

THE MONGOL ĪLKHĀNS AND THEIR VIZIER RASHĪD AL-DĪN. BY DOROTHEA KRAWULSKY. pp. 156. Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2011. doi:10.1017/S1356186311000319

The unobtrusive appearance of Dorothea Krawulsky's highly erudite study of the Ilkhanid Renaissance man and prime minister of Mongol Iran, Rashīd al-Dīn, is certain to have a far greater impact than its initial reception by the scholarly world. Innumerable biographies of this intellectual giant of the mediaeval world among whose labels 'the creator of the world's first universal history' is merely one, already exist, both detailed and sketched, but Krawulsky's short biography within fifteen short pages renders these others obsolete and seriously inaccurate. Krawulsky's work however is far more than a biography of Rashīd al-Dīn and her area of research wanders in pastures new, her anecdotes and stories are harvested from freshly prepared manuscripts and her conclusions are reaped from material previously uncharted and unexplored. She explains at the end of her characteristically short and focused introduction that a couple of her papers had appeared before in German and Arabic but that they made little impact and so with appropriate updating and revision she has included translated versions in the present book which otherwise contains fresh material. This is an exciting book.

Krawulsky's work is divided into two sections, the first section, labelled 'The Time' is concerned with the epoch into which Rashīd al-Dīn was born while the second part, 'The Vizier', deals with the minister himself and concludes with the short biography already mentioned. She introduces the two books with a useful and practical introduction which summarises each chapter and outline her conclusions. In addition she introduces the Ilkhanate explaining its establishment in some broad strokes at once controversial and also convincing. While acknowledging recent thinking that the Ilkhanid regime was established with the cooperation of the Iranian elite, Krawulsky assumes that Ghazan's conversion to Islam was a response to the dire economic straits besetting the regime in the last years of the thirteenth century. To those who consider that the Toluid state in Iran was wishing to define itself as a separate and dominant cultural and political regional entity with ambitions which would have coincided with the aspirations of the Iranian elite namely the Persian dream of finally casting aside persistent remnants of Arab dominion, Krawulsky offers sustenance.

However before tackling the reality of Ilkhanid identity Krawulsky questions the very basis of Chinggisid succession and suggests that the *Secret History* had been subject to interpolation with the introduction of the idea of a testament created by Chinggis Khan's Nestorian in-laws. Succession by testament being a Christian tradition. Igor de Rachewiltz concluded in 2004 that the designation by testament of Ogodai was "almost certainly a later interpolation"<sup>1</sup> and Krawulsky develops the argument to demonstrate the ideological bias of the historical reports. Exploring the influence of the women and the Christian tradition her conclusion is unequivocal and, as she closes this opening article, she states that the story of the testament was interpolated into the *Secret History* "after the death of Ögedey, probably by Toluy's line". (p. 28)

Krawulsky's second article underlines the significance of Rashīd al-Dīn's Mongol history beyond its value as a record of the Mongol dynasties. The Ilkhans introduced official historiography into the Islamic world and commissioned their Persian vizier to apply this Chinese tradition to their own history and that of other national histories. Rashīd al-Dīn applied Islamic methodology to this Chinese tradition and made liberal use of the *Altan Debter* (*Golden Book*), the original *Secret History*, and the *Shih-lu*, the monographs of the Mongol Emperors, composed under Qubilai in Chinese and Mongolian, he quoted various different and often contradictory sources in a manner reminiscent of the transmission of *hadiths*, leaving his reader to decide on the relative authenticity of the different accounts.

<sup>1</sup>See Igor de Rachewiltz, *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*, vol.ii, Brill, 2006, p. 923

In comparing copies of the *Altan Debter*, and the later *Secret History* and Rashīd al-Dīn's *History of the Mongols*, Krawulsky comments on the various gaps and omissions noticeable in the two later histories and concludes that these represent the intentions of the two historical compilers. Whereas the writers of the *Secret History* wished to legitimise the succession and rule of the house of Tolui, Rashīd al-Dīn was intent upon omitting anything "contrary to the moral standards of his time and detrimental to the reputation of the Čingizid family." (p. 38) For Krawulsky however it is the combination of the Chinese system of historiography and Islamic methodology evident in the Persian vizier's epic work that she finds particularly fascinating. Rashīd al-Dīn believed historiography to be of the utmost importance and he took his role as official historian extremely seriously as is evident from the instructions he laid down in his will regarding the preservation, the copying of and the accessibility to his great works.

The significance of history is again underlined in Krawulsky's third article which investigates the origins and implications of the name 'Īrān' and Īrānzamīn' revived for the Ilkhanid state. Iran had been known as such since before the Arab conquests of the seventh century and the revival of this emotive name was welcomed by most Iranians without reservations as clearly demonstrated by its widespread adoption by the many histories and historians of the time. With the fall of Baghdad in 1258, the Caliphate and its role as grantor of legitimacy on Islamic regimes also collapsed. In its place the ancient practices of the Sassanians coupled with Mongol concepts of a heavenly mandate were embraced by the emerging state and appropriately the new king was able to occupy a throne vacated as a consequence of the Arab conquests and empty ever since. The Persian image of Iran is evoked in the pages of the *Shāhnāma* through miniatures and verse and it is significant that in the newly commissioned versions dating from the Ilkhanate the beautifully crafted miniatures are peopled by Mongol princes and Chinggisid courts.<sup>2</sup>

For more than three centuries Persians had been struggling to come to terms with the Arab conquests. The rise of the small semi-autonomous Persian dynasties had nurtured the development of 'New Persian' and the emergence of Persian as the second language of Islam along with the appearance of Persian 'nationalism'. Distrust and distaste for the Arabs was never far from the surface but, as Krawulsky clearly states, "what had prevented these dynasties from establishing an Iranian kingdom was the Caliph in Baghdad, the symbol of Islamic unity". (p. 48) Krawulsky has not examined the nature of the Iranian delegation to Mongke for his inauguration which some sources claim was an explicit plea for the Chinggisid Great Khan to intervene and to dispatch his armies not only to destroy that constant bane of Iranian life, the Ismā'īlīs, but to request the appointment of a king and the incorporation of the country fully into the economic, political and most importantly the mercantile life of the empire as Mustawfi's *Zafarnāma* and another verse epic both testify. Hulegu Khan revived Iran's ancient name, he re-awoke a slumbering pride and he re-ignited national shared memories and the cultural regeneration has persisted until the present day "this name has remained the official name of today's Iran". (p. 51)

The date of the Ilkhanate's founding has never been officially recognised, not being considered sufficiently important to merit concern. Krawulsky however has determined not only the probable date for its founding as the Ilkhanid state but has suggested that this date has important implications and reflects on very basic existential truths of the state. In 1264 following Qubilai Khan's victory over his younger brother, he declared himself Great Khan in succession to his brother, Mongke, and confirmed Hulegu's sovereignty over Iran and future ruler of Egypt, with a document of confirmation, a contingent of 30,000 troops to secure his conquests, and the minting of new coinage bearing for the first time the title 'Īlkhān'. This mutual recognition by the two brothers, rulers of urban based kingdoms, provoked the "hereditary enmity of the other Čingizid princes who were left empty-handed". (p. 56)

<sup>2</sup>See Abolala Soudavar, "The Saga of Abu-Sa'id Bahador Khan. The Abu-Sa'idname," in Teresa Fitzherbert and Julian Raby (eds.), *The Court of the Il-Khans 1290–1340*, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art XII (1994), pp. 95–211

While Qubilai assumed the throne of the divine ruler of China without resistance, in Iran world domination was religiously orientated and Islam considered the absolute law-maker and law-giver to be God beneath who all were created equal. The caliph was “God’s guardian of the Islamic community (umma)” (p. 57) and the bestower of legitimacy. At that time legitimacy was conferred by connection to Chinggis Khan, this continue through Islamic dynasties such as the Aq Qoyunlu until 1502 when the Safavid Shah Ismail assumed power legitimised by his claimed blood links to the Shi’ite Imam, Ja’far Sadiq. In China they became ‘Universal Emperors’ and Chinggis Khan became God whereas in re-born Iran the Mongol khans became Persian khosrows.

From both perspectives however the assumption of power in Iran bore no connection to the overthrow of the Caliph who was just another local ruler there to be assimilated or cast aside, in just the same way that the Khwarazmshah, the Saljuq sultans of Rum, and the Isma’ili Imams had been dealt with. 1264 was the year that the newly enthroned Great Khan bestowed sovereignty on his brother, Hulegu Khan, and cemented the union of the two Toluid urbanised states of Iran and China. The title Ilkhan also dates from 1264 and though not the most common of their titles Rashīd al-Dīn, the dynasty’s official historiographer, makes it clear that it is the regime name as in ‘Doulat-i-Īlkhānī’ and uses it for most of the kings including Hulegu and Oljaytu (r.1304–16).

The problem of Islamic legitimacy is pursued in the fifth article and discusses why the Ilkhanid regime ultimately failed; quoting Ibn Taymiyya, (who contrasts noticeably with the Shi’ite commentator Ibn Taqtaqānī) “Isn’t a tyrant better than no ruler? Because people need a ruler to live in peace”. (p. 73) He observes that not only did the Ilkhans fail to conquer Syria and Egypt but they were unable “to divert the consciousness of the Sunni community to themselves”. (p. 74) As conquerors upon whom God bestowed victory the question of their legitimacy was irrelevant but as a defined state in a state of war with its neighbours including the Islamic regime of the Mamluks the question assumed more importance. The complexity of the religious profile of the Ilkhanate has rarely been fully addressed and in these eleven pages Krawulsky tackles the nature of the Ilkhan’s relationship with Shi’ism, Sunnism and with the Mamluk regime and its theologians.

The second half of the book is more directly concerned with the vizier Rashīd al-Dīn and most importantly Krawulsky introduces two original manuscripts composed by the minister, *al-Madjmū’a al-Rashīdiyya*, which have yet to appear in edited form and which have not as yet been studied in any systematic fashion. The first article explores the subject of the manuscripts themselves, their condition, availability, origins, and provenance and the other three are all based on original material gleaned from this important and inexplicably neglected work.

The *al-Madjmū’a al-Rashīdiyya* survived the turbulent days following the vizier’s execution during which the Rashīdī quarters were plundered and burnt. It comprises four books each made up of several treatises, though in fact this collection forms only the first part of Rashīd al-Dīn’s magnum opus, the *Jāmi’ al-taṣānīf al-Rashīdī*, his collected works on theology, philosophy, medicine, history, agriculture, animal husbandry, ornithology, topography and various other subjects. The fact that the *al-Madjmū’a al-Rashīdiyya* formed the first part of his magnum opus is indicative of the importance that Rashīd al-Dīn felt for this neglected work.

Only two original manuscripts of the *al-Madjmū’a al-Rashīdiyya* still exist, one in Persian and one in Arabic. The Arabic manuscript, a translation from the original Persian, is kept in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris. Unfortunately the Persian manuscript which was last seen in the Royal Library of the Golestan Palace in Tehran has disappeared. Krawulsky’s article examines the physical nature and the history of the manuscripts and includes two short appendices, one listing other extant copies of this work and the second recording reviews of the *Madjmū’a*.

Krawulsky’s seventh and eighth article present Rashīd al-Dīn in the unusual light of an Islamic reformer. Following a request from the Ilkhan Oljaytu, the vizier composed a work of Qoranic

analysis and interpretation which was in some ways a response to the aggressive preachings and rulings emanating from Egypt and the Mamluk regime and in particular the unbending teachings of Ibn Taymiyya who dismissed the Ilkhanid authorities as infidels against whom all Muslims were obligated to wage jihād. Rashīd al-Dīn vigorously disputed the words of Ibn Taymiyya at all levels and he argued that aggressive jihād is contrary to the word and spirit of the Qoran.

Though most famous as the author of the world's first universal history, Rashīd al-Dīn was a serious theologian from an early age. Like his predecessors, the Juwaynīs, Rashīd al-Dīn was brought up, educated, and culturally matured in Mongol ordus which in itself undermines the traditional picture of the barbarian Tatar camps. He was nine years old when he was 'liberated' by Hulegu from the Ismā'īlī stronghold of Maymūn-Diz near Qazvin and he records that he converted to Islam while still a child. From an early age he maintained close contacts with Islamic ascetic circles and it was this intimacy which informed his later understanding of Islam and strengthened his confident rebuttal of Ibn Taymiyya. Krawulsky explains his understanding of Islam and in particular his interpretation of Jihād and places his thinking in the context of the time and in relation to the complex politics which was shaping the Islamic societies of Persians and Arabs. She places the vizier firmly in the reformist camp which unlike the fundamentalists such as Ibn al-Jauzī (d. 597/1200) recognised an allegorical interpretation of the Qoran. That he was regarded as a serious theologian is borne out by the commentaries and reviews of his work which appeared at the time and by the vicious rebukes and denunciation he received from Ibn Taymiyya who called him "this ugly heretic and hypocrite" (p. 97).

In her eighth chapter, Krawulsky explores in depth the concept of Jihād and its relevance and meaning to Rashīd al-Dīn. The resonance of this subject today with the resurgence of the work of Ibn Taymiyya is certainly not lost on Krawulsky and Rashīd al-Dīn is cast in the unlikely role of peace-maker, reformer and liberal. He sees the strident and aggressive proclamations of the Jihādists as blackening the name of Islam and assigning God the role of 'arbitrary butcher' (p. 111).

The final chapter of this remarkable and absorbing book is a short biography of Rashīd al-Dīn based on previously overlooked material which Krawulsky has uncovered in the *Madjmū'a*. It is brief and intended only as an appetiser for a more extensive biography that she hopes to produce in the future. She explains that the purpose of writing this short biography is "to correct erroneous biographical data responsible for the wrong image of the Vizier's life and character" (p. 119). One such correction is the vizier's birthplace, previously assumed to be Hamadan because of his *nisba*, which in fact was either Qazvin or possibly the nearby Ismā'īlī base of Maymūn-diz. Another correction involves his early conversion to Islam rather than a late conversion commonly reported elsewhere. Ṭūsī and the librarian, Ibn Fowaṭī, were both close associates of the vizier's well-established Jewish family and Rashīd al-Dīn continued to move in exalted circles all his life. Krawulsky has clearly demonstrated that there is a great deal of material, much of it unused and unexplored, that will cast much light on one of the most important figures in mediaeval Iran. This final chapter is a very effective taster and we can only wait in anticipation, relishing the feast to come.

Krawulsky has written a dense, erudite and very challenging work which approaches its subject from a wide varieties of angles. Though nominally about Rashīd al-Dīn, prime minister of Iran under the Muslim Ilkhans, this compilation of essays tackles everything from the justification for bloody jihād to the legitimacy of the rule of the Great Khans, from the ready adoption of the name Iran to the implications of the use of the term Ilkhan, from the conversion of Oljaytu to Shi'ism to the attitude of the Sunnis to infidel rule. Each chapter is executed with seriousness and thoroughness and most importantly with great originality of approach and conclusion. Most exciting however is the fact that Krawulsky by her own admission is at the beginning of her work and much ground remains to be

covered. In particular we have to look forward to what must become the definitive biography of Rashīd al-Dīn, the quintessential renaissance man, and architect of the state of Iran.

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QUṬB AL-DĪN SHĪRĀZĪ (1236–1311). Edited ĪRAJ AFŠHĀR, *Akhhbār-i Muḡhulān dar Anbāneh-ye Quṭb*, pp. 115. Qum, 2010/1431/1389.  
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Quṭb al-Dīn Maḡmūd ibn Mas'ūd Shīrāzī (634–710) is best known for his association with Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d.1274) and his work at the famous observatory of Maragha. As well as erudite and voluminous commentaries and analyses of Ṭūsī's astrological calculations, Shīrāzī produced his own novel mathematical solutions to the problems with which the contemporary learned elite were grappling, along with his own ideas on the motion of the planets and other heavenly bodies. Hitherto he had not been noted as an historian. However Quṭb al-Dīn has now been credited with the transcription, rather than the authorship, of this newly edited, short history of the early Ilkhanate. The date of writing is given early in the chronology as 680/1280 and the last event described is Arghun Khan's assumption of power on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1285. Known more for his thoughts on astronomy and theology, Quṭb al-Dīn's work as a calligrapher is often forgotten. In fact a considerable number of mediaeval Persian manuscripts from collections around the world are written in the hand of Shīrāzī including the codex from which the present historical chronology is taken. This codex is in the library of the Ayatollah al-'Uzmā Mar'ashī Najafī in Qom (MS Mar'ashī 12868). For many years the codex had been fragmented and dispersed before being collected, collated and rebound and eventually acquired by the current library in Qom. A detailed study by Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtke of the Mar'ashī codex appeared in 2007 in *Studia Iranica*. As well as a careful itemised analysis of the contents of the codex Schmidtke and Pourjavady revealed the extent of Shīrāzī's work as a copyist, demonstrating that he penned not only many of his own works but those of his contemporaries too, including his colleague Nasir al-Dīn Ṭūsī. The Shīrāzī codex containing the short history of the early Ilkhanid comprises 147 leaves and originally belonged to the library of Rashīd al-Dīn in the *Rab'-e Rasādi*, Tabriz as indicated by stamps on some of the leaves bearing the insignia 'waqf-e-keṭāb-khāna Rashīdī'. The folios are incomplete and there are leaves missing from many sections including the beginning and the end of the codex itself. The codex has undergone various preservation measures and now contains fourteen sections whose disparate contents throw much light on the intellectual interests of Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī and the cultural milieu in which he lived. There are various Persian and Arabic quatrains and poems including verse by 'Umar Khayyam, fragments of works on philosophy, extracts from the sayings of Plato, extensive fragments from the work of Tāj al-Dīn Shahrestānī, various quotations from pre-Islamic Persian and Greek thinkers, large tracts by his contemporary, the Jewish philosopher Ibn Kammūna and Samaw'al al-Maghribī's *'Silencing the Jews' (Iḡlām al-Yahūd)* and also the anonymous Mongol chronicle currently under review.

The chronicle was composed between 1281 and 1285 but there is no indication as to its authorship. The compiler of the catalogue suggests that Shīrāzī may have been the author but no decisive evidence for this exists. Īraj Afshār, the editor of the book, suggests that there are various external reasons for suspecting that Quṭb al-Dīn was the actual author and at the same time cites two reasons to doubt Shīrāzī's authorship. First is the inconsistency in the spelling of certain names found in this chronicle though, as Afshār points out, variations in spelling within a single document were common at this