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THE MONGOLS IN IRAN

Quṭb Al-Dīn Shīrāzī's Akhbār-i Moghūlān

George Lane

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The Mongols in Iran

The polymath, Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, operated at the heart of the Ilkhanate state (1258–1335) from its inception under Hulegu. He worked alongside the scientist and political adviser, Nasir al-Dīn Ṭūsī, who had the ear of the Ilkhans and all their chief ministers.

The Mongols in Iran provides an annotated, paraphrased translation of a thirteenth-century historical chronicle penned, though not necessarily authored, by Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī. This chronicle, a patchwork of anecdotes, detailed accounts, diary entries, and observations, comprises the notes and drafts of a larger, unknown, and probably lost historical work. It is specific, factual, and devoid of the rhetorical hyperbole and verbal arabesques so beloved of other writers of the period. It outlines the early years of the Chinggisid empire, recounts the rule of Hulegu Khan and his son Abaqa, and finally, details the travails and ultimate demise and death of Abaqa's brother and would-be successor, Ahmad Tegudar. Shirazi paints the Mongol khans in a positive light and opens his chronicle with a portrait of Chinggis Khan in almost hallowed terms.

Throwing new light on well-known personalities and events from the early Ilkhanate, this book will appeal to anyone studying the Mongol Empire, Mediaeval History, and Persian Literature.

George Lane returned to academia in 1991 after many years living and working in the Middle East and Asia. Since obtaining his PhD in 2001 he has published, lectured, and talked about the Mongols, the Ilkhanate, and various aspects of mediaeval Islamic history all over the world.

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Preface

After centuries of gathering dust, lost in a large pile of disparate manuscripts, the late Iraj Afshar chanced upon this collection of historical notes penned though not necessarily authored by the polymath, Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī. The jumbled pages of often scrawled script were hidden amongst other papers on a variety of subjects and by a variety of authors including the Jewish theosopher, Ibn Kammūna, his colleague Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, the Islamic commentator, Shahrestānī, the poet, Sa'dī, and many other poets, thinkers, and writers from the mediaeval world. Iraj Afshar managed to sort the pages of historical observations and anecdotes into some kind of order and transcribe Shīrāzī's not easily decipherable script into an edited, legible text. His edited edition appeared in the holy city of Qum, central Iran, in 2009 along with the facsimile of the original and detailed notes and technical details about the original manuscripts including the order in which they had been found. From Afshar's notes it is clear that a number of pages have gone missing and that the manuscript as it stands was not a finished product. It seems more to have been a collection of notes and observations to aid later researchers and historians compile their histories and chronicles. Some of the folios from which Afshar worked were stamped with the seal of Rashīd al-Dīn's academy in Tabriz and indeed some of the incidents recorded in Shirazi's work appear verbatim in the *Jāma' al-Tavārīkh*.

Unfortunately, a great deal of the material from the great libraries of mediaeval Iran has been lost over the years as Persian capitals moved, were attacked or were ransacked and their priceless collections lost and scattered. Extant chronicles frequently mention tomes no longer available and quote works otherwise unknown. Rashīd al-Dīn detailed the extreme measures that he went to ensure that his own great chronicles would survive and yet despite such care and determination most of the original copies of his great work, painstakingly produced in all Iran's major urban centres, have disappeared. However, the recent discovery of not only Shirazi's little gem but of the substantial work of Majd al-Dīn Tabrizi, the *Safīna-ye Tabrizī*, brings



Figure FM0.1 Dashi Namdakov's Chinggis Khan, Marble Arch, 2014

Chinggis Khan 'conquered' London in 2012 and his magnificent statue by the renowned artist Dashi Namdakov graced Marble Arch for a couple of years.

Source: Halcyon Gallery, New Bond St. © A. Bronnikov and Peter Mallett. Reproduced with permission.

hope for the future. Tabrizi's *Safīna* is a complete library of literary works including poetry, philosophy, history, theology, and scientific works, all meticulously copied out by a local man of means, Majd al-Dīn, in the 1320s. Tehran University has now reproduced a facsimile edition of the work which provides a unique insight into the intellectual milieu of the later Ilkhanate. However, more than this, the appearance of both these two works provides hope that in the future more such discoveries will be made and more of those very many missing tomes will eventually reappear for the edification of some very source-hungry scholars.

Acknowledgements

A number of people have helped me over the years as I slowly worked through this captivating and intriguing text. I was constantly emailing friends and colleagues, knocking on doors, dropping unexpectedly upon unsuspecting victims with a knowledge of Persian, anyone who could throw light on some of the obscure words, phrases, and usages which lay scattered throughout Shirazi's text. It was not an easy task and agreement was not always easy to find.

Especial thanks must go to Peter Jackson who never refused my requests for advice and guidance and who helped me unravel some of the more obscure passages. My colleague, Derek Mancini-Lander, has always opened his door to me whenever I came knocking and never failed to shine a light into the darkness. My thanks must also go to Florence Hodous who has always been willing to give up her time to check over my error-infected first drafts and correct the many inaccuracies of the early drafts.

I would like to thank Charlotte de Blois and Alison Ohta at the *Royal Asiatic Society* for permission to re-use some of the material from my own article on Shirazi's chronicle published in their Journal in October 2012.

And finally my thanks to my wife, Assumpta, and my two children, Oscar and Ella, who have put themselves through their A levels and university as I have been absorbed in Shirazi's thirteenth-century Iran.

I feel that Carole Hillenbrand and the Routledge team deserve a special mention since without their support this little historical gem would not have become available to the English-speaking world.

1 Introduction

The Akhbār-i-Moghūlān dar Anbāneh-ye Quṭb by Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Masʿūd Shīrāzī

The period between circa 1260 and the early 1300s has been described as a historiographical desert with the dearth of historical chronicles and absence of historical accounts having been caused by the Iranian Muslim world's apprehension at a prolonged period of infidel rule, a *fatrat*,¹ or interregnum, which ended with the production of the remarkable compendium of histories by the researchers of the *Rab'-Rashīdī*, Rashīd al-Dīn's academy in Tabriz.² Their collective hard work under the guidance of the polymath and exceptionally talented Rashīd al-Dīn produced the world's first universal history, the *Jāma' al-tavārīkh*, to which the present work donated a sprinkling of information and words.

Juwaynī ended his own chronicle on the eve of the fall of Baghdad following the destruction of Alamut and the end to the 'blasphemous and heretical' regime of the Ismailis. Some saw ominous meaning in his silence on the 'events', the 'vāqi'a' of Baghdad, a silence that seemed to be broken only with the re-establishment of Muslim rule again in Iran.

However, Juwaynī was only partly silent and for good reason. First, his colleague, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (1201–74) provided a final chapter to Juwaynī's *History of the World Conqueror*, which covered the 'events' in Baghdad, while his own account finished more appropriately with the end of an era rather than the start of a new age. But perhaps more importantly, 'Atā Malik Juwaynī was no longer a court adviser with time on his hands to write and

1 See Judith Pfeiffer, "The Canonization of Cultural Memory", in Anna Akasoy et al. (eds.), *Rashīd al-Dīn: Agent and Mediator of Cultural Exchanges in Ilkhanid Iran* (London: The Warburg Institute, 2013), pp. 57–70.

2 An institution founded by Rashīd al-Dīn in Tabriz which comprised a scriptorium, libraries, lecture halls, mosques, and madresseh and which was twinned with the Hanlin academy in Khanbaliq (Beijing), contact facilitated through his friendship with the great Bolad Ching-sang. See Thomas Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

2 Introduction

research at leisure but the governor of a large and important cosmopolis. Not only was his new position time consuming, but it was politically sensitive and his words and pronouncements were public property with his every syllable carrying political weight. As Baghdad's governor, his words were far more than likely to ruffle the feathers of someone, somewhere, about something than as Hulegu's PA whose thoughts and opinions would have had far more limited impact.

In fact, during this early period of Ilkhanid rule, local histories continued to be written, and Rashīd al-Dīn's collection of chronicles is just that, a collection of notes, observations, accounts, and records, which was being amassed in the decades prior to Ghazan's enthronement. The Ilkhans might have been infidels but they had been recognised as legitimate Iranian monarchs from the beginning as the great Sunni theologian, Baydawī, was keen to attest with his regularly updated historical pocket book, *Nizām al-tavārīkh*. The period between 1282 and 1295 was a period of unusually disruptive political activity in Ilkhanid Iran, a dynastic period (1258–1335) of general political stability, cultural prosperity, and certainly in the earlier decades, economic growth. The *Akhbār* only came to light a few years ago, not long after the discovery of the remarkable *Safīna-ye Tabrīz* dating from circa 1322–35 which certainly maintains the hope and possibility that other chronicles, short histories, and historical accounts might continue to come to light in the musty and neglected storerooms of Iranian academia.

The *Akhbār-i Moghūlān dar Anbāneh Quṭb* penned though not necessarily authored by Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī (1236–1311),³ outlines the early years of the Chinggisid empire, recounts the rule of Hulegu Khan and his son Abaqa, and finally, details the travails and ultimate demise and death of Abaqa's brother and would be successor, Ahmad Tegudar. It is an original and independent source and though it covers well-known events and personalities, it throws new light on these events and makes some startling and controversial claims concerning other matters that are only lightly touched upon elsewhere. Shīrāzī was a well-known, highly respected figure with access to key members of the ruling elite and to other centres of establishment power and influence including the ulema. He supplemented his scientific work with copy writing manuscripts which is why the authorship but not the penmanship of this work is in question.⁴

3 Sayyed 'Abd-Allāh Anwār, "Qoṭb-al-Dīn Šīrāzī", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Online edn, 2005, <www.iranicaonline.org/articles/qotb-al-din-sirazi#>. Accessed 10 February 2017.

4 Some parts of this introductory chapter originally appeared in an article about Shīrāzī's manuscript which appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Those parts of the present chapter are appearing here with the kind permission of the editors of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. George Lane, "Mongol News: The *Akhbār-i Moghūlān dar*

Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Masʿūd Shīrāzī

Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Masʿūd Shīrāzī (634–710/1236–1311) is best known for his association with Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d.1274) and his astrological and scientific work at the famous observatory of Maragha, in Iranian Azerbaijan. Born into a cultured and educated family, Quṭb al-Dīn received medical training from his father, ʿẒāʾ al-Dīn Masʿūd Kāzerunī, a well-connected physician and Sufī, who died when the boy was only 14, leaving his son's schooling in the hands of some of Shiraz's leading scholars. The young Quṭb al-Dīn delved into the complexities of Avicenna's *Qānūn* along with Fakhr al-Dīn's commentaries and reputedly raised many issues with his tutors which he determined one day to answer in his own commentary. He succeeded his father at the Mozarfarī hospital in Shiraz as an ophthalmologist while still a teenager and continued his education under such luminaries of the *Qānūn* as Kamāl al-Dīn Abu al-Khayr, Sharāf al-Dīn Zakī Bushkānī, and Shams al-Dīn Moḥammad Kishī until the age of about 24. He left the hospital to devote himself full time to scholarly pursuits when he heard about developments in the north of the country which offered an opportunity too great to ignore. Shīrāzī left Shiraz in 1260 and he is believed to have finally arrived at Ṭūsī's *Rasadkhāna* in 1262.

The Maragha complex of Ṭūsī's *Rasadkhāna* had gained in renown and stature as the Ilkhanate grew and benefitted from growing political stability, expanding trade links, and increasing cultural exchange. The complex comprised the famous observatory, Ṭūsī's library amassed from the intellectual riches of both Alamut and, much to the chagrin of the exiled Arabs in Cairo, of Baghdad's famed collections, a madressah and mosque, and the lecture halls and research laboratories of the *Rasadkhāna*. Ibn Fuwaṭī, Ṭūsī's chief librarian, who had been rescued from Baghdad, composed a mammoth biographical dictionary during his time in Maragha, based on information gleaned from the many scholars, researchers, and merchant travellers who availed themselves of this seat of learning which had fast been gaining an international as well as a regional reputation. Only the volumes of his biographical dictionary covering 'names' from *ʿayn* to *mīm* have survived and even these extant folios are a summary of the lost originals.⁵ The Mamluk scholars in Cairo could only fume in resentful frustration as Maragha built

Anbāneh Qutb by Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Masʿūd Shīrāzī", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 22, No. 3/4 (2012), pp. 541–559. doi:10.1017/S1356186312000375.

5 On Ibn Fuwaṭī's work at the *Rasadkhāna* library see Devlin DeWeese, "Cultural Transmission and Exchange in the Mongol Empire", in Linda Komaroff (ed.), *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 11–29.



Figure 1.1 Tusi's Observatory, The *Rasdakhana*, Maragha

Maragha was also the site of the scientist, Nasīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's world famous observatory, the *Rasadkhan*, built for him by Hulegu, the first Ilkhan.

Photo by author

its reputation on the stolen waqf-supported, intellectual wealth of Baghdad that they considered rightfully theirs.

Their spokesman, the historian and man-of-letters, Ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (1296–1363) cursed Ṭūsī whom he accused of having persuaded Hulegu to award him Baghdad's libraries, 400,000 tomes, as acknowledgment for services rendered and advice given and expressed 'utter derision and humiliation' when he thought of the treachery of Ibn al-^cAlqamī who had been in secret correspondence with the approaching enemies of his master, the Caliph al-Musta^csim.⁶ Certainly, the Persian scholars and clerics who flocked to Maragha felt no scruples or guilt in availing themselves of

6 See George Saliba, "Ilkhanid Patronage of Astronomers", in Linda Komaroff (ed.), *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 360–362; Ṣalāh al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wafī bi al-Wafayāt*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1981) on the fall of Baghdad, pp. 179–189, on Ṭūsī's role, 400,000 books in total from Baghdad, Syria and Jazira, pp. 184ff, cited in Saliba, p. 360.



Figure 1.2 Observatory foundations, Maragha

This is all that remains of Tūsī's Rasadkhana, the brick foundations preserved under a large plastic dome.

Photo by author