

# Iraq And Rum Sultans In The 10th–15th Centuries: An Analysis Based On The Tazkira Ravzat Al-Salatin

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes Fakhri Hirāwī's Rawzat al-Salāṭin tazkira as a literary and historical source. The study highlights the historical significance of the work, focusing on the creative legacies of the sultans and amirs mentioned, particularly their engagement with poetry. Various manuscript copies of the tazkira, their characteristics, and additional notes and materials inserted by scribes are also examined. Based on the fourth chapter – “On the Sultans of Iraq and Rum Who Occasionally Engaged in Poetry” – the article provides a detailed analysis of Sultan Uvais Ilkhoniyy, Shah Tahmasp, and Sultan Ahmad Baghdadi. Their political activities, artistic abilities, poetic fragments, and the literary environment of their era are examined from a scholarly perspective.

**Keywords:** Tazkira, Fakhri Hirāwī, Rawzat al-Salāṭin, sultans' poetry, rulers of Iraq and Rum, manuscript copies, Shah Tahmasp, Sultan Uvais, Sultan Ahmad Baghdadi.

**Introduction:** Tazkiras, manaqibs, and memoirs are valued as important sources for the study of literature and literary history. They often provide information about individuals, events, and the cultural and intellectual environment that is not recorded in official historical sources. Thus, they are significant not only for understanding literary processes but also for studying the socio-political life of particular periods.

Fakhri Hirāwī's Rawzat al-Salāṭin, composed in 957–958 AH (mid-16th century CE), is a unique source for studying the social, cultural, and political life of Mawarannahr, Iran, and India from the 10th to the 15th centuries. The work consists of seven chapters and includes valuable information about 81 sultans, amirs, and prominent figures. Its manuscript copies, preserved in various libraries worldwide, are of particular importance due to the notes, poetic fragments, and additional information added by scribes.

This article specifically examines the fourth chapter – “On the Sultans of Iraq and Rum Who Occasionally Engaged in Poetry.” It comparatively studies the sources, poetic fragments, and historical data concerning several rulers mentioned, namely Sultan Uvais Ilkhoniyy, Abu Muzaffar Shah Tahmasp, and Sultan

Ahmad Baghdadi.

## METHOD

Tazkiras, manaqibs, and memoirs hold significant value in the study of literature and literary history. They often provide information that may not appear in specialized historical works. These sources are important not only for understanding literary processes but also for studying the socio-political life of a particular period.

Fakhri Hirāwī's Rawzat al-Salāṭin tazkira is an important literary source that occupies a unique place in research on the socio-political history and cultural life of Mawarannahr, Iran, and India from the 10th to the 15th centuries, particularly regarding events related to culture, education, and science.

This work was composed around 957–958 AH (mid-16th century CE) and consists of seven chapters, containing information about 81 sultans, amirs, and notable cultural figures. Through the tazkira, we gain insights not only into the rulers' and amirs' approaches to governance—whether merciless or compassionate—but also into their literary activity, particularly in poetry.

It is known that in the past, scribes copying manuscripts often added their own observations, comments, and additional information in the margins of the pages. This

practice is evident in the manuscript copies of *Rawzat al-Salāṭin*.

The scholarly-critical edition of *Rawzat al-Salāṭin* and *Jawāher al-‘ajāyeb*, prepared by Sayyed Ḥosām-al-Din Rāṣedi, provides valuable information about the *tazkira* at the beginning of the text. According to this edition, five manuscript copies of the work exist to date, as follows:

1. Paris Manuscript (No. 320): Preserved in the National Library of Paris, this

is the oldest known copy, made during the author’s lifetime. The manuscript consists of 32 folios (64 pages). Pages 4 to 9 contain various notes and poems added by the scribe. This manuscript indicates that, for a certain period—particularly during Shah Tahmasp’s reign—it was kept in Tabriz and included poems by prominent poets of that time. Additionally, the scribe included *qasidas* praising the Turkic Sultan Sha’ban Afandi, written by a poet with the pen name Alkhon, who resided in Syria. This manuscript is also preserved in Tkhata, where Abbasol Bastomi dedicated an Arabic poem to the book in 976 AH, during which the author himself was in India.

2. Paris Manuscript (No. 321): This copy is also preserved in the National

Library of Paris. The *tazkira* consists of 59 folios (118 pages), with 13 lines per page, written in the *nasta’liq* script. It includes several Turkish and Persian poems, as well as various prose passages. This manuscript is an exact copy of the first manuscript, with no differences in words or sentences.

3. Berlin Manuscript (No. 644/134): This manuscript was held in the Berlin

Library before World War II and is currently preserved in Marburg. It consists of 33 folios (66 pages), with 19–21 lines per page. Two additional pages were added at the beginning. This manuscript is also written in *nasta’liq* script.

4. Saint Petersburg Manuscript (S-1573/2065): This copy is written in an

extremely refined *nasta’liq* style. Several pages, including the introduction and middle sections, are missing. The date of copying and final notes are not recorded. Compared to other manuscripts, this copy is distinguished by the scribe’s numerous additions of phrases and poems. Notably, it contains extensive information and poetry concerning Sultan Muhammad Ghaznavi, Sultan Ghiyasuddin, and Hafiz.

5. Istanbul Manuscript: This copy is identified within an existing scholarly

collection and is preserved under number 4097. The *tazkira* is located on folios 267–275 of the collection. The compilation of this collection is dated to 1038 AH.

The fourth chapter of the *tazkira*, titled “On the Sultans of Iraq and Rum Who Occasionally Engaged in Poetry,” provides information about a total of twelve sultans. Each of them was recognized not only as a statesman but also as a poet. The *tazkira* records the names, origins, and poetic compositions of the following sultans:

Name	Composition	Name	Composition
Shah Shoja Kermani	One ghazal matla’ and one rubai	Shah Ismail	One madih, one matla’, and one muḥammas
Sultan Uvais Ilkhan	One rubai and one poem	Abu Muzaffar Shah Tahmasp	One matla’ and one rubai
Sultan Ahmad Baghdadi	One madih and one matla’	Abu Nasr Som Mirza	One matla’ and one rubai
Sultan Yaqub	One rubai and one ghazal	Bahram Mirza	Two rubai

Jahangir Mirza Turkman	One couplet	Sultan Salim	One matla' and four ghazals
Pir Badakh Mirza	One matla'	Sultan Suleiman	Four ghazals and one matla'

The life and activities of each sultan mentioned in the tazkira hold significant historical value. However, this study focuses particularly on three sultans.

Sheikh Hasan Bozorg's son, Sultan Uvais Ilkhan: According to the tazkira, Sultan Uvais Ilkhan (d. 738/776 AH at the age of 38) was an outstanding painter, and the famous artist Khwaja Abdullah was his pupil. Due to his beauty, the people of Baghdad would stop and gaze at him when he passed by. He was also skilled in music. His reign extended from the Ray province to the borders of Rum. Being very interested in poetry, he studied the secrets of six crafts under Khwaja Salman Rushdi. Upon hearing Shah Shoja's rubai, *که جبه شاه محمود گفته است*, he composed a response rubai:

ای شاه شجاع دولت و ملت و دین  
خود را بجهان وارث محمود مبین  
در روی زمین اگر چه باشی دو سه روز  
بالله که بهم در زیر زمین

Translation:

O Shah Shoja, possessor of power, nation, and religion!

Do not consider yourself the heir of Mahmud in this world.

Even if you exist on earth for merely two or three days,  
By God, you will descend to the world below as well.

This response rubai was exchanged with witty remarks between them. Sultan Uvais, however, passed away at a young age, departing from the transient world to the eternal. Historical sources note that he was the most prominent and renowned figure of his lineage. He was a poet, painter, and musician, and his beauty and appearance are praised in numerous tazkiras. For instance, Davlatshah Samarqandi writes:

"He was so beautiful that when he walked in the streets, the people of Baghdad would stop and remain astonished by his appearance."

His painting skills were exceptionally high, and artists were astonished by his works. Sources describe him as "Ibrahim Sultan Uvais was graceful and talented, possessing various skills," and they depict his beauty and appearance as so striking that it could captivate hearts.

According to reports, wherever he rode his horse, from nobles to ordinary people, everyone would turn their heads to catch a glimpse of his face. At the same time, the sources also mention that he consumed wine in considerable amounts.

Abu Muzaffar Shah Tahmasp. Historically, Shah Tahmasp, the eldest son and heir of Shah Ismail, reigned from 930 to 984 AH, governing for a total of 54 years. According to Rawzat us-Salotin, he was an exceptionally just ruler, and his greatness and fairness were evident to all. Among the sultans of his time, none could match Shah Tahmasp in terms of his protective and paternal qualities.

He was also highly skilled with his troops, controlling regions stretching from the East to the West. Shah Tahmasp cherished poetry, showing respect and admiration for scholars and artists, encouraging them with gifts and honors. One of his famous couplets often cited is:

از بهر قتل عاشق دل خسته چشم یار تیغی کشیده از مژه همچون زبان  
مار

Translation:

For the death of a lover, whose heart is weary,

The beloved's eyes pierce like a sword drawn from lashes, like a serpent's tongue.

Sultan Ahmad Baghdadi (AH 784–813) was a ruler whose dominion extended from Baghdad to Tabriz. He engaged in several battles with Amir Timur, sometimes losing and later reclaiming his throne. In 813 AH, he was executed in Tabriz by the order of Qara Yusuf.

Fakhri Hiravi's tazkira notes that Sultan Ahmad Baghdadi was the son of Sultan Uvais. After his father's death, he ascended the throne in Baghdad's Dar al-Salam, taking over authority from his brother Sultan Husayn. Sources indicate that his power extended as far as Rum, as also documented in the Zafarnameh.

He was a versatile artist, responding to Arab and Persian poets, and unmatched in painting. In poetry, he excelled in the Shash-qalam style. He also gained renown in music and secular sciences, maintaining numerous officials and students. Even the celebrated poet Hafez praised him.

Although, toward the end of his life, it is mentioned in the sources that he became inclined to wine, lost his health, and devoted himself to pleasure and entertainment, thereby straying from the right path. After the battle with Amir Timur's forces, it is reported that he was tortured and killed by Yusuf Qara Turkmen.

In the *tazkira*, the following opening couplet is given as his description:

دلا کدایی و رندی از پادشاهی به

دمی فراغت خاطر از هر چه خواهی به

Translation:

"O heart, poverty and a wandering life are better than kingship;

A single breath of peace and tranquility is worth more than all else."

According to *Sahifat al-Akhbar*, he was exceptionally skilled in geomancy (divination through earth patterns) and in the science of music. He regarded Haji Abdul Qadir as his master and treated him with deep respect. However, it is also stated that he was very tyrannical, and no one could escape his wrath. In *Tarikh al-Jalayir*, he is described as a wine-lover, excessively inclined toward women, and someone who spent his time in worldly pleasures. He never concerned himself with the poverty or misfortune of the people.

A *divan* compiled from Sultan Ahmad has also survived. This *divan*, consisting of 337 pages, is preserved under numbers 32 and 35 in the Freer Gallery in Washington. Several pages of this *divan* were published by Mr. Martin in 1946.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of "*Rawzat al-Salatin*" reveals the multifaceted and culturally rich environment of the sixteenth-century Eastern literary and historical landscape. The text portrays rulers not merely as political figures but also as active participants in the cultural, artistic, and intellectual life of their time. Shah Tahmasp's patronage of literature and the arts reflects one of the key driving forces of Safavid cultural development. In contrast, the depiction of Sultan Ahmad of Baghdad illustrates the interplay between power, personal inclination, moral weakness, and artistic passion, showing how a ruler's individual character could shape political governance. The poetic excerpts cited in the *tazkira* function as essential indicators of the rulers' emotional world, aesthetic taste, and creative capabilities.

1. "*Rawzat al-Salatin*" proves to be a significant source that presents not only the political activity of rulers but also their artistic, cultural, and intellectual identities.

2. Shah Tahmasp is portrayed as a just ruler and a

patron of literature and the arts, contributing to the cultural flourishing of the Safavid period.

3. The multifaceted talents of Sultan Ahmad of Baghdad—in poetry, music, and painting—demonstrate his influential role within the cultural environment of his era.

4. Cross-comparison with other historical sources allows for a more holistic analysis of sixteenth-century literary and historical processes.

5. The study confirms that this *tazkira* is a reliable and valuable resource for examining the cultural life of the Eastern world in the sixteenth century.

## CONCLUSION

The *Rawzat al-Salatin* is one of the most significant sources in sixteenth-century historiography, offering a multifaceted portrayal of historical figures such as rulers, poets, painters, and artisans. The work presents information about their political activity, literary talent, artistic skills, and intellectual abilities in harmony with various historical sources, thereby revealing the complex cultural landscape of the period.

The accounts of Sultan Uvays Ilkhani's mastery in painting and poetry, Shah Tahmasp's justice and patronage of literature, and Sultan Ahmad of Baghdad's versatile talents demonstrate that these rulers were not only statesmen but also cultivated, creative, and intellectually refined individuals. The poetic excerpts cited in the text further illuminate their aesthetic sensibilities, spiritual world, and inner emotions shaped by the realities of their time.

Thus, *Rawzat al-Salatin* once again proves to be a valuable, reliable, and comprehensive source for studying not only literary processes but also the cultural world and creative activity of historical personalities.

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