

Ā'in-i Akbarī as a Tazkira of Poets

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This paper discusses the *tazkira* part of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, which consists of short biographies of poets and extracts from their Persian poetry. There is a strong tradition of *tazkira* of poets in Persianate societies. Badā'unī and Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad, contemporary writers with Abū al-Faẓl, also included chapters of *tazkiras* for their famous chronicles, the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* and the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī*. A few independent *tazkiras* were compiled in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Compared to the more unique and significant descriptions in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, previous researchers have not paid much attention to its *tazkira* part.

The question is what are the features of this *tazkira* part if one compares it with other chronicles and *tazkiras*. The *tazkira* part represents Abū al-Faẓl's approach not only to Persian poetry but also to Persianate culture as a whole because Persian poetry was the quintessence of Persianate culture. This study compares the *tazkira* part with other chronicles and *tazkiras*, examines the selections of the poets and their poetry, and the descriptions of their biographies, and finds the features of Abū al-Faẓl's *tazkira*.

The *tazkira* part of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* is rather short. It contains only 59 poets, which is less than the numbers referred to in the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh*, the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* or any other *tazkiras*. This is because Abū al-Faẓl selected only those who attended Emperor Akbar's court in person. Except for his brother, Fayẓī, his descriptions of each poet's biography are short and lack concrete information. One has to refer to other *tazkiras* to learn about the poets. However, the *tazkira* part of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* is rich in poets' verses. It contains more verses than Badā'unī and Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad's works, and almost two-thirds of the verses are not found in other *tazkiras*. For this reason, the *tazkira* part of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* has a unique value and should not be underestimated.

Introduction

1. Abū al-Faẓl and the *Tazkira* in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*

2. Poets

3. Poetry

Conclusion

Keywords: Persian Poetry, *tazkira*, Abū al-Faẓl, Fayẓī, 'Urfi

Introduction

The *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, completed in 1595–6¹⁾ by Abū al-Faẓl 'Allāmī (1551–1602) provides us tremendous knowledge about Mughal India. It represents both the Indic and Persianate cultures of the Mughal court. Persian poetry was undoubtedly one of the most significant aspects of Persianate culture, and it was well reflected in *tazkiras*, that is, poets' biographies and anthologies. The *Ā'in-i Akbarī* contains a short *tazkira* featuring the biographies and descriptions of the works of 59 poets, which takes up 28 pages of the Calcutta edition [AA: I 235–62]. This paper focuses on the *tazkira* found in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* and explores its distinguishing features in comparison with other contemporary *tazkiras*. Such an analysis highlights Abū al-Faẓl's attitude toward Persianate culture, which may contrast with his attitude toward Indic culture.

It should be noted that the *tazkira* part of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* has attracted little scholarly attention. In his well-known bibliography of the *tazkiras*, *History of Persian Tazkiras*, Gulchīn Ma'ānī mentioned the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, but he did not describe its contents [Gulchīn Ma'ānī 1984–5: II 436–8]. Sunil Sharma, in his *Mughal Arcadia*, compared it with the *tazkiras* in two other chronicles, Niẓām al-Dīn's *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* (1594) and Badā'unī's *Muntakhab al-tawārīkh* (1595–96), but not in great detail [Sharma 2017: 41–3]. These previous studies do not clarify even the basic facts such as how many names of poets listed in the *tazkira* part of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* overlap with the counterparts of other contemporary Persian *tazkiras*, and how many names are mentioned only in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. The author first analyzes these issues by comparing it with other contemporary *tazkiras*, such as Kāmī's *Nafā'is al-ma'āthir* (1589–90), Awḥadī's *Arafāt al-'āshiqīn* (1615), and Emperor Jahāngīr's selection of poets during Akbar's reign (1626). Based on the facts uncovered this analysis, this paper explores reasons why Abū al-Faẓl may have composed such a list of the poets and their poetry for the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* and the uniqueness of his *tazkira* work in comparison to other works.

1. Abū al-Faẓl and the *Tazkira* in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*

Abū al-Faẓl is known as a historian, thinker, politician, and translator. In his classic study of Persian literature during Emperor Akbar's reign, Abd'ul Ghani treated Abū al-Faẓl as a historian [Abd'ul Ghani 1930: 230–46]. Academic encyclopedias' articles on him do not mention his poetic ability [Eaton 1983, Streund 2009]. We know that his brother, Abū al-Fayẓ (penname Fayzī), was the poet laureate at Akbar's court, and he has been well described in *tazkiras*; his influence reached as far as the Ottoman Empire [Gibb 1965: 247–8, Feldmann 1997: 45]. However, his brother, Abū al-Faẓl is rarely mentioned in *tazkiras*. One contemporary exception is Amīn Aḥmad Rāzī's *Haft iqlīm* (1593–4), but this work also contains biographies of non-poets. Later, *tazkiras* such as Khushgū's *Safīna-'i Khushgū* (1734–5) and Muḥammad Ṣadiq Ḥasan Khān's *Sham'-i anjuman* (1875–6) contained his

1) The date was based on Mashita [2013: 73–4].

biography and described his poetic works, but they expressed skepticism about his value as a poet [*Khushgū* 685, *Sham'* 60–1]. He was categorized as a scholar (*'ulamā'*, *fuḍalā'*) in the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* [II 458]. His biography was also recorded among the biographies of Mughal nobles (*umarā'*) such as Bhakkari's *Ẓakhīrat al-khawānīn* (1651) and Shāh Nawāz Khān's *Ma'āthir al-umarā'* (1780) [*Ẓakhīrat*: I 67–77, *Umarā'*: II 608–22]. These descriptions indicate that he was considered more as a scholar or a politician than as a poet. In the *Haft iqlīm*, he was described in the following manner:

He has a strong desire to compose poems and makes good verses with elegance and delicacy. He excavates jewels of poetry from the mine of thought in his attempts [HI: 402–3].

This description may indicate that his poetry has a philosophical tendency. One of his works, *Munājāt*, cited many verses explaining his religious beliefs [1–37].²⁾

How did Abū al-Faḍl consider poets? In the introduction to the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, he divided those who served Mughal states into four groups: A. *nū'inān*³⁾ (the nobility), B. *awliyā-yi naṣrat-farāhīm-ārāndagān wa niḡahbān-i sarrashta-i dād wa sitad* (military officers and bureaucrats), C. *aṣḥāb-i suḡbat* (royal companions), and D. *aṣḥāb-i khidmat* (royal servants) [AA: I 4–5]. Poets were mentioned in the third category of the royal companions, together with the *ṣadrs* (chief justice), *mīr 'adls* (enforcer of judicial decisions), *ṭabīb* (physicians), *qāẓīs*, *munajjims* (astronomers), and *rammāl* (geomancers). According to him, this group should uphold morality through their knowledge and activity and improve this world [AA: I 5].

The *tazkira* part was inserted in the second part (*daftar*), the *Sipāh-ābādī* (military affairs), among the five parts of *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. After a description of 29 regulations, including the *manṣab* system, Abū al-Faḍl gives a list of people. First, he names high-ranking officers (here, he uses the term *buzurgān*, i.e., greats) in the order of the size of their *manṣabs*.⁴⁾ Second, he lists Muslim and Hindu scholars (*dānish-andūzān*), followed by poets (*qāfiya-sanjān*). After the list of poets, he gives the names of musicians (*khaniyāgarān*) before the end of the second part. The individuals in this part can be categorized as follows:

- 415 High-ranking officers with their names and amounts of *manṣab*
- 232 Scholars with their names
- 59 Poets with short biographies and works
- 15 Poets mentioned only in names
- 36 Musicians with their names and specialties (instruments)

Only the poets have short biographies in this part of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. In other words, Abū al-Faḍl paid more attention to these poets than the high-ranking officers and scholars whose biographies were not included in the work.

Even so, Abū al-Faḍl had a cynical view of the poets. The title of the *tazkira*, *qāfiya-sanjān*, could be an ironic expression, which literally means those who weigh meters of

2) I would like to thank Dr. Satoshi Ogura for helping me to access this source.

3) A Mongolian term. See Doerfer [1963], I 526–9.

4) For analysis of this list, see Mashita [1999].

poetry. Moreover, in the introduction to the *taẓkīra*, he stated that the poets spent their time praising shameful people, abandoned critics, and dirtied people with their language. Emperor Akbar, for this reason, was not charmed by the words of poets and was not interested in poetry. Despite this, thousands of poets visited the emperor's court, composed *dīwāns*, and recited stories [AA: I 235].

It is uncertain how much of Abū al-Faẓl's account is true; nevertheless, his cynical view of poets is apparent.

2. Poets

Abū al-Faẓl chose 59 poets among those who attended Akbar's court in person. The other 15 poets were mentioned only in names; they had never met Akbar but only praised the emperor from a distance. Their names are as follows:

- a. Qāsīmī Gunābādī (d.1574–5)⁵⁾
- b. Ẓamīrī Iṣfahānī (d.1565–6)⁶⁾
- c. Waḥshī Bāfqī (d.1583–4)⁷⁾
- d. Muḥtasham Kāshānī (d.1587–8)⁸⁾
- e. Malik Qummī (d.1616–7)⁹⁾
- f. Ẓuhūrī Shīrāzī¹⁰⁾
- g. Walī Dashtbayāzī (d.1592–3)¹¹⁾
- h. Nikī Iṣfahānī (d.1591–2)¹²⁾
- i. Sabrī¹³⁾
- j. Faḡārī¹⁴⁾
- k. Ḥuẓūrī Qummī (d.1591–2)¹⁵⁾
- l. Qāẓī Nūrī Iṣfahānī (d.1591–2)¹⁶⁾
- m. Ṣāfī Bāmī¹⁷⁾

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- 5) The author of *Shāh Ismā'īl nāma* [Nawāyī 1998–2001: IV 318].
 - 6) His style was similar to that of Amīr Khusraw and was called "Khusraw the Second" [Nawāyī 1998–2001: IV 70–1].
 - 7) He lived in cities in central Iran such as Kashan, Yazd, and Bafq during his lifetime [Nawāyī 1998–2001: VI 104].
 - 8) He was famous for his religious poetry on Shi'ite Imams, but he composed eulogies (*qaṣīda*) for not only Shāh Ṭahmāsb but also Akbar and 'Abd al-Raḥīm Khān Khān-i Khānān [Nawāyī 1998–2001: V 133–4].
 - 9) He served the Niẓām Shāhīs and the 'Ādil Shāhīs and died in Bijapur [Nawāyī 1998–2001: V 280, Gulchīn Ma'ānī 1990–1: 1340–55].
 - 10) He was a disciple of Waḥshī Bāfqī [Nawāyī 1998–2001: IV 126].
 - 11) He travelled a lot but never left Iran [Nawāyī 1998–2001: VI 118–9].
 - 12) He was close to Shāh Ṭahmāsb and received a pension from him [Nawāyī 1998–2001: VI 90].
 - 13) Probably Ṣabrī Ardīstānī (d.1576–7). He lived in Isfahan and became the imam of the Friday Mosque [Nawāyī 1998–2001: IV 24–5].
 - 14) He composed poetry both in Persian and Turkic [Nawāyī 1998–2001: IV 303].
 - 15) He learned religious sciences in Najaf [Nawāyī 1998–2001: II 283].
 - 16) He moved to Qazvin and learned from scholars there [Nawāyī 1998–2001: IV 334].
 - 17) He spent most of his life in Khorasan [Nawāyī 1998–2001: IV 15].

n. Ṭawfi Tabrizī¹⁸⁾

o. Rashkī Hamadānī¹⁹⁾

Only Malik Qummi left Iran for India, but his destination was Deccan India. He served the Niẓām Shāhīs and the 'Ādil Shāhīs. The other poets never moved to India. However, they sent their works to Emperor Akbar.

Abū al-Faẓl chose 59 poets for the *tazkira*; however, more poets were mentioned in other contemporary chronicles and *tazkiras*. Among the chronicles, Niẓām al-Din's *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* included biographies of 81 poets [ṬA: II 484–520], and Badā'unī's *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* discussed 164 poets [MT: III 119–263]. Nihāwandī's *Ma'āthir-i Raḥīmī* (1616), which concerned mainly two nobles in the Mughal court, Bayram Khān and 'Abd al-Raḥīm Khān, covered 105 poets [MR: 55–859]. Jahāngīr's selection of poets during Akbar's reign (1626) consists of 81 poets [*Jahāngīr*: 1–34].²⁰⁾ Two independent *tazkiras* described more poets than any of the abovementioned *tazkiras*: Kāmi's *Nafā'is al-ma'āthir* (1589–90) carried the names of 492 poets, and Awḥadī's *'Arafāt al-'āshiqīn* (1615) listed as many as 3492 names. Thus, Abū al-Faẓl's *tazkira* contained the least number of names.

On the one hand, from the date of compilation, one can assume that Abū al-Faẓl might have referred to Kāmi's work, which was completed five years before, as Badā'unī did so [MT: 119]. On the other hand, two chronicles, the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* and the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī*, were compiled almost at the same period as the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. Although they could have exchanged their ideas during the process of compilation [cf. Mashita 1999: 50], they could not cite the completed works. The *'Arafāt al-'āshiqīn* and the *Ma'āthir-i Raḥīmī* were composed later than the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*; thus, Abū al-Faẓl could not refer to them, while Awḥadī and Nihāwandī could refer to the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. In Table 1, we mention the numbers of poets in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* whose names appeared in other works.

Although the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* contains the least number of poets, no other work covered all the poets mentioned in it. The gigantic *tazkira*, *'Arafāt al-'āshiqīn*, contained the largest number of poets overlapping with those in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* among the aforementioned

Table 1 The number of *Ā'in-i Akbarī*'s poets shared and their percentages among other *tazkiras*'

Works (number of the poets)	Number of the shared poets (Percentage of the poets in the <i>Ā'in-i Akbarī</i>)	Percentage of the shared poets in the whole work
<i>Nafā'is al-ma'āthir</i> (492)	27 (46%)	6%
<i>Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī</i> (81)	36 (61%)	44%
<i>Muntakhab al-tawārikh</i> (164)	40 (68%)	24%
<i>'Arafāt al-'āshiqīn</i> (3492)	53 (90%)	2%
<i>Ma'āthir-i Raḥīmī</i> (105)	17 (29%)	16%
Jahāngīr's selection (81)	35 (59%)	43%

18) First he was a saddler; then, he become a gold smith and finally worked as an alchemist [Nawāyī 1998–2001: IV 118–9].

19) He was a musician and a poet. He became a police chief in Tabriz [Nawāyī 1998–2001: III 105].

20) This is a part of Muṭribī Samarqandi's work, *Nuskha-i Zibā-yi-Jahāngiri* [*Zibā*: 315–41].

Table 2 The number of *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī*'s poets shared and their percentages among other *taẓkiras*

	Number of the shared poets (Percentage of the poets in the <i>Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī</i>)	Percentage of the poets shared in the whole work
<i>Nafā'is al-ma'āthir</i>	29 (36%)	5%
<i>Ā'in-i Akbarī</i>	36 (44%)	61%
<i>Muntakhab al-tawārikh</i>	47 (58%)	29%
<i>'Arafāt al-'āshiqīn</i>	52 (64%)	1%
<i>Ma'āthir-i Raḥīmī</i>	16 (20%)	15%
Jahāngīr' s selection	78 (96%)	96%

taẓkiras. Notwithstanding, six poets found in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* did not appear in the *'Arafāt al-'āshiqīn*. They were Darwīsh Bahrām, Subūḥī, Ṣāliḥī, Khusrawī, Raḥāyī, and Sāqī. Four of them were included in the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī*,²¹⁾ and three were mentioned in the *Nafā'is al-ma'āthir* and the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh*, respectively.²²⁾ Consequently, every poet in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* is referred to in at least-one of these *taẓkiras*. However, as mentioned above, no *taẓkira* contained all the poets mentioned in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*; thus, it retains its uniqueness in its choice of poets.

For comparison, Table 2 shows the same data as Table 1 for the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī*, which is closely related to Emperor Jahāngīr's selection of poets and coincided with the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* at more than 90 percent, which implies he selected poets during Akbar's reign based on this work. In contrast, the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* does not appear to be referred to by Jahāngīr. It is also true that the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* did not have any obvious connection to works other than Jahāngīr's selection.

The order of the poets does not appear to follow an obvious rule in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, such as the alphabetical order of the pennames (*takhallus*) found in the *Nafā'is al-ma'āthir* and the *'Arafāt al-'āshiqīn*. The first poet listed is Abū al-Faẓl's brother, Fayẓī, who was, for a time, the poet laureate of Emperor Akbar. Fayẓī occupied a special place in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* because Abū al-Faẓl spent seven pages on Fayẓī's biography and works, which is an exception. For comparison, the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* [II 484–6], the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* [119–24], and Jahāngīr's selection [1–3] began with the same three poets: Ghazālī Mashhadī (d.1572), Qāsim Kāhī (d.1575–6?)²³⁾, and Khwāja Ḥusayn Marwī (d.1571–2)²⁴⁾. According to the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh*, Akbar bestowed the title of the poet laureate (*malik al-shu'arā*) to Ghazālī, who, along with Kāhī, were the two leaders of all poets [MT: 119, 123]. The *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* and Jahāngīr's selection put Fayẓī in the fourth position after Khwāja Ḥusayn Marwī, while he appeared later in the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* [205–13] by

21) Darwīsh Bahrām, Ṣubūḥī, Khusrawī, and Raḥā'ī [ṬA: 494, 498, 506, 509].

22) Ṣubūḥī and Raḥā'ī are also found in the *Nafā'is al-ma'āthir* [253, 333] and the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* [161, 176]. The *Nafā'is al-ma'āthir* [334] mentions Ṣāliḥī, while the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* [169] includes Sāqī.

23) He was from Kabul and a disciple of 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī [Nawāyī 1998–2001: V 24].

24) He first served Humāyūn and then, Akbar. He was good at composing chronograms [Anūsha 2001: 997].

the alphabetical order of pennames. Evidently, Abū al-Faḥl gave a special position to his brother, Fayḏī, in his *tazkira*.

The *Ā'in-i Akbarī* gives only concise words for the biography of each poet. For example, the biography of Qāsim Kāhī was most descriptive besides that of Fayḏī; however, his biography consists of only four lines in the Calcutta edition, as follows.

He is known as Miyānkālī.²⁵ He collected a small piece of knowledge. He was high browed, had a wide surprising face, and lived with satisfaction. He rarely mixed with great men of dignity. By his open disposition, various people gathered around him. For this reason, ignorant simple people slandered him with long words. With his own freedom and entertainment of the master of the world (i.e., Akbar), he considered himself one of his disciples. He often said about the future [AA: 244].

By contrast, Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad wrote the following:

He had great virtues and abilities. He authored several works on musicology and composed many pieces of music. He spent his time with perfect independence and freedom. He lived for one hundred and twenty years. He composed a poem in response to *Būstān* and had a collection of verses (*dīwān*) [ṬA: II 485].²⁶

The *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī*'s description is also short but contains more concrete information than the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. Moreover, the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* spent more than two pages for Kāhī, including his verses in the Tehran edition [120–3]. Genuine *tazkiras* also had longer descriptions: The *Nafā'is al-ma'āthir* [485–8] has more than two full pages dedicated to his biography and verses, while the *'Arafāt al-'āshiqīn* [3194–8] used more than four full pages for the same.

Another example is the biography of the famous poet, 'Urfī Shīrāzī (d.1590–1). The *Ā'in-i Akbarī* devoted only three lines in the Calcutta edition to him.

Propriety turns away from the appearance of his saying. His talent is clear by his words, but he composes poetry himself because of his short-sightedness. He ridicules older poets. The bud of his gift did not bloom but withered [AA: 245].

The *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* described him devoting four lines in the Calcutta edition:

He was a young man with genius. He had a good understanding. He composed various poems well. His work was so marvelous that he became arrogant and lost popularity. He did not reach his old age. In his youth, he passed away from a diarrheal disease. He had a collection of poems (*dīwān*) and *mathnawīs*. For memory, these verses were recorded [ṬA: II 491–2].

This description was the same as that in Jahāngīr's selection [*Jahāngīr*: 5]. Moreover, the first part of this description (underlined) is cited word for word by Badā'unī [MT: 195]. Badā'unī continued to describe 'Urfī in more than ten lines in the Tehran edition. 'Abd'ul-Ghani pointed out the contradictory accounts found in the biography of 'Urfī in the *Muntakhab*, which was, apparently, caused by that Badā'unī partly quoted the lines from the

25) Miyānkāl was located in the west of Samarkand although he himself came from Kabul.

26) This text is almost identical with Jahāngīr's selection [*Jahāngīr* 2].

Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī for ‘Urfi without paying attention to the consistency with the remaining part of his biography [‘Abd’ul-Ghani 1930: 177–9]. Therefore, we can safely conclude that there is a referential relationship between the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* and the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh*, while the *Ā’in-i Akbarī* was quite independent of other works.

The biographies of 42 poets (71 percent of the total) in the *Ā’in-i Akbarī* were condensed into a single line. For example, concerning Fikrī Harawī (d.1565–6), the following was included in the *Ā’in-i Akbarī* [258] without mentioning his penname:

Sayyid Muḥammad: a weaver (*jāmah-bāf*) from Herat. Mainly, he sang *rubā’is*.

The *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* [494] includes a little more information:

Fikrī, Sayyid Muḥammad, the weaver, served Emperor Akbar for years. He was good at *rubā’is*. He was nicknamed the master of *rubā’i* (*mīr rubā’i*) because he always recited *rubā’is*.

Next, the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* [202] had more information.

Fikrī: Sayyid Muḥammad, the weaver, is known as the master of *the rubā’i*. He was ‘Umar Khayyām of the age around here. He passed away in 973AH on the journey to Jaunpur. This chronogram was “the master of *rubā’i* traveled (*mīr rubā’i safar namūd =973AH*).”

Here, even chronicles such as the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* and the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* had longer biographical descriptions than the *Ā’in-i Akbarī*. Moreover, five poets had no biography, and only their poetry was contained. This is extraordinary because this means that the *tazkira* in the *Ā’in-i Akbarī* provided little information on the lives of the poets; for this purpose, one has to refer to other *tazkiras*.

A certain Iranian dominance can be found among the poets. Four poets in Abū al-Faḏl’s *tazkira* were from India: Fayzī, Širafi Kashmīrī (d.1594–5),²⁷⁾ Mazḥarī Kashmīrī (d.1608–9?),²⁸⁾ and Širī Panjābī.²⁹⁾

Five poets were Central Asian: Kāhī, Šubūḥī Chagatāy,³⁰⁾ Mushfiqī Bukhārī,³¹⁾ Yādḡār Ḥālatī,³²⁾ and Ghayūrī Ḥiṣārī.³³⁾ One was from Iraq, ‘Atabī Najafī.³⁴⁾ The majority of

27) He is known as Shaykh Ya‘qūb Šarfī, a Sufi from Kashmir. While the *Ā’in-i Akbarī* [250] and the *‘Arafāt al-‘āshiqīn* [2166] spell *Širafi*, the *Nafā’is al-ma’āsir* [339] and the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* [178] spell *Šarfī*. He traveled to Samarqand and studied Sufism there and then, returned to Kashmir. He also made pilgrimage to Mecca and traveled the Middle East and North India. Due to the oppression of the local ruler, he escaped to Akbar’s court [Anūsha 2001: 1599–1601]. For his life and works, see also Tikku [1971: 52–79] and Rafiqi [n.d.: 116–24]. I thank Satoshi Ogura for the reference.

28) He traveled various cities in Iran and composed a panegyric poem for a Safavid prince. He served Akbar when the emperor conquered Kashmir. Later, he displeased Akbar but was saved by the courtiers’ intercession [Anūsha 2001: 2385–6].

29) He was from the outskirts of Lahore and composed panegyric poems for Akbar and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Khān-i Khānān [Anūsha 2001: 1562–3].

30) He was from Badakhshān and spent some years in Herat. He served Akbar and had a *dīwān* [Nawāyī 1998–2001: IV 25].

31) He first served ‘Abd Allāh Khān Uzbek and then, moved to Akbar’s court. After a while, he returned Bukhara and died there [Nawāyī 1998–2001: V 237].

32) He was a descendant of Sultan Sanjar Seljuq [*Nafā’is*: 216]. Anūsha [2001: 947] calls him Indian (Hindi), but it was not correct.

the total, the remaining 49 poets (83%) were migrants from Iran.³⁵⁾ This was a higher percentage than that in the *Muntakhab al-tawārīkh* (55%), which included 91 Iranian poets out of 164 poets, and the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* (53%), which included 43 Iranian poets out of 81 poets. This might be because, compared to the other two authors, Abū al-Faḏl did not hesitate to refer to such poets from Iran in his *tazkira*, since at that time, many outstanding Persian poets from outside of the subcontinent, including Iran, visited Akbar's court in search of patrons.

3. Poetry

In contrast to the concise description of the biographies, the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* quotes larger number of verses than other contemporary *tazkiras* per one poet: it contains 548 couplets of poetry and 81 lines of poets' biographies. Although his *tazkira* records less than ten couplets when referring to 45 poets, he lists ten to twenty couplets per person for other ten poets. More remarkable cases are 23 couplets of Thanā'i Mashhadī (d. 1587–8)³⁶⁾, 21 of 'Urḏī Shīrāzī, and 20 of Ḥayātī Gilānī (d.1618–9)³⁷⁾ [AA: I 242–3, 245–6, 247–8]; Notwithstanding Abū al-Faḏl wrote only one or two lines about the biographies of these three men, he quoted so many of their poems. Furthermore, the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* contains a superb selection of Fayḏī's poetry, including his *qaṣīdas*, *rubā'īs*, and *ghazals*, as much as 169 couplets [AA: 235–42]. This number exceeds those of any other *tazkiras*³⁸⁾, and only 17 couplets (10 percent) among them can be found in other *tazkiras*.

In some cases, the same couplets can be found in other *tazkiras*. All of the couplets of Ḥuznī Iṣfahānī (d.1586–7)³⁹⁾, Ghazālī Mashhadī, and the other ten poets in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* are also available in other *tazkiras*.⁴⁰⁾ For example, one *tazkira*, the *Nafā'is al-ma'āsir* [190],

33) He first served Muḥammad Ḥakīm Mirzā in Kabul and then, went to the court of Akbar [*Muṭribī*: 743–44; *Arafāt*: 2683]. Nawāyī [1998–2001: IV 243] confused him with Shāhwirdī Ghayūri, who was from the Zu al-Qadr tribe.

34) He moved to Iran and then, went to Deccan India and served 'Alī 'Adil Shāh. After the master's death, he moved to Akbar's court [Nawāyī 1998–2001: IV 165–6]. Another poet with an Irāqī origin name, Qudsi Karbalā'i, lived in Sabzevar, Iran, although his family was from Karbalā. He, later, moved to Herat and Delhi. [*Arafāt*: 3067. Cf. Nawāyī 1998–2001: IV 333]. Therefore, I count him as an Iranian.

35) The *Ā'in-i Akbarī* [258] mentions Payāmi just as 'Arab (*tāzī-nizhād*), but he was from Kerman, Iran [Gulchīn Ma'ānī 1990–1: 176–92, Nawāyī 1998–2001: II 132].

36) First, he tried to serve Shāh Ismā'il II, but after he failed, he moved to India. He once became a court poet of Akbar, but later, he served Ḥakīm Abū al-Faḏl Gilānī and then, 'Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān [Gulchīn Ma'ānī 1990–1: 257–68; Nawāyī 1998–2001: II 177].

37) He frequently visited Kashan for trade and moved from there to India. Ḥakīm Abū al-Faḏl Gilānī introduced him to Akbar. He was also close to 'Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān and served Jahāngīr [Gulchīn Ma'ānī 1990–1: 335–48; Nawāyī 1998–2001: II 298].

38) The *Nafā'is al-ma'āthir* [444–6] contains 38 couplets, the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* 16 couplets, the *Muntakhab al-tawārīkh* [205–13] 111 couplets, the *Arafāt al-'āshiqīn* [2980–4] contains 84 couplets, and Jahāngīr's selection [4] contains 10 couplets, respectively.

39) He was an erudite scholar and moved to India. He stayed for a while in Golkonda and then, moved to the Mughal court [Gulchīn Ma'ānī 1990–1: 314–21; Nawāyī 1998–2001: II 257].

includes all three couplets of Judā'ī Tirmizī⁴¹) included in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* [254]. However, Ḥuznī Iṣfahānī's twelve couplets are covered by not one *taẓkira* but various works. The *'Arafāt al-āshiqīn* contains the most, that is, ten couplets [1142–3, 1145], which might have been cited from the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*; however, the other two couplets are not included. One is found in the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* [151], and its variants can be found in the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* [508] and Jahāngīr's selection [23].

marā bar sādalaḥwīhā-yi ḥuznī khwānda mī-āyad
ki 'āshiq gashte wa chashm-i wafā az yār ham dārad

(Ḥuznī's innocence make me laugh

I love him and promise to help him) [AA: 244]

The other is found in the *Nafā'is al-ma'āthir* [218] as a slightly different version.

*Ḥuznī sāda-dil imrūz chu har rūz-i digar*⁴²
ba-sukhanhā-yi durūgh-i tu tasallī shud wa raft

(Simple-hearted Ḥuznī today is just like another day

He was consoled with your lies and went away) [AA: 244]

Here we find again that the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*'s collection of poetry surpasses the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* in the number of verses. The latter contained just two couplets of Ḥuznī, one of which is also included in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* and the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh*. The *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* includes three couplets of Ḥuznī, one of which is also mentioned in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. In other words, the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* and the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* includes just a few couplets of Ḥuznī, and one of them are also contained by the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*.

The couplets of 38 poets in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* partially coincide with those of other *taẓkiras*. For example, among 'Urfi's 21 couplets included in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, 4 couplets are also mentioned in the *'Arafāt al-āshiqīn* and 3 couplets are included in the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* and the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī*. The remaining 14 couplets are not mentioned in the other *taẓkiras*.⁴³ One of them is as follows:

ma-gū ki naghma-sarāyān-i 'ishq khāmūshand
ki naghma nāzuk wa aṣḥāb pamba dar gūshand

(Do not say that singers of love are silent

Because the song is elegant and the audience has cotton in the ears) [AA: 245]⁴⁴)

40) Ghayratī Shirāzī, Fikrī Harawī, Judā'ī Tirmizī, Wuqū'ī Nishābūrī, Rafī'ī Kāshī, Pādshāh Qulī Jazwī, Khāja Ḥusayn Marwī, Mushaffiq Bukhārī, Rahā'ī Bustī, and Payrawī Sāwajī.

41) He was a famous painter like his father. He grew up in Tabriz and first worked at the workshop of Shāh Ṭahmāsb. After migrating to India, he worked at Akbar's workshop and produced famous copies of the *Hamza-nāma* [Gulchīn Ma'ānī 1990–1: 272–5; Nawāyī 1998–2001: II 186].

42) The *Nafā'is al-ma'āthir* says: *Ḥuznī sāda-dil imrūz chu har rūz*.

43) I found all 14 of them in 'Urfi's *kulliyāt* (the collection of his whole works) ['Urfi: I 231, 355, 392, 429, 468, 482, 592, 647; II 120; III 66, 92], which might prove the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*'s credibility.

44) This is the first couplet of seven couplets *ghazal* in his *kulliyāt* ['Urfi: I 592]. These couplets are cited by Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī, a famous jurist in Isfahan known as Shaykh Bahā'ī in his *Kashkūl* [I 260]. In other words, the couplets were known in Iran at that time though other *taẓkiras* than the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* did not cite them.

This is another verse:

Umīd hast ki bigānagī-i 'Urfī rā

ba-dūstī-i sukhanhā-yi ashnā bakhshand

(Hopefully in favor of familiar words

They might forgive 'Urfī's strangeness) [AA: 245]⁴⁵⁾

Urfī's biographies in the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* and the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* were much longer than the one in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. The *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* cites eleven couplets, and the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* includes just six, much fewer than those in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. Moreover, his verses included in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* cannot be found in other *tazkiras*.

Furthermore, the verses of Širafī Kashmīrī and the other eight poets,⁴⁶⁾ whose works were collected in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, did not coincide with those in the other *tazkiras*. Širafī was mentioned as a poet in the *tazkiras* of the *Nafā'is al-ma'āthir* [339], the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* [178], and the *'Arafāt al-'āshiqīn* [2166], but the verses that *Ā'in-i Akbarī* cites are different from those in the three other *tazkiras*.

Ham zi dil duzdīd šabr wa ham dil-i dīwāna rā

duzd-i man bā khāna duzdīd mutā'-i khāna rā

(The thief stole patience from the heart and also the mad heart

My thief stole my belongings with the house) [AA: 250]

In summary, the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* contains 548 couplets of poetry, and among them, 200 couplets are also mentioned in other *tazkiras*. In other words, 348 couplets (64 percent) are not mentioned in other *tazkiras*. The fact that such a great number of couplets are recorded only in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* highlights this encyclopedic work's feature as a *tazkira* of poets. Among the *tazkiras*, the *'Arafāt al-'āshiqīn* contains 130 couplets in common with the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, while the *Muntakhab al-tawārikh* has 63 common couplets, the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* includes 53 common couplets, Jahāngīr's selection has 39 common couplets, and the *Nafā'is al-ma'āthir* has 26 common couplets, respectively. The relationships between the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* and other *tazkiras* regarding the numbers of common couplets are not much different from those regarding the numbers of shared poets.

Conclusion

The *tazkira* part of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* has not received much attention. It is short, few poets are mentioned, and each poet's biography is brief and does not contain much information. Compared to the other parts of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, which are tremendously rich and unique, it is natural for researchers to ignore this part.

However, after analyzing the biographies of poets and their verses, one can find a few

45) This is the last couplet of 13 couplets of *ghazals* in his *kulliyāt* [*'Urfī*: I 480–2].

46) Šālihi Harāti, Kāmi Sabzawāri, Payāmi Kirmāni, Sāmīri Tabrizi, Faribi Rāzi, Nādirī Turshizi, Qāsimi Māzandarāni, and Rāhi Nisābūri.

distinctive features of this part. First, Abū al-Faẓl selected 59 poets who attended Akbar's court in person. Badā'unī and Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad adopted a different approach. They described the poets from Akbar's era regardless of whether they had personal contact with the emperor or not. In contrast, regarding the poets who communicated with the emperor from a distance, Abū al-Faẓl included only their names. In other words, he ignored the poets who did not have any relationship with Akbar, no matter how good their poetry was. For this reason, we can consider the *tazkira* part of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* as the most important source of the literary scene at Akbar's court. Even in the cases where the other *tazkiras* do not explicitly state a poet's relationship with the emperor, if his name is on the list of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, we can assume that he had some connections in the court.

Second, although the biographies of poets, except that of Fayzī, in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* are brief and have only 81 lines in total in the Calcutta edition, a considerable number of couplets (548) are cited. Comparing the same poets, the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* contains more verses than the *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī* or the *Muntakhab al-tawārīkh*. Among the 548 couplets, 348 couplets (64 percent) were not found in other *tazkiras*. Therefore, instead of the poets' biographies, their verses establish the originality of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* as a *tazkira*. Naturally, poets' *dīwāns* could contain more verses than *tazkiras* do but not all the *dīwāns* of poets mentioned in *tazkiras* are available for us. In this regard, we cannot ignore the value of this *tazkira* as a literary source.

Why did Abū al-Faẓl compile such a unique or unorthodox *tazkira*? One possibility is that Abū al-Faẓl did not want to include traditional *tazkira* in his magnificent work, the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. Unlike Badā'unī, he did not explicitly cite other *tazkiras* and compiled it independently from others; he tried to compile a *tazkira* in a unique manner, which was fitting for the peerless masterpiece, the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*.

He knew the importance of Persian poetry and spent pages on their biographies and poetry, written in more detail than those of nobles, scholars, and musicians. He was surrounded by Persianate culture. Moreover, although he was not known as a poet, his brother Fayzī was a master of Persian poetry. However, he did not conceal his cynical view of the poets. This might be the reason why he did not write longer biographies of the poets.

The *tazkira* part is not unique when one explores the other unique parts of the extraordinary work, the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*. However, if one examines it in detail, the contents of the *tazkira* in the *Ā'in-i Akbarī* has a unique value and should not be underestimated. Even when he dealt with a traditional genre like the *tazkira*, Abū al-Faẓl found his own approach; this has attracted our attention even after more than four hundred years.

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