

British came to use rather sloppily to describe a ‘puritan’ and activist Muslim reformer. Indians also use the term in a similar loose fashion. Altaf Husain Hali described the religious views of Saiyid Ahmad Khan before the Mutiny Uprising as being those of a ‘Wahhabi’. This said, lengthening the chronological span of the study would, in all probability, have undermined its tightly organised argument.

The scholarship is not entirely secure. Davis unfairly depicts the work of Natana DeLong-Bas saying that “she fails to understand that Wahhabism in the twenty-first century is not an exact replica of how it appeared in eighteenth-century Arabia” (p. 42). But DeLong-Bas attempts no such thing. Her work *Wahhabi Islam* (2004) concentrates on how different the ideas of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab were from those who interpreted him after his death. In his text Davis refers to Abd al-Wahhab (pp. 8, 9) when he means ibn Abd al-Wahhab. We are informed (p. 132) that the Protestant Reformation in Europe took place in the eighteenth century. <[F.Robinson@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:F.Robinson@rhul.ac.uk)>

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It is always exciting when previously unexamined manuscripts come to light, offering new evidence and information. This is certainly the case with the *Akhbar-i Moghulan*; a brief history covering some of the most important events which took place in the Mongol Near East during the mid-late thirteenth century. This Persian history was recently identified by Iraj Afshar, who then published a critical edition in 2009. The present work serves to offer a detailed introduction to this work along with an English paraphrased translation.

The *Akhbar’s* author is unknown. The surviving manuscript was written down by the famous thirteenth century intellectual Qutb al-Din Shirazi (1236–1311) although he may have been drawing upon an existing work rather than producing his own text. Certain clues from the manuscript reinforce the impression that Shirazi was the copyist rather than the author although, as Lane demonstrates in the introduction, it is difficult to be sure. The text itself seems to have been written originally between 1281 and 1285 and may have been used as source material by the famous Rashid al-Din.

Lane’s introduction also provides helpful background on Shirazi himself, who had a colourful and varied career, predominantly in service to the Ilkhans. He worked at the famous Maragha observatory and wrote several scientific and astrological works. Later he travelled to Anatolia joining a group of intellectuals in orbit around the local Mongol governor. In 1282 he was despatched as an ambassador to the Mamluk sultan, Qalawun. He died in 1311, famous for his scholarship, his humour and his skill as a musician and a chess player.

Later sections of the introduction provide contextual historical overviews intended to add background and discussion to the subsequent translated material. The translations themselves are offered in two forms: first as a straightforward translation and then as an annotated translation.

The source itself contains a curious treasure trove of stories, historical accounts and anecdotes. It doesn’t offer a dramatic new re-imagining of the thirteenth century; its value lies rather in its provision

of a large number of contextual details that add greater depth and texture to many key events and points of interest concerning the Ilkhanate and its neighbours. The *Akhbar* starts with a brief history of the Mongol khanate from the era of Chinggis Khan, but then swiftly advances the narrative to the time of Hulegu and his campaign into the Near East. This was the venture that overthrew the Assassins' strongholds and conquered Baghdad in 1258. In its discussion on these events, the *Akhbar* includes some fascinating details on themes of logistics and weaponry, most significantly a highly detailed description of the large siege crossbows deployed by the Mongol forces.

The *Akhbar* provides a lot of further useful material on the fall of Baghdad, including the spread of disease both within the city and among the Mongol forces during and following the siege. It also provides coverage for subsequent events including Hulegu's advance into Northern Syria, his conquest of Aleppo and Damascus, and the battle of Ayn Jalut. Within this, it is interesting to see how the author attempts to defend the reputation of the Mongol commander Kitbuqa, despite his defeat by the Mamluks; exonerating him by placing the blame on his subordinates.

The source's history of the next twenty-five years is sporadic, with some events covered in detail alongside many long periods of silence. It does pay close attention however to: the Mamluks' 1277 campaign into Anatolia, the events preceding and following the battle of Homs (1280) and the struggle between the Ilkhan Tegudar (1282–1284) and his nephew and usurper Arghun. It also provides some observations, bearing upon key thematic points of interest. There is a fair amount of information on leading Mongol elite women and their ability to exercise power. There are also some clues concerning the Mongols' changing religious orientation, including brief material on their relationship with Islam and their love of astrology.

Scholars interested in the Mongols' neighbours will find some useful material. The Mamluks receive a fair amount of attention and it is striking to note that the *Akhbar* praises Sultan Baybars' virtues, despite the problems he posed for the Ilkhans. It makes occasional references to the Franks and the Crusader States, perhaps most notably in the observation that the Franks made very little effort to support the Mongols whenever the Ilkhans tried to attack Mamluk territory. This is an important point given the longstanding questions surrounding Mongol-Frankish relations. There is also a curious story about a failed Frankish attempt to assassinate Sultan Baybars.

Overall this is a short but helpful source that will be of the greatest interest to anyone interested in the Near Eastern world during the thirteenth century. The translated text is supplemented by a great deal of supporting information including a series of contextual introductions in the front matter, and later a helpful 'list of personages' providing prosopographical context on the source. In this way, George Lane has done scholarship a great service by enabling scholars to access this well-introduced and fascinating text. <[nicholas.morton@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:nicholas.morton@ntu.ac.uk)>

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