CENTRAL ASIA

DOROTHEA KRAWULSKY:
The Mongol Īlkhāns and their Vizier Rashīd al-Dīn.
156 pp. Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 2011. £30.20. ISBN 978 3 631 61130 2.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X12001668

This is a collection of nine related articles on various aspects of the Mongol period in the history of Iran, the most ubiquitous common factor being the career and writings of the great Persian minister and historian Rashīd al-Dīn, who is explicitly the subject of Part 2 (four articles), "The vizier" (Part 1 is entitled "The time"). The author explains that earlier versions of many of the articles have appeared in German and Arabic, in Beirut (on my shelves is a volume containing versions of the contents of Part 1: *Mongolen und Ilkhâne – Ideologie und Geschichte*, 1989). She suggests, probably rightly, that her articles received little attention because of the languages in which they were written and their place of publication. She hopes that the revised English versions will be more widely read. They certainly deserve to be. It has to be said that her English is often very far from idiomatic, that there are numerous typographical errors, and that citations are, to say the least, inconsistent. There is no index. But none of this is a serious obstacle to appreciation of what is in most cases distinctly important work.

I single out some of what seem to me the most significant aspects of these articles. In the first article she argues that the allegation, to be found in the *Secret History of the Mongols*, that Chinggis Khan nominated his third son Ögödei as his successor as Great Khan is spurious, a later interpolation into the text. This strikes me as persuasive. In the third article she discusses the revival by the Mongols, for the first time since the Arab conquest, of the name "Iran", and the significance of that innovation. In the fifth article she considers the Mongols' problem in establishing their legitimacy as Muslim rulers. She suggests that Öljeitü's motive in adopting Shiism was that of making "the Sunnī Caliphate in Cairo and the Mamlūks usurpers" (p. 70). I am not sure that we can know what motives underlay conversion in such circumstances (elsewhere she suggests that Ghazan's motive for conversion to Islam was economic). For myself, I suspect that from time to time, people may have converted to a new religion because they believed it to be true: but who can say? In this context, she makes one very odd point, remarking that "The Shīʿa … had never assumed political power", which would have surprised the Fatimids and the Buyids, among others.

Part 2 is full of valuable material. It is based mainly on a large compendium by Rashīd al-Dīn, still mostly unpublished, the *al-Majmūʿa al-Rashīdiyya*. There are two versions: one in Arabic, in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, the other, in Persian, last seen in the library of the Golestan Palace in Tehran (its location since the Islamic Revolution is apparently unknown). Krawulsky has made an intensive study of the Arabic version, which is no doubt, as she says, a translation of the now, one hopes temporarily, lost Persian original. Among the many interesting points she makes is that Rashīd al-Dīn was an Islamic reformer, who contended vigorously against the concept of aggressive *jihad* (and hence against the Ilkhans' Mamluk enemies), with particular reference to the, according to him, invalid doctrine of abrogation in connection with Quranic interpretation. She will have it that he was in fact a distinguished and original theological thinker. In this she takes a very different view from that of Professor Josef van Ess, in his book *Der Wesir und seine*

Gelehrten (1981); and her case is persuasively argued, as it needs to be if she proposes to contradict van Ess on a matter of Islamic theology. Van Ess had suggested that Rashīd al-Dīn wrote treatises on Islamic theology, and had them receive a kind of imprimatur from notable theologians, because, as a man who had converted to Islam as late as the age of 30, he needed to demonstrate his orthodox Muslim credentials. That date for his conversion has been generally accepted (e.g. in the article, by this reviewer, in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*). Krawulsky shows that, according to his own testimony, he became a Muslim when a small child – which certainly makes a difference. The final article is distinctly important. It is entitled "A short biography of Rashīd al-Dīn" (it is fifteen pages long), and it contains a good deal of further new material. More than once, Krawulsky expresses the hope that she may be able to write a full-scale biography of Rashīd al-Dīn. I have no doubt that all specialists on Ilkhanid history would enthusiastically encourage her to do just that: it has long been a desideratum, and she is very well qualified indeed to write it.

My main reservation regarding Krawulsky's arguments is her contention that that enigmatic Mongolian document, the *Secret History of the Mongols*, is in its existing form an abridgement of the now-lost Mongolian compilation called the *Altan Debter*, which is known to have been one of Rashīd al-Dīn's main sources for the early history of the Mongols, as well as being used later in China by the compilers of the official history of the Mongol dynasty there, the *Yüan-shih*. Hence, she says, the *Secret History* must have been Rashīd al-Dīn's "direct source" for the first volume of his great history. This is very improbable indeed. Igor de Rachewiltz has recently, in his magisterial annotated translation of the *Secret History* (2004), drawn attention to the differences between the *Secret History* and what we can deduce about the contents and character of the *Altan Debter* from Rashīd al-Dīn's use of it. And Professor Thomas Allsen refers to "the erroneous conclusion that Rashīd al-Dīn had direct access to a version of the *Secret History*". He goes on to say that "The *Secret History*, however, is quite a distinct work … While a problematical text, it is certainly not to be equated with the *Altan Debter*; rather the *Altan Debter* contained raw materials that were common to three historiographical traditions". Allsen sees the *Altan Debter*, surely rightly, "as a collection of materials toward a history of the early Mongols", initiated by Chinese scholars (*Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, 2001, p. 90). Nothing that Krawulsky writes suggests to me that Allsen's analysis is in any way at fault. But this is by no means a reflection on the quality and interest of the other contents of her tightly-packed book.

D.O. Morgan
University of Wisconsin-Madison

TIMOTHY MAY:
The Mongol Conquest in World History.
(Reaktion Books Globalities.) 319 pp. London: Reaktion Books, 2012.
£25. ISBN 978 1 86189 867 8.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X1200167X

By the end of the thirteenth century, the Mongols had defeated and eliminated more than twenty Eurasian states and established the largest contiguous empire in the