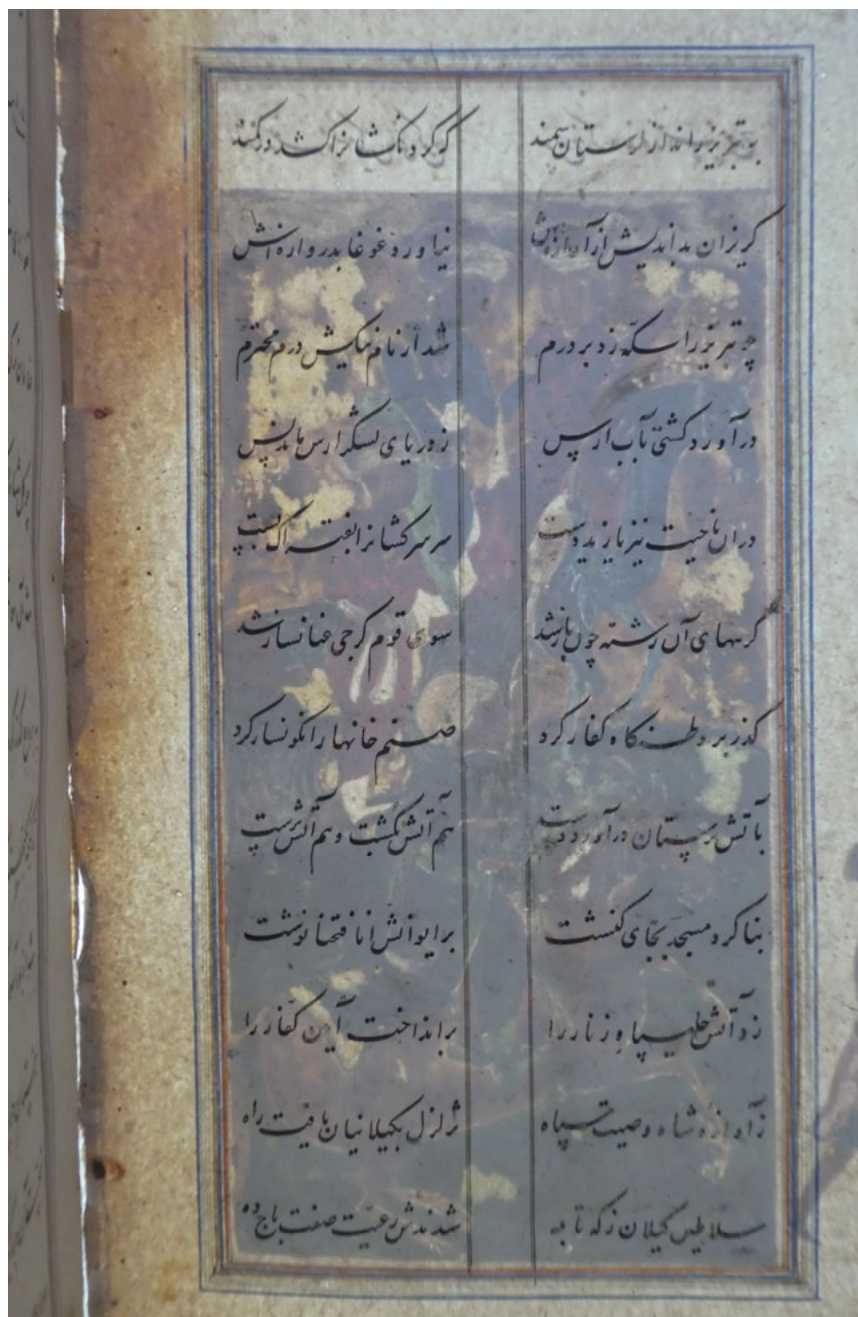


Fig. 5: Fol. 58^v of Hatifi, *Timurnama*: Free Library of Philadelphia, Lewis O. 43. Photo: author.

