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Poetry and power: the appreciation of the verse in Seljuq and Ilkhanid chronicles : the case of Rāḥat al-Şudūr and Jāmi‘ al-Tavārīkh

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2 *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr* va *Āyat al-Surūr*

This chapter consists of six subsections. I will start with situating *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr* in its milieu tracking the development of Persian historiography up until the composition of *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr* followed by introducing the author, Rāvandī. Subsequently, I will focus on how the work is structured as well as its writing style. The last three subsections will concentrate on the verses included in *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr* with special focus on Nizāmī and Firdawsī whose verses have been applied frequently by Rāvandī.

2.1 Persian Historiography under the Seljuqs

The battle of Dandānaqān in 1040 marked the end of the Ghaznavids' rule in Iran and beginning of a new era for the Seljuqs.⁵¹ This battle pushed the Ghaznavids (977-1186) out of Khurasan for good by taking over Nishapur, their last stronghold in Khurasan.⁵² The main participants of this battle on the Seljuq side were Ṭughril Beg and Chaghrī Beg of the Seljuqs. They were both aware of the political requirements of ruling over a vast territory, thus they sought to acquire legitimacy via the traditional sources for such legitimacy in this period. As Patricia Crone says, "all legitimate power flowed from the [caliph], so that all public offices would be void in his absence." Ṭughril and Chaghrī wrote a letter to then-sitting Abbasid Caliph al-Qā'im (1031-1075), asking him for his blessing and support.⁵³ The Seljuqs continued expanding their territory outside of Khurasan; territory which was then divided between various members of the Seljuq family.⁵⁴ The caliph's letter arrived later in 1044. Unfortunately,

⁵¹ For the origin of the Seljuqs, see: Andrew Peacock, *Early Seljuq History* (London & New York: Routledge, 2010); Andrew Peacock, *The Great Seljuq Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Aziz Bašan, *The Great Seljuqs* (London & New York: Routledge, 2010); Edmund Bosworth, "The Origins of the Seljuqs," in *The Seljuqs, Politics, Society, and Culture*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 13-21. Claude Cahen, "The *Malik-Nāma* and the History of the Seljuqid Origins," in *The Turks in the Early Islamic World*, ed. Edmund Bosworth (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007), 315-38. For a brief history of the Seljuqs, see: David Durand-Guédy, "New Trends in the Political History of Iran under the Great Saljuqs (11th-12th Centuries)," *History Compass* 13.7 (2015): 321-37.

⁵² For the conquest of Nishapur, see Jürgen Paul, "The Seljuq Conquest(s) of Nishapur: A Reappraisal," *Iranian Studies* 38.4 (2005): 575-585.

⁵³ Patricia Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 239. For the letter, see: Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr* va *Āyat al-Surūr*, ed. Mohammad Eqbal (Tehran: Asāṭīr, 1386/2007), 102-3. For Seljuq and Abbasid relationships, see: Deborah Tor, "The Political Revival of the Abbasid Caliphate: Al-Muqtafī and the Seljuqs," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 137.2 (2017): 301-314; Vanessa van Renterghem, "Baghdad: A View from the Edge on the Seljuq Empire," in *The Age of the Seljuqs*, ed. Edmund Herzig & Sarah Stewart (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 74-93.

⁵⁴ Peacock, *The Great Seljuq Empire*, 40-41. This was a common practice among the Turks. In their eyes, sovereignty belong to all male members of the founding family. It is also the reason for many rebellions and succession struggles during their reign, because based on this practice, more than one person could have a claim on the throne. The best example for the rivalry between Seljuq family members is the rebellion of Arsalān Arghūn, Malikshāh's brother who sought power after Malikshāh's death. For his story, see: Jürgen Paul, "Arslān Arghūn- Nomadic Rival?" in *The Seljuqs, Politics, Society and Culture*, ed. Christian Lange and Sungül Mecit (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 99-116. Rudi Paul Lindner, who has worked extensively on

the actual letter was not preserved in our sources, but sources have provided us with a summary of its contents according to which the Seljuqs were warned not to expand further but were allowed to keep what they had conquered.⁵⁵

Sultan Ṭughril died in 1063 without producing a son. His nephew, Alp Arsalān (r. 1063-1072), the son of Chaghrī seized power. He was the ruler of Khurasan after his father's death and upon hearing the news of Ṭughril's death advanced westwards. It was in Alp Arsalān's reign and that of his successor, Malikshāh (r. 1072-1092), that the Seljuq Empire reached its peak in terms of territory.

It is also during Alp Arsalān's reign that Seljuq historiography began. It is not easy to investigate Seljuq historiographical works, since not many have survived. Some have survived partially or in the form of abridgments in other sources and the ones that have come down to us only have one manuscript. The scarcity of Seljuq historiographical works is also the reason that many scholars, like Julie Meisami, believe in the Seljuq rulers' lack of interest in historiography. According to her, Iranian administrators were less eager to immortalise the actions of the Seljuq rulers, compared to the Ghaznavid rulers, and recurrent power struggle after the death of Malikshāh made history writing even more difficult.⁵⁶ In contrast, Elton Daniel focuses more on the possibility of many Seljuq sources being lost by pointing out that we are already aware of the names of a few lost works via existing sources, but the number of lost sources might have been higher.⁵⁷ Moreover, we may not have an abundant amount of historical works, but we do have significant literary production in other genres such as mirror for princes and poetry.⁵⁸

Cahen has categorized Seljuq historiography into three types of pan-Islamic, regional, and dynastic.⁵⁹ It is true that the existing works, save for one (the *Maliknāma*), were not commissioned by the Great Seljuqs themselves. Rather in this era, small courts within the Seljuq empire provided patronage for authors.⁶⁰ An important example of this is *Mujmal al-Tavārikh va al-Qiṣaṣ*, a general history written for the Kakuyid Atabegs of Yazd (1050-1141).⁶¹

nomadic tribes also mentions this traditional custom. According to him, "the tribesmen supported not the eldest son, but the candidate who best represented their interests." Rudi Paul Lindner, "What Was a Nomadic Tribe?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24.4 (1982): 693.

⁵⁵ Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronology of Bar Hebraeus*, trans. Wallis Budge (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2019), vol.1, 203-204.

⁵⁶ Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 142.

⁵⁷ Daniel, "Rise and Development", 149-150.

⁵⁸ The term 'mirrors for princes' will be explained later on pp.49-50.

⁵⁹ Claude Cahen, "The Historiography of the Seljuq Period," in *Les peuples musulmans dans l'histoire médiévale*, ed. Claude Cahen (Presses de l'Ifpo, 1977), 38, no.3.

⁶⁰ Aptin Khanbaghi has demonstrated how the Turkic dynasties of the Ghaznavids, and the Seljuqs participated in spreading Persian from Khurasan to the other parts of their territories. See: Aptin Khanbaghi, "Champions of the Persian Language: The Mongols or the Turks?" in *The Mongols' Middle East: Continuity and Transformation in Ilkhanid Iran*, ed. Bruno De Nicola and Charles Melville (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 193-215.

⁶¹ For more on this, see: Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 188-209.

The first source patronized by the Great Seljuqs, the *Maliknāma*, was produced to legitimise Seljuq rule. This source is unfortunately lost, and we are only informed of it by other sources, especially by *Rawzat al-Ṣafā* of the Timurid historian, Mīrkhvānd and the Syrian historian Bar Hebraeus.⁶² The *Maliknāma* was a work of propaganda, an image given by the Seljuqs of their origin and drew on materials from their oral history.⁶³ It is not exactly clear in what language it was written; Peacock lists Turkish, Arabic and Persian for the *Maliknāma*'s language,⁶⁴ while Cahen believes it was written in Persian.⁶⁵ In whatever language it was composed, there is no evidence that it contained poetry as well.

The second state-sponsored source is a regional history called the *Fārsnāma*.⁶⁶ As the title suggests it is a local history of the province of Fars written by Ibn Balkhī in 1116. In the introduction, the author informs us that he was commissioned by Sultan Muḥammad (r. 1105-1118) to write a book on history of Fars, as it had been the centre of power for a long time and in this book, he was requested to discuss the regions of Fars, its financial resources, the people, and their customs as well as their history.⁶⁷ The author surpassed this request by not only discussing the aforementioned issues, but also by reminding his readers of the ancient glory of Fars.⁶⁸ Ibn Balkhī, unlike Rāvandī, did not apply poetry to achieve his purpose, rather his efforts are more visible through the structure based on the classes (*ṭabaqāt*) of ancient Iranian kings and in fact very similar to the structure that the historians, Bayzāvī and Rashīd al-Dīn applied one and two centuries later.

The *Maliknāma* and the *Fārsnāma* are the only works commissioned by a sultan as far as we know. In contrast, there is a significant amount of literary production, including historical works, which were supported by the Seljuq sultans and their vassals- after their composition- or dedicated to them; not to mention that the court of Sultan Sanjar (r. 1118-1157) was home to many poets. It is likely that the relationship between authors and their patrons was reversed in this period. In other words, while the rulers of pre-Seljuq era, especially the Buyids and the Samanids, were interested in commissioning historical books themselves, the Seljuq rulers welcomed and sponsored the production and did not necessarily commission them.⁶⁹

⁶² Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronology*, 195-196.

⁶³ Andrew Peacock, "Court Historiography of the Seljuq Empire in Iran and Iraq: Reflections on Content, Authorship and Language," *Iranian Studies* 47:2 (2014): 331-332 & 345.

⁶⁴ Peacock, 330.

⁶⁵ Claude Cahen, "Le Malik-nameh et l'histoire des origines seljukides," *Oriens* 2.1 (1949): 32.

⁶⁶ In this period, some sources were written based on the order of sultans, while some other were written by the authors' own initiatives and then were offered to rulers or courtiers and received a reward or an amount of money.

⁶⁷ Ibn Balkhī, *Fārsnāma*, ed. Guy Le Strange & Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (Tehran: Asāṭir, 1384/2005), 2-3.

⁶⁸ Writing regional histories is also seen an attempt to situate various regions into the history of Islam and Muslim world. See: Sarah Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 127-129.

⁶⁹ Peacock, "Court Historiography," 335.

As we get closer to the end of the Seljuq reign, more historical works were produced, especially in western regions of the empire such as the region *‘Irāq-i ‘Ajam* (translated as Persian Iraq, roughly west and northwest of modern Iran).⁷⁰ It is during this time that the most significant dynastic history was written. It is called the *Saljūqnāma* and was written in Persian by Ṣāḥib al-Dīn Nayshābūrī in 1170. The author was an *adīb* and historian at the court of Sultan Arslan (r. 1160-1177).⁷¹ As Rāvandī states in his *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, the *Saljūqnāma* had been the basis of his work.⁷² Indeed, Rāvandī did not only use the *Saljūqnāma* for its historical information, but also, repeated some of the *Saljūqnāma*’s passages verbatim. Almost all the verses in the work were included in Rāvandī’s text as well. The main difference between the historical information of the *Saljūqnāma* and *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr* concerns the reign of Ṭughril III and the aftermath of his fall, since Rāvandī himself lived in that period and was a witness to the events himself.

Historiography of the Seljuq period is by no means homogeneous. Both Cahen and Meisami have noticed a separation between Arabic and Persian works on the Seljuqs.⁷³ In other words, Arabic and Persian histories were produced in two completely different spheres and do not seem to have had significant influence on each other. Although the Seljuqs are often celebrated for connecting the east and west of the ancient Iranian territory for the first time after the Islamic conquest, the books which were written in the eastern and western territories of their empire have different focuses as well as having the authors with various backgrounds.⁷⁴ *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* and *al-Sīyāq li-tārīkh Nayshābūr* are both regional histories, one on the city of Bayhaq (modern day Sabzivār in the northwest of Iran) and another on Nayshābūr written in the east of the empire.⁷⁵ Their authors, Ibn Funduq and ‘Abd al-Ghāfir Fārsī respectively, came from religious families (families of the *‘ulamā*). They also show a significant interest in religious history of their regions as well as relating life stories of the local *‘ulamā*. On the other hand, the works from the western part of the empire emphasize political and administrative history while having authors with administrative backgrounds (or *dīvānī*). Therefore, there seems to have been a wide gap between the courts of the east and the west.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Peacock believes that factionalism in the west was the reason for the proliferation of historical works. While the eastern administration was more stable, the western territory was the focus of struggle for sultans and as a result, they could not exert control over their bureaucrats as easily as Sultan Sanjar in the east. Moreover, many of the administrators were chosen and sent by Sultan Sanjar to the west, as Sanjar was considered the overlord at this time. See: Peacock, “Court Historiography,” 341.

⁷¹ Naser Sedqī, *Tārīkh-nigārī dar Īrān-i ‘Aṣr-i Saljūqī* (Tehran: Pazhūhishkade-yi Tārīkh-i Islām, 1393/2014), 340-341.

⁷² Rāvandī, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr va Āyat al-Surūr*, 64-65.

⁷³ Cahen, “The Historiography of the Seljuq Period,” n.29; Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 144.

⁷⁴ Sedqī, *Tārīkh-nigārī dar Īrān-i ‘Aṣr-i Saljūqī*, 81-94.

⁷⁵ For more, see: Sedqī, *Tārīkh-nigārī dar Īrān-i ‘Aṣr-i Saljūqī*, 134-137 & 152-157.

⁷⁶ Reproduction and distribution of manuscripts were also other issues that should be taken into account. The *Maliknāma* was commissioned by court and produced there, but none of the Seljuq writers seem to have had accessed to it or even have seen it, let alone using it in their books.

In terms of applying poetry in historiography, three books can be distinguished: the first one, *Mujmal al-Tavārīkh va al-Qiṣaṣ* written by an unknown author in 1126, is the first Seljuq history which included *Shāhnāma* verses by way of historical information.⁷⁷ As we approach closer to the time of Rāvandī, more authors start to include poetry in their work. The second noticeable example is *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* which mostly makes use of Arabic verses, while the third, *ʿIqd al-ʿUlā lil-Mawqif al-Aʿlā*, was written by Afzal al-Dīn Kirmānī in 1189. The book is a history of the last years of Seljuq rule over Kerman and its aftermath. It is perhaps the closest source to *Rāḥat al-Sudūr* in terms of language and making use of poetry, both Arabic and Persian, as well as Qurʾanic verses. It is in this line of literary production that we can situate *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*. In the following section, I will consider closely both the author and his purpose for writing the book.

2.2 Rāvandī and His Milieu

Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr va Āyat al-Surūr (hereafter *RṢ*) is a dynastic history of the Great Seljuqs written by Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Sulaymān al-Rāvandī around 1205-6.⁷⁸ Almost all our information about the author can be gathered from the introduction of *RṢ* itself. According to his introduction, Rāvandī comes from a small village, Rāvand, in the vicinity of Kashan. He lost his father when he was young and just finished his elementary studies in Persian and Arabic, so the responsibility of his education fell upon his uncle, Tāj al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Rāvandī who, according to the author, was knowledgeable in every field, including poetry, jurisprudence, exegesis, Qurʾan studies and *ḥadīth*.⁷⁹ The author spent ten years in his uncle's care while also traveling to various cities of Iraq. During these years, he acquired every skill of calligraphy to the extent that he could 'write in seventy different calligraphic styles' along with bookbinding and gilding.⁸⁰ Calligraphy was a field in which the author's family was famous. Another of his uncles, Zayn al-Dīn Rāvandī, was particularly talented, and was summoned by Sultan Ṭughril III in order to teach him the ways and secrets of this art.⁸¹

When Tughril III had become quite the calligrapher, the Sultan undertook the huge project of scribing the Qurʾan. In doing so, he did not refrain from any expense and hired painters and gilders to adorn the pages he had written. It is through this project that our

⁷⁷ Nasrin Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma as a Mirror for Princes* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 68.

⁷⁸ Various translations have been suggested for the book's title, such as 'Ease for Breasts and Marvel of Happiness' (Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 237), 'Recreation of the Breast and Symbol of Joy' (Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968), 237), and as 'Comfort of Hearts and Wonder of Delights' (Dagmar Reidel, "Searching for the Islamic Episteme: The Status of Historical Information in Medieval Middle Eastern Anthological Writing" (PhD diss, Indiana University, 2004), iii).

⁷⁹ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 40.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Rāvandī, 43. The editor of *RṢ*, Mohammad Eqbal stated that Rāvandī's family acquired such a reputation in calligraphy that a form of script, *khaṭṭ-i Kāshī* (script of Kashan) was popularised by them. Rāvandī, *RṢ*, xvii.

author was first introduced to the court.⁸² Rāvandī was so fascinated by his patron that he vowed to write a history of the reign of Sultan Ṭughril III.⁸³ The author did not get a chance to realize his wish, as his patron died in the battle with Takish Khwrazmshah (r. 1172-1200) bringing the Great Seljuq dynasty to an end.

With his patron, Sultan Ṭughril, dead, Rāvandī lost the security of having a benefactor. He retreated more into solitude, keeping himself busy with reading about poetry, jurisprudence, and other branches of religion. After a few years of living in relative poverty and at the same time, pursuing his education, he informs us that he came to the realization that it is only one's 'good name' that remains in this world.⁸⁴ Therefore, Rāvandī decided to write a book which would ensure that the name of Rāvandī would be well-remembered. Feeling indebted to the Seljuqs whose government provided him with learning opportunities, Rāvandī desired to offer the book to a member of the Seljuq family.⁸⁵ His attention was drawn to the Seljuq rulers of Anatolia. Around 1202, when Rāvandī started to write the book, Sultan Rukn al-Dīn Sulaymānshāh ruled over Anatolia. The author informs us that he was first inclined to offer the book to Rukn al-Dīn, but he learnt that he was a usurper and therefore, decided to dedicate the book to the man he considered to be the true ruler of Anatolia, Sultan Ghīyāṣ al-Dīn Kaykhusraw I, who regained the throne in 1204.⁸⁶

Despite the fact that Rāvandī allocated so many poems throughout the book to Sultan Kaykhusraw, he did not completely manage to erase the traces of his first dedicatee, Sultan Rukn al-Dīn. Occasionally, we see some passages in the book that clearly refer to Sultan Rukn al-Dīn's deeds, such as the campaign of Abkhaz and Caucasus.⁸⁷ Rāvandī became aware of some of Sultan Kaykhusraw I's achievements through Abī Bakr ibn Abī al-'Alā' al-Rūmī [*sic*], a merchant whom Rāvandī met in his place of residence, Hamadan, when he was finishing *RṢ*. Extremely enthralled by *RṢ*, al-Rūmī asked Rāvandī for his permission to present the book to Sultan Kaykhusraw I.⁸⁸ It is not clear whether Rāvandī made the journey himself as well or not. There is no evidence in the sources indicating Rāvandī's presence or the reception of the book.

⁸² A manuscript of this Qur'an known as *Qur'ān-i Rāvandī* (ms.2261 Library of Āstān-i Quds-i Razavī) has survived. It was scribed by Rāvandī's uncle, Tāj al-Dīn, in 586/1190 and illuminated by Rāvandī himself in 587/1191. Rāvandī mentioned this Qur'an in *RṢ* as well. (see: Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 44).

⁸³ Rāvandī, 44.

⁸⁴ Rāvandī, 59. This theme can be found in other sources too, see: Afzal al-Dīn Kirmānī, *'Iqd al-'Ulā lil Mawqif al-A'āl*, ed. Ali Mohammad Ameri Nayini (Tehran: Rūzbahān, 2536/ 1978), 62.

⁸⁵ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 62. "و چون تحصیل علوم در دولت آل سلجوق کرده بودم و مشایخ و استادان دعاگوی داعیان و هواخواهان ایشان بودند و مدارس عراق و خیرات در آفاق ازیشان و بندگان ظاهر شد خواستم که این کتاب بنام سلطانی سلجوقی باشد."

⁸⁶ Rāvandī, 461. "گفت این اعجوبه جهان را من بدان حضرت رسانم."

⁸⁷ Rāvandī, 26. For more examples, see xx. On this campaign, see: Ibn Bībī, *Tārīkh-i Salājaqa-yi Rūm*, ed. Mohammad Javad Mashkour (Tehran: Kitāb-furūshī-yi Tihirān, 1350/1972), 21-3. Another example of this discrepancy is a poem included at the end of *RṢ*. The poem in *RṢ* clearly states that it is in praise of Sultan Kaykhusraw. However, the same poem appears in the manuscript of *Mu'nis al-Ahrār fī Daqā'iq al-Ash'ār*, an anthology of Persian poetry completed in 1341 by Muḥammad ibn Badr al-Dīn Jājarmī, where it is addressed to Sultan Rukn al-Dīn Sulaymānshāh. See: Alexander Morton, "The *Mu'nis al-Ahrār* and Its Twenty-Nine Chapters," in *Illustrated Poetry and Epic Images: Persian Paintings of the 1330s and 1340s*, ed. Marie Lukens Swietochowsky and Stefano Carboni (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), 49-66.

⁸⁸ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 462.

The historian, Andrew Peacock believes that Rāvandī “appears to have travelled to Konya for the purpose of presenting it to the ruler.”⁸⁹ However, no evidence has been presented. The editor of *RŞ*, Mohammad Eqbal shares the same belief. He downplays the role of al-Rūmī by indicating that he only encouraged Rāvandī in his endeavours.⁹⁰ Eqbal’s evidence for holding such a belief is a sentence in the opening of the book: “since this book has come to the attention of the pillar of this world and looked upon approvingly.”⁹¹ Contrary to this vague reference (assuming that ‘the pillar of this world’ refers to Sultan Kaykhusraw I), there is a clear sentence in the epilogue of *RŞ* which demonstrates that Rāvandī had not been in the presence of Sultan Kaykhusraw I: “God almighty ... may deliver this book to His Majesty merrily and auspiciously and may God grant me the opportunity to pay him homage.”⁹² Since the author uses the phrase ‘*daryāft-i muṣul*’, which can be translated as ‘to be granted an audience’, the possibility of the book having been presented by the author seems slim.

Whether Rāvandī went to Konya or not, we do not hear about the book in our sources until 24 April 1238 (1 Ramaḍān 635 A.H.), the date of its only extant manuscript. The manuscript was written in *naskh* script by Ḥāj Ilyās ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Qūnavī, meaning that the work attracted some attention during the reign of Sultan Kaykhusraw II (r. 1237-46).⁹³ The book was also in the possession of the Ilkhanid official and historian ‘Aṭā-Malik Juvainī (1226-1283), the Ottoman Sultan Bayazid II (r. 1481-1512), and an unknown figure, Ḥaj Muṣṭafā (with his seal dated 1765) which speaks to its manuscript circulation to some degree.⁹⁴

The ideological foundation of the Rum Seljuq Sultanate and its development is beyond the scope of this study and the possible reason for this apparent attention to *RŞ* is not completely evident. The manuscript was scribed in the early years of Kaykhusraw II’s reign and as is suggested by the sources, Kaykhusraw II’s ascension was not a straightforward transfer of power. His father, Sultan Kayqubād (1220-37) had three sons of whom Kaykhusraw was the eldest. The other two, ‘Izz al-Dīn and Rukn al-Dīn, were from Kayqubād’s Ayyubid wife. The court historian Ibn Bībī (d. 1285) informs us that Kayqubād designated ‘Izz al-Dīn as his successor and made the emirs take an oath of allegiance to him.⁹⁵ After the death of Sultan Kayqubād, a number of the *amīrs* (commander), including Sa’d al-Dīn Köpek, assisted

⁸⁹ Andrew Peacock, “Court Historiography of the Seljuq Empire in Iran and Iraq: Reflections on Content, Authorship and Language,” *Iranian Studies* (2014): 4. [10.1080/00210862.2013.860331](https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2013.860331)

⁹⁰ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, xx.

⁹¹ Rāvandī, 64. "چه این کتاب در نظر قطب عالم آمده است و پسندیده"

⁹² Rāvandī, 464. "ملک تعالی ... رسیدن این کتاب بدان حضرت خجسته و مبارک گرداناد و بنده را نیز در یافت مثول در خدمت روزی کناد."

⁹³ The manuscript is kept in the National Library of France (BnF) catalogued as Supplement Persan 1314.

⁹⁴ For more on the details of *RŞ*’s manuscript, see: Riedel, “*Searching for the Islamic Episteme: The Status of Historical Information in Medieval Middle Eastern Anthological Writing*” 78- 83.

⁹⁵ Ibn Bībī, *Akhbār-i Salājaqa-yi Rūm*, ed. Mohammad Javad Mashkour (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Tihirān, 1350/1974), 205-206.

Kaykhusraw in gaining power.⁹⁶ In the first two years of Kaykhusraw II's reign, Köpek seems to have increased his influence, as he was able to discard or isolate other emirs who helped him and Sultan Kaykhusraw II before. An account of his exertion of power was recorded by Ibn Bībī where we can also find the narrative of Köpek's death in 1238. Sara Nur Yıldız suggests that the fact the *RŞ* manuscript was copied in 1238 could have been due to the state of affairs between Sultan Kaykhusraw II and Köpek. In other words, considering *RŞ*'s ethical and didactic aspects, it could have been an appropriate work to introduce just rulership to the new Sultan.⁹⁷ Apart from that, Songül Mecit has demonstrated in her work how the ideology of the Rum Seljuqs was re-formulated during the reigns of the predecessors of Sultan Kaykhusraw II, Kaykāvūs I (1211-20) and Kayqubād II (r. 1249-1257). In this course of reformulation, the Seljuq lineage came to be more important, for the Great Seljuq dynasty had come to an end following their defeat in 1194.⁹⁸ As the present study aims to demonstrate, *RŞ* is an attempt to establish legitimacy and ideology with an emphasis on Sultan Kaykhusraw I, but it could have been easily utilized for the other Seljuq Sultans as well, especially after the period of upheaval seen in the early years of Sultan Kaykhusraw II's reign.

2.3 Language and Structure

According to Waldman, it is in the structure of the work that we can find the author's values and the points which he/she wishes to communicate.⁹⁹ Analysing structure does not only entail how the chapters are organised and adjusted (in this case in the edited volume of *RŞ*, however close it might be to the original manuscript), but it also looks into the structure of the manuscript and the possible differences. In the 12th century, the purpose of copying a book was transmitting the benefits and often didactic lessons to the purported audience which meant that the roles of authors, translators and scribes were often flexible; any one of them could add, delete, or expand some point in order to make it more understandable and useful according to his own view.¹⁰⁰ That is why it is necessary first to look at the structure of the extant manuscript of *RŞ*, before taking a look at the language and structure of the text itself as transmitted in the manuscript, which will come later in this chapter.

⁹⁶ For more on this, see: Songül Mecit, "*The Rum Seljuqs (473-641/1081-1243): Ideology, Mentality and Self-image*" (PhD diss, University of Edinburgh, 2009), 170-175.

⁹⁷ Sara Nur Yıldız, "A Nadīm for the Sultan: Rāwandī and the Anatolian Seljuqs," in *The Seljuqs of Anatolia*, ed. Andrew Peacock & Sara Nur Yıldız (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 104-105.

⁹⁸ Songül Mecit, "Kingship and Ideology under the Rum Seljuqs," in *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture*, ed. Christian Lange & Songül Mecit (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 63-78.

⁹⁹ Waldman, "Tarikh-i Bayhaqi," 25 & 32.

¹⁰⁰ Peacock, *Medieval Islamic Historiography*, 172-173.

2.3.1 The Manuscript of *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*

Unfortunately, however, we do not have enough materials in order to provide a full picture of the manuscript tradition of *RṢ*, even though there must have been one; especially considering the fact that the manuscript owned by Juvainī family and found its way to the Ottoman court. However, there is only one manuscript of *RṢ* has been identified, catalogued as Supplement Persan 1314, which is kept in the National Library of France (BnF). It was written in *naskh* script by a Ḥāj Ilyās ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Qūnavī on 24 April 1238 (1 Ramaḍān 635) during the reign of Sultan Khaykhusraw II of the Rum Sultanate (r. 1237-46). The scribe’s *nisba*, Qūnavī, indicates that he may have been from Konya but that is all the information we have about this person.

It has been argued that Seljuq Konya was a centre of manuscript production.¹⁰¹ Konya with its abundant madrasas, was indeed a home to religious scholars and Sufis. However, this reputation was only established after the conquest of Anatolia by the Mongols in 1243. The only manuscript of *RṢ* was written in 1238 when the Seljuqs imperial image was at the beginning of its development in Konya; an image that is mostly demonstrated in architecture (*madrasas*, *khānqāhs*, mosques, caravanserais), starting from the reign of Qilij Arsalān II (r. 1156-1192).¹⁰² It was only in the 1270s that we can recognize a certain ‘School of Konya’ in manuscript production which displays illumination among its main features.¹⁰³ The *RṢ* manuscript thus does not fit into this category, but seems to be akin to the manuscripts produced earlier in Iran.

In the *RṢ*’s manuscript, the chapters are separated by a title, usually written in red and in a larger size.¹⁰⁴ The same visual method can also be applied to verses, parables, and didactic anecdotes found in the text. The scribe does not seem to follow a consistent system for including poetry. Verses are often separated from the main body of the text by the word *shi‘r* (poem) written in red, but there are a few examples where it says *bayt* (verse), despite the fact that more than one verse is cited.¹⁰⁵ The same method is true for proverbs and didactic anecdotes. They are distinguished by the words *ḥikmat* (wise words/didactic anecdote) and *maṣāl* (parable). These words are sometimes written properly in line with the text, as if they are part of the text and sometimes seem to be squeezed in afterwards above the line. The inconsistency in writing can also be seen in the verses themselves. There are instances (see Figure 2) where there is a ‘comma’ between two hemistiches, or one before the first hemistich, one in between two hemistiches, and one after the second hemistich, but also

¹⁰¹ Cailah Jackson, *Islamic Manuscripts of Late Medieval Rūm, 1270s-1370s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 5.

¹⁰² Richard McClary, *Rum Seljuq Architecture, 1170-1220: The Patronage of Sultans* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 23.

¹⁰³ Jackson, *Islamic Manuscripts*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ This is a common practice in manuscript production where chapters are only separated by titles. These titles are called “*sar-faṣl*”. Ali Safari Aq Qaleh, *Nuskha-Shinākht* (Tehran: Mīrās-i Maktūb, 1390/2011), 69.

¹⁰⁵ This is a common practice in Persian manuscripts, where authors use *bayt* as a collective noun.

there are examples of placing ‘commas’ in other ways, such as putting three ‘commas’ after one verse or between two hemistiches, placing one ‘comma’ over another two.¹⁰⁶ There is no way of knowing if this is how Rāvandī wrote them or if this is the innovation of the scribe but playing with ‘commas’ seems to have been an attempt at improving the aesthetic aspect of the manuscript.



Figure 2: Depiction of dots and commas in *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, BnF, ms. Supplement Persan 1314, folio 6.

My last remark on the manuscript is its paratext and marginalia which were not considered by the editor, Mohammad Eqbal, in his edition of the text. The manuscript's first page is written in various hand, some of which are unfortunately not legible. The first line in the paratext reads ‘the book of *Rṣ* in the history of Kaykhusraw and the Seljuq kings,’ even though the book does not cover the history of Kaykhusraw's reign.¹⁰⁷ The first line containing the title starts with the word ‘*kitāb*’ (book) written in an enormous size. The word is slightly smudged, but it appears that it was written over something else, since small traces of lines and words are still visible. Moreover, on the same page the name of ‘*Ṣāḥib ‘Alā al-Dīn ‘Aṭā-malik*’ appears. Assuming that he is the same ‘*Aṭā-malik Juvainī*, the author of *Tārīkh-i Jahāngusha*, we can speculate that the book was in the possession of Juvainī and that at least

¹⁰⁶ I have used the word ‘comma’ here loosely since punctuation symbols were not used in Persian at the time of the manuscript production. The coma here is merely important for its shape and it does not demonstrate the comma as a punctuational value.

¹⁰⁷ کتاب راحة الصدور في تواريخ كيخسرو و آل سلجوق

some of the lines on the first page of the manuscript were added more than a century later. It is a similar case for the paratext (a few verses written in handwriting) and the last page of the manuscript which quotes a poem from Hilāl al-Šābī in Arabic.¹⁰⁸ The existence of these various lines may not provide us more information about the author or his book, but it definitely speaks to the circulation of the book and its owners.

2.3.2 The Language of *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*

RṢ is considered a work of rhetorical prose (*naṣr-i fannī*) by scholars of Persian literature.¹⁰⁹ However, its style of writing is by no means homogeneous and not all parts of *RṢ* can be counted as rhetorical prose since there are also parts where the style is more akin to simple prose (*naṣr-i sāda*). Looking at the introduction however, with the rhetorical figures applied both in imitation of the author's predecessors and in an innovative way one can understand why this work is described by one author as a "fine example of rhetorical prose."¹¹⁰

Rāvandī opens his book with a 14-verse poem (see the poem in 2.4.3) in praise of God in *mutaqārib* meter, the meter of the *Shāhnāma*.¹¹¹ As Julie Meisami has pointed out, opening an exordium with a poem was not customary for prose historical works and the practice was mostly seen in *maṣnavī* works.¹¹² Indeed, the opening poem is a reminder of a *maṣnavī* work; it has an undeniable similarity with the *Shāhnāma*.¹¹³ What gives away that it is not from the *Shāhnāma* is the usage of several Arabic words, significantly more so than the usage of Arabic

¹⁰⁸ It is unfortunate that we cannot know more about the extras and marginalia and possible reasons of their addition to the manuscript, but it is intriguing that most of these extras are in poetry endorsing or admiring what has already been written in the book. For instance:

این شیوه نو که در جهان آوردم	جان کاسته ام تا بمیان آوردم
تو جان برو که علم خط در	چون لقمه ترا سوی دهان آوردم
هر جا که دقیقه و خط یافته ام	اندر طی این درج بهم یافته ام
یکساله رخت را بدو روز آوردم	انصاف بده که تنگ بشتافته ام

'This new method that I brought to the world/ I have suffered in inventing it// the science of the line .../ I have brought for you like a bite of food to your mouth// Anywhere that I discovered minutes and lines/ I have weaved it here (in my work)// I have shortened a one-hundred way to two days/ Be fair, I have hastened.'

(ms. supplement persan 1314, folio 172.)

¹⁰⁹ Bahar, *Sabkshināsī*, v.2, 406; Sirous Shamisa, *Sabkshināsī-yi Naṣr* (Tehran: Nashr-i Mitrā, 1398/ 2019), 125.

¹¹⁰ Bahar, *Sabkshināsī*, v.2, 406.

¹¹¹ فعولن فعولن فعل

¹¹² Julie Scott Meisami, "Rāvandī's *Rāḥat al-ṣudūr*: History or Hybrid?" *Edebiyat* 5.2(1994): 188.

¹¹³ *Maṣnavī* is a poetic template where each verse has a set of different rhyming words. Because of this feature, *maṣnavī* is a template best suited to compose long narratives such as the *Shāhnāma*.

words in the *Shāhnāma* such as *ṭarab* (mirth),¹¹⁴ and a Qur'anic concept, the story of *Rajm*.¹¹⁵ Other than these, the poet uses the same vocabulary to praise God and to discuss the creation of the world. Examples of this similarity can be found in the following hemistiches:

Firdawsī says:	Rāvandī says:
چو دریا و چون دشت و چون کوه و راغ¹¹⁶ Like sea and like field and like mountain and meadow.	چو آب و چو آتش چو باد و مغاگ¹¹⁷ Like water and like fire, like wind and chasm.
خرد را و جان را همی سنجد او¹¹⁸ He measures wisdom and life.	خرد را و جان را نخست آفرید¹¹⁹ He created wisdom and life first.

As can be seen in the first example, the structures of the two hemistiches are the same, while in the second example, the first half of two hemistiches are exactly the same. These are only two instances of the similarity of the vocabulary between *Shāhnāma* verses and those of *RŞ*. Ample examples of this can be found throughout the book.¹²⁰

As we go further in the introduction, Rāvandī makes use of language in such a way that the readers would find themselves challenged to figure out if this is prose or poetry. In other

¹¹⁴John Perry, "Šāh-nāma v. Arabic Words," *Elr*, last updated on June 23rd, 2010, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sah-nama-v-arabic-words>; see also: Mahmoud Omidshah, "Poetics and Projection: Nationalist and Neo-Orientalist Interpretations of Iran National Epic the Shahnameh," a Lecture on October 17th, 2007, accessed on November 23rd, 2020, <https://www.scribd.com/document/13779387/Poetics-and-Projection-Nationalist-and-Neo-orientalist-interpretations-of-Iran-s-national-epic-the-Shahnameh>

¹¹⁵ This Qur'anic story, whose details are scattered in various parts of the Qur'an, is about the devil's efforts to ascend to the higher parts of the sky where the angels are residing, in order to listen to the angels thus uncover secrets of the universe. According to the Qur'an, whenever the devil tries to climb higher, he will be attacked by stones. Fragments of this story can be found in the Qur'an 67:5 and 37:10. For more on Qur'anic interpretations of this story, see: Ruhollah Najafi, "Bāz-kāvi-yi Guzāra-yi Qur'ānī-yi Rajm-i Shayāṭīn bā Shahāb-hā," *'Ulūm-i Qur'ān va Ḥadīṣ* 86 (1390/2011): 135-164.

¹¹⁶ Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, ed. Jalal Khaleqi Motlaq (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1366/ 1987), vol.1, 6.

¹¹⁷ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 1.

¹¹⁸ Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, vol.1, 1.

¹¹⁹ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 1.

¹²⁰ The subject will be addressed again in this chapter where it is discussed in detail.

words, Rāvandī decreased the distance between prose and poetry by applying this specific language.¹²¹ This type of prose, known as ‘rhythmic prose’ (*naṣr-i mawzūn*),¹²² is mostly used in Sufi works, the oldest of which are the works of the twelfth century Sufi, Khvāja ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī.¹²³ Rhythmic prose in Persian usually involves using *saj’* (rhyming words) recurrently. However, what we can attest in Rāvandī’s introduction is a higher and more complicated type of rhythmic prose called “rhythmic and well-balanced prose” (*naṣr-i mawzūn va mutivāzin*).¹²⁴ This style involves composing two sentences in which every word is matched with another word in the second sentence with regard to their meter. The following example is selected from the introduction of *RṢ*:

"صفت خالقیش نه بایجاد مخلوقانست و نعت رازقیش نه بابداع مرزوقانست"¹²⁵

Sifat-i khāliqīsh na bi-ījād-i makhlūqān-ast va na‘t-i rāziqīsh na bi-ibdā‘-i marzūqān-ast.

‘His quality as a creator lies not in the invention of creations, nor does His nature as a provider lie in the generation of provisions.’

صفت	خالقی	ایجاد	مخلوق
Si-fat	Khā-li-qī	Ī-jād	Makh-lūq
نعت	رازقی	ابداع	مرزوق
Na‘t	Rā-zi-qī	Ib-dā‘	Mar-zūq

As is demonstrated by the table, six words of this sentence were composed in the same metrical pattern two by two as well as the fact that they rhyme.¹²⁶ *Şifat* and *na‘t* in this

¹²¹ Julia Rubanovich, “Literary Canon and Patterns of Evaluation in Persian Prose on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion,” *Studia Iranica* 32(1) (2003): 51.

¹²² Though rhythmic prose, otherwise known as poetic prose, is a style between prose and poetry, it should not be confused with a prosimetrum which is a combination of prose and poetry. On prosimetrum see: Terry Brogan, “Prosimetrum,” in *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene et al (Princeton University Press, 2017), 1115-6. It is also important to point out that *RṢ* is a work of prosimetrum, but while prosimetrum refers to the usage of poetry and prose together, it is not relevant to rhythmic prose. Although rhythmic prose makes use of poetics in various ways, it is still considered prose. For more on *RṢ* and prosimetrum see Julie Scott Meisami, “Mixed Prose and Verse in Medieval Persian Literature,” in *Prosimetrum: Crosscultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*, ed. Joseph Harris & Karl Reichl (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997), 259-319.

¹²³ On Khvāja ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī and his style see: Bahar, *Sabkshināsī*, vol.2: 240-241; Shamisa, *Sabkshināsī-yi Naṣr*, 73-74; Zabihullah Safa, *Tārīkh-i Adabīyat dar Īrān* (Tehran: Firdaws, 1369/ 1990), v.2, 882-884.

¹²⁴ This style has precedents in both Arabic literature and Middle Persian poetry. For more on this see: Johannes de Bruijn, “Arabic Influences on Persian Literature,” in *General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed. Johannes de Bruijn (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 369-384; Sirous Shamisa, *Sabkshināsī-yi Naṣr*, 74 & 335; on Middle Persian poetry see: *The Literature of Pre-Islamic Iran*, ed. Ronald Emmerick & Maria Macuch (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

¹²⁵ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 3.

¹²⁶ For more on Persian meters, see: Bo Utas, “Prosody: Meter and Rhyme,” in *General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed. Johannes de Bruijn (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 71-122.

sentence are also rhyming words, albeit not in the same meter, but close enough. When the readers read that sentence out loud, it will sound like two parts of a verse, rather than a prose text. In other words, even the parts that were written in 'prose' still possess poetic qualities.

The third rhetorical device is perhaps the most important one for Rāvandī to establish his talent in poetry and prose and to demonstrate his knowledge of both Persian and Arabic poetry. When praising Sultan Kaykhusraw II in the introduction, Rāvandī starts with mentioning his titles for nearly a whole page; almost all of these titles are in Arabic and written in *saj'*. Then he proceeds to a more poetic form of paying tribute to his patron by frequently applying the method of *taḥlīl* or *ḥall*.¹²⁷ *Taḥlīl* and *ḥall* both come from the Arabic root of ḥ-l- meaning to dissolve or to disintegrate.¹²⁸ As a rhetorical figure, it means to disintegrate a verse into small pieces of imagery or notions and reuse these images and notions in the form of prose text. The following passage is an example of such a method as utilized by Rāvandī where he re-applies the images from a verse composed originally by the twelfth century poet, Sayyid Ḥasan Ghaznavī (d.1169), known as Sayyid Asharf:

"آسمان بیسار او یمین خورده و آرزو از یمینش یسار برده

وی برده آرزو ز یمینت بسی یسار"

ای خورده آسمان بیسارت بسی یمین

'The sky has sworn to his left hand and the wish (as an entity) has acquired peace and wealth from his right hand.'¹²⁹

Both lines have the same meaning and same words. The only difference is that the first line is in rhymed prose and the second is a verse composed in the meter of *muḏārī'*.¹³⁰ It is also noteworthy that *taḥlīl* is not the only rhetorical figure used in this verse. The poet also applies the words *yamīn* and *yasār*, both of which have more than one meaning in the verse (thus, the rhetorical figure of *ihām*). *Yamīn* means the right hand and vow, while *yasār* means the left hand and wealth. Moreover, these two words are antonyms and using them in one single verse leads to the rhetorical figure of *tazād*.¹³¹

This is an example of *taḥlīl* where Rāvandī reuses other people's poetry in Persian, but he also makes use of Arabic poetry in the same way:

¹²⁷ Jalal al-Din Homa'i, *Funūn-i Balāghat va Ṣanā'āt-i Adabī* (Tehran: Mu'assisa-yi nashr-i humā, 1370/1991), 372-373.

¹²⁸ حل

¹²⁹ The left hand is a metonym for anything worthless. In Persian literature, the right hand stands for generosity and wealth and thus is the exact opposite of the left hand.

¹³⁰ مفعول فاعلات مفاعیل فاعلن

¹³¹ On *tazād*, see: Rashīd Vatvāt, *Ḥadā'iq al-Sihr fī Daqā'iq al-Shi'r* (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Ṭahūrī, 1362/1983), 24-25.

"چهره روزگار بنور رویش روشن است..."

سعدت بگره وجهک الایام...¹³²

'The face of Time is illuminated because of his (the patron's) face.'

'Time is blessed by your forehead.'

Although they may seem different at first glance, they both describe the same concept which is showing the relationship between the shining face of the patron and the happiness of Time.

On another level, Rāvandī applies a method which not only demonstrates his deep knowledge of Persian and Arabic poetry, but also his ability to recall similar concepts in various poems. Here he includes an Arabic poem by Mu'ayyid al-Dīn Ṭughrāyī (12th c.) in praise of the Seljuq ruler, Muḥammad ibn Malikshāh (r. 1105-18). Immediately after, he includes another poem by Sayyid Ḥassan Ghaznavī conveying similar concepts to the Arabic poem. An instance of this similarity is these two hemistiches:

"و الدهر کیف امرته لک طیع"¹³³

'And Time obeys whatever you command.'

"زمانه گوش بنهاده که تا رایت چه فرماید"¹³⁴

'Time is waiting for you to command it.'

As can be seen, the core concept in both hemistiches is the obedience of Time to the object of reverence.

The reverse of this method (*ḥall*) is the method of *'aqd* which means that a poet re-uses the concepts and/or imagery of a prose text in poetry;¹³⁵ in other words, the poet converts a piece of prose text into poetry. The following verses can be considered an example of this method:

"از سعادت ایام اوست که مشتری صاحبقرانی پیشه دارد وز لطافت طبع خود اوست که زهره تصنیف اغانی اندیشه دارد"

مشتری صاحبقرانی میکند

از سعادت‌ها که در ایام اوست

زهره تصنیف اغانی میکند"¹³⁶

وز لطافت‌ها که اندر طبع اوست

¹³² Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 21

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ عقد

¹³⁶ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 21.

‘It is through the auspiciousness of his days that Jupiter has become fortunate, and it is due to his tender nature that Venus is thinking of composing songs.

It is through the auspiciousness found in his days/ that Jupiter is claiming fortune.

And it is due to the tenderness found in his nature / that Venus composes songs.’

Given that both the prose text and the poem were composed by Rāvandī himself, it is hard to determine the order in which the author wrote the above pieces. In case of giving the priority to the verses, it would be another example of *tahlīl*; otherwise, it is an instance of the ‘*aqd*’ method. Both these methods are considered problematic from a modern point of view, but it may not have been considered as such during Seljuq period. In case of not having any added value, they can be classified as *sirqat-i adabī* (plagiarism).¹³⁷ It is not my intention to determine whether Rāvandī committed plagiarism or not, but in order to understand the author’s point of view, it is necessary to see how scholars in the field of eloquence regarded such techniques. In imitation of Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāt who discussed the concept and examples of plagiarism,¹³⁸ the renowned literary scholar, Jalal al-Din Homa’i has proposed a manner by which plagiarism can/cannot be assigned. According to him, if the purpose of the author/poet is to demonstrate his literary skills (especially in the ‘*aqd*’ method), then it is less of a theft. On the other hand, if the author/poet just steals the idea without adding anything new, it should be recognized as *sirqat-i adabī*.¹³⁹ Keeping in mind that this is a modern interpretation of *sirqat-i adabī*, there is a statement in *al-Mu’jam fī Ma’āyir al-Ash’ār al-‘Ajam* by Shams Qays al-Rāzī (13th c.) that is relevant to the technique that Rāvandī used here:

‘An outstanding poet and a dexterous author is the one [...] who composes in such a way that if his verse is disentangled [from rhyme and meter], it will turn into well-done (or: artful: *maṣnū’*) prose and if his prose is ordered, it will turn into natural (*maṭbū’*) verse.’¹⁴⁰

What al-Rāzī has indicated in this passage, some thirty years after Rāvandī, seems to be the exact description of the *ḥall* and ‘*aqd*’ techniques and it was clearly considered a highly appreciated practice. No matter if it was considered a theft in the later periods or not, what Rāvandī does here is a remarkable indicator of his literary talent, as are the other innovative literary devices applied by him and discussed earlier in this chapter. In the next section, I am going to investigate the way the text is structured.

¹³⁷ Homa’i, *Funūn-i Balāghat*, 371-373.

¹³⁸ Rashīd Vaṭvāt, *Ḥadā’iq al-Siḥr fī Daqā’iq al-Shi’r*, 72.

¹³⁹ Homa’i, *Funūn-i Balāghat*, 371-373.

¹⁴⁰ Shams Qays al-Rāzī, *Al-Mu’jam fī Ma’āyir al-Ash’ār al-‘Ajam* (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1956), 266-267. The translation is borrowed from Julia Rubanovich, “Literary Canon and Patterns of Evaluation in Persian Prose on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion,” *Studia Iranica* 32 (2003): 51.

2.3.4 The Structure of *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*'s Introduction

As mentioned in the previous section, *RṢ* begins with a 14-verse *maṣnavī* which continues by praising God using ornate prose, Persian poetry and Qur'anic verses. It was common practice to begin a book by praising God and Muḥammad and then proceed to the main body of work. In this regard, Rāvandī follows the same pattern as his predecessors. However, what makes this particular panegyric special is that he makes use of three different approaches in order to praise God; the first is by applying vocabulary related to nature to create the imagery he needed. 'Nature as the creation of God' forms the gist of Rāvandī's praise of God, using words such as day, night, winter, summer etc. Neither the rhetorical figures, nor the imagery of nature he applies is unique; rather he makes use of natural imagery which had transformed into a pattern by the 12th century.¹⁴¹ In the second part of the introduction, there is a shift towards a more complicated approach where he discusses religious and mystical concepts and applies such vocabulary as faith (*īmān*) and unbelief (*kufr*). The third approach involves a different type of nature: the universe and the celestial objects; in other words, cosmology. He builds up his imagery based on the features attributed to these heavenly bodies.¹⁴²

The next part of the introduction is dedicated to praising Muḥammad, which Rāvandī does by first taking a cosmological approach and then a religious approach; just as he did for the praise of God. However, in this instance, he does not refer to heavenly bodies and their features; rather he makes an allegory between the celestial bodies and the prophets. This analogy mirrors the earth as it is located in the centre of the spheres and the celestial bodies orbiting around it; Muḥammad also stands in the centre with relation to all prophets who circle around him.¹⁴³

The introduction is continued by praising the Rashidun Caliphs using *saj'* to introduce them and their features as well as quoting the Qur'an and certain *ḥadīths*.¹⁴⁴ At the end of each segment, the author inserts a poem in praise of the Rashidun Caliphs.¹⁴⁵ This is followed by a section praising the '*ulamā*', in particular Abū Ḥanīfa and al-Shāfi'ī, where we can see a change in the author's style. The language becomes less poetic and rhythmic and instead of praising them only by calling out their features and their virtues, Rāvandī compliments them through narrating stories about them.¹⁴⁶ Having brought up the subject of the '*ulamā*', he connects them to the next part of the introduction which is in praise of Sultan Kaykhusraw I.

¹⁴¹ Shafiei Kadkani, *Ṣuvar-i Khīyāl dar Shi'r-i Fārsī*, 206-212.

¹⁴² These heavenly bodies are the earth, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. These objects and their attributions will be discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁴³ Rāvandī *RṢ*, 5.

¹⁴⁴ The Rashidun Caliphs are the first four leaders of Islam: Abūbakr (632-4), 'Umar (634-44), 'Uthmān (644-56), 'Alī (656-61).

¹⁴⁵ In the manuscript, there is no actual segmentation. The beginning and the end of each chapter are only recognizable by the coloured titles. My divisions are based on topic.

¹⁴⁶ These narratives cover six pages of the edited version while the section in praise of all the four caliphs was less than 5 pages.

The link between is a story where Abū Ḥanīfa asks God's support in promoting his sect and God answers him by saying that his sect enjoys prosperity and popularity 'as long as the sword is in the hands of Hanafid Turks,' thus referring to the Seljuqs.¹⁴⁷ In the next step, Rāvandī becomes more explicit by demonstrating the Seljuq sultans' honest faith and their efforts in patronizing the 'ulamā up to the time of Sultan Kaykhusraw I.

The author continues praising the Sultan by including a 30 verse *qaṣīda* of his own composition for Sultan Kaykhusraw I.¹⁴⁸ Subsequently, he proceeds to indicate his patron's efforts in supporting the 'ulamā, because according to Rāvandī, supporting and elevating Islam is both the root and the goal of their rule.¹⁴⁹ This is a prelude for the last part of his introduction where he discusses the disastrous situation of the realm upon the death of the last Great Seljuq ruler, Ṭughril III (d. 1194). Rāvandī finishes by praying to God that Sultan Kaykhusraw may sit on the throne of the Great Seljuqs, as their rightful successor in order to re-establish Islam's position in the world.¹⁵⁰

The next section of *Rṣ* is titled 'mention of the author and praising his friends and his teachers.'¹⁵¹ Although the title refers to only these three topics (i.e. the author himself, his friends, and his teachers), the section covers broader subjects. While the primary goal of this section seems to be introducing Rāvandī's teachers and friends, in order to tell his readers how, where, and with whose assistance he was able to become an educated man, the section is an indication of the patronage network of the time as well. The names that are mentioned in this part of the introduction do not merely represent Rāvandī's process of education, they are also a clear indication of the hierarchical patronage system of the Seljuq era. That is why Rāvandī does not limit himself to just their names; he also pays tribute to them in the form of poetry or a complimentary piece of prose. In Rāvandī's time, if a well-educated man wished to get close to the sultan, it was essential for him to seek sponsors who were high up on the patronage ladder.¹⁵² That is what Rāvandī attempts to demonstrate in this section. First, Rāvandī introduces his first teacher, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Ravandī, who also happened to be his uncle. According to the book, Rāvandī spent ten years in Hamadan where his uncle gave lectures in a few *madrasas* at the request of Jamāl al-Dīn Āyba, *atabeg* of Sultan

¹⁴⁷ Rāvandī, *Rṣ*, 17.

¹⁴⁸ *Qaṣīda* is a template for composing poetry originating from Arabic poetry. A *qaṣīda* must include *qāfiya* (rhyming word) in both hemistiches of the first verse as well as the second hemistich of every verse. A *qaṣīda* is usually a form of panegyric poetry which also include subjects like descriptions of nature as well.

¹⁴⁹ Rāvandī, *Rṣ*, 29.

¹⁵⁰ Rāvandī, 38.

¹⁵¹ ذکر احوال مصنف کتاب و ثنای دوستان و استادانش

¹⁵² A good example of this system is the Khujandī family of Isfahan who were brought to Isfahan by Nizām al-Mulk and were lecturers at the Shāfi'ī *madrasa* of Isfahan for generations. Many of their students held important positions in the court of the Seljuqs. See: David Durand-Guédy, "The Khujandīs of Isfahan," in *The Seljuqs, Politics, Society, and Culture*, edited by Christian Lange and Songül Mecit (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 182-202; David Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers: A History of Işfahān in the Saljūq Period* (London: Routledge, 2010).

Ṭughril III.¹⁵³ Thus, at the beginning of his study, Rāvandī was linked to Sultan Ṭughril III by two mediators, first his uncle and second, Jamāl al-Dīn. A few pages later, Rāvandī mentions a Shahāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, a friend and a pupil who had asked Rāvandī to include his name in *RṢ*. Not only did the author accept his request, but also interpolated a few poems in Persian and Arabic stating Shahāb al-Dīn's qualifications. We see how Rāvandī is using the patronage network this time for his student's benefit. Thus, in case Rāvandī was accepted by Sultan Kaykhusraw, Shahāb al-Dīn may also have had a chance of employment at the court of the sultan.

The last few pages of this section are dedicated to Rāvandī's attributable and acquisitional qualifications where he talks about his uncle, Zayn al-Dīn, who worked for Sultan Ṭughril III as a calligrapher. Similar to his other introductions, he includes verses in praise of his uncle as well as a number of poems composed by his uncle. Pointing out his uncle's achievements at court, the author informs us that his primary wish was to follow his uncle's path, but he never got the chance (due to the death of the Sultan). It is in this section that Rāvandī reveals his deepest desire, namely for employment at the court of Sultan Kaykhusraw; a desire which is accompanied by his weight of experience acquired in various cities of '*Irāq-i 'Ajam*', most notably Isfahan and Hamadan. By mentioning the names of his teachers and their roles in the upbringing and education of the Seljuq sultans, he makes his request more specific: to transfer his knowledge to the next generation of the Seljuq family.¹⁵⁴

So far, I have talked about the author's goals and wishes as they were inserted in various layers of the text. However, there is a section in the work containing the author's purpose for writing the book in his own words. The author believes that in all those years of his education and meditation, he learned that the only thing that remains after a person dies is his 'good name'.¹⁵⁵ He supports his claim by including Qur'anic as well as Arabic and Persian verses to convey the same message. Furthermore, he connects this concept with the Islamic concept of '*ṣadaqa*' (charity) which according to two prophetic *ḥadīths*, is the only thing which does not perish with death.¹⁵⁶ Rāvandī suggests that rulers construct public buildings, such as *madrasas* and *ḥammāms*, then recruit poets to praise them because of those deeds which cause their 'good name' (*nām-i nīk*) to survive.¹⁵⁷ In other words, doing good would not be sufficient to secure a good name for rulers; rather it is the authors/poets that provide them with the immortality of their names. Through connecting these rather two different concepts (the Islamic concept of *ṣadaqa* and the didactic notion of leaving a good name), not only does

¹⁵³ *Atabeg* was a Turkish title and was assigned to the nobles who were responsible for training the Seljuq princes. For more, see: Claude Cahen, "Atābak," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, last updated on August 17th, 2011, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/atabak-turkish-atabeg-lit>

¹⁵⁴ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 55.

¹⁵⁵ Rāvandī, 59.

¹⁵⁶ From the Islamic point of view, *ṣadaqa* is a voluntary offering which comes in a number of forms, one of which, known as '*ṣadaqa-yi jāriya*' is mentioned here by Rāvandī. This type of *ṣadaqa* includes the good deeds whose outcome would remain for generations, like the construction of public buildings or religious endowments.

¹⁵⁷ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 59-62.

Rāvandī divert his patron's attention to his wish for employment, but also insinuates that the Sultan's good name depends on him as well.

The last section of the introduction is what the author has titled '*fihrist*' (contents), where he lists the content of the book in a descriptive way. However, this section includes more than just a description of the content; it also covers subjects such as the titles of Sultan Kaykhusraw and the obligation of kings to exert justice and uphold religious law. It is in the latter where Rāvandī stresses the religiosity of the Seljuqs, who according to him 'were the greatest and the most religious rulers after the Rashidun Caliphs.'¹⁵⁸ It is here that we can see again the connection of a ruler's legacy and Islamic concepts. Rāvandī applauds the Seljuqs not only for doing good, but also for the deeds whose outcome would last for generations, the same notion and link that was proposed in the previous section of Rāvandī's introduction.¹⁵⁹ Constructing *madrasas* seems to be the most important good deed in Rāvandī's point of view, as he repeats this and praises the Seljuqs for doing so at any chance he gets. Moreover, the construction of *madrasas* not only produces *ṣavāb* (Islamic reward), but also will immortalise their names.¹⁶⁰

2.3.5 Rāvandī's View on Justice

After this rather long introduction (68 pages in the edition), Rāvandī commences the main body of his book. However, as the eloquent writer he is, he does not go straight to the history of the Seljuqs; rather he begins the section with an extensive discussion on '*adl*' (justice) containing several anecdotes from various sources. Stressing the importance of the sources that he applies; he sets off on this section by including a Qur'anic verse followed by a prophetic *ḥadīth*. In the next few sentences, his style takes another turn, when he breaks the Qur'anic verse into pieces in order to explain it. This is where his writing style comes close to the works of Sufis in Persian literature where a passage starts with a Qur'anic verse followed by a *ḥadīth* whose interpretation comes afterwards.¹⁶¹ In this style of writing, based on the target readers, the Sufi author either includes the Qur'anic verses and the *ḥadīth* only in Arabic, or with their translation. Afterwards, the Sufi author interprets them based on the

¹⁵⁸ Rāvandī, 65.

¹⁵⁹ Good deeds which have an ongoing impact are called *bāqīyāt al-ṣāliḥāt* in Islam. An example of such deeds is construction of public places like *madrasas*. According to Islamic ideas, as long as those *madrasas* are functioning, the builder will enjoy religious rewards (*ṣavāb*).

¹⁶⁰ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 67.

¹⁶¹ For more on this and for examples of this style, see: Mohammadreza Shafiei-Kadkani, *Zabān-i Shi'r dar Naṣr-i Ṣūfīyya* (Tehran: Sukhan, 1392/2012), 141-165.

purpose of his speech.¹⁶² Using this style, Rāvandī breaks the Qur'anic verse of 16:90 into pieces to explain the verse from his own perspective by giving examples for each phrase:¹⁶³

"ان الله يامر بالعدل والاحسان وابتاء ذى القربى وينهى عن الفحشاء والمنكر والبغى يعظكم لعلكم تذكرون"¹⁶⁴

'God commands (people) to maintain justice (*al-'adl*), kindness (*al-lḥsān*), and proper relations with their relatives (*īta' zī al-qurbā*). He forbids them to commit indecency (*al-faḥshā*), sin (*al-munkar*), and rebellion (*al-baghī*). God gives you advice so that perhaps you will take heed.'

According to Rāvandī, wishing good for people is an instance of 'justice' (mentioned in the verse); doing good is wholly represented by the concept of *iḥsān*; kindness, charity, mercy, and helping one's family are the instances of 'giving to one's kindred'; fornication and immorality are examples of indecency; Usury, eating *ḥarām* food, and oppression are examples of sin; and any reprehensible feature, such as jealousy, holding a grudge, and arrogance are seen as aspect of a rebellious nature.¹⁶⁵

Setting this verse as a preamble for a section on '*adl*', Rāvandī proceeds to further concentrate on the first concept, justice, by interpolating as much proof as he can from prophetic *ḥadīths* to Arabic poetry, Persian poetry, and historical anecdotes. The order in which this proof is organized tells us more about the value of each of them in the author's view. This hierarchy is as follows: prophetic *ḥadīth*, Arabic poetry, Persian poetry, and lastly historical anecdotes (in the sense that they were positioned in a historical context, or the protagonist of the anecdote is a real historical person). The Arabic poetry included in the beginning of this section bears the exact same meaning as the following Persian verses which were chosen from the *Shāhnāma*; that Firaydūn was not an angel, but rather that he achieved greatness by doing justice.¹⁶⁶ Within the historical anecdotes also, there seems to be an order which can once again highlight the author's goal of acquiring a job as a *nadīm* (boon companion): the narrative begins with numerous didactic (Persian and Arabic) proverbs and *ḥadīths*, all of them centring on the concept of justice and none of them longer than a few lines at most. While these short sayings underline justice as a notion, the historical narratives demonstrate the execution of justice by prominent figures such as the second Rashidun caliph, 'Umar (r. 634-644) and Hurmuzd IV of the Sasanians (r. 531-579).¹⁶⁷ Interestingly, the Seljuq Sultan, Muḥammad ibn Malikshāh is the protagonist of two stories which indicate the author's

¹⁶² Mohammad Gholamrezayi, *Sabkshināsī-yi Naṣrḥā-yi Ṣūfīyāna az Avāyil-i Qarn-i Panjum tā Avāyil-i Qarn-i Hashtum* (Tehran: Shahid Beheshti University Press, 1388/2009), 318-9. The author believes that this type of interpreting Qur'anic verses and *ḥadīths* was originally adopted from the preaching style.

¹⁶³ The editor has mistakenly recorded this verse as number 92.

¹⁶⁴ The Qur'an, 16: 90.

¹⁶⁵ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 68-9.

¹⁶⁶ Rāvandī, 69. "ان فريدون لم يكن ملكا/ ولا من المسك كان معجونا// بالعدل والجد كان مكرمه/ فاعدل وجد كي تكون فريدونا"

¹⁶⁷ An example of exerting justice in this section is when the second caliph, 'Umar, upheld Islamic law by flogging sinners. On one occasion, the sinner cursed 'Umar during the event. 'Umar refrained from whipping him further himself and gave the lash to another. When asked about it, 'Umar stated that it would not have been justice if he had flogged the sinner in anger; the whipping should be done for God's satisfaction and not out of a person's anger.

respect for this particular sultan. Although the preamble ends with the story of Hormizd IV, the author does not hesitate to make his point even more clear by saying that he included all these stories and those succeeding because he expects Sultan Kaykhusraw to revive those customs (i.e. justice) and take lessons from his ancestors and choose to act justly.¹⁶⁸

The concept of justice is a recurrent theme in Arabic and Persian sources of the medieval era.¹⁶⁹ The notion is mentioned in the *Saljūqnāma* as ‘an ornament of kings’ (*ḥilyat-i pādishāhān*),¹⁷⁰ and in *Mujmal al-Tavārīkh va al-Qiṣaṣ*, a twelfth century general history, as the reason for the appointment of kings.¹⁷¹ While short references to this concept can easily be found in historical sources, such as the ones mentioned above, it is usually discussed much more prominently in advice literature and the works of mirrors for princes, whose origins can be traced back to the works of *andarz* or ‘*ahd* in ancient Iran.¹⁷² A large number of mirrors for princes were written during the Seljuqs’ reign and the proliferation of these types of works has caused scholars of medieval Iran to wonder about the reason for this great tendency towards this type of literature in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

While Naser Sedqi believes that the works of mirrors for princes were written to inculcate the idea of justice,¹⁷³ Julie Meisami believes that the lack of a model for rulership among the Turks prompted the massive production of mirrors for princes during the Seljuq era.¹⁷⁴ The *Qābūsnāma* written for a Ziyarid prince allocates a whole chapter to ‘kingship’ (*dar āyīn-i pādishāhī*) where the concept of justice is discussed. According to the author of the *Qābūsnāma*, Kaykāvūs ibn Iskandar, prosperity is born from justice.¹⁷⁵ While the *Qābūsnāma* is structured in such a way as to focus on all aspects of life, but especially court life, another important work of advice, *Sīyar al-Mulūk (Sīyāsatnāma)*, reflects a perspective closer to the Seljuq court. The author, Khvāja Niẓām al-Mulk, the vizier of Alp Arslān and Malikshāh, begins his didactic book by stating that in every period God sends someone, so that he can spread

¹⁶⁸ Rāvandī, *Rṣ*, 84. (see p.78 as well.)

¹⁶⁹ For an overview of how this concept was dealt with in medieval sources, see: Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 158-61; Anne Lambton, “Justice in Medieval Persian Theory of Kingship,” *Studia Iranica* 17 (1962): 91-119.

¹⁷⁰ Nayshābūrī, *Saljūqnāma*, 9.

¹⁷¹ *Mujmal al-Tavārīkh va al-Qiṣaṣ*, ed. Mohammad Taqi Bahar (Tehran Kalāla-yi Khāvar, 1318/1940), 1.

¹⁷² Other than this, influences from Greek wisdom literature and the Arabic genre of *vaṣṣīyya* (testament, advice) can also be recognized in Persian wisdom literature. For more on Greek influence, see: Christine van Ruymbeke, “Hellenistic Influences on Classical Persian Literature,” in *General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed. Johannes de Bruijn (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 354-368; for Arabic influences, see: Johannes de Bruijn, “Arabic Influence on Persian Literature,” in *General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed. Johannes de Bruijn (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 369-84; Louise Marlow, *Counsel for Kings: Wisdom and Politics in the Tenth Century Iran* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), vol.2, 3-4; on the influences of Pahlavi advice literature, see: Ulrich Marzolph, “The Good, Bad, and the Beautiful: The Survival of Ancient Iranian Ethical Concepts in Persian Popular Narratives of Islamic Period,” in *Early Islamic Iran*, ed. Edmund Herzig & Sarah Stewart (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 16-29.

¹⁷³ Sedqi, *Tārīkh-nigārī dar Īrān-i ‘Aṣr-i Saljūqī*, 62-63.

¹⁷⁴ Julie Scott Meisami, “Rulers and Writing of History,” in *Writers and Rulers: Perspectives on their Relationship from Abbasids to Safavid Times*, ed. Beatrice Gruendler & Louise Marlow (Richert Verlag Wiesbaden, 2004), 92.

¹⁷⁵ Kaykāvūs ibn Iskandar, *Qābūsnāma* (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Ibn Sīna, 1956), 210.

justice.¹⁷⁶ Interestingly enough, while only one chapter is titled with the word justice and directly deals with it,¹⁷⁷ all the other chapters tackle the concept of justice indirectly as well. For example, in the chapter which discusses the gratitude of kings towards God, the only way for kings to show their appreciation is to do justice.¹⁷⁸ Having said that in the beginning of the chapter, the author includes a few short anecdotes in order to teach a lesson about the value of justice.

Another important work of the mirrors for princes genre is *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* written by al-Ghazzālī, the well-known religious scholar of the eleventh century. Similar to the previously mentioned works, the concept of justice plays a significant role in his book. However, his approach to defining justice is not similar to that of his contemporaries. In the beginning of his book, he explicitly connects the concept of faith to that of justice, giving a seemingly small turn in the way both matters are dealt with. Moreover, the issue of justice, which previously has been seen in the field of morality, now is situated in religion, meaning that one person cannot have one without the other:

"و ایزد تعالی ترا این نعمت داده است و تخم ایمان در دل پاک و عزیز تو نهاده است و پرورش آن تخم بتو گذاشته است و گفته اند که این تخم را آب عدل و طاعت می پرورد."¹⁷⁹

‘And God, the exalted, has given you this blessing and has planted the seed of faith in your pure noble heart and has appointed you to bring it up and it has been said that the water of justice and obedience would nurture this seed.’

The connection between faith and justice has also been used by Rāvandī in his section on justice. Apart from his numerous religious anecdotes, Qur’anic verses, and prophetic *ḥadīths*, he also indicates the consequences of lacking justice/being oppressive, all of which have a clear connection to the religious concept of *ṣavāb* (spiritual reward according to Islam):

"و اگر نعوذ بالله و عیاذا به من سخطه پادشاه ظلم کند رعیت از عبادت باز مانند، رعیت را خدای عز و جل از کرم خویش ثواب مضاعف کند، یکی ثواب آنک نیت عبادت داشتند و از ظلم پادشاه نتوانستند و دوم ثواب مظلومی"¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Niẓām al-Mulk, *Sīyar al-Mulūk*, 11. Some scholars, including Boris Zakhoder and Marta Simidchieva, have questioned the full authorship of the *Sīyar al-Mulūk* attributed to Niẓām al-Mulk. In contrast, Hubert Darke, the editor of the *Sīyar al-Mulūk*, has argued in favour of Niẓām al-Mulk’s authorship. See: Neguin Yavari, “Siar al-Moluk,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, accessed on 16 September 2024, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/siar-al-moluk>

¹⁷⁷ اندر مظالم گاه نشستن پادشاه و عدل و سیرت نیکو ورزیدن

¹⁷⁸ Niẓām al-Mulk, 15.

¹⁷⁹ Al-Ghazzālī, *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*, ed. Jalal Homa’i (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Tīhrān, 1315-17/1936-38), 2.

¹⁸⁰ Rāvandī, *Rṣ*, 69-70. This notion aligns with broader Islamic principles on governance, as articulated by Abū Yūsuf (729-798) in his book *Kitāb al-Kharāj* and discussed by Petra Sijpesteijn in her article. According to Abū Yūsuf, a ruler is seen as appointed by God and accountable for his actions, like a shepherd caring for his flock. As Abū Yūsuf stresses, the ruler is personally responsible for the welfare of the people, and if they suffer due to his actions, he must also carry the blame. Thus, a just ruler ensures the conditions for the subjects to flourish, while an unjust ruler- oppressing worship and livelihood- leads to consequences not only for the oppressed but

‘And if God forbid, the king oppresses and (as a result) the flock would be deprived of worshipping, God, the exalted and elevated, will double their reward out of his generosity; one reward for having the intention of worship but not being able because of the king’s oppression, and another reward for being the oppressed.’

Other than this, the historical anecdotes depicting ‘Umar executing justice all centre on the religious form of justice, *qiṣāṣ*. In other words, like al-Ghazzālī, Rāvandī’s understanding of justice was affected by its Islamic connotations. Furthermore, from the middle of this rather long section on justice onward, Rāvandī begins to interpret justice as doing good deeds. This interpretation starts with an Arabic proverb declaring that ‘the best of kings is he who does good in his actions and his intentions and does justice to his army and his flock.’¹⁸¹ From this point onward we can see that didactic stories are told to encourage Sultan Kaykhusraw to do good deeds, for good deeds are the true implication of justice. The first narrative of such involves Sultan Muḥammad ibn Malikshāh curing a cripple. As narrated by Rāvandī, the cripple dreamt of the prophet Muḥammad three nights in a row where the prophet orders him to visit Sultan Muḥammad. The Sultan performed the miracle after carrying out an ablution and praying. This religious approach of Rāvandī’s is continued until the end of this section where the author urges his patron to ‘revive those customs’ (i.e. justice), prevent intolerance and bias that exist between Ḥanafīs and Shāfi‘īs, and set up *madrasas* and religious endowments, because promoting religion is the true foundation of a prosperous state.¹⁸²

2.3.6 History as Narrated by Rāvandī

After 84 pages of praise and advice (according to the edited version), Rāvandī eventually starts his journey through the history of the Great Seljuqs. For his narration of the reigns of the sultans, Rāvandī follows the same structure for all of them, beginning with mention of their titles in their entirety, the dates of their ascensions and/or the duration of their reigns and/or the dates of their birth, the names of their viziers and chamberlains, a short description of their appearance, and an overview of their skills or their virtues. At the beginning of the historical section, he provides us with a family tree of the Seljuqs starting with their eponymous founder, Seljuq and ending with Ṭughril III. The names and the titles of Seljuq, Chaghri, and the sultans are written in the manuscript with a large font and some of their sons are listed as well with a smaller font diagonally (Figure 3).¹⁸³ Family members who have reigned are distinguished by the title sultan, while some princes, including Chaghri are

also for his own soul. See: Petra Sijpesteijn, “Good Governance in Theory and Practice: Comparing Abū Yūsuf’s Kitāb al-Kharāj with Papyri,” in *The Historian of Islam at Work*, ed. Maaike van Berkel and Letizia Osti (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 183-200.

¹⁸¹ Rāvandī, *Rṣ*, 77. خير الملوك من احسن في فعله و نيته و عدل في جنده و رعيته

¹⁸² Rāvandī, *Rṣ*, 84.

¹⁸³ Riedel has noticed that the names were not written in the same handwriting. While the larger ones seem to have been written by the main scribe, Ḥājī Ilyās, the smaller ones were probably scribed by other people. (Riedel, *Searching for the Islamic Episteme*, 80.)

given the title *malik*. The rest do not have any title. The criteria based on which a prince gained the title of *malik* is not exactly clear. Based on Seljuq coinage, Nicholas Lowick has suggested that this title was bestowed upon governors.¹⁸⁴ However, in Rāvandī's family tree, not all of the governing princes bear this title; not even the first governor of Kirman. Regarding the other title, *sultan*, the matter is much clearer. Only the sultans have chapters of their own. Interestingly two of the sultans, Sultan Maḥmūd ibn Malikshāh and Sultan Dāvūd ibn Maḥmūd, are neither written in the larger font, nor get their own chapter. The editor, Eqbal, has concluded that the author does not recognize them as sultans.¹⁸⁵ However, this does not seem to be correct, as even though they were not treated the same, they still have the title of *sultan* in the family tree.¹⁸⁶

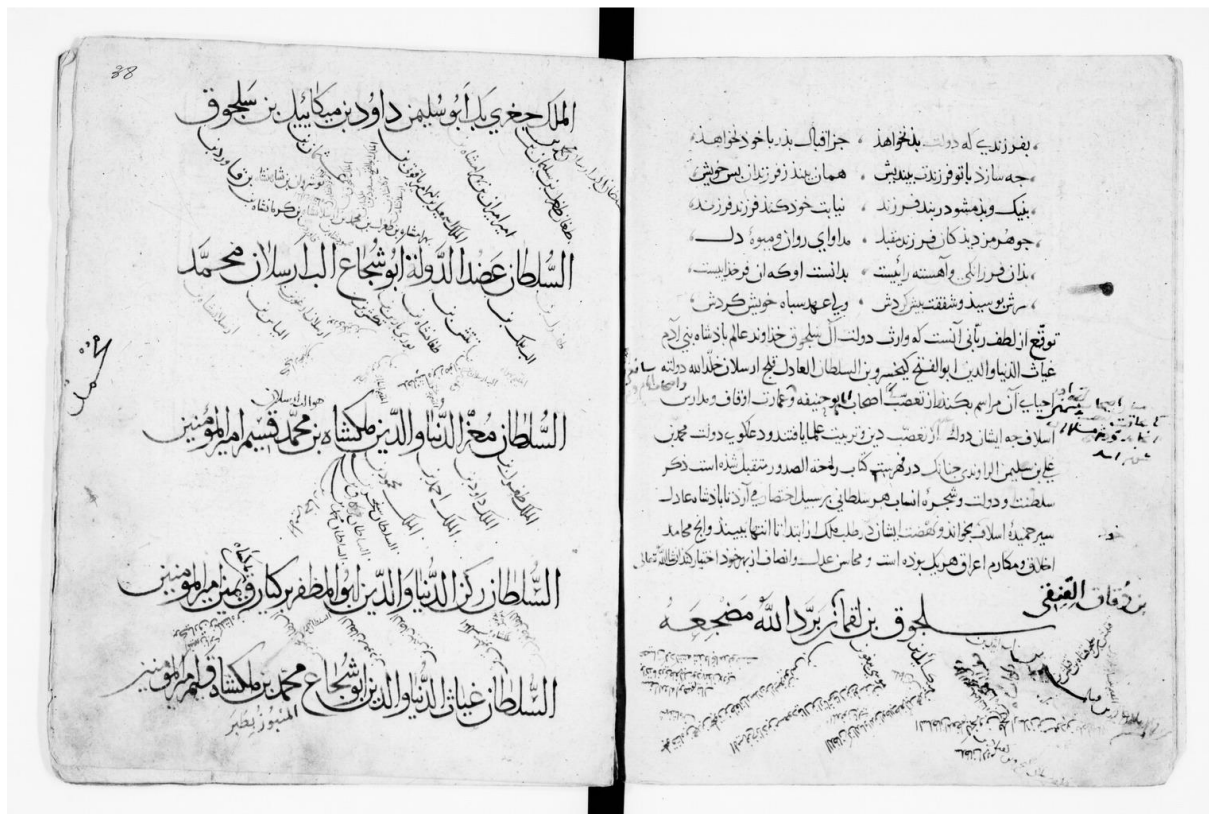


Figure 3: The Seljuq family as recorded in *Rāḥat al-Ṣudur*, Supplement Persan 1314, folio 38.

The historical part of *RṢ* is structured by the reigns of the sultans; each having their own chapter. It is in the beginning of the chapter on Sultan Tuḡhril that we see an interesting connection to ancient Iranian history. In this section, Rāvandī quotes a sentence attributing it to Ardashir I of the Sasanians enjoining kings to recruit a vizier (*vazīr*), a chamberlain (*ḥājib*),

¹⁸⁴ Nicholas Lowick, "Seljuq Coins," *The Numismatic Chronicle* 10 (1970): 242.

¹⁸⁵ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 85.

¹⁸⁶ It is, of course, not clear whether the family tree in its present form was drawn by the scribe or copied from Rāvandī's own manuscript faithfully. However, I would suggest that the latter is more probable, because even though the manuscript was written in the Rum Seljuqs' court, there seems to have been no effort made to record the names of the Rum branch of the family properly; for they are all squashed in the bottom of the page under the name of their ancestor, Isrā'īl and many of their names are barely legible.

a boon companion (*nadīm*), and a secretary (*dabīr*).¹⁸⁷ Following this *ḥikma* (wise word), Ṭughril and all the sultans recruited their viziers and chamberlains (no names are provided for the boon companions and the secretaries).¹⁸⁸ This narrative is followed by another anecdote where the concept of justice is mentioned once again. In this anecdote, Ṭughril asks the Sufi Bābā Ṭāhīr for advice. The Sufi responds with a Qur'anic verse (the same one that Rāvandī cited earlier in his introduction): 'God commands (people) to maintain justice and kindness.'¹⁸⁹ While Rāvandī, as he states himself, used the *Saljūqnāma* extensively as his source, these two stories are not found in the earlier source.

The reign of Ṭughril ends with Rāvandī paying tribute to Sultan Kaykhusraw for a page and a half (according to the edited version) where Rāvandī first attributes Arabic titles to him, all of which are in rhythmic prose (having *saj'*). This passage is followed by Rāvandī's prayers requesting God to grant him the world, especially Khurasan and 'Iraq-i 'Ajam. Although the same order can be seen at the end of each chapter, this one is the longest of all. The eulogy is followed by poetry composed by the author himself in praise of Sultan Kaykhusraw, as was promised in the introduction. The poem is titled '*qaṣīda*'. However, formally speaking, its template is *tarkīb-band*.¹⁹⁰ The author certainly knew the difference between a *qaṣīda* and a *tarkīb-band* and usage of the word *qaṣīda* here is perhaps because of the literal meaning of the word *qaṣīda* (aimed for a person) rather than its formal connotation.

Despite the importance of Alp Arslān's reign in the expansion of the Seljuq territory, his chapter is among the short ones. Even his most important battle, Manzikert (1071) against the Byzantine Empire is described in only one page where most of the lines are either poetry or wise sayings. This brevity is probably due to the length of the same chapter in the *Saljūqnāma*, because for most historical narratives, Rāvandī's source was the *Saljūqnāma*. The chapter ends by highlighting the Islamic aspect of the Seljuq legitimacy once again. Rāvandī indicated that the pillars of a state are three things: God's protection, upholding Islamic law, and elevating the '*ulamā*'.¹⁹¹

The author brings up the notion of divine support as one of the pillars of Seljuq legitimacy in the chapter on Sultan Malikshāh's reign. It begins with an Arabic saying borrowed from a didactic book called *al-Farā'id va al-Qalā'id* written by Abū Manṣūr al-Ṣa'ālābī in the 11th century.¹⁹² Rāvandī treats this passage in his own way: he includes the whole passage in Arabic and then provides his readers with a modified translation to suit his purpose. According

¹⁸⁷ Rāvandī, 97.

¹⁸⁸ "اردشير بابک گفت پادشاه بايد که وزيري را بدست آرد و حاجي را بگمارد و نديمي را بدارد و ديپري را بيارد که وزير قوام مملکت بود و نديم نشان عقل شود و ديپر زبان دانش او باشد و حاجب سياست افزايد، بر قضيت اين اثر و ترجمت اين خبر سلطان طغرلبک و جمله سلاطين وزرا Rāvandī, RŞ, 97-8. و حجاب و اصحاب مناصب داشتند."

¹⁸⁹ "ان الله يأمر بالعدل والاحسان" The Qur'an 16:90; Rāvandī, RŞ, 99.

¹⁹⁰ *Tarkīb-band* is a template where a number of *qaṣīdas* with different rhyming words are connected to one another by a single verse in between which has its own set of rhyming words.

¹⁹¹ Rāvandī, RŞ, 123.

¹⁹² See: Abū Manṣūr al-Ṣa'ālābī, *Al-Farā'id va al-Qalā'id* (Egypt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīyyat al-Kubrā).

to the Arabic saying, the sultan is God's successor on earth.¹⁹³ Rāvandī translates this sentence as the sultan is God's shadow, thereby bringing the sultan closer to God and his authority over his creation. A shadow is a reflection of God in light, while a successor is a completely different entity whose authority was bestowed upon him by God.

The chapter on Sultan Sanjar's reign stands out in Rāvandī's text, as although its structure shares some similarities with the other chapters (such as mentioning his appearance, skills, virtues, his viziers, and chamberlains, and including panegyric poetry at the end), it has a number of unique features as well. With 40 pages, this chapter is the third longest of the text. It is not because of its historical narratives or the fact that Sanjar's reign was the longest of the Seljuqs' reigns, but because it contains a lengthy panegyric text both in prose and poetry. The first four pages of the chapter deal with prosperity of his territory and all the battles ending with his victory in a concise way. Perhaps the author hoped that his praiseworthy description of Sultan's Sanjar's triumph along with his 'divine *farrah* and king-like appearance'¹⁹⁴ would make up for Sanjar's dreadful loss and disturbing defeats later in his reign.

Another important feature of the chapter on Sanjar is the number of poems included in the conclusion. Although the author first promised his readers to compose a *qaṣīda* at the end of each chapter for Sultan Kaykhusraw, he did not keep his promise here. For he includes four *qaṣīdas* from Sayyid Ashraf and another six from Anvarī in praise of Sanjar. The author's excuse for not following the pattern is that 'since Sayyid Ashraf did not live to see the time of Sultan Kaykhusraw, he said this prayer for his (Sultan Kaykhusraw's) ancestors, so that it comes to him as a legacy and such a praise fits for this benevolent sultan (Kakhusraw), even though it was meant for Sanjar.'¹⁹⁵ Given that including a poem for Sultan Kaykhusraw at the end of each chapter is one of Rāvandī's methods to demonstrate him as the rightful successor of the Great Seljuqs, here Rāvandī phrases his excuse in a way that implies both the strong family connection and a sense of predestination, as if Sultan Kaykhusraw was meant to be the successor.

The next two chapters on Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad and Ṭughril ibn Muḥammad are short and do not cover the reigns of these two sultans in any detail. Instead, the author is more focused on his patron, pointing his readers' attention to Sultan Kaykhusraw by comparing these two sultans to his patron. Obviously in Rāvandī's mind, Sultan Kaykhusraw ranks higher than these predecessors, and he explicitly indicates such a conclusion by saying that what Sultan Maḥmūd spent on his dogs' leashes, Kaykhusraw bestows upon his servants and friends.¹⁹⁶ While in the aforementioned case, Rāvandī concentrates on the generosity of

¹⁹³ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 125. السلطان خليفة الله في ارضه translated by Rāvandī as سلطان سايه خداست

¹⁹⁴ "هبيت خسروان و فره كيان داشت" Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 168.

¹⁹⁵ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 187.

¹⁹⁶ According to Rāvandī, Sultan Maḥmūd spent an excessive amount of money on his dogs and provided them with gold leashes. (Idem, 205-6)

these rulers to draw his analogy, in the second case, Rāvandī's assessment of Ṭughril is even more demeaning: 'Now we stop talking about the lesser and start praying for the greater; and we will continue going from the star to the Sun.'¹⁹⁷ The brevity of these two chapters (either because of the author's dislike for these two men or the fact that not much historical information appears in the *Saljūqnāma* on them) offers the author a chance to take his agenda further by discussing matters of military organization and battle strategies; the type of issues that can be beneficial to his desired career as a boon companion. This subject is later elaborated in detail in the third section of *RŞ*, where the author aims directly to discuss the art of war.

The rest of the historical chapters follow the same pattern. The only difference is the abundance of the historical narratives as we go further towards the end of this section. In other words, the more we get closer to the time when Rāvandī lived, the more detailed the narratives become; many of which are the author's own information and are not covered by the *Saljūqnāma*. In concluding with the Great Seljuqs, Rāvandī also records the aftermath of Ṭughril's death, when the Khwarazmshah Tekish (r. 1172-1200) conquered '*Irāq-i 'Ajam*'. In this chapter Rāvandī depicts the Khwarazmshah in the exact opposite way of the Great Seljuqs in order to delegitimise him. Contrary to the Great Seljuqs who were just, faithful, and true believers, as well as supporters of the '*ulamā*', the Khwarazmshah appointed *bad-dīn* (impious) people and oppressors as administrators and governors; Neither did he care for the religious endowment. The Khwarazmshahs killed, oppressed, and destroyed; and because of the disarray they caused, *Rāfizīs* were empowered.¹⁹⁸ The author ends the historical section by a recurrent prayer that Sultan Kaykhusraw may conquer the territories of his ancestors in order to 'bring upon the spring and wash away the autumn from this realm with his *farr*'.¹⁹⁹

2.3.7 A *Nadīm*'s Qualifications

The issue of Rāvandī's hopes for work at the court of Sultan Khaykhusraw was first raised by Kenneth Allin Luther²⁰⁰ and was taken up again in more detail by Sara Nur Yıldız who suggests that the particular job that Rāvandī was pining for was the position of *nadīm* (boon companion) and that is why he included a few non-historical chapters, such as on hunting and archery in *RŞ*.²⁰¹ Similar to Nur Yıldız, Elton Daniel also holds the same opinion about Rāvandī's

¹⁹⁷ "از سخن کهتران بدعی مهتران بازآییم و از ستاره به آفتاب پیوندیم" Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 214.

¹⁹⁸ *Rāfizī* is a term used for Shi'i Muslims in historical sources. Depending on the period, the term applies to various branches of Shi'ism. In this context, *Rāfizī* refers to the Ismā'īlīs; Rāvandī's opinion on the rule of Khwarazmshahs can be found in: Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 394.

¹⁹⁹ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 403.

²⁰⁰ Allin Luther, "Islamic Rhetoric and the Persian Historians 1100-1300 A.D.," in *Studies in Near Eastern Culture and History*, ed. James Bellamy (Michigan: Centre for Near Eastern and North African Studies, University of Michigan, 1990), 95.

²⁰¹ Nur Yıldız, "A *Nadīm* for the Sultan: Rāvandī and the Anatolian Seljuks," 93.

choice of career, as the didactic chapters of *RŞ* are precisely on the subjects which were among the desired qualifications of a boon companion.²⁰²

Through Letizia Osti's study on Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī, we can get a glimpse of what it was like to be a boon companion at a ruler's court or what kind of qualifications the job called for. al-Ṣūlī (b. ca. 887-941) was born to a family of boon companions and as a result of his family heritage, served as a boon companion to three Abbasid caliphs, al-Muktafi (r. 902-8), al-Muqtadir (r. 908-32), and Al-Rāzī (r. 934-40). He was involved in playing chess, drinking wine, and composing panegyric poetry. Al-Ṣūlī was trained as a *kātib* (secretary), so he also possessed a *kātib*'s literary qualifications. Just like *kātib*s, boon companions had fixed salaries, but a significant part of their revenues came from the occasional gifts given by the ruler.²⁰³ Osti believes that the prosperity of boon companions in the Abbasid era started to decay with the death of al-Ṣūlī and there was hardly any mention of this job in the later Abbasid sources.²⁰⁴

Certainly, this assumption cannot be applied to the Seljuq era. Niẓām al-Mulk, who wrote his *Sīyar al-Mulūk* for Sultan Malikshāh, inserted a chapter on boon companions and how they were supposed to behave. According to him, a companion should be chosen from noble (*gawharī*) families; he must be knowledgeable, rightly guided, trustworthy, and particularly funny; a quality which is also emphasized by the poet 'Imād al-Dīn Iṣfahānī whose verses can be found in *RŞ*.²⁰⁵ Further on, Niẓām al-Mulk says that he must know anecdotes and he must be a fine storyteller. Moreover, a companion should know how to play chess (*shaṭranj*), backgammon (*nard*), and polo (*chawgān*) as well as being interested in hunting and drinking.²⁰⁶

Kaykāvus ibn Qābūs' *Qābūs-nāma*, written in the 12th century, has a chapter on *ādāb-i mūnādimat* (on being a boon companion). In this chapter, he lists various qualities of a boon companion such as: having a fair face; being trained in *dabīrī*; being well-versed in Persian and Arabic; having adequate knowledge of religious sciences, poetry, astrology, and medicine. While playing chess and drinking are the basic qualities of a companion, these above-mentioned qualities will make a far superior companion.²⁰⁷ Of course, we could assume that the required qualifications asked of a companion differ from one ruler to another, as the desires of rulers determined their expectations of a companion. However, it should also be

²⁰² Elton, "Rise and Development of Persian Historiography," 152.

²⁰³ Letizia Osti, "The Remuneration of a Court Companion in Theory and Practice: A Case Study," *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 1(2014): 86-90. For more on boon companions, see: J. Sadan, "Nadīm," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. Peri Bearman et al. Accessed on November 4th, 2020, https://referenceworks-brillonline-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/nadim-SIM_5712?s.num=22&s.start=20

²⁰⁴ Osti, "The Remuneration of a Court Companion in Theory and Practice: A Case Study," 105.

²⁰⁵ Bundārī, *Tārikh-i Silsilā-yi Saljūqī*, trans. Mohammad hossein Jalili (Tehran: Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān, 1356/1978), 186-187.

²⁰⁶ Niẓām al-Mulk, *Sīyar al-Mulūk*, 120-122.

²⁰⁷ Kaykāvus ibn Qābūs, *Qābūs-nāma* (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Ibn Sīnā, 1956), 183-189.

taken into account that many qualities and functions were similar, if not identical, in various courts and thus there are numerous similarities between the account of the Abbasid court and those of Nizām al-Mulk and Kaykāvūs.

Not much is known about the position of boon companion in Seljuq Anatolia. The most important source for the history of the Seljuqs of Rum is *al-Avāmīr al-‘Alā’iya fī al-Umūr al-‘Alā’iya*, written by Ibn Bībī in the twelfth century. He does not go into the details of the lives and routines of boon companions and in most of his anecdotes about the court life of the Seljuq Sultans, the presence of a boon companions is mentioned, though not elaborately explained. Only once does he mention the name of a boon companion, Nūr al-Dīn Akhlāṭī, during the reign of Kayqubād I (r. 1220-1237) where he influences Kayqubād’s decision to forgive a fallen commander using a Qur’ānic verse.²⁰⁸ Even from this account, it is clear that companions were supposed to be knowledgeable and educated.²⁰⁹

As indicated above, Rāvandī dedicates the last part of *RŞ* to the matters surrounding boon companions which has prompted some scholars to consider *RŞ* as a mirror for princes rather than a historiographical work.²¹⁰ Rāvandī’s title for this section reveals the nature of the position he wished to acquire in Sultan Kaykhusraw’s court: ‘On the manners of being a *nadīm*.’²¹¹ The section covers requirements of the job, both in terms of a *nadīm*’s appearance and his skills in employing wisdom as well as Arabic and Persian poetry. While including these wise words (*ḥikma*), Rāvandī indicates that in everything there is a hidden lesson (*ḥikmat*) which can only be perceived by intelligent people.²¹² His example of this type of *ḥikma* are the games of chess and backgammon. According to him, ‘while common people play it for pleasure, it was particularly designed for boon companions to play with kings and teach them about the organization of the army.’²¹³ Both chess and backgammon were seen as metaphors for hostile situations, especially where two sides engage in military actions. We have seen that Rāvandī discusses the organization of the army briefly in the chapter on Ṭughril ibn Muḥammad. Here though, he allocates about 8 pages to discuss this issue in detail under the guise of chess. This chapter also contains the various forms of playing chess such as the Indian way, Iranian, and that of the Romans. In other words, Rāvandī’s attempt is to advise his patron on matters of war by using chess figures as metaphors; so not only does he show off his knowledge of battle strategies and his talent in playing chess, but he also informs his patron of his gift in perceiving *ḥikmas* in different matters of life.

²⁰⁸ *Akḥbār-i Salājiqa-yi Rūm*, ed. Mohammad Javad Mashkour (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Tihrān, 1350/1972), 116.

²⁰⁹ For more on this, see: Nur Yıldız, “A *Nadīm* for the Sultan,” 100-104.

²¹⁰ See: Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma*, 46.

²¹¹ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 405.

²¹² Here I have attempted to show the difference by the way of spelling. *Ḥikmat* and *ḥikma* are just two ways of pronouncing one word, the former in Persian and the latter in Arabic. Here I have used them differently to show their various functions: *ḥikma* as a didact genre and *ḥikmat* as a specific didactic lesson.

²¹³ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 407.

The next three chapters of this section deal with drinking wine,²¹⁴ shooting,²¹⁵ and hunting.²¹⁶ Although all these issues were commonly included in the works of mirrors for princes, Rāvandī treats them in a slightly different manner. In works such as the *Qābūsnāma*, the focus is primarily on morality and *adab*, while here, the author's main concern is religion. That is why the author concentrates on right and wrong from the perspective of religion. It is also for the same reason that there are references made to the works dealing with such matters. The author was not a member of the clergy and in order to make his arguments about *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* aspects of something, he made sure to apply his sources correctly. Needless to say, that in these chapters, as well as all the previous chapters, quotations are included from the Qur'an and *ḥadīths*, however, there are references to works such as *Zakhīra-yi Khvāramshāhī*, a medical treatise written in the 12th century and several Ḥanafī works on law as well.²¹⁷

There is also a chapter on the shapes of the Arabic letters and the principles of calligraphy where each letter is drawn and described both in prose and poetry (Figure 4). Composing poems for this subject must have been for the purpose of teaching; if the instructions did not help amateur calligraphers to remember the rules, the poems certainly would have aided memorisation. Rāvandī himself indicates that by including this subject, he was hoping to attract more readers, so when they looked to the book for its calligraphic information, they would also be informed about the greatness of Sultan Kaykhusraw and his magnificent house.²¹⁸ In other words, Rāvandī had anticipated that there is a slim chance that his patron would not be amenable to offering him a job, so he reminded him of his skills in the field of propaganda. Furthermore, he brings up the subject of leaving a good name once again which highlights the ideological use of the work for his patron.

²¹⁴ Rāvandī, 416.

²¹⁵ Rāvandī, 428.

²¹⁶ Rāvandī, 431.

²¹⁷ Rāvandī, 426. see also: Zayn al-Dīn Jurjānī, *Zakhīra-yi Khvāramshāhī*, ed. Mohammad Reza Moharrari (Tehran: Farhangistān-i 'Ulūm-i Pizishkī, 1382/ 2003), vol. 3, 91.

²¹⁸ Rāvandī, RŞ, 446.

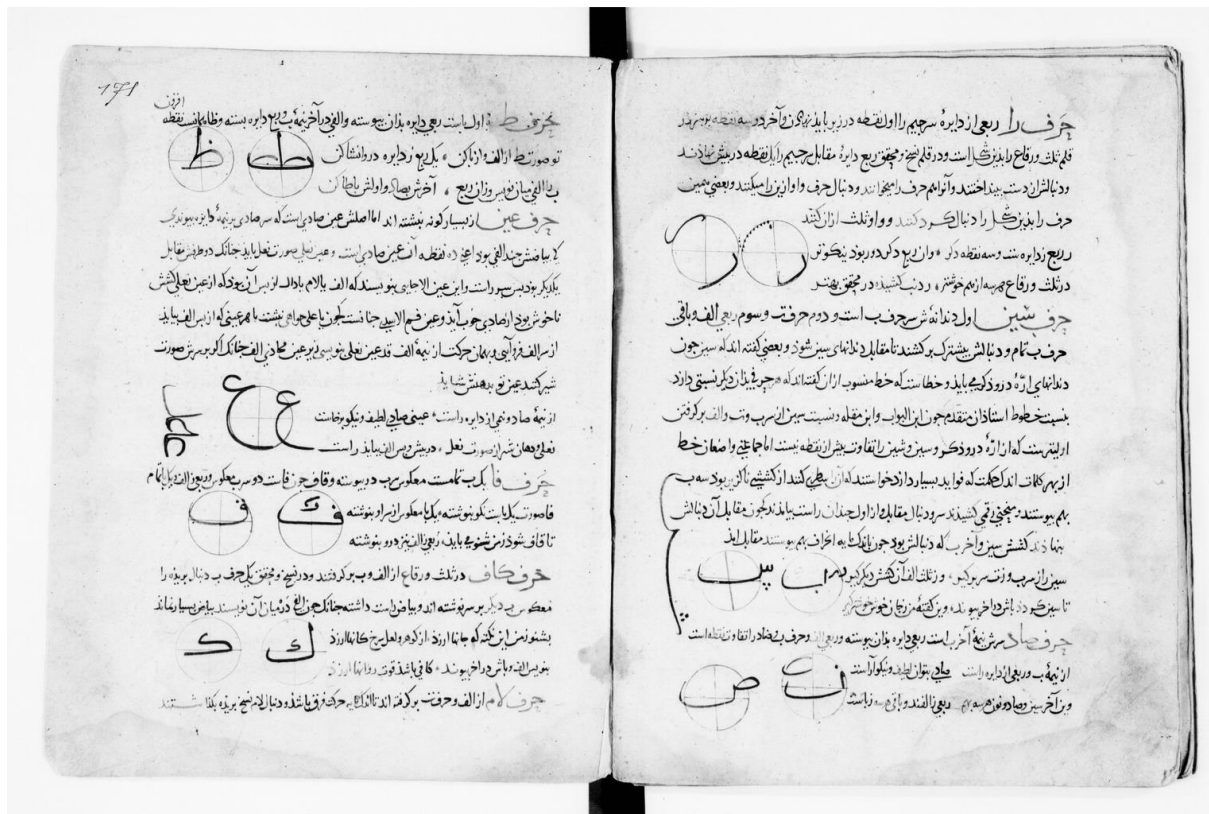


Figure 4: The letters in *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr*, BnF, Supplement Persian 1314, folio 171.

The chapter on calligraphy and letters provides a nice prelude to the last chapter of *RṢ* on what is considered to be a branch of what are normally called ‘occult sciences.’²¹⁹ Having already emphasized the value of letters, Rāvandī goes into more detail on how letters can enable us to predict the future, especially in case of a battle. According to the chapter, every letter and thus every name has a calculable value. This value, when accompanied by a table (which is included in *RṢ*) would predict the outcome of a battle.

Rāvandī ends his book with an epilogue, where apart from his usual praise of Sultan Kaykhusraw, he expresses his frustration caused by his failure in finding a patron after the death of Sultan Ṭughil III. In his mind, only a person of the Seljuq family can be worthy of his work. This is where he narrates the story of how he was informed of such a worthy person through a divine dream. Having realized the divine origin of the Seljuq family, the author later became aware of Sultan Kaykhusraw’s efforts in elevating Islam and Muslims. This acts as the ultimate reason which motivated him to dedicate his work to the Sultan via a merchant, Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-‘Alā’ Rūmī.

Having looked closely at how *RṢ* is shaped, its content, from its introduction and its conclusion and how he ends it in the last pages, let us now take a step back and frame those

²¹⁹ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 437; the term ‘occult sciences’ refers to a group of esoteric supernatural beliefs and practices including alchemy and divination. An almost equivalent of this category in Persian is ‘*jāfr*’ which includes ‘*ilm al-a’dād*’ (the science of the numbers) as well. Rāvandī uses *jāfr* in this section of his work.

tiny details in the bigger picture. Rāvandī has named his book, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr va Āyat al-Surūr dar Tārīkh-i Āl-i Saljūq* (*Comfort of Hearts and Wonder of Delights in the History of the Seljuq House*). As is evident from the title, it is a book of history (*tārīkh*), the kind of history that will bring you joy (*surūr*) and relief (*rāḥat*). In other words, the name itself says it all, that this book of history may have a different outlook from its predecessors. The next issue is the *Shāhnāma*-style poem in the beginning of the introduction which tells us that our author-historian is also a poet so good and well-trained that he can emulate Firdawsī's style, the poet whose name and style are mostly associated with the concepts of Iranian kingship and heroism. In other words, the work also demonstrates a link to the ancient Iranian kings.

By putting together pieces of information throughout the book, we can envisage the grater idea that Rāvandī seeks to capture: the idea of justice. It is for this reason that the narratives start and end playing on the concept of justice, which is mentioned repeatedly throughout the book in various forms (poetry, short story, proverbs, etc). The idea of justice and kingship was not, of course, Rāvandī's innovation. Many authors and historians defined legitimate rule as just rule. What he does in this book, however, is to connect the concept of justice to Islamic morality. Therefore, the way that Islam distinguishes right from wrong is also considered an angle of justice: the Islamic idea of 'right' (*ḥalāl*) is just and what has been declared 'forbidden' (*ḥarām*) is unjust. In this interpretation of justice, it is vital for kings to exercise what Islam commands along with ensuring that the servants of religion, i.e. the 'ulamā, will be well-patronized. It is for the same reason that Rāvandī is keen to highlight the Seljuq rulers as the protectors of Islam, not only by depicting them as good Muslims and *ghāzī* (holy warriors), but also as kings whose God-given authority is constantly being acknowledged by their actions in elevating the 'ulamā and upholding Islamic law.²²⁰

What is seen immediately in *RṢ* is the constant tribute paid to Sultan Kaykhusraw I, as he is the recipient of the book. We learn from the author that Sultan Kaykhusraw I was not the original dedicatee of the work. A large part of the book had already been written before naming him as the dedicatee without having a specific patron. We also know that Rāvandī's family were in the service of the last Great Seljuq ruler, Sultan Tughril III and the author was thus very much familiar with Seljuq ideology. The book was composed based on Seljuq ideology and later found a recipient from the same family. Dedication of the book to a member of another branch of the Seljuq family is the reason for the author's efforts to strengthen the link between Sultan Kaykhusraw I and the main branch of the Seljuq family. The effort is mostly attested in the inclusion of panegyric poems at the end of each chapter on Great Seljuq rulers.

²²⁰ The Seljuqs, seeking to solidify their rule and gain legitimacy in the eyes of their subjects and neighbouring powers, adeptly crafted an image of themselves as holy warriors. By aligning their political ambitions with religious objectives, they presented themselves as champions of Islam, dedicated to defending the faith and upholding its tenets. The Battle of Manzikert in 1071 serves as a prominent example of this strategy. In a study on the battle of Manzikert, Carole Hillenbrand demonstrates how this battle served Alp Arslān to depict himself as a *ghāzī*. See: Carole Hillenbrand, *Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol: The Battle of Manzikert* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

Apart from wishing for a second period of Islamic Seljuq rule by the Anatolian Seljuqs, there is another motive prompting Rāvandī to write this book which to some extent is also related to the issue of *Rṣ'* patronage. Rāvandī's last employer was dead and the historian, pursuing his family's career, as was customary at the time, was in need of a court job, or a patron. In the time of the Great Seljuqs, his uncles were the servants of the court, which meant that he could have been considered as a candidate for court positions because of his genealogy. As Roy Mottahedeh explains, two matters were important to acquire a patron in an early Islamic society: *ḥasab*, one's qualifications and *nasab*, one's genealogy.²²¹ While Rāvandī had both the required *ḥasab* and *nasab* for requesting a job at the court of Tughril III, he lacked the latter for the court of Sultan Kaykhusraw I which forced him to show off his knowledge, abilities, and skills in various ways. This is also the reason that he admits that the target audience is not limited to Sultan Kaykhusraw I; it is also for those who seek calligraphic skills. The fact that he did not restrict himself to this possible patron suggests that he was not sure of his employment and was mapping out a 'Plan B' for his future. We cannot be certain about what happened after the book was offered to Sultan Kaykhusraw I as our sources are silent on this matter.

Besides the obvious practical lessons, the last chapters on calligraphy and the numerical value of the letters could convey another message. Since the early years of Islamic rule, especially since the rule of the third Islamic caliph, 'Uthmān, who ordered a group of people to define a standard text for the Qur'an, the words of the Qur'an have been of great importance to Muslims; so much so that the discussions around its historicity created a chasm between various theological groups from the 8th century onwards.²²² Because of its literary importance, disciplines and skills surrounding the Qur'an became important as well. Among them is the skill of calligraphy which flourished first due to the value of the Qur'an itself and continued its prosperity along with other branches of religious science.²²³ Under the Seljuqs as well, calligraphy was affiliated to religion and since religion was a strong pillar of Seljuq claim to rulership, the Seljuq rulers did well to patronize the production of abundant copies of Qur'an in *madrāsas* and *khānaqāhs*; one example of this is the Rāvandī Qur'an mentioned earlier in this chapter.

2.4 Cosmology and Kingship

Rṣ' consists of 2680 verses of Persian poetry throughout the chapters. The verses appear in various forms; one may find complete *qaṣīdas* (such as the poems in praise of Sultan

²²¹ Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1980), 102.

²²² For more on this, see: François Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads: A First Overview* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

²²³ Meena Sharifiy-Funk, "Geometry of the Spirit: Sufism, Calligraphy and Letter Mysticism," accessed on May 1st, 2021, <https://www.societyarts.org/geometry-of-the-spirit-sufism-calligraphy-and-letter-mysticism.html>

Kaykhusraw at the end of each chapter), single verses, and selected parts of the works of previous or contemporary poets.

In order to investigate how imperial ideology is represented by the poems of this book, it is essential to analyse both the poetry as well as the prose text in which the poems are situated, which is what I attempt to do in this section. Since the poems which were inserted in *RŞ* encompass numerous aspects based on which they can be interpreted, there are various angles one can take to study this subject. I aim to include all the necessary aspects of these poems which enable us to comprehend the representations of imperial ideology. Since *RŞ* includes a significant number of verses composed by Rāvandī himself, I will focus primarily on his own compositions, while looking at his choice of poems written by other poets as well. The table below shows an overview of the verses:

Source/ Poet	Amount	Date of the Source/ Poet
‘Imādī	72	12 th C. (d. 1177)
Amīr Mu‘izzī	5	12 th C. (d. 1125)
Anvarī	143	12 th C. (d. 1189)
Aṣīr Akhsīkatī	78	12 th -13 th C. (d. 1212)
Bū al-Ma‘ālī Nuḥḥās	4	12 th C. (d. 1118)
Būṭāhir Khātūnī	2	11 th -12 th C. (d. 1135)
Fakhr al-Dīn As‘ad Gurgānī	1	11 th C. (d. 1054)
Farīd al-Dīn Dabīr	4	12 th C.
Firdawsī	633	10 th -11 th C.
Jamāl al-Dīn Iṣfahānī	74	12 th C. (d. 1192)
Jamāl al-Dīn Khujandī	2	12 th C.
Khāqānī	13	12 th C. (d. 1190)
Kalīla va Dimna	2	12 th C.
Mujīr Baylaqānī	350	12 th C. (d. 1194)

Niẓāmī	247	12 th C.
Rāvandī	477	12 th -13 th C.
Rūzbihān Baqlī	1	12 th -13 th C. (d. 1209)
Sanā'ī	8	11 th -12 th C. (d. 1131)
Sayyid Ashraf	205	12 th C. (d. 1169)
Shams al-Dīn Lāgharī	3	12 th C.
Shams al-Dīn Shaṣṭ- Kulah	3	12 th C.
Sharaf al-Dīn Shafrūh	22	12 th C.
Pseudo-Firdawsī	101	
Tāj al-Dīn Rāvandī	2	12 th C.
Ṭughril III	14	12 th C. (d. 1194)
Zayn al-Dīn Rāvandī	2	12 th C.
Translation of Arabic phrases	43	
Anonymous	169	

Figure 5: Table of poets/sources of *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr's* verses.

As is demonstrated in the table, most verses were composed by Rāvandī's contemporaries corresponding to what he says about the sources of the poems who are contemporary and recent poets.²²⁴ A substantial number of verses are of the author's own composition. However it is also important to keep in mind that these verses (in total 477) are the ones whose authorship is certain, since most of them are placed at the end of each chapter and Rāvandī himself informs us that at the end of each chapter, he would praise Sultan Kaykhusraw and he would insert a *qaṣīda* in his praise.²²⁵ Given that he does not treat his sources in a consistent way, as he sometimes acknowledges his source(s) for the poems and sometimes does not, it is safe to assume that a number of the verses shown as 'anonymous' in the table might be his as well. That is why I have decided to study both categories together

²²⁴ "و ذکر شعرای متاخر و شعرهایی که در حضرت ایشان خوانده اند بیاورم" Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 63.

²²⁵ Ibid.

in terms of the themes, though the emphasis will certainly be on Rāvandī's acknowledged verses.

Among the themes that are embedded in Rāvandī's poems, celestial bodies are the most prominent. Heaven as the power above, whose bodies and their movements influence the lives of all people, including kings, has always been in interaction with imperial ideology. Paying attention to the importance of heavenly bodies and in general, 'the science of the stars,' was not restricted to the Seljuqs, but they owed much of their understanding of the stars to their predecessors in the Islamic world.²²⁶

It was during the reign of al-Ma'mūn (r. 813-833), the eighth Abbasid caliph, that an institution was established to collect and translate books from various languages, such as Greek, Middle Persian, and Sanskrit. This institution known as *Bayt al-Ḥikma* (The House of Wisdom) paid special attention to astronomical works, since their calculations were needed to determine the direction of the *qibla*. The Greek scholar Ptolemy's astronomical books including the *Almagest*, were also translated into Arabic, later influencing the works of many Muslim astronomers. This influence is also attested in the works of the 10th century polymath al-Bīrūnī. He was the first astronomer who included the positions of the planets in his work as well. His book, *Masudic Canon (al-Qānūn al-Mas'ūdī)*, dedicated to Sultan Mas'ūd of the Ghaznavids, dealt with heavenly spheres, their movements, and their characteristics.²²⁷

Before the Seljuqs, the science of the stars was mostly restricted to the treatises of court astrologers; it was during the reign of the third Seljuq ruler, Malikshāh, when the first observatory was established in the Islamic world. The observatory was built by 'Umar Khayyām, the chief astrologer and mathematician in the court of Malikshāh, in Isfahan. Malikshāh's admiration for astrology and astronomy was situated in the milieu of 11th and 12th century when the science of the stars was considered a revered subject and necessary for the courts of kings. This importance to rulers is attested in the works known as mirror for princes written during the Seljuq era. An example of this is *Chahār Maqāla (The Four Discourses)* written by Niẓāmī 'Arūzī Samarqandī, a poet and author in the court of the Ghurids (1175-1215). He dedicated the book to the Ghurid prince, Abū al-Ḥasan Ḥusām al-Dīn 'Alī.²²⁸ According to the author, a king has no choice but to have a *dabīr*, a poet (*shā'ir*), an astrologer (*munajjim*) and a physician (*ṭabīb*) in his service and thus Samarqandī has allocated a chapter to each.²²⁹ The *Kutadgu Bilig*, a Turkic mirror for prince, written in the 11th century by Yūsuf Balāsaghūnī also focuses on the importance of astrologers. In a chapter called 'Associating with astrologers,' the author indicates: "If you plan to undertake a certain business, you have

²²⁶ Early Muslims used the term 'science of the stars' for both astrology and astronomy. See: Stephen Blake, *Astronomy and Astrology in the Islamic World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 25.

²²⁷ Blake, 35-36.

²²⁸ Gholam-hossein Yousefi, "Čahār Maqāla," *Encyclopaedia of Iranica*, last updated December 15, 1990, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/cahar-maqala>

²²⁹ "دبیر و شاعر و منجم و طبیب از خواص پادشاهند و از ایشان چاره‌ای نیست." Niẓāmī 'Arūzī, *Chahār Maqāla*, ed. Mohammad Qazvini and Mohammad Moien (Leiden: Brill, 1327/1949), 18.

first to determine the proper time. For there are lucky days and months and also unlucky ones. So, inquire of the astrologer, and choose one that is lucky.”²³⁰ Besides the sporadic references to the importance of astrology in the *Kutadgu Bilig*, a chapter is allocated to heavenly bodies and constellations and another to the position of an astrologer at court. The names of the characters in *Kutadgu Bilig* also refer to the value of planets. The character of the king in the book is called ‘Rising Sun’ and his vizier ‘Full Moon;’ it is especially significant since throughout the book, features of the sun and the moon as planets are used to describe Rising Sun and Full Moon. In the following section, I will look at the planets’ characteristic and their usage in Rāvandī’s poems.

2.4.1 Images of the Celestial Bodies

The first noticeable point in Rāvandī’s poems in *RŞ* is his recurrent usage of the imagery of celestial objects including the sun, the moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.²³¹ From the earliest stages of Persian poetry, celestial objects have been used to create poetic images. The most extensive usage of celestial bodies in Persian poetry can be attested in Nizāmī’s *Haft Paykar* (12th century). According to this narrative poem, the Sasanian king Bahram V (known as Bahrām-i Gūr) had seven wives, each from one of the seven earthly climes. Bahram built a palace with a dome for each of them and the domes were designed with regard to the seven planets. Therefore, various features attributed to the planets, such as their colour and the assigned day of the week, are prominent in this narrative.²³² Although the characteristics related to the celestial bodies play an important role in *Haft Paykar*, they did not only existed in Persian, rather they were transferred from Greek astronomy through Arabic treatises, such as *The Treatises of Ikhvān al-Şafā (Rasā’il-i Ikhvān al-Şafā)* written in the 10th century.²³³

Over time, repetitive applying of these images led to the emergence of numerous fixed images. These fixed images are usually known as themes or motifs of Persian poetry and often it is not clear who created them in the first place; especially because many of these images originate in Arabic poetry.²³⁴ The images usually bear some features which through their recurrent application by poets have become distinguished in the way that the image is always

²³⁰ Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥājib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory (Kutadgu Bilig) A Turko-Islamic Mirror for Princes*, trans. Robert Dankoff (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 182

²³¹ For the poetic characteristics of the celestial bodies, see: Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1992); Riccardo Zipoli, “Poetic Imagery,” in *General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed by J.T.P. de Bruijn (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 172-232.

²³² See: Nizāmī, *Haft Paykar* (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Ibn Sīnā, 1344/1965).

²³³ Van Ruymbeke, “Hellenistic Influence in Classical Persian Literature,” 359-360; Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, “A Mystical Reading of Nizāmī’s Use of Nature in the Haft Paykar,” in *A Key to the Treasure of the Hakīm*, ed Johann-Christoph Bürgel and Christine Van Ruymbeke (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2011), 181-182. For an overview of Islamic cosmology, see: Samer Akkash, “Discursive Order,” in *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam: An Architectural Reading of Mystical Ideas* (Ithaca: State University of New York Press, 2005), 1-54.

²³⁴ For the examples of this derivation see: Shamisa, *Sabkshināsi-yi Shi’r*, 367-369.

accompanied by those features. For example, in the following verse, Rūdakī (858-941) associates Mercury ('*aṭārud*') with the profession of a *dabīr* (secretary):

"زیرش عطارد، آن که نخوانیش جز دبیر
یک نام او عطارد و یک نام اوست تیر"

'Underneath is Mercury that you would not call it other than *dabīr*/ one of its names is Mercury and the other one Tīr.'

The association of Mercury with the profession of *dabīr*, writing, and calligraphy is attested in the poetry of later poets including Rāvandī, for example:

"اولین روز عطارد چو بدیوان بنشست
بجهانداری از بهر تو بنبشت مثال"²³⁵

'On the first day, when Mercury sat in *dīvān*, he wrote your name down as an example of a good world-manager.'

The images related to the celestial sphere seems to have been finalised around 1200, subsequently in the later periods, poets and authors used the same images, but sometimes treated them differently depending on their knowledge and purposes in order to create 6, also images.²³⁶ The courts of the Ghaznavids Maḥmūd and Mas'ūd played a crucial role in the formation of Persian poetic imagery due to their practice of patronizing poets.²³⁷ Rāvandī, who finished his book around 1205-6, also made use of these images extensively, often adopting the same images. To gain a better understanding of the meaning of these images, let us take a look at how Rāvandī makes use of them.

2.4.1.1 The Sun (*Khurshīd*)

The sun is usually used in Persian poetry due to its brightness, its light, and its status in the sky. Its shape also attracted the attention of some poets. The sun has been considered the first heavenly sphere (*falak-i avval*) and is associated with the colour yellow.²³⁸ Persian poets created various images using the planets and their characteristics by applying rhetorical

²³⁵ Rāvandī, *Rṣ*, 249.

²³⁶ *A Two Colored Brocade*, 125.

²³⁷ Heshmat Moayyed, "Lyric Poetry," in *Persian Literature*, ed by Ehsan Yarshater (New York: The Persian Heritage Foundation, 1988), 127.

²³⁸ For the examples of usage of various characteristics of the planets by Persian poets, see: Siros Shamisa, *Farhang-i Ishārāt-i Adabīyāt-i Fārsī* (Tehran: Nashr-i Mitrā, 1377/ 1998); Zahra Khanlari, *Farhang-i Adabīyāt-i Fārsī* (Tehran: Tūs, 1366/ 1987).

figures, such as simile (*tashbīh*) and metaphor (*isti'āra*).²³⁹ Through the recurrent usage of the sun for some concepts, such as beauty or brightness, the sun has become a common symbol for beauty and magnificence. Thus, the face of the beloved is compared with the sun because of their beauty, the brightness of their skin, and the round shape of their face. Since it is the first celestial body in the sky, it has also been considered as a symbol for high status *per se* and in comparison, with the other celestial bodies.

Rāvandī's treatment of the sun in his poetry is also compatible with the aforementioned notions. He applies a range of vocabulary including 'world illuminating sun' (*hūr-i gītī-furūz*),²⁴⁰ 'the wheel's beloved' (*shāhid-i charkh*),²⁴¹ 'the doe-signed sun' (*mihr-i ghazāla-nishān*)²⁴² as well as more general words such as *khur*, *āftāb*, *hūr*, and *mihr* to refer to the sun. He makes use of the sun's brightness for his patron's wisdom (*rāy-i rawshan*) more than once.²⁴³ His second usage of the sun is due to the relationship of the sun to heaven and moreover, because of its light which reaches everywhere. The verse is:

"آسمانش کمینه خرگاهست آفتابش کمینه افسر باد"²⁴⁴

'The sky is like his royal tent and even lesser/ The sun is like his crown, even lesser.'

Therefore, he not only refers to the place of the sun in the sky, but also, he implicitly indicates that as the sun's light can reach everywhere, the Sultan is also dominant over the whole world.

In another analogy, Rāvandī notes the sun's shape and makes a comparison between the sun and the ball in the game of polo. In this verse which goes:

"شه غیاث الدین عادل بلمظفر شهریار قرص خور را روز جولان گوی میدان یافته"

'The just Ghīyās al-Dīn has become the king/ he finds the round sun as his polo-ball on the day of the match.'

Here the poet provides us with multiple images. Firstly, he makes a comparison between the sun, with regard to its round shape, and the polo-ball. He suggests that the sun, which is a resident of the first sphere and thus enjoys the highest rank, in relation to him, is like a polo-ball, inferior and easily manageable. Secondly, the words *qurṣ* (circle) and *maydān* (generally meaning the polo-field and bearing a circular shaped connotation) both refer to circular

²³⁹ For the Persian rhetorical figures, see: Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, "Persian rhetorical Figures," in *Metaphor and Imagery in Persian Poetry*, ed by Ali Asghar Seyed Gohrab (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1-13.

²⁴⁰ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 1.

²⁴¹ Rāvandī, 27.

²⁴² Rāvandī, 272.

²⁴³ Rāvandī, 115, 222, 280.

²⁴⁴ Rāvandī, 166.

shapes which are also relevant to the sun; and lastly, the Sultan's title, *muẓaffar*, meaning victor, is also in relation to polo and the Sultan being victorious.

Rāvandī's last usage of the image of the sun refers to the sun's high position in the sky. In these verses, he analogizes the Sultan's high rank to the sun's high rank.²⁴⁵ However, there is a small difference between the examples of this treatment. In the first example, Rāvandī uses the phrase '*āftāb-i qadr-i tu*' (the sun of your rank), but in the second image, the poet says: '*sar nahad bar āstānat āftāb*' (the sun bows to your threshold). While in the first example of this usage, the Sultan's rank has been elevated to reach the sun, in the second example, the sun's rank has been pulled down to the earth. The sun is not the only celestial body applied for referring to a patron's high rank. Since all celestial bodies are located in the heavenly spheres, they are all applied to indicate one's high position.

2.4.1.2 Mercury ('*Aṭārud*)

The only image of Mercury in Rāvandī's poetry is the old theme of association of Mercury with the *dīvān*, *dabīr*, and discourse (*sukhan*). 'The wheel's scribe' (*kātib-i charkh*),²⁴⁶ 'the scribe of the second sphere' (*kātib-i gunbad-i duvum*)²⁴⁷ are used to describe this planet. Mercury's position is in the second sphere, after the sun. In one of the places where Mercury plays a role, Rāvandī depicts a scene in which various celestial bodies are present at Kaykhusraw's court. In this scene, Mercury has assigned Jupiter to praise Sultan Kaykhusraw, or to be exact, to sing a song of praise to Kaykhusraw:

بیزم شاه مدحت خوان گرفته²⁴⁸

"عطارد سعد اکبر را همیشه

'Mercury has assigned Jupiter (sa'd-i akbar) to sing a song of praise at the king's feast.'

In this verse and the verses before and after, Rāvandī makes a connection between the celestial spheres and Kaykhusraw's court. This connection can also be seen in other parts of the book.

2.4.1.3 Venus (*Zuhra*/ *Nāhīd*)

Just as with Mercury, Rāvandī's usage of Venus includes only old themes. In Persian literature, Venus is situated in the third sphere and is associated with singing, dancing, and sin. Venus is also considered the 'lesser fortune' (*sa'd-i aṣghar*) as opposed to Jupiter which is

²⁴⁵ Rāvandī, 222, 281.

²⁴⁶ Rāvandī, 39.

²⁴⁷ Rāvandī, 435.

²⁴⁸ Rāvandī, 28.

the 'greater fortune' (*sa'd-i akbar*).²⁴⁹ Rāvandī's treatment of this planet also highlights its function as a singer, 'the tuneful singer' (*muṭrib-i khush-navā*),²⁵⁰ while taking notice of Venus' brightness:

"سرورا نوعروس شعر رهی که به آمد ز زهره زهرا"²⁵¹

'Oh, master, this servant, the new bride of the poem who is better than the shining Zuhra.'

In this verse, Rāvandī refers to the planet's brightness by using the adjective *zahrā* (bright) as well as applying the rhetorical figure of *jinās* between *zuhra* and *zahrā*.²⁵² The choice of using this rhetorical figure is not accidental; rather a meaningful one, as he is expressing his interest to be the Sultan's panegyrist in the poem:

"عاشق مدح شاه گشت و ز آن جمع کرد این کتاب از درها"²⁵³

'He fell in love with praising the sultan, thus he assembled pearls in this book.'

2.4.1.4 Mars (*Mirrīkh/ Bahrām*)

Mars, known as *Bahrām* and *Mirrīkh* in Persian, is located in the fifth sphere. This planet is associated with fighting and war. It is also called 'the warrior star', 'Turk of the sky,' and 'lesser misfortune' (*naḥs-i aṣghar*). Due to its red light, it is usually associated with blood, as he is a warrior whose job it is to fight and to spill blood. Its link with the Turks seems to have emerged later, highlighted by the Ghaznavid poets, when the Turks started to become associated with the 'sword' (as opposed to Iranians who were usually connected to administration, or the 'pen'). Rāvandī mentions Mars in the same way, as his predecessors, as a warrior. However, on one occasion, he demonstrates his skill in composing poetry:

"خسرو بهرام قدر شاه فریدون سیر رستم دستان برزم حاتم طی بی گمان"²⁵⁴

'Khusraw, whose position is as high as Bahrām, whose disposition is likened to that of Firaydūn; who is undoubtedly a Rustam in war and a Ḥātam in generosity.'

The ingenuity of this verse lies in the dual implication of *Bahrām*, where 1) it can be a reference to a number of the Sasanian kings, the most famous one being Bahram V, and 2) it

²⁴⁹ *Farhang-i Adabīyāt-i Fārsī*, 256; *Farhang-i Ishārāt-i Adabīyāt-i Fārsī*, 592-594; *A Two Colored Brocade*, 213.

²⁵⁰ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 435.

²⁵¹ Rāvandī, 436

²⁵² *Jinās* happens when the letters of two words are identical except for one. This rhetorical device aims to increase the musical value in a text.

²⁵³ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 437.

²⁵⁴ Rāvandī, 272.

can refer to Mars and its high position in the sky. At first glance, it would seem that the first implication is the only one befitting the verse, especially because other figures are mentioned as well. However, when the verse is read as a part of the whole *qaṣīda*, the second implication becomes relevant as well. The *qaṣīda* starts with images related to nature and moves immediately from this verse to Khusraw's skills in battle; thus, making use of Mars as a symbol for fighting.

2.4.1.5 Jupiter (*Mushtarī*)

Perhaps the most important heavenly body in Rāvandī's poetry is Jupiter. The Persian name for Jupiter is *mushtarī* coming from the Arabic root sh-r-y which means customer. Persian poets often used the similarity to create a notion with dual implications (*īhām*). A perfect example of this wordplay is a verse by the twelfth century poet Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāt:

"تو مشتری نه ای که ببازار نیکوئی صد مشتری است روی ترا همچو مشتری"²⁵⁵

'You are not Jupiter (*mushtarī*), o you for whose face there are a hundred Jupiters (*mushtarī*) like buyers (*mushtarī*) in the marketplace of beauty.'

Jupiter is located in the sixth sphere and is considered the star of judges and the 'greater fortune' as well as the star of eloquence where it comes close to the function of Mercury. As we have seen before, Rāvandī also points out this connection in a verse.²⁵⁶ Rāvandī makes use of this planet more than the others, largely because of the link between Jupiter and fortune. Once again, Rāvandī depicts a scene where the celestial bodies are all present at court; and among them stands 'the greater fortune' pulled down from the sky, in order to be placed among Kaykhusraw's courtiers, side by side with his poets:

"سعد اکبر را فلک هر شب به درگاه تو بر در عداد شاعران شه ثناخوان یافته"²⁵⁷

'The heavenly sphere finds the greater fortune (Jupiter) among the Sultan's poets praising him every night.'

Other than this image, there are a few terms which Rāvandī applies frequently in connection with Jupiter. Perhaps one reason is their similarity in root: these words are *sa'd* (fortunate) and *sa'adat* (fortune). However, the more important reason concerns Rāvandī's efforts to legitimize Kaykhusraw as a fortunate ruler.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Translation in: *A Two Colored Brocade*, 201.

²⁵⁶ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 28

²⁵⁷ Rāvandī, 224. The same image can be found on page 28 as well.

²⁵⁸ The relationship between fortune and Rāvandī's poetry comes in detail later in this chapter.

2.4.1.6 Saturn (*Zuḥal/ Kayvān*)

This planet is located in the seventh sphere. Because of its black colour, it is associated with anything dark: in the images which poets create, he is often called ‘the Hindu of the sky’ referring not only to its colour, but also to his function as the doorkeeper of heaven. Saturn is ‘the greater misfortune’, but accompanied by Jupiter, its misfortune can be neutralized. Rāvandī takes advantage of this feature to indicate his patron’s fortune:

نام تو گرچه سعادت را توقیع شده است سعد اکبر شود از روی بکیوان آرد²⁵⁹

‘Although your name is like a king’s signature on fortune, it can also turn Saturn (which is the greater misfortune) to greater fortune.’

As can be seen in the verse, Rāvandī again uses celestial bodies as well as word play related to fortune to indicate Kaykhusraw’s fortune.

2.4.1.7 The Moon (*Māh*)

The images concerning the moon form an extensive and significant part of the imagery of Persian literature. Poets have made analogies to the moon in its various shapes and phases. The full moon is often analogized with the beloved’s face which is described as round, white, and bright. The new moon usually emerges in imagery when anything bent and crooked is concerned, such as the beloved’s eyebrow. In terms of Islamic concepts, the new moon is connected to the beginning and the end of Ramazan (the fasting month).²⁶⁰ Rāvandī’s usage of the moon also conforms to this style; he makes an analogy between the brightness of his patron’s face and the moon,²⁶¹ to his patron’s wisdom which is as bright as the moon²⁶² and refers to the crookedness of the new moon caused by its jealousy to his patron.²⁶³ The most significant of all are certainly the verses which form an analogy between the sultan’s court and the celestial bodies, among which stands the moon as well:

باد جاوید چرخ بنده شاه ماه و مهر و ستارگانش حشر²⁶⁴

‘May the wheel (of the universe) be the king’s servant forever and the moon, the sun, and the stars his soldiers.’

²⁵⁹ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 150.

²⁶⁰ See: “Poetic Imagery,” 196.

²⁶¹ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 27.

²⁶² Rāvandī, 115.

²⁶³ Rāvandī, 435.

²⁶⁴ Rāvandī, 358.

In the rather complicated image that Rāvandī creates in this verse at the end of a poem in praise of Sultan Kaykhusraw, he presents a scene where the Sultan is above the whole universe and heavenly objects are presented as his soldiers. Moreover, the verse contains a neat contradiction of the high position of the Sultan in the first half and the low positions of the heavenly objects in the second part of the verse. Moreover, this verse is also key in terms of the concept of the ‘wheel’; a notion which repeats itself throughout the book.

2.4.2 The Wheel, the Sphere, and Fortune

The wheel (*charkh*), fortune (*iqbāl*, *sa’d*, *sa’adat*), and the sphere (*falak*) are the words that are frequently used by Rāvandī, which alone demonstrates the importance of these concepts for him and probably for his patron. I have placed these terms in one section, because they are all related to one another and altogether they shape the author’s worldview as expressed in poetry.

The heavenly wheel is often described as a necessary force which through whose movement, time passes. It is often identified with the heavenly sphere (*falak*) and they are used interchangeably in Persian literature. Thus, they both participate in moving time forward, as Rāvandī states:

"تا زمین باشد فلک گردد شب و روز آورد
در زمان فرمان روان کیخسرو باداد"²⁶⁵

‘So long as the earth exists and the heavenly sphere brings night and day through its orbit, Kaykhusraw, the Just will be the ruler forever.’

Given the circular movements of the spheres, heaven is always envisaged as a dome where celestial bodies are located; the earth in the centre and other celestial bodies above or below it. Like the celestial bodies, which were discussed in the last section, the wheel/the sphere has also been described by Persian poets with various features. These features are indicated simply by applying adjectives or the more sophisticated method of using rhetorical figures, especially metaphors. While describing the wheel, poets pay attention to a variety of aspects, such as its behaviour, colour, and its function. For example, the wheel’s behaviour is frequently described as faithless (*bī-vafā*), bold (*gustākh*), and manipulative (*nayrang-sāz*); its colour as green (*akhzār*), turquoise (*pīrūza*), and sapphire (*lājivard*); its function as rotary (*davvār*) and circular (*gardūn*, *gardān*).²⁶⁶ Similar to his predecessors, Rāvandī uses these characteristics of the wheel and the spheres but he does not only repeat them, rather he creates images of his own as well. In the next section, I will look at his rhetorical creations.

²⁶⁵ Rāvandī, 465.

²⁶⁶ For more examples see: Hashem Rajabzadeh, “Taṣvīr-i Charkh dar Adab-i Fārsī,” *Īrānshināsī* 58: 324-325.

2.4.3 Images of the King and His Court

What makes Rāvandī's introduction stand out amongst other historical books is the opening. This is a 14 verse long *maṣnavī* composed in *mutaqārib* meter where he praises God as the one who created everything. In this poem, the time and the seasons are mentioned first followed by the creation of the earth, the spheres, and the four elements (water, fire, wind, earth).²⁶⁷ It is in this poem that we see an image of a court with a king and his courtiers:

خداوند نیسان و فصل بهار	"سپاس از جهان آفرین کردگار
خداوند هر چیزی اندر جهان	خداوند فصل تموز و خزان
که هستند مر بندها را کلید	خرد را و جان را نخست آفرید
پدید آوردست دریای نیل	همو آفریننده مور و پیل
همان هور گیتی فروز آورد	ز بعد شب تیره روز آورد
پدید آرد از آب در خوشاب	همی دارد او گوی خاکی بر آب
بیاراست او را چنان چون سزید	بر از خاک چرخ بلند آفرید
همان رجم دیوی که تخم بدیست	ستاره کزو چرخ را روشنیست
دگر ساکنان اند و غمخواره اند	ازیشان سه و چهار سیاره اند
همه سر نهاده به فرمان شاه	مه و مهر شاهند و دیگر سپاه
که بی این دو هرگز نباشد طرب	یکی شاه روز و دگر شاه شب
ز سبزه بساطی بدو درکشید	خدایی که کوه و زمین آفرید
همان چرخ را پای بر جا بداشت	ازین چار گوهر زمین را نگاشت
کزیشان چو دیبا شود روی خاک ²⁶⁸	چو آب و چو آتش چو باد و مگاک

'Thanks to the World-Creator Almighty, / the Lord who is the month nīsān and spring,

The Lord, who is *tammūz* and autumn time, / the Lord, who is the world and all therein.

Wisdom and spirit first He did create / as keys to break the bonds of suffering,

²⁶⁷ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 1.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

That Maker of all, from ant to elephant / did cause the river Nile to spring forth.
 He brought the day after the darkest night, / that sun that shines glory upon the earth.
 He holds above the water the earthen sphere / and raises from the depths a shining pearl.
 He has wrought above the earth a wheel / tall and dressed it up as such befit.
 A star that lights the wheel is that rock / which strikes the demon, who is evil's seed.
 Of these there are the planets three or four / the other stars do still and sombre sit.
 The moon and sun are kings and all the rest / the army which the kings' command does heed.
 One is king of day, the other of night / without these two shall ne'er there be delight.
 God, who made the mountains and the soil, / and spread the greenery out before Him,
 Has never turned the earth from these four jewels, but held aloft that wheel in its place,
 And though water, fire, wind, and darkest pit, / he wove silk brocade o'er the face of it.'

When the wheel was created, it was adorned by God with stars and planets. These stars and planets are an army for two kings, the kings of day and night, the sun, and the moon. Thus, here we have the image of God as he creates the world as well as the image of a court with all the kings in their grandeur.

The image fits well in the introduction as we go further. Rāvandī elaborates the creation of the spheres by describing their positions and their functions. According to him, God created Saturn in the seventh sphere associating it with the seven climes, India, and the colour black. All the seven climes bore witness to the fortune of Jupiter, the resident of the seventh sphere and the one from whom all the judges in the world should seek help. The general of this universe is Mars who will draw blood from his enemies. The sun is considered the Sultan in this cosmology who bestows *iqṭā'* among the seekers.²⁶⁹ Venus sits in the third sphere providing music, songs, and joy, while Mercury runs the universe in an orderly manner. This universe is lightened by the torch-holder, the moon in the first level.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ *iqṭā'* refers to the lands given to army officials. It was established in the 9th century and continued to be in practice during Seljuq period as well.

²⁷⁰ Rāvandī, *RS*, 4. "هزار مهره زرین بصنع بلعجب از هفت حقه مینا بنمود، اوج کیوان هفتم آسمان کرد تا بهفتم کشور زمین هند ازو مسعود شوند، هفت کشور را بر سعادت مسند نشین صدر ششم گواه کرد تا قضاة بلاد رشاد ازو طلبند، جلاذ سرخ لقای صف پنجم را از سیاه دلی چنان گردانید که چون مرغ نظر را بر کنگره کشوری نشانند برنیراند تا جوی خون در آن کشور نراند، و سلطان یک سواره را پنج نوبت بر طارم چارم بزد تا یاوگیان جهان بدان طرف رانند و اقطاع ازو ستانند، و چار بالش طرب در بزمگاه سوم برافراخت تا مطرب خوشنوا الحان بساخت و کار طرب ازو پرداخت، و سه نوبت بوزیر دوم داد تا بقلم ضبط کار عالم بکنند، و مشعله دار را بر رواق ازرق که اول ورق رقی دفتر افلاکست بنشانند تا ز نور او کار عالم بنوا بشود."

The same image is applied and reapplied in bits and pieces in *RŞ* where sometimes there are modifications as well, but the image of a kings' court and his courtiers, either in poetry or prose, remain the same. In this way, Rāvandī created a cosmological image which mirrors the court of his patron, Sultan Kaykhusraw. Thus, while many of the images Rāvandī applies are akin to those created earlier by Niẓāmī, there are also new images of heavenly bodies found in *RŞ*. Niẓāmī's influence on Rāvandī, however, is not restricted to cosmological poetic images. In the next section, we will see what role Niẓāmī's verses play in Rāvandī's plan to legitimise the Seljuqs.

2.5 Rāvandī and Niẓāmī

With 247 verses, Niẓāmī is one of the most used poets in *RŞ*. There are a few verses from the *maṣnavī* of *Laylī and Majnūn*, but the rest is all from the *maṣnavī* of *Khusraw va Shīrīn*. Despite the frequent usage of Niẓāmī's verses in the book, Rāvandī does not mention him once. However, it is clear that Niẓāmī's works were well-circulated in various courts, even though he was a contemporary of Rāvandī and one might assume that considering the difficulties of travel at the time, manuscripts might not have transferred fast from a court to another.

Ilyās ibn Yūsuf ibn Zakī ibn Mu'ayyid known as Niẓāmī Ganjavī was born and raised in Ganja (in modern-day Azerbaijan). It is not exactly clear when he was born but based on his works, scholars have narrowed it down the year 530/ 1136.²⁷¹ The Atabegs of Azerbaijan were vassals of the Seljuqs, though they maintained a degree of independence as well. As was the custom of the time, Niẓāmī paid tribute to Sultan Ṭughril III as well as a number of powerful courtiers including Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Jahān Pahlavān ibn Ilduguz and Qizil Arsalān ibn Ilduguz. Niẓāmī's most famous work is called the *Khamṣa* which consists of five *maṣnavīs*: *Makhzan al-Asrār*, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, *Laylī va Majnūn*, *Haft Paykar*, and *Iskandarnāma*.²⁷²

In the last section, we saw how Rāvandī applied similar notions as Niẓāmī's *Haft Paykar* in his depiction of the cosmos in order to praise and legitimise his patron. Now I will focus on Rāvandī's 'direct' application of Niẓāmī's verses in his *RŞ* in two parts: how the character of the Sasanian king, Khusraw II, appears in *RŞ* and how Rāvandī modifies several verses for his own purposes.

²⁷¹ Safa, *Tārīkh-i Adabīyyāt*, v.2, 798-802.

²⁷² For more on Niẓāmī's works, see: Domenico Parrello, "Kamsa of Neẓāmi," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, last updated on November 10, 2010, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kamsa-of-nezami>; Mohammad Moein, *Taḥlīl-i Haft Paykar-i Niẓāmī* (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1338/ 1960), bīst va chahār- sī va du.

2.5.1 Khusraw II as a Role Model

Khusraw II known as Khusraw Parvīz (r. 590-628) is an intriguing character in the history of the Sasanians. As a historical figure, he is considered to be the last powerful king of Persia before the Islamic conquest and a king who is also famous for his military expeditions against the Byzantines and eventually occupying considerable lands extending the Sasanians territory to its greatest limit.²⁷³ In Persian literature, he is predominantly distinguished by his wealth and treasures (*ganj-i khusrawānī*), his musicians (such as Bārbad), and his tendency to indulge himself in various forms of pleasure.

It is, indeed, this image that we find in *Khusraw va Shīrīn* of Niẓāmī. This poem is the second work in what has become known as the *Khamṣa* (after *Makhzan al-Asrār*) which narrates the love story between Khusraw II and his beloved Shīrīn, a princess of Armenia. According to Niẓāmī, their love story is not an easy one; it includes several other characters who makes their lives complicated, such as Farhād (who is in love with Shīrīn), Maryam (Khusraw's wife), and Shikar (Khusraw's consort). Moreover, political complications are also included in the story; Khusraw provokes his father by minting his own coinage. Later, Khusraw loses his throne to Bahrām, a rebellious commander, and resorts to request the help of the Byzantine emperor while living for a considerable time in exile. Eventually, he regains his throne and marries Shīrīn only to be betrayed and later murdered by his own son, Shīrūya, alongside Shīrīn. Overall, Khusraw is depicted as wilful, arrogant, and self-centred in this story which raises the question of the reason for Rāvandī's application of this narrative's verses; especially since in medieval Islamic literature, protagonists of stories function either as an example to be emulated or an example to be avoided.²⁷⁴

There is a two-fold answer to this. Firstly, like many poetic compositions, Niẓāmī's works often leave room for interpretation. While some scholars focus on the Islamic and Sufi aspects of Niẓāmī's work, others emphasize the romantic side of his stories. In other words, because of the broad knowledge of Niẓāmī in various subjects and thus implementing this knowledge in his works, scholars have been able to analyse his stories from diverse perspectives. While Julie Meisami explores the romantic aspects of *Khusraw va Shīrīn* and its link to kingship and justice; Asghar Seyed-Gohrab focuses on the Sufi angle of Niẓāmī's works and its relation to Sanāyī's poetry; while Kamran Talattof investigates the didactic side of his stories.²⁷⁵ Secondly, borrowing from Christine van Ruymbeke's study on *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, "a work always entertains relations with other writings, but this does not preclude an act of

²⁷³ For more on this, see: James Howard-Johnston, "Kosrow II," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, last updated on January 1st, 2000, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/khosrow-ii>; Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2023).

²⁷⁴ Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 134.

²⁷⁵ For more, see: Christine van Ruymbeke and Christoph Bürgel (ed.), *A Key to the Treasure of The Hakīm: Artistic and Humanistic Aspects of Nizāmī Ganjavī's Khamṣa* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2011); Kamran Talattof, *Nezami Ganjavi and Classical Persian Literature* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

creation and a demonstration of originality by its author.”²⁷⁶ What Rāvandī does here is to perceive the story of *Khusraw va Shīrīn* through another lens. Instead of focusing on the pleasure-seeking activities of Khusraw, he carefully selects the verses related to kingship which picture Khusraw as a just king blessed by Fortune. It is also noteworthy that there are some similarities between Khusraw and Rāvandī’s patrons, such as their shared names (Khusraw and Kaykhusraw), and the fact that they both lost their throne at some point, spent time in exile, and regained power later.

Our first encounter with Nizāmī’s verses in *RŞ* is at the end of the introduction and before the beginning of the historical section where Rāvandī discusses the subject of justice and how it is the most important feature for a king. Here Rāvandī includes an entire episode on Khusraw (56 verses) when he is not yet enthroned.²⁷⁷ Khusraw stays in the house of a farmer after a long day of hunting and takes advantage of his host’s generosity. When his father, Hurmuzd, hears of this, he punishes Khusraw severely for this act of injustice. Regretting his actions, Khusraw submerges himself in sorrow and asks for forgiveness which is granted by Hurmuzd.

At first glance, it does not seem that the passage is one which lauds Khusraw, rather it seems to emphasise Hurmuzd’s sense of justice. However, before including the story, Rāvandī informs us that Khusraw II dreams of Khusraw I (r. 531-579; Khursaw Anūshīrvān who is known for his justice), because God was glad of him (*ba ḥaq khushnūd būd*).²⁷⁸ Moreover, almost half of the verses indicate how Khusraw II atones for his bad behaviour and finally, the episode ends with the declaration that Khusraw possesses God’s fortune:

مدادای روان و میوه دل	"چو هرمز دید کان فرزند مقبل
بدانست او که آن فر خدایست" ²⁷⁹	بدان فرزانی و آهسته رایست

‘When Hurmuzd saw that his fortunate son/ that cure of soul and the fruit of heart.

(he) is so wise and prudent/ he (Hurmuzd) realized that his son possesses God’s fortune.’

The above episode is not the only time where Khusraw’s character is in the spotlight, though it is the only anecdote with a direct link to Khusraw. In the chapter on Sultan Malikshāh ibn Maḥmūd (r. 1104-1105), 15 verses of Nizāmī are included to describe the character and disposition of the Sultan. The verses belong to a section where Shāpūr, the court painter, is describing Khusraw to Shīrīn, as Shīrīn had not seen him yet. Shapūr introduces Khusraw as

²⁷⁶ Christine van Ruymbeke, “Persian Medieval Rewriters between Auctoritas and Authorship: The Story of *Khusra va Shirin* as a Case-Study,” in *Shahnama Studies III: The Reception of the Shahnama*, ed. Gabrielle van den Berg and Charles Melville (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 270.

²⁷⁷ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 81-84.

²⁷⁸ Rāvandī, 81.

²⁷⁹ Rāvandī, 84.

young, brave, handsome, generous, a warrior, possessing fortunate and most importantly, shown by its positions in the first two verses, from the line of the ancient Iranian kings:

ز دارا و سکندر یادگاری	"سکندر موکبی داراسواری
زمین را تخمی از جمشید مانده" ²⁸⁰	بخویش آسمان خورشید خوانده

'You have a retinue like that of Alexander and you are a rider to match Dārā/ You are what has remained from Alexander and Dārā.

The sky holds you as a sun/ There remains a seed of Jamshīd on earth.'²⁸¹

It is also noteworthy to add that Rāvandī makes use of Khusraw's ascension episode for the enthronement of his deceased patron, Sultan Ṭughril III. It is doubly significant that the information found in Rāvandī's chapter on Sultan Ṭughril III is of his own authorship, and not gathered from the *Saljūqnāma*, due to the fact that the Sultan was his contemporary and he was serving in his court at the time. Apart from Sultan Kaykhusraw, Sultan Ṭughril III was the most important figure for Rāvandī, as he indicates in the introduction that given time, he would write a 'history of Ṭughril'.²⁸² Employing Khusraw's character for Sultan Ṭughril III demonstrate how highly Rāvandī deems Khusraw of the Sasanians as a role model.

Apart from including Niẓāmī's verses directly, there are instances where Rāvandī modifies them for his own purposes. I aim to discuss in the next section, how, where, and when these instances occur and how they can contribute to further legitimise the Seljuqs.

2.5.2 Modification of Niẓāmī's Verses

In her article, "The Past in the Service of the Present," Meisami demonstrates how the past is formed by the standpoint of the present by investigating two books, the *Shāhnāma* and *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī* by Abū al-Faẓl Bayhaqī, and their relationship to the Ghaznavid court and the political issues and concerns of the time. While Firdawsī seeks to display a model of ancient Iranian kingship, the history of ancient Iran was irrelevant for Bayhaqī.²⁸³ That is also the reason for having many different approaches to historical writings, even if they have been written at the same time. Two authors may choose to record the same event, but considering their point of view, their purposes, their audience, their patrons as well many other factors,

²⁸⁰ Rāvandī, 250. Niẓāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ed. Hasan Vahid Dastgerdi (Tehran: Nashr-i Qatra, 1388/ 2009), 67.

²⁸¹ Dārā and Jamshīd are ancient Iranian kings according to the *Shāhnāma* and narratives of national Iranian history. Alexander also possesses an Iranian genealogy based on this tradition. For more on national history of Iran, see: Ehsan Yarshater, "Iranian Historical Tradition," in *Cambridge History of Iran: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 343-380.

²⁸² Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 44.

²⁸³ Julie Scott Meisami, "The Past in the Service of the Present: Two Views of History in Medieval Persia," *Poetics Today* 14, n.2: 267.

their works will not be the same. This has also been focused on by Waldman in her study of *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī* and by Peacock in his investigation of *Tārīkh-i Bal'amī*. In both works, the way the authors chose to rearrange historical anecdotes provide a key to gain an insight into the author's goals.

However, it is not only rearranging that can shed light on the author's agenda. We have already investigated how Rāvandī applied the method of *ḥal* and *aqd* to reuse materials as well as translating Arabic wisdom to Persian in the forms of both poetry and prose.²⁸⁴ Both methods are a form of modification, and they are not the only methods Rāvandī uses. In dealing with Nizāmī's verses, he also applies modification by changing a few words; sometimes merely a name and sometimes more than one word.²⁸⁵

The modifications can be understood better when put in their specific context. For example:

"خلیفه چون از آن مقدم خبر یافت به خدمت کردن شاهانه بشتافت"²⁸⁶

‘When the caliph became aware of that arrival (Tughril's), he rushed to pay his respects to his imperial majesty.’

In *RŞ*, this verse can be found in the chapter on Sultan Tughril I when he first enters Baghdad. The verse explicitly demonstrates the high position of Tughril, as it is the caliph who comes to him to pay his respects. It is even more enlightening when compared to its original context in Nizāmī's *Khusraw va Shīrīn*:

"مہین بانو چو زین حالت خبر یافت به خدمت کردن شاهانه بشتافت"²⁸⁷

‘When Mihīn Bānū became aware of this situation, she rushed to pay her respects to his imperial majesty.’

Nizāmī's verse belongs to the section when Mihīn Bānū, the ruler of Arran and Armenia welcomes Khusraw II.²⁸⁸ Armenia was a vassal of the Sasanians at the time and thus, the verse conveys the higher rank Khusraw II possessed in relation to Mihīn Bānū. It is also noteworthy that Rāvandī did not only change the personage involved, ‘Mihīn Bānū’ to ‘*khalīfa*’; but also,

²⁸⁴ See the section on the language of *RŞ*, p.34.

²⁸⁵ See also: Julie Scott Meisami, “Ravandi, Nizami, and the Rhetoric of History,” in *The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love, and Rhetoric*, ed. Kamran Talattof and Jerome Clinton (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 97-128.

²⁸⁶ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 106.

²⁸⁷ Nizāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, ed. Abdul-Muhammad Ayati (Tehran: Intishārāt va Āmūzish-i Inqilāb-i Islāmī, 1370/1991), 70.

²⁸⁸ The parts related to Shīrīn and Mihīn Bānū differ from the historical accounts such as Ṭabarī. According to Paula Orsatti, the story of Shīrīn and Mihīn Bānū is a remainder of the legend of Semiramis, an Assyrian queen whose story is associated with Armenia, Arran, and the west of Iran. See: Paula Orsatti, “*Khosrow va Shirin* and Poems of Love,” in *Persian Narrative Poetry in the Classical Era 800-1500*, ed. Mohsen Ashtiany (London & New York: I.B.Tauris, 2023), 152-155.

he replaced the word '*ḥālat*' with '*maqdam*'. He could have easily kept the word and the meter would have remained intact. However, this modification aims to heighten the impact of his portrayal of the power dynamic. *Ḥālat* is a neutral word in this context, but *maqdam* refers to the high position of Ṭughril I in relation to the Caliph.

In the chapter on the reign of Sultan Ṭughril III, several other verses from *Khusraw va Shīrīn* are included; one of which was modified by Rāvandī:

"شه طغرل که سالار جهان بود" جوان بود و عجب دلکش جوان بود"²⁸⁹

'King Ṭughril who was the world's chief/ he was young, such a pleasant young man.'

The verse comes in the section where Ṭughril has successfully suppressed Qizil Arsalān and the commanders who had risen against him. Previously, their uprising had cost Ṭughril his throne which he regained after putting down the rebellion and punishing those responsible.²⁹⁰ In the verse that Rāvandī uses, the name of Sultan Ṭughril III replaces that of Khusraw in the *Khusraw va Shīrīn*:

"جهان خسرو که سالار جهان بود" جوان بود و عجب دلکش جوان بود"²⁹¹

'The world's sovereign,²⁹² Khusraw, who was the world's chief. He was young, such a pleasant young man.'

The above verse is part of the episode where the court painter, Shāpūr, is describing Khusraw II. The fact that Rāvandī picks the verses composed for Khusraw's character leads us again to his intention to depict Khusraw II as a role model. It is also noteworthy that just like Sultan Kaykhusraw I, Sultan Ṭughril III had lost and regained his throne as well.

Although Khusraw II might seem a peculiar choice for a role model considering his frivolous reputation, the concept of depicting a model for didactic purposes is not new in the Persian tradition of historical writing. It is well-established by several scholars that Persian historians used to present their historical facts in a particular way to suit their agenda. While one may have focused on the rise and fall of dynasties, another emphasized establishing a template for just rulership. It is, indeed, the latter that has caused some scholars such as Askari to consider *RŞ* as a work of 'mirror for princes.'²⁹³ According to Louise Marlow, the term 'mirror

²⁸⁹ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 368.

²⁹⁰ For more on the rebellion against Ṭughril III, see: Taef El-Azhari, *Queens, Eunuchs, and Concubines in Islamic History 661-1257* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 324-327.

²⁹¹ Nizāmī, *Khusraw va Shīrīn*, 103.

²⁹² The name Khusraw means sovereign and in this verse, it was used with regard to both its meaning: sovereign and King Khusraw.

²⁹³ Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma*, 6.

for princes' refers to a form of literary work "devoted to the ethical and practical aspects of governance, and such writings were customarily dedicated to specific rulers or rather high-ranking officers of the state."²⁹⁴ In this definition of mirror for princes, two factors have been highlighted: in terms of content, it should focus on the moral and practical aspects of governance; and it should be written for a ruler or a state-affiliate. *RŞ* while containing these criteria exceeds them; thus, making it difficult to fit it into one genre.²⁹⁵ *RŞ* was, indeed, written for a ruler (Sultan Kaykhusraw I), and in more than a few cases, it focuses on various aspect of governance. An example of this is the account of 'Amīd al-Mulk al-Kundurī's death. Al-Kundurī served as vizier during the reign of Ṭughril I, but when Ṭughril I's nephew, Alp Arsalān, gained power, al-Kundurī was stripped of his rank and Niẓām al-Mulk was appointed as vizier. Al-Kundurī, who had previously supported Alp Arsalān's brother's claim to the throne, was sentenced to death. In the account of Rāvandī, al-Kundurī sees his death as orchestrated by both Alp Arsalān and Niẓām al-Mulk. Before his death, he sends a message to Niẓām al-Mulk warning him of the consequences regarding 'killing a vizier':

"وزیر را بگوی که بدبدعتی و زشت قاعدتی در جهان آوردی بوزیر کشتن ارجو که این سنت در حق خویشتن و اعقاب بازبینی." ²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ Louise Marlow, "The Ways of Viziers and the Lamp of Commanders (*Minhāj al-wuzarā' wa-sirāj al-umarā'*) of Aḥmad al-Isfahbadhī and the Literary and Political Culture of Early fourteenth-Century Iran", *Writers and Rulers*, ed. Beatrice Gruendler and Louise Marlow (Reichert Verlag Wiesbaden, 2004), 169. For more detailed information about mirrors for princes in Persian and Arabic see: Marlow, *Counsel for Kings: Wisdom and Politics in the Tenth Century Iran*; Louise Marlow, "Advice Literature in Tenth and Early Eleventh Century Iran and Early Persian Prose Writing," *Early Islamic Iran*, ed. Edmund Herzig & Sarah Stewart (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012); Louise Marlow, *Medieval Muslim Mirrors for Princes: An Anthology of Arabic, Persian and Turkish Political Advice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

²⁹⁵ The question of genres and categorization of literature has always involved a long and rather vague discussion among scholars, especially since in Persian literatures. The genres used to describe texts often overlapped. As Saghi Gazerani has pointed out, Persian literature and history were oriented and classified based on western literature, instead of being studied as a separate field. Applying western genres in Persian literature led to distinguishing and labeling some areas as 'misfits', while the comprehensiveness of criteria, even in western literature, is still in question. (Saghi Gazerani, *The Sistani Cycle of Epics and Iran's National History: On the Margins of Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1-2.) It is also important to note that the concept of genre, as it is perceived now, did not exist in Persian literature. Julie Meisami has suggested a few words which can be recognized as parallels to the western concept of genre, as they convey almost similar notions. These terms which can be found in primary sources when talking about literature are *shīva* (method), *ṭuruq* (ways), *anvā'* (types), and *aghrāz* (purposes). However, they were mostly applied to poetry and its various thematic types, such as *madḥ* (praise), *hajv* (satire), *marṣīyya* (elegy), *vaṣf* (description), *taqazzul* (love poem), and so on. In this attempt to suggest parallels to the western terms, the aforementioned types of poetry have been considered as various genres of Persian literature and they are classified based on their subjects. While subject is a key point in perceiving the concept of genre, it is not the only criteria. In fact, some scholars used the term genre for another concept usually known as 'template' which refers to the different systems based on which Persian poems are composed. In other words, when one talks about genre, it is not totally clear and indisputable what they are referring to: content, form, writing style, some combination of all three factors, or something else. (Julie Scott Meisami, "Genres of Court Literature," *General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed. Johannes de Bruijn (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 233-234.); see also: Julie Meisami, *Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Lyric Poetry* (London: Routledge, 2003), 27.

²⁹⁶ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 118.

‘Tell the vizier that in killing a vizier you have established a wrong innovation and preposterous tradition. I hope that this you will see this practice upon yourself and your descendent.’

The account is followed by several verses by Firdawsī indicating that the world’s favour will not last long:

نگه کن بدین گردش روزگار	"جهان تا توانی بشادی گذار
ز تیمار و دردش کند بی گزند	یکی را برآرد بچرخ بلند
همه جای ترسست و تیمار و باک	وز آنجاش گردان برد سوی خاک
بیفگند خیره بچاه دراز	هم آنرا که پرورد بر بر بناز
نهد بر سرش پر ز گوهر کلاه ²⁹⁷	یکی را ز چاه آورد سوی گاه

‘Live as happily as possible/ observe the transience of the world.

It elevates one as high as the sky/ and it gives him no pain and no harm.

Then it takes him down degrades him to the earth/ to a place full of terror and agony.

It (the world) has whom it had raised in feather/ thrown to a deep well.

It takes another from the well to the throne/ and places a jewelled crown on his head.’

It is also important to note that the modification case described earlier between Khusraw II and Ṭughril is by no means an exception and there are other figures on whom Rāvandī focuses and modifies verses for. In the next section, we will see how he creates allegories to praise his patron and how he treats Firdawsī’s verses for the same purpose.

2.6 Rāvandī and Firdawsī

Perhaps the most famous work of Persian literature is the *Shāhnāma* composed in 1010 by Abū Al-Qāsim Firdawsī. He was born in a village called Bāzh in Khurasan in a noble landowning family (*dihqān*). Primarily, it was another poet, Abū Manṣūr Daqīqī, who had taken on the task of composing the *Shāhnāma*. However, after composing 1000 verses, Daqīqī was killed by his servant, and it was Firdawsī who continued the work. While composing the *Shāhnāma*, Firdawsī benefited from the patronage of Abū Manṣūr ‘Abd al-Razzāq Ṭūsī, the governor of Khurasan. A generous governor, Abū Manṣūr had earlier bestowed his patronage

²⁹⁷ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 118; Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, ed. Jalal Khaleqi Motlaq (California: Bunyād- Mīrās-i Īrān, 1992), vol.3, 396-397.

upon Abū Manṣūr Mu‘ammarī to write a *Shāhnāma* in prose. This prose *Shāhnāma* later served as a source for Firdawsī.²⁹⁸

The *Shāhnāma* is an account about the Iranian people from the mythical era to the fall of the Sasanians in 656.²⁹⁹ It portrays the beginning of everything for the people who lived on the Iranian plateau; how fire was discovered; how they made clothes; how they learned to read and write etc. It narrates the story of four dynasties: the Pishdadids, the Kayanids, the Arsacids, and the Sasanians.³⁰⁰ It is the story of ancient Iranian kings, how they ruled and how they were defeated.

However, what makes the *Shāhnāma* extraordinary and unparalleled among Persian literature is its drastic and long-lasting impact on later works as well as political issues surrounding legitimacy and ideology. Other *Shāhnāmas* were composed imitating the same style or dealing with spin-off stories of the *Shāhnāma*, such as the *Farāmarz-nāma* and *Bānūgushasp-nāma*. Its influence, however, was not merely limited to the stories within it; In later centuries, the meter of the *Shāhnāma*, *mutaqārib*, came to be associated with heroic stories and the meter of epic.³⁰¹ Moreover, due to its political value and interest of the rulers, copies of it were produced on the order of kings. The surviving illustrated manuscripts of the *Shāhnāma* are dated as early as the time of the Mongol Empire, while Oleg Grabar has argued that there were illustrated copies of the *Shāhnāma* from the 11th century, though they were not preserved.³⁰²

In her book, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma as a Mirror for Princes*, Askari indicates that the *Shāhnāma* was viewed primarily as a work of mirror for princes in the medieval era. Authors of the medieval period paid attention to its didactic value for kings, repeatedly citing selected verses from the *Shāhnāma*.³⁰³ Indeed, we can find *Shāhnāma* verses not only in mirrors for princes, but also in other works such as the *Marzbān-nāma* written in

²⁹⁸ Jalal Khaleghi Motlagh, "Firdowsi, Abu'L- Qāsem i. Life," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, last updated January 26, 2012, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ferdowsi-i>; *Shāhnāma* studies on its own is a vast field which has enthralled scholars for decades. For Firdawsī's biography, see: Mohammad Amin Riahi, *Firdawsī* (Tehran: Tarḥ-i Naw, 1380/ 2001); For the reception of the *Shāhnāma* in the Ghaznavid court, see: Andrew Peacock, "Firdawsī's *Shahnama* in its Ghaznavid Context," *IRAN* 56 (2018): 2-12.

²⁹⁹ For more on the fall of the Sasanian Empire, see: Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008).

³⁰⁰ While there is firm evidence for the history of the Arsacids and the Sasanians, the narratives of the Pishdadids and the Kayanids are wrapped in myth. For studies on how those stories can be seen as history see Mahnaz Farjami, *Barrasī-yi Taṭbīqī-yi Shakhshiyat-hāyi Shāhnāma va Tārīkh-i Bal'amī* (Tehran: Būālī, 1398/ 2019); Zabihollah Safa has divided the *Shāhnāma* into three parts: mythical, heroic, and historical based on their proximity to history and their characteristics. Zabihollah Safa, *Ḥamāsa-sarāyī dar Īrān* (Tehran: Amīrkabīr, 1333/ 1954), 206-215.

³⁰¹ Gabrielle van den Berg, "Early Persian Verse Romances in *Mutaqārib*: Form, Structure, Contents," *Iranian Studies* 56 (2023): 656.

³⁰² Oleg Grabar, "Why Was the *Shahnama* Illustrated?" *Iranian Studies* 43, v.1: 93-94.

³⁰³ Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma*, 6.

the 12th century.³⁰⁴ Other than that, there seems to have been a change in the treatment of the *Shāhnāma* sometime between the 10th-12th centuries. While authors like Bayhaqī did not find it particularly interesting to focus on, a century later during the Seljuq period, stories of the *Shāhnāma* (either in their versified form or in prose) were found in didactic sources as well as historical works.³⁰⁵ Moreover, a collection of Firdawsī's verses was made by 'Ali ibn Aḥmad commissioned by Sultan Malikshāh containing various topics such as descriptions of nature, praising God, and wise words categorized by topics. This book, which is called *Ikhtiyārāt-i Shāhnāma* was a source of didactic words for authors to include them in their works.³⁰⁶

Rāvandī, however, does not seem to have made use of *Ikhtiyārāt*, rather he chose the *Shāhnāma* verses himself and rearranged them in his own way, as we shall see later. There are two sets of verses here that I will investigate: the verses composed by Firdawsī (633 verses in total) and the verses composed by Rāvandī in imitation of Firdawsī, or, as I call them, pseudo-Firdawsī verses (101 verses).

There is a question that need to be addressed before presenting and investigating examples of Rāvandī's treatment of these verses. The question is why Rāvandī decided to include verses of his own in imitation of Firdawsī. The reason appears to be the nature of the *Shāhnāma* as a potential model for Rāvandī's work. The *Shāhnāma* gives advice to rulers, records history as it was perceived at the time, and presents ancient Iranian kings as proper examples of rulership. It has all the elements that Rāvandī tries to establish for his own book: justice, kingship, and history. Moreover, considering the epic nature of the *Shāhnāma* and all the epic works emulating the *Shāhnāma* especially in the 12th century, choosing the meter of *mutaqārib* could provide RŞ with a heroic atmosphere for the Seljuq rulers.³⁰⁷

While *Shāhnāma* verses were included in didactic works of the Seljuq era, Rāvandī took it upon himself to not only select and rearrange *Shāhnāma* verses as he saw fit, but also to add verses of his own to it without acknowledging the addition. In some cases, the additional verses are usually what links the *Shāhnāma* verses to the situation at hand.³⁰⁸ For example:

³⁰⁴ See: Julia Rubanovich, "Tracking the *Shahnama* Tradition in Medieval Persian Folk Prose," in *Shahnama Studies II*, ed. Charles Melville and Gabrielle van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 11-34.

³⁰⁵ Andrew Peacock, "Early Persian Historians and the Heritage of Pre-Islamic Iran," in *Early Islamic Iran*, ed. Edmund Herzig and Sarah Stewart (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 70.

³⁰⁶ For more on *Ikhtiyārāt-i Shāhnāma*, see: Mahmoud Omidasalar, "Nukta-yī dar bāb-i Huvīyyat-i Jāmi'-i Kitāb-i Ikhtiyārāt-i Shāhnāma," *Īrānshināsī* 56 (1381): 850-855.

³⁰⁷ The epic cycle was popular during the Ghaznavid and the Seljuq periods; so much so that 12 different *Farāmarznāma* existed in the 12th century. see: Marjolijn Zutphen, "Faramarz' Expedition to Qanuj and Khargah: Mutual Influences of the *Shahnama* and the Longer *Faramarznama*," in *Shahnama Studies II*, 49-78.

³⁰⁸ As Melville demonstrates, the same practice is later found in the *Ẓafarnāma*, written by Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī during the reign of the Timurids. Similar to Rāvandī, Yazdī incorporated verses from the *Shāhnāma* into his work but did not select all the verses from the same story. Instead, he chose verses from various sections of the *Shāhnāma*, rearranged them, and added his own verses in imitation of Firdawsī. See: Charles Melville, "'Ali Yazdi and the *Shāhnāma*," in *International Shahname Conference. The Second Millennium*, ed. Forogh Hashabeiky (Uppsala Universitet, 2014), 117-33.

یکی داستان زد جهان‌دیده کی	که مرد جوان چون بود نیک پی
بدام آیدش ناسگالیده میش	پلنگ از پس پشت و صیاد پیش
چو کاهل شود مرد هنگام کار	از آن پس نیاید چنان روزگار
چنان شد شهاب از بس آموختن	که مثلش نیابی تو در هیچ فن
برای و بدانش بجای رسید	که چون خویشتن در زمانه ندید" ³⁰⁹

'Once a seasoned ruler stated, / that should a young man be fortunate,

He would hunt a sheep effortlessly, / as well as a leopard from behind.

Should the man become lazy in the time of work, / then the fortune would not come again.

From having learned greatly, Shahāb become, / as such that you would not find his like in any field.

Of tact and knowledge, he achieved a place, / that he did not see one his like in his era.'

In the abovementioned verses, the first three are from Firdawsī, while the last two are from Rāvandī describing his friend, Shahāb al-Dīn Aḥmad. In the *Shāhnāma* verses, we hear of a young person who is wise beyond his age. The verses refer to Manūchīhr, great grandson of Faraydūn. Manūchīhr withstood the threat of his great uncles, Salm and Tūr (who had waged war against his grandfather, Iraj, and killed him earlier), and defeated them even though he was younger and less experienced. It is this aspect that Rāvandī has in mind when he talks about his friend, Shahāb al-Dīn, as he also states that Shahāb al-Dīn was wiser than 70-year-olds.³¹⁰

In other cases, the additional verses seem to have been composed for their educational merit as they often strengthen and stress what comes before and after them. Most of these verses are warnings to the readers of the transience of the world. In these cases, Rāvandī mostly applies the same sets of vocabulary in order to give a demonstration of his literary skills:

که داند که چندین نشیب و فراز	پدید آرد این روزگار دراز
چنین است گیهان آسیب و سیب	پس هر فرازی نهاده نشیب" ³¹¹

³⁰⁹ Rāvandī, *RṢ*, 49-51.

³¹⁰ Rāvandī, 47.

³¹¹ Rāvandī, 142.

‘Who is aware of the ups and downs / that the time will put forward.

This is the universe of harm and un-harm, / after an up will come a down.’

Not only are the words *nashīb* and *farāz* repeated in these two verses, one from Firdawsī and one from Rāvandī, but the other hemistiches also discuss the same matter, the force of fate in what happens in the world.

In the case of Firdawsī’s verses applied in *RŞ*, Rāvandī follows the same rule as discussed previously. While a number of them were chosen because of their didactic contents, there is another group of verses which possess an allegorical connection to the incidents which occurred during the Seljuq era and are narrated in *RŞ*. Askari has discussed one of these occasions where the original context plays an important role in understanding of Rāvandī’s work.³¹² In this verse, which appears in the introduction of *RŞ*, Sultan Kaykhusraw I is praised with more than one poem, one of which is made up of 12 verses chosen from various parts of the *Shāhnāma*:

کچونان درخت آفریدون نکشت³¹³

"درختی بکشم بخرم بهشت

‘I have planted a tree in the verdant paradise, / like of which Faraydūn did not plant.’

The verse selected addresses the reign of Gushtāsp where he accepted Zoroastrianism and planted a cypress in Kashmar to honour the occasion. Thereafter, he sent emissaries to spread the faith among people and he held the tree as a symbol of his righteousness. It is intriguing that the verse has a connection to its previous paragraph both in terms of content and vocabulary. According to Rāvandī, Sultan Kaykhusraw I is ‘the fruit of the tree of Seljuq family.’³¹⁴ He is also a tree whose roots are spreading and strengthening religion and whose fruit is constructing public buildings, such as *madrāsas*, *khānaqāhs*, mosques, and upholding justice. In other words, the verse is profoundly intertwined with the verse from the *Shāhnāma* and its original context. In both cases, the tree (real and hypothetical) is the most significant factor referring to Gushtāsp and the Seljuq family, Kaykhusraw I in particular, as righteous God-approved rulers.

Moreover, the text and its following poem suggest there is a relationship between justice and God’s approval. Strengthening religion and constructing religious buildings are considered as a way of justice, as was also indicated in the section on the structure of *RŞ*.³¹⁵ Religion and upholding religious laws were among the pillars of the Seljuq dynasty’s legitimacy. Omid Safi has demonstrated the Seljuqs’ attempts to gain legitimacy through empowering orthodox knowledge and commissioning the construction of *khānaqāhs*. An

³¹² See: Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma*, 46-47.

³¹³ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 28.

³¹⁴ Rāvandī, 29. "ثمره شجره سلجوق است."

³¹⁵ See p.46.

example of the former can be seen in the figure of al-Ghazzālī whose works are centred on the relationship between the sultan and the caliph. Construction of the *khānaqāhs*, especially, was carried out to gain the approval of saints and Sufi. A practice that was called *baraka* and eventually led to legitimising the Seljuqs.³¹⁶

The allegory between the original context and the one in *RŞ* does not end with the similarities between Gushtāsp's situation and that of Kaykhusraw I. The rest of the poem comes from the beginning of the reign of Kaykhusraw of the Kayanids in the *Shāhnāma*. Beside the evident overlap of their names, Kaykhusraw of the *Shāhnāma* and Kaykhusraw of the Seljuqs, the poem addresses concepts of *hunar*, *guhar*,³¹⁷ *nizhād* (origin), and *khirad* (wisdom), concluding that whoever is in the possession of these four elements and virtues will be at peace and a be God-approved ruler who is also revered by a chaste and faithful people.³¹⁸ The passage before the poem indicates Sultan Kaykhusraw I's tendencies to patronize religion, religious establishments, and the 'ulamā, thus showing his efforts in upholding justice. The passage following the poem also demonstrates his endeavours in this line. If we take a closer look at the poem and its connection to the text, we can see the four qualities mentioned above in Kaykhusraw I: 1) He is of the pure origin of the Seljuqs (*nizhād*); 2) his very essence is strengthening the religion (*guhar*);³¹⁹ he constructs religious buildings; 3) he is well-versed in religious matters; 4) he patronizes the 'ulamā (*hunar*); and finally all this comes together in being a just ruler (*khirad*).

Instances of *Shāhnāma* verses and pseudo-*Shāhnāma* verses can be attested in almost every page of *RŞ*. What makes them significant for this study is not only the abundance of them compared to previous works, but also the close connections between the original context of the *Shāhnāma*, the history of the Seljuqs, and the link the work makes to Sultan Kaykhusraw I. It is also noteworthy that the frequency of *Shāhnāma* verses increases when it comes to the chapter on Tughril III and the events of Rāvandī's own time. We can witness this in *Jāmī' al-Tavārīkh* as well, where more *Shāhnāma* verses are included in the section on Ilkhanid history. This feature will be investigated in the next chapter.

2.7 Conclusion of the Chapter

In chapter two, I have analysed the language, the structure, the motifs, and the usage of poetry both Rāvandī's and those of others including Niẓāmī and Firdawsī in *RŞ*. What the

³¹⁶ Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Pre-Modern*, xxi-xxxvii.

³¹⁷ It is extremely difficult to provide a simple definition for *guhar* and *hunar* in the context of the *Shāhnāma*. Firdawsī applies these two words frequently and sometimes interchangeably. *Guhar* refers to the nature or the essence of a person and can nourish in life, while *hunar* signifies the acquisitional features of a person and positive traits that one can acquire during their lifetime. For more, see: Qadamali Sarrafi, "Guhar va Hunar dar Shāhnāma va Bāztāb-i Ān dar Adab-i Fārsī," *Justār-hāyi Adabī* 186 (1393/ 2015): 29-54.

³¹⁸ Rāvandī, *RŞ*, 29.

³¹⁹ Ibid. "بیخس تربیت و تقویت دین"

language tells is that Rāvandī made a conscious choice in his usage of *naṣr-i fannī* for his introduction while the rest of the book borders between *naṣr-i fannī* and one level easier style, *naṣr-i baynābayn* (middle prose). In this way, he could demonstrate his literary skill for the various types of audience he addressed, be it the Seljuq ruler, Sultan Kaykhusraw, his courtiers, and even those interested in skills such as calligraphy while at the same time, he structures his work in a way that every chapter ends with a reference to Sultan Kaykhusraw to ensure making a connection to the Seljuq family, and therefore emphasize the legitimate rule of Sultan Kaykhusraw I. Rāvandī made use of every strategy available to him at the time: he drew on celestial objects to make an allegory between a ruler and his court; he made use of the Sasanian king, Khusraw II as a role model; and he made use of Firdawsī's verses to connect the Seljuqs in the line of the ancient Iranian kings. Moreover, in the introduction as well as in the following chapters, Rāvandī reasons for the Seljuqs' legitimacy by focusing on notions important in Islam such as justice and its relation to good deeds.³²⁰ The author defines the notion of justice by linking it to the religion. Justice is not only about doing good, but also about doing the deeds that were deemed good by the religion. Upholding religious rules was also considered a way of ensuring that justice is served as was looking after the *'ulamā* and their needs in order to strengthen and spread the word of God.

³²⁰ See pp.48-52.

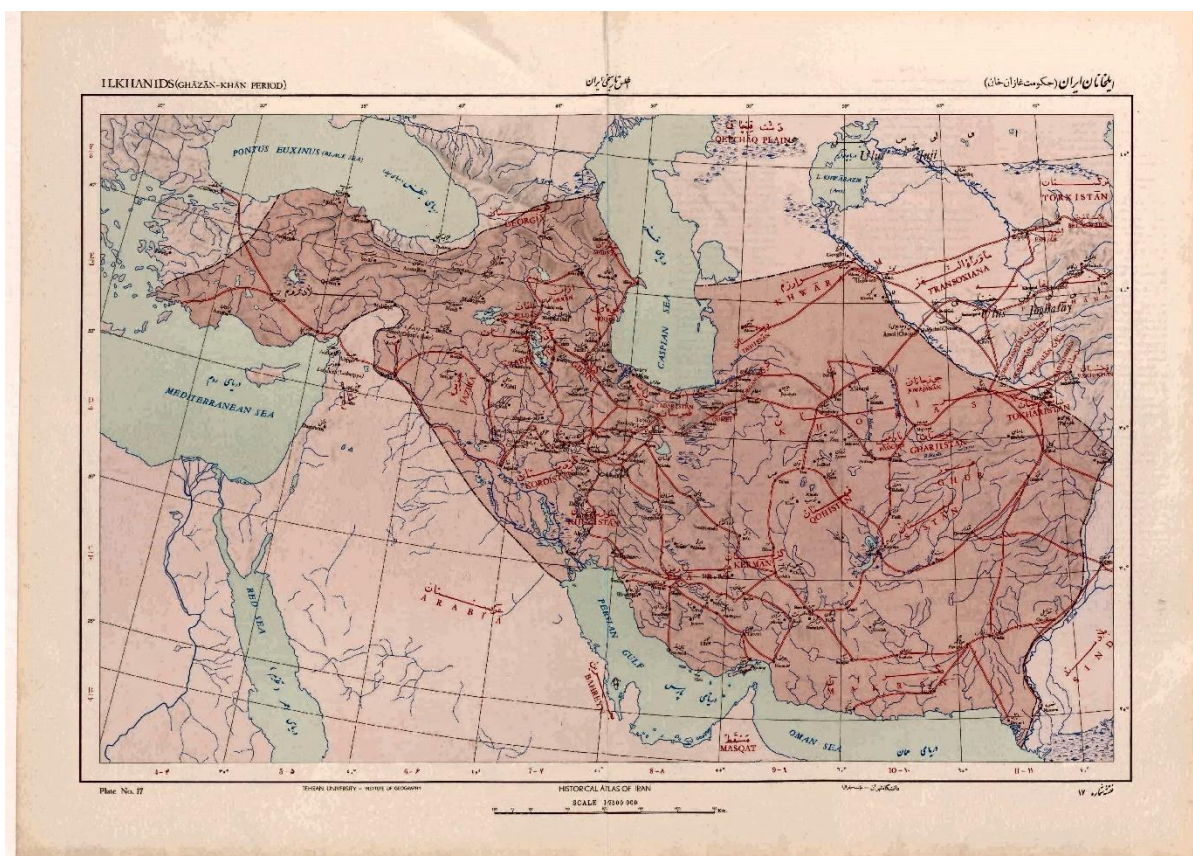


Figure 6: Map of the Ilkhanid Territory³²¹

³²¹ Historical Atlas of Iran, "Plate No.17," Wikimedia Commons, accessed on 14 March 2024, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Historical_Atlas_of_Iran_-_Plate_No._17.jpg