



JĀME' AL-TAWĀRIK II. ILLUSTRATIONS

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ii. ILLUSTRATIONS

Just as the text of Rašid-al-Din Fażl-Allāh's *Jāme' al-tawāriḳ* can be regarded as groundbreaking historically, so too the illustrations to it are seminal for the study of art history. Although illustrated books had been produced earlier in Persia, from the turn of the 14th century they became more common, bigger, and fancier, and they covered a wider variety of subjects including history such that they became a major form of artistic expression there. The *Jāme' al-tawāriḳ* helps us to document this development in three ways. First, we have first-hand information about how and why Rašid-al-Din, the author and patron, wanted these illustrated books produced, providing the first and, at any time, a rare description of the working of a Persian scriptoria (*ketāb-kāna*). Second, we have extant manuscripts and detached illustrations made under the patron's supervision that show how his intentions were realized. And third, we have copies of the text made for later courts that help us to understand the development of the illustrated book across the eastern Islamic lands over the next three centuries.

Before his execution in 1318, Rašid-al-Din sequestered much of his fortune in pious foundations (*abwāb al-berr*) established around the Ilkhanate



(Hoffman). The largest was the Rab'-e Rašidi, his own tomb complex outside the capital Tabriz (Blair, 1984). In its endowment deed (*waqf-nāma*) written in the patron's own hand and dated 1 Rabi' I 709/9 August 1309, he provided for the annual copying of a 30-volume Qur'an manuscript and a 4-volume work on *ḥadith*, and four years later he appended an addendum (Rašid-al-Din, pp. 237-41; Eng. tr., W. M. Thackston in Blair, 1995, pp. 114-15) stipulating that in addition to the religious texts, each year his scribes were to produce two copies, one in Arabic and the other in Persian, of all of his own works, including the *Jāme' al-tawāriḳ*. These manuscripts were to be copied in a neat hand on large *baḡdādi*-size sheets of paper, checked with the original for accuracy, and bound in goatskin. Once registered at the judiciary, they were to be distributed throughout the realm, the Persian copies to Persian cities and the Arabic copies to Arab cities. There, they were to be deposited in *madrasas* to be read in consultation with learned teachers or, with appropriate deposit, borrowed for copying. In short, the endowment deed to the Rab'-e Rašidi shows us that the patron's purpose in having these books produced was both philanthropic and pedagogic.

Illustrated copies of the text may have been made before this date, for the Baghdadi chronicler Ebn al-Fuwaṭi mentions that in the year 1305 in Arrān he met the painter (*naqqāš*) Moḥammad b. al-'Afif al-Kāši, an expert in the art of design and illustration (*ṣan'at al-naqš wa'l-taṣwir*), while he was working on the book of his master, the vizier Rašid-al-Din (cited in Blair, 1984, p. 82 and n. 79; Blair 1995, pp. 62-63; Ivanov, 2000, and Blair, 2006, pp. 171-72). The same artist signed the illumination in a copy of Rašid-al-Din's theological works in Paris (BN, ms. Arabe 3232; Richard, 1997a, no. 12) dated 707-10/1307-10, and he may well have been in charge of the atelier in Tabriz. He probably had several assistants, such as the painter (*naqqāš*) Qutluḡ Buḡā, one of the 20 Turkish slaves mentioned in Rašid-al-Din's endowment deed (Rašid-al-Din, p. 151).

Surviving manuscripts of the *Jāme' al-tawāriḳ* made under the author's supervision and illustrations detached from them show how these artists in Rašid-al-Din's scriptorium carried out his specifications. No manuscripts of the first volume (*mojallad-e avval*) on the history of the Turks and Mongols are known to have survived, but 49 illustrations detached from them have been mounted in several albums (Diez A, fol. 70-72) in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (Ipširoḡlu, pp. 15-32; Roxburgh, 1995, p. 116; Komaroff and Carboni, nos. 17-32) and four more in an album (H2153) in the Topkapı Palace Library, Istanbul (;



Cağman and Tanındı, no. 43-44).

The detached illustrations fall into three groups based on size (Rührdanz). One group of small (6 x 6 cm) pictures showing the khan and the *kātūn* enthroned must have illustrated the genealogical table (*jadval*) in the first part (*qesm*) of each section (*dāstān*) of Part Two (*bāb-e dovvom*), Chapter Two (*faṣl-e dovvom*), that describes a particular ruler and his family. These illustrations, also found in later manuscripts such as a late 14th-century copy in Tashkent (Abu Rayhan Biruni Institute ms. COM I, no. 22; Ismailova, figs. 1-2), underscore the text's focus on Mongol genealogy.

At the opposite end of the scale are very large (29 x 38 cm), often double-page paintings. Many (FIGURE 1a and FIGURE 1b) show an enthroned couple surrounded by the court, with the ruler's male relatives to his right, his female relatives to his left, and his courtiers, including guards, musicians, dancers, falconers, and viziers, in front. These illustrations correspond to the *ṣurat-e taḳt* (picture of the enthronement) mentioned in the second part of each section describing the events leading up to a particular ruler's reign. Other double-page illustrations show major events from the reign, such as the "Destruction of Baghdad" under Hulāgu (Diez A, fol. 70, S. 7 and 4; FIGURE 2, FIGURE 3) or the "Gates of Piety," the tomb complex that Ġāzān (qq.v.) built in Tabriz (only the left half survives: Diez A, fol. 70, S. 8 bottom).

In the middle are medium-size (e.g., 20 x 26 cm) rectangular pictures that depict a range of subjects, from enthroned couples with a few servants, bands of riders, hunting scenes, etc. All the text has been cropped before the paintings were mounted in the albums, but it is sometimes possible to identify the subject of specific images by comparing the scenes to those in later copies of the text, such as undated manuscripts in Calcutta (Asiatic Society of Bengal D31; Gray) and Rampur (Reza Library P.1820; Schmitz and Desai, no. IV.1), and one transcribed at Herat ca. 1425 (Paris, BN ms. Suppl. Pers. 1113; Richard, 1997b). For example, a painting showing a Mongol procession (Diez A, fol. 71, S. 50) can be identified as Hulāgu and his envoy (*ilčī*) leading his army against the castles of the Assassins (Blair 2005).

In contrast to the first volume, several illustrated copies of the second volume (*mojallad-e dovvom*) on the non-Mongol peoples made under Rašid-al-Din's supervision survive. They include two manuscripts in Persian in the Topkapı Library (H1653 dated Jomāda II 714/October 1314, and H1654 completed according to the colophon on 3 Jomāda I 717/14 July 1317), but the most



important because all its illustrations are contemporary with the text is an Arabic version dated 714/1314-15, now divided between the Khalili Collection in London (MSS727; facsimile and commentary in Blair, 1995) and Edinburgh University Library (Arabic ms. 20; Rice). The surviving portion comprises about one-half of a 400-page codex with 109 illustrations as well as 23 pages with depictions of Chinese emperors and attendants. Like the other manuscripts made for Rašid-al-Din, this one is transcribed on large-format sheets (each page measures some 50 x 37 cms, thus half-*baġdādi* size) of glazed, ivory-colored paper with 35 lines of clear *nask* script written in a neat hand with fine illumination. The paintings are done in the same technique as the detached images: drawing in black ink heightened with a thin colored wash, sometimes highlighted with silver and bright opaque colors.

The size, frequency, and style of the illustrations in the Arabic and Persian copies of the *Jāme' al-tawārik* made under the patron's supervision tell us about the varying importance of the subjects and the different models available to the painters. The most distinct in terms of format is the section on China, a regnal chronicle illustrated with multiple boxes enclosing emperors and servants (FIGURE 4). The box format suggests that the artists copied from Chinese wood-block printed texts, a suggestion confirmed by the style that adheres most closely to Chinese techniques dependent on line and colored wash. That the artists were copying is also clear from mistakes in the iconography. On the page showing Shi Huangdi, founder of the Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE), and Gao Zhu, founder of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), for example, the emperors are shown reclining, but seem to float awkwardly in mid air because the artist omitted the requisite pillows. In other cases, the Ilkhanid artists did not understand the implications of the original sartorial details, depicting, for example, emperors with their hands covered like servants. The Mongolian official and cultural broker Bolan Ch'eng-Hsiang (biography in Allsen) might have been the person to show and explain such Chinese originals to Rašid-al-Din and his artists.

The other sections of the *Jāme' al-tawārik* are transcribed in running prose with horizontal (landscape) rectangular illustrations, regularly cut off at the sides as though copied from a scroll. Since the text was such a new enterprise, often based on oral information, the artists had to devise new compositions to illustrate it, gathering pictorial material from a wide range of sources. Reconstructing the manuscript shows that the illustrations are not distributed regularly through the text. Rather, some sections are completely void of



illustration, notably the 82 folios from the end of life of Mohammad through the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid caliphates. These subjects were clearly of little interest to the patron. Not so, the sections on the various Turkish dynasties, which are heavily illustrated: the Ġaznavids (26 paintings on 30 folios, including one page with two illustrations), mainly violent battle scenes that underscore the dynasty’s warrior past; and the Seljuqs (17 paintings, many missing, on 32 folios), mainly bland, rather simplified enthronements which highlight the dynasty’s role in government and the patron’s interest in bureaucracy.

Other parts of the Arabic manuscript that are heavily illustrated include the sections on pre-Islamic Iran and Arabia (27 illustrations on 33 folios) and the Prophet Mohammad (13 illustrations in 29 folios), the latter a subject of particular interest in the Ilkhanid period (Soucek). Like the section on the Jews (8 illustrations in 17 folios), these illustrations allude to the patron’s Jewish roots, for they include not only well-known subjects such as Noah’s ark, but also large illustrations of such events in the life of the Prophet as his campaigns against two Jewish tribes, the Banu Qaynoqā‘ and the Banu’l-Nazir.

To illustrate these scenes, unknown in the Islamic tradition, the artists turned to Western models. For example, to illustrate the “Birth of the Prophet,” the artists adapted a scene of the Nativity, transforming the Three Magi into waiting women and Joseph into Prophet’s uncle, although these figures play no part in the narrative. Such models would have been available either from manuscripts or liturgical objects such as portable altars brought to the Ilkhanid court by the many travelers and missionaries there. In style, the artists adapted standard devices and figures to create new and meaningful compositions, for example, setting the figure of the Prophet against a bright blue ground (FIGURE 5) to distinguish his presence or foreshortening the figures to emphasize the closeness of the family of the Prophet as he exhorts them before the battle of Badr.

Rašid-al-Din’s stipulation of two manuscripts per year placed a heavy burden on the artists, who had to develop ways to speed up production and reduce costs. The Arabic copy (or one like it) served as a model for the two, slightly later Persian copies in Istanbul, but they show less variety: H1653 has more repetitive and flatter compositions, fewer attempts at three-dimensional representation, and a more sparing use of silver. By 717/1317, the date of the other Persian copy in Istanbul (H1654), pressures had increased, creating a backlog: the text is slightly smaller in area, with fewer lines per page (31), and



only the first three illustrations were completed before the patron's execution a year later.

The copies of the *Jāme' al-tawārik* made for Rašid-al-Din during his lifetime continued to serve as the model for centuries for manuscripts produced under successive Turkish and Mongol dynasties ruling Iran, Central Asia, and India. Interest in the text resurged in the Timurid period, particularly under Šāhroḡ, who ordered his court historian Ḥāfeḡ-e Abru (q.v.) to compile a similar multi-volume universal chronicle entitled *Majma' al-tawārik* and to put together a replacement text for a missing part of Rašid-al-Din's history (Soudavar, no. 22). Šāhroḡ's seal on a page with Chinese emperors (Figure 4) shows that to do so, the Timurid historian consulted this very Arabic copy. He probably also consulted the two Persian manuscripts made under Rašid-al-Din patronage (H1653 and H1654), for this was the time when they were re-margined with pinkish paper (Roxburgh 2005, no. 34). To link present with past, Timurid painters imitated the older line-and-wash technique in a deliberately archaistic style that Richard Ettinghausen dubbed "the historical style of Shahrukh" (p. 42; see also Canby).

The Mughal court picked up the Timurids' interest in the *Jāme' al-tawārik*, undoubtedly because these conquerors of northern India saw themselves as heirs to the Mongols. The emperor Akbar (q.v.) commissioned a very large (54 x 38 cm) and splendid copy of the first volume on the Turks and Mongols (Tehran, National Library; Marek and Knizbová; detached pages, Brand and Lowry, nos. 2, pp. 35-37), completed according to the colophon on 27 Ramadan 1004/25 May 1596. To make it, his atelier consulted earlier manuscripts of the text, including the 14th-century manuscript of the first volume in Rampur, some of whose illustrations were overpainted at this time, as well as the original Arabic version of the second volume, which received catchwords and glosses around the paintings and page numbers written at this time. For their new volume, Mughal artists continued to use the rectangular format known from the earlier copies but extended the paintings into the margins, cramming the scenes with utensils, figures, and architectural vignettes executed in typical Mughal style. The precedents established in manuscripts of the *Jāme' al-tawārik* made at Tabriz under the patronage of Rašid-al-Din had therefore a long shelf life, continuing to set the model for manuscripts made over the next three centuries as far away as India.



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