

In Defense of Rašid-od-din and his Letters

INTRODUCTION

In his attack on Avicenna (981 – 1037), Ġazzāli (1058-1111) wrote a refutation of Aristotelian Philosophy entitled *Tahāfot-ol-falāsefa* (Refuting the Philosophers) which, in turn, became the subject of a refutation by Averroes (1126-98), in a work entitled, *Tahāfot-ot-tahāfot* (The Refutation of the Refutation). Even though there was never to be a *Tahāfot-ot-tahāfot-ot-tahāfot*, the controversy didn't stop there but continued endlessly. One fears that, in the matter of the *Rašidi Letters*, the controversy about the authenticity of the work would be never ending as well, for each rebuttal seems to generate a new refutation. The latest condemnation of the Letters is one written by A.H. Morton,¹ which—long before its apparition in printed form—was heralded by David Morgan as the “conclusive evidence” that they were a fabrication of the Teymurid era.²

In a more recent study, Thomas Allsen joins the chorus and qualifies Morton's arguments as “persuasive,” but marvels nevertheless at the precise information contained in one of the letters on the uncommon subject of sweet-lemons (*limu-širin*) of Chinese origin, and cultivation in the little known village of Ba'qubā situated “just to the north of Baġdād,” and in Ḥella.³ In a second remark, he finds corroborating evidence in between the claim contained in one of the letters about Chinese and foreign physicians teaching local “interns” at the Rab`-e Rašidi hospital, and Rašid-od-din's extensive “exposure to East Asia medicine.”⁴

The *Rašidi Letters* have been regularly relied upon for corroborating or comparative evidence in various studies of the period.⁵ While Morton may have judged them as irrelevant or inconsequential to his arguments, there is one—a very crucial one—that he refers to on page 195 of his article, the *Āšār-ol vozarā* of `Aqili, which he obviously considers to be of value. Written between 1470 and 1486,⁶ the *Āšār-ol-vozarā*

¹ Morton, A.H., “The Letters of Rashid al-Dīn: İlkhānīds Fact or Timurid Fiction?” in *The Mongol Empire & its Legacy*, eds. D.O. Morgan and R. Amitai-Preiss, Leiden, 1999, pp. 155-99.

² Morgan, D., “Rašid al-din and Ġazan Khan” in *L'iran face à la domination mongole*, ed. D. Aigle, Tehran 1997, (pp.179-88), p. 182. Jackson also refers to Morton's forthcoming article, but favors the conclusion of Ruben Levy's 1946 publication that the Letters were a forgery “emanating from 15th century India,” Jackson, P., *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*, Cambridge, 1999, p. 154.

³ Allsen, T., *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 123-24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁵ See for instance Rajabzādeh, H., *Ā'in-e kešvardāri dar `ahd-e Rašid-od-din Fażlollāh*, Tehran, 2535/1876, in which the Letters are referred to on almost every other page, and Soudavar, A., “The Saga of Abu-Sa'id Bahādor Khān: The Abu-Sa'idnāmē” in *The Court of the Il-Khāns 1290-1340, The Cultural and Intellectual Milieu*, Oxford, 1996, pp. 136, 151-52.

⁶ *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, II:912.

incorporates the complete text of four of the *Rašidi Letters*. In the section pertaining to these letters, its editor Moḥaddeṣ-e Ormavi, presents, in hefty footnotes, a detailed stylistic comparison between these four letters and the *Al-mo`jam fi tārikh-e moluk-el-`ajam* of Fażlollāh-e Monši-ye Qazvini, a work composed prior to 1334 (see discussion further below).⁷ Because of strong stylistic similarities, Moḥaddeṣ argues that of the two authors, i.e. Rašid and Qazvini, one must have copied the other, and concludes that, since Rašid was a “busy vizier and had no time for such literary works” and so powerful that Qazvini should have been scared to “steal” from, it must have been Rašid copying Qazvini!⁸ On the other hand, the editor of the most recent edition of the *Rašidi Letters*, Dānešpazhuh, whose introduction Morton highly praises,⁹ firmly states the opposite: that Qazvini’s work was based on these letters and not vice versa.¹⁰ No matter which version Morton accepts, it was incumbent upon him to address this issue; for, one way or the other, it implied a composition date of no later than 1334 and a fatal negation of his Teymurid fabrication thesis.

The lack of recognition for the relevance of past studies notwithstanding, Morton’s article suffers—as I shall demonstrate—from an incomprehension of the motives of Persian scribes and history writers, wrong assumptions, and neglect of crucial evidence. Having recently warned researchers about the pitfalls of forgeries and semi-fakes,¹¹ I now find myself in the awkward position of doing the opposite: defending the authenticity of a work against allegations of forgeries. The objective though, remains the same: that research should not be hampered by unwarranted allegations.

To gage the negative impact of this recent concerted effort to discredit the *Rašidi Letters* on Mongol studies, one needs to look no further than the volume in which Morton’s article appears. For there, on an ending footnote, Rudi Paul Lindner remarks:

The letters attributed to Rašid al-din discuss Mongol estates west of Ankara. One might make something of this, although in light of Mr. A.H.

⁷ `Aqili, Sayf-od-din Hāġji b. Neḏām, *Āṣār-ol-vozarā*, ed. J. Ḥosayni-ye Moḥaddeṣ-e Ormavi, Tehran, 1958, pp. 287-322.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 320.

⁹ Morton, “The Letters,” *op. cit.*, p. 159.

¹⁰ *Savāneh-ol-afkār-e Rašidi*, ed. M.T. Dānešpazhuh, Tehran, 1979, p. (36).

¹¹ Soudavar, A., “The Concepts of *al-aqdamo aṣaḥḥ* and *yaqin-e sābeq* and the Problem of Semi-fakes,” *Studia Iranica*, vol. 28, fasc. 2, 1999, pp. 255-69; Soudavar, A., “Forgeries; Introduction” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, X:90-93.

Morton's paper in this volume it seems wiser to leave this particular "evidence" aside.¹²

By the same token, the wholesale discarding of the fifty-four Rašidi letters as forgeries is, in effect, equivalent to a massive suppression of "evidence" with important consequences for Mongol studies.

In what follows, I shall not only try to negate Morton's arguments but also show the historical relevance of the very letters that Morton saw as fictitious.

FORGERY AND MOTIVE

As in most criminal cases, proof of forgery hinges on establishing a valid motive. Absent the confession of the forger, the evidence is circumstantial in nature and can usually be interpreted both ways, i.e. both pro and con. The decisive factor for tilting the argument one way or the other, is the motive. Without a plausible motive, forgery does not make sense.

Morton, of course, recognizes this and since he is unable to establish a material gain for any individual, he posits that "the only beneficiary is the reputation" of Rašid, and that the culprit would have been one of his descendants, although he cannot be sure that any of them survived the fourteenth century. He then tries to ease out of this dilemma by recasting the alleged forgery into a category that he qualifies as "playful" and "designed to bamboozle harmlessly, rather than to cheat."¹³ This remark comes in the wake of a previously imagined scenario in which he explains that the alleged forger was so impressed with Teymur's campaign in Anatolia that—somehow unconsciously—he modeled the events mentioned in the letters after it. And he did so without providing any concrete link to the Teymurids, by which he could have solicited a reward for praising their dynasty.

Morton wants us to believe that his presumed Teymurid forger-scribe had extensive knowledge about the Il-Khānid era, and was in a position to be fully informed about Teymur's campaign—therefore a Teymurid bureaucrat of high-rank—and yet, he had spent innumerable hours writing fifty four radically different letters, plus an introduction, each in an elaborate mix of prose and verse, to the glory of Rašid and the named compiler of the letters, [ShamsShams](#)-od-din Moḥammad-e Abarquhi, *just for the fun of it* and without any benefit whatsoever for himself. Such possibility simply defies common sense.

¹² Lindner, R.P., "How Mongol were the Early Ottomans?" in *The Mongol Empire & its Legacy*, eds. D.O. Morgan and R. Amitai-Preiss, Leiden, 1999, pp. 155-89.

¹³ Morton, "The Letters," *op. cit.*, p. 196

More disturbing is the fact that Morton totally ignores Abarquhi's stated goal and targeted audience for the compilation of these letters: that the compendium "was to be for the novice-scribe (*mota`allemān*) and the speakers (*motakallemān*), a refined companion in travel and a witty friend at home."¹⁴ Abarquhi further explains that each letter that had been copied in his presence was worthy of becoming a top copy model (*sar-daftar*) for the speakers and the scribes (*motarasselān*).¹⁵ It is thus self-evident that the *Rašidi Letters* were compiled in the tradition of manuals for scribes such as the *At-tavassol el-at-tarassol* (Manual for correspondence) comprising the correspondences of Bahā'-od-din-e Baġdādi, the vizier of the Khārazmšāh `Alā'-od-din Takeš (1172-1200),¹⁶ or the more contemporary *Dastur-ol-kāteb* (Manual for scribes) of Moḥammad b. Hendušāh-e Nakhjavāni, dated 761/1360.¹⁷ Like templates and computer form-letters, the manuals provided the scribe with a source for a "cut and paste" operation in every given situation, a sample of which is provided here below.¹⁸

As a tool of trade, each of these manuals was cherished by scribes and passed on from one generation to the other. In this chain of transmission, and in the process of recopying, scribes could deliberately alter some parts, extract excerpts as isolated modules, or recombine the modules into a new composition.¹⁹ More often than not, the name of the recipient of a letter was even replaced by a simple *folān* (i.e. so and so). In other words, the historical information contained in the letter was plainly of *secondary* value and often modified.

In the case of the correspondence of important personalities such as Bahā'-od-din-e Baġdādi or Rašid though, chances are that, out of respect for the completeness of the document and the volume as a whole, scribes avoided major alterations. One cannot exclude, however, modifications due to the scribe's incomprehension of events that occurred long before his time. In any event, such alterations cannot be qualified as forgery, for they were simple attempts to modify a tool to the liking of its user.

¹⁴ *Savāneh-ol-afkār, op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁵ *Savāneh-ol-afkār, op. cit.*, p. 3. Abarquhi also uses the expression *men zālek* (as equivalent to *sar-daftar*) which was a scribal expression referring to the heading of copy models (personal communication by Iraj Afshar).

¹⁶ Baġdādi, Bahā'-od-din Moḥammad b. Mo'ayyad, *At-tavassol elat-tarassol*, ed. A. Bahmanyār, Tehran, 1936.

¹⁷ The text was subsequently revised by its author in 767/1366, Moḥammad b. Hendušāh-e Nakhjavāni, *Dastur-ol-kāteb*, ed. A. Alizādeh, Moscow, 1964, 3 vols., I:23.

¹⁸ See note 157 *infra*.

¹⁹ Such may be the case for instance for some of the numerous short but anonymous entries of the *Dastur-ol-kāteb*, the *Al-mokhtārāt men ar-rasā'el*, eds. Ğ. Tāher and I. Afshar, Tehran, 1378.

Abarquhi states that he compiled these letters in view of offering them to Rašid's son, Khājah Ġiyās-od-din Moḥammad (d. 1336). His motive is quite clear: by compiling the letters into a manual for scribes, he would perpetuate Rašid's style, and fame, for many generations to come, and would place himself in a position to be rewarded by Ġiyās-od-din Moḥammad. In addition, Abarquhi's own name would be immortalized by association with that of Rašid.

In this perspective, the added headings by Abarquhi, may exaggerate the rank of Rašid's sons or the importance of the sender of a letter, in order to enhance the prestige of Rašid and his family.²⁰ One must also expect Rašid to exaggerate his and his family members' political role and power in his letters, or to try to strengthen his position vis-à-vis his rivals. These forms of exaggerations or "truth" alterations are inherent to the type of work the letters purport to represent, and are not proof of forgery.

RAŠIDIAN PROPAGANDA AND IL-KHĀNID DOMINIONS

A cornerstone of Morton's claim of forgery is the *Rašidi Letters*' pretense of Il-Khānid control over domains that were never conquered by the Mongols, or if conquered, were lost again shortly after.

As a high level political administrator, Rašid would naturally try to emphasize the legitimacy of his king, enhance his prestige, extol his feats, praise his deeds, exaggerate his dominion and glorify him in every possible way. In sum, political propaganda was a prime motive for Rašid, and therefore an underlying theme for all of his correspondences. In the *Jāme`-ot-tavārikh*, Rašid did not refrain from fabricating stories in order to enhance the legitimacy of Uljāytu and polish the image of the Mongol dynasty.²¹ In the same vein, he would not hesitate in his Letters, to exaggerate the extent of Il-Khānid domains and follow a line of propaganda dictated by Mongol ideology and factional rivalry.

The core of this propaganda rested on the Mongol belief that they had a mandate from the Eternal Heaven to conquer the world.²² Thus, Mongol conquests are

²⁰ One should also expect that letters containing references to issues no longer politically acceptable under the new regime of Abu-Sa'id, were wholly or partially censored by Abarquhi or Khājah Ġiyās-od-din Moḥammad. But this I suspect, did not amount to any significant alteration, for the astute politician that Rašid was, he would not commit to writing an opinion that could be criticized afterwards.

²¹ In one case, Rašid invented a story to whitewash the fact that Changiz' wife, Borte Fujin, got pregnant while kidnapped by the Merkits, and that Jochi was a bastard; in another, Rašid falsely claimed that Ġāzān had appointed Uljāytu as his successor five years before his death; see for instance Soudavar, "The Saga," *op. cit.*, pp. 129-30, 175.

²² For a listing of references on this Mongol ideology see Amitai-Preiss, R., "Mongol Imperial Ideology and the Ilkhanid war against the Mamluks" in *The Mongol Empire & its Legacy*, eds. D.O. Morgan and R. Amitai-Preiss, Leiden, 1999, p.62.

systematically termed as “deliverance” (*estekhlās*) in Rašid’s *Jāme`-ot-tavārikh*, in the same way that the Chinese annals referred to visiting embassies as “tribute bearers.” In both cases, the truth is distorted to suit an ideology of world dominion; but neither the *Jāme`-ot-tavārikh*, nor the Chinese annals can be deemed as forgeries.

Within this global Mongol ideology, the descendants of Hulāgu (r. 1256-65) had to stake a claim on a territory that was never theirs. Indeed, as defined by the celebrated vizier and astronomer, Naṣir-od-din-e Ṭusi (1201-1274), Hulāgu was entrusted by his brother to conquer the lands across the Oxus, from “Hendustān to the setting sun.”²³ It was a land to be conquered under the leadership of Hulāgu with the participation of main branches of the Changizid dynasty, and not an assigned fiefdom. But in the succession rift that split the Mongols, following the death of Mungkā Qāān (r. 1251-59), and in reward for his allegiance to the new *qāān*, i.e. Qubilāy (r. 1260-94), Hulāgu was able to transform his mandated territories into a kingdom. Hulāgu’s westward advance was, of course, halted by the Mamluks at the battle of `Ayn-e Jālūt in 1260; and since the Iranian Lands constituted the bulk of the territories that he had managed to conquer, the old concept of Iranshahr or Iranzamin (Iranian Domains), traditionally proclaimed as the lands from the Oxus to the Nile, was gradually adopted for the definition of the Il-Khānid domain.²⁴

In the Sasanid era, the memory of the Achaemenid occupation of Egypt had helped to formulate the concept of Iranshahr as territories stretching to the Nile. But the fact is that, except for a brief period (from 619-28), the Sasanians never occupied Egypt. And yet, that did not prevent them to claim Egypt as part of Iranshahr. The use of the expression “from the Oxus to the Nile” was thus a form of propaganda well rooted in Persian history. Although Morton reluctantly concedes that the Letters use of the “Oxus to the Nile” formula is “all found here or there in other Il-Khān sources,” he treats the fact that four of the Letters extend this definition to include Indian territories as an oddity²⁵ He obviously makes abstraction of the fact that, according to Naṣir-od-din-e Ṭusi, “Hendustān” (India) was part of Hulāgu’s original mandate. But more importantly, with the adoption of the Islamic faith by Ġāzān and the title of Pādšāh-e Islam (i.e.

²³ Boyle, J., “The Longer Introduction to the “Zij-i-Ilkhani” of Nasir-ad-din Tusi,” in *The Mongol World Empire*, London, 1977 (Variorum reprints), p. 246. Another sympathetic view about Hulāgu’s appointment is given in Grigor of Akanc’s “History of the Nation of the Archers (The Mongols),” ed. R.P. Balke and R.N. Frye, *HJAS*, vol. 12 (1949), nos. 3&4, p. 69, where in response to the concerns of seven Mongol commanders Mungkā orders: “go and install my brother Khān of the Land, whosoever does not submit to him, impose him the *yasaq* by our command.”

²⁴ *Shahrestānihā i Erānshahr; A Middle Persian Text on Late Antique Geography, Epic and History*, ed. T. Daryae, Costa Meza, 2002, pp. 4-5.

²⁵ Morton, “The Letters,” *op. cit.*, p. 171.

Emperor of Islam) that Rašid bestowed upon him, the Iranzamin formula had to be extended to include important Muslim kingdoms. Thus, the inclusion of Anatolia, India and Egypt—which were all governed by Muslim rulers—was the direct consequence of Ġāzān being proclaimed Pādšāh-e Islam, and not a Teymurid forgery scheme.

In this perspective, the Mamluks, who had revived the `Abbasid Caliphate and posed as the champions of “legitimate” Islam, were the main spoilers of the Il-Khānid claim to Islamic leadership. Thus, the “Oxus to the Nile” formula acquired a new ring since it implicitly wiped out the Mamluks. Today, Israeli maps show the Golan Heights as part of Israel, and the Syrian maps as part of Syria. Depending on one’s point of view, one or the other of the maps might be seen as wrong. Neither of them however, can be labeled as forgery for they reflect the official political viewpoint of their respective governments. Similarly, the Letters’ claims of Il-Khānid control over Syrian territories that they never captured or only briefly occupied, simply follow the “Oxus to the Nile” line of propaganda against the Mamluks. They do not imply forgery.

In the same vein, some of the Il-Khānid propaganda was aimed at the Bātuids of the Golden Horde and the Chaġatāyids of Transoxiana, who considered the Hulāġuids as usurpers, and sought to recapture the Il-Khānid territories that they deemed as their hereditary domain, or *ulus*.²⁶ Thus, the references to territorial control of domains in present-day Afghanistan and India were part of the propaganda against the Chaġatāyids and those of Armenia and the Caucasus against the Bātuids.

The cleverest propagandistic formula that Rašid used in his Letters however, is one that has eluded Morton. In Letter 37, Rašid qualified the domains of the Muslim rulers of Syria, Yemen and India as *soyurġāls*, i.e. royal grants of territory! It’s a formula that reflects political reality by acknowledging the independence of these rulers, but at the same time pretends that as recipients of *soyurġāls*, they fall under Il-Khānid suzerainty.

As a whole, the territorial claims of the Letters are very consistent with the Il-Khānid political ideology of the time and an administrator’s aim to project Il-Khānid hegemony over the widest possible area while portraying rivals and enemies as submissive vassals.

Finally, the problem of fictitious governorship that Morton raises in his article comes in contradiction to his supposed forgery motive (i.e. that the work was beneficial to the reputation of Rašid-od-din’s descendants). Such claim does not enhance the prestige of the Rašidi family but diminishes it. A forger would have been much safer to

²⁶ Šabānkārei, Moḡammad b. `Ali b. Moḡammad, *Majma`ol-ansāb*, Tehran, 1363/1984, p. 290.

present Rašid's sons as governors of provinces that were under secure Il-Khānid control, rather than contested areas.

ODDITIES AND OMISSIONS

Morton often treats odd and otherwise “unconfirmed” information provided by the Letters as proof of forgery. But, as evidenced by a study of the Safavid Šāh Ṭahmāsb's (r. 1524-76) interactions with his Mughal counterpart, the Emperor Homāyun (r. 1530-40, and 1555-56), in Persian sources, oddities are usually indicative of suppressed information and omissions are often more telling than lengthy statements.²⁷

In one instance of that study, I had surmised that a lengthy entry on an insignificant event—in an otherwise concise narration of events—in the *Tarikh-e jahān-ārā* of Qāzi Aḥmad-e Ġaffāri, namely the accidental death of Ṭahmāsb's standard-bearer Abol-Qāsem Kholafā-ye Qājār during a hunt organized for Homāyun, was perhaps hinting at a stray shot from Ṭahmāsb, whose failing eyesight had by then turned into a major handicap. Subsequent to the publication of that study, I discovered that a Mughal source, the *Tārikh-e alfi* of Qāzi Aḥmad-e Tatavi, actually explained that Abol-Qāsem was shot by Ṭahmāsb's brother, Bahrām Mirzā, who wished to settle an old score.²⁸

At the very least, this new information confirmed that the Safavid sources were not revealing the whole story. The question then was whether the information provided by Tatavi, half a century after the event, was correct or simply a cover-up fed by the Safavids to the Mughals? If Bahrām Mirzā had truly shot the standard-bearer, one can hardly find a valid reason for the contemporary historian Qāzi Aḥmad-e Ġaffāri to suppress such crucial information and end up with an incongruent report on the death of a second rank standard-bearer, at par with kingly events. As for later Safavid historians who otherwise relied systematically on the *Tārikh-e jahān-ārā*, one would be at a loss to explain why they chose to suppress this whole episode.

Be that as it may, the preceding example shows how oddities and suppressed information can go hand in hand, and how they should be used as indicators of more complex events rather than proof of forgery. It also underlines the difficulty in deciphering Persian chronicles where the boundaries of truth, half-truth and falsification are never well delimited.

²⁷ Soudavar, A., "Between the Safavids and the Mughals: Art and Artists in Transition," in *IRAN*, London, 1999, vol. 37, pp. 50-52.

²⁸ Qāzi Aḥmad-e Tatavi, *Tārikh-e alfi*, Tehran 1378/1999, p. 522. The same information is then repeated in 'Allāmi, Abol-faẓl, *Akbarn-āmeḥ*, ed. Ġ. Ṭabāṭabāi-ye Majd, Tehran, vol. I, 1372, p. 324.

With the above generalities in mind, I shall now try to analyze some of the specific problems cited by Morton.

LETTER 53

In Letter 53, Rašid, who is in Qandahar, relates to his son Ebrāhim, his narrow escape from a treacherous trap, and how his other son Jalāl-od-din, who, accompanied by the mighty Anatolian army (*lašgar-e `aẓim-e rum*), was attacking Kābol and Zābol, then joined Mongol commanders (*omarā-ye moğol*) in pursuit of the enemy, stormed the fort of Lahore, and spear-headed the attack into Sind as far as the Indus. When the news of the successful pursuit reached the *il-khān*, he commended Jalāl for his bravery. Rašid ends his letter with a list of arms and armors to be sent out from the Širāz arsenal.²⁹

To discredit this Letter, Morton first makes an assumption concerning the unnamed *il-khān* therein: by analogy with Letter 35 “in which Ġāzān is represented as intending an attack on India, it might be assumed that he is meant.”³⁰ Then observes that: “Ġāzān never went on campaign in the region of southern Afghanistan, and never attacked the Punjab and Sind. Nor did Uljāyту.” And since he believes that sources invariably reported military operations undertaken on such scale, he concludes that Letter 53 is fictitious.³¹

Unfortunately, wrong assumptions lead to wrong results. Morton wrongly assumes that the stated events occurred under Ġāzān, wrongly asserts that Uljāyту troops never went on campaign eastward, wrongly assumes a full reporting of campaign by the sources in all circumstances, and thus, reaches the wrong conclusion. Furthermore, his wrong analysis and conclusion for this letter becomes the basis of another unwarranted assertion later on: “Noticeable in the Letters is the complete absence of reference to relations with the Chağatāyid Khānate.”³² As a matter of fact, Letter 53 very much pertains to Uljāyту’s interaction with the Chağatāyids, and to fully grasp its content and context, I will begin with a short recapitulation of the Chağatāyid activity in the eastern borders of Il-Khānid territories.

Squeezed in between the Il-Khānids and the Yuans, the southward forays of the Chağatāyids were generally confined to a corridor that stretched from the Oxus to the

²⁹ *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, pp. 295-96.

³⁰ Morton, “The Letters,” *op. cit.*, p.164.

³¹ Morton, “The Letters,” *op. cit.*, p. 165.

³² Morton, “The Letters,” *op. cit.*, p. 195.

Sind and Punjab.³³ In this corridor also moved a formidable band of Mongols, the Neguderis that, at times, accepted the hegemony of the Chaġatāyids, but mostly acted independently.³⁴ They constantly harassed eastern Il-Khānid provinces and, in one instance, after devastating the province of Sistān and sacking Širāz, advanced all the way to Šuštār when Ġāzān's main forces were engaged in the Syrian campaign.³⁵

In 1303 the Chaġatāyids and the Ogedāyids recognized the suzerainty of the Yuan emperor, Teymur Qāān (r. 1294-1307), and the de facto rulership of the Il-Khānids over the Iranian territories. As a legitimated Mongol *khān*, Uljāyту could now intervene in the fraternal disputes of neighboring Mongol hordes. Uljāyту first welcomed the Ogedāyid Sarbān in 1306, who was being chased by his Chaġatāyid cousins, and then accepted the pleas of the Neguderi Teymur son of Abāchi, and his brother, Lakmir, to recover their grazing grounds from another Neguderi chieftain, Dāud Khājeġ.³⁶ In 1312, Uljāyту's forces, together with the Neguderis, routed Dāud Khājeġ's forces and sacked his headquarters of Tekinābād near Qandahar.³⁷ Teymur who had accepted Uljāyту's suzerainty, sent the captured standards of the enemy to the *il-khān* and, in a further sign of submission, rendered a visit to the commander of the eastern Il-Khānid forces, Yasāul.

The joint Il-Khānid and Neguderi victory proved to be short-lived, for soon after, Dāud Khājeġ persuaded his cousin, the Chaġatāyid *khān* Isan-buqā (r. 1309-18), to avenge his defeat. The Chaġatāyid counterattack was led by Isan-buqā's brother Kebek and the commander Jankeshi, and was joined by a number of Chaġatāyid princes, including Yesāur who, later on, defected to the Il-Khānids. The most explicit description of this counterattack is to be found in Kāšāni's *Tāriġh-e Uljāyту*, where he reports it twice: once under the events of the year 713/1313 and the other, under the events of the

³³ During Abāqā's reign, the Chaġatāyid Borāq would claim that the pastures of Bādġays down to Ġaznayn and the waters of Sind, were the grazing grounds of my forefathers;" Rašid-od-din Fażlollāġ, *Jāme'-ot-tavāriġh*, ed. A. `Alizādeġ, Bāku, 1957, vol. 3, p. 113.

³⁴ For a synopsis of the Chaġatāyids raids into Indian territories see Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-27.

³⁵ Vaššāf-e Širāzi, Fażlollāġ b. `Abdollāġ, *Tāriġh-e vaššāf-ol-hāzrat*, Tehran, 1338/1959, pp. 367-71, Jackson, *The Delhi sultanate*, p. 219. The Neguderi incursion seems to have paralleled a Chaġatāyid attack on Khorāsān that Kāšāni claims to have been repelled by Uljāyту (who is referred to as Pādšāġ-e Islam but was actually viceroy of Khorāsān at that time); Kāšāni, *Tāriġh-e Uljāyту*, p. 18-19.

³⁶ Kāšāni states that Teymur was the son in law of the Chaġatāyid *khān* Dua and therefore adds the honorific Gurkān to his name; Kāšāni, Abol-qāsem `Abdollāġ b. Moġammad, *Tāriġh-e Uljāyту*, ed. M. Hambli, Tehran, 1348/1969, p. 152

³⁷ According to Jackson, the sack of Tekinābād is related by Sayfī; Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, p. 224. On a map of the region, Jackson presents Tekinābād and Qandahar as the same (*ibid.* p. 120). The *Deġkhodā* encyclopedia however situates Tekinābād some 16 *farsakhs* south-east of Qandahar, Deġkhodā, A., *Loġat-nāmeġ*, Tehran, 1373/1994, IV:6062.

year 716/1316.³⁸ As argued elsewhere, the first reporting was a normal entry in what was intended to be the continuation of the *Jāme`-ot-tavārikh* for the period covering the reign of Uljāyту. The second reporting—which considerably overlaps the first one—was introduced as part of the schema to provide more possibilities for the *Šāh-nāmeḥ* project nicknamed *Abu-Sa`id-nāmeḥ*, whose illustrations were meant to represent both an episode of the *Šāh-nāmeḥ* and an event of Mongol history.³⁹

The differences between the two accounts are quite revealing. The first account—a regular yearly entry probably written soon after 1313, when the Chaḡatāyid threat had not fully dissipated, tried to portray the counterattack as an insurrection that was successful while Uljāyту and Yesāul were feasting in Māzandarān, but was pushed back as soon as Uljāyту learned about the counterattack.⁴⁰

As in the case of the *Tārikh-e Jahān-ārā* and the cryptical account of the death of Ṭahmāsb’s standard-bearer, the first reporting of Kāšāni incorporated enough elements for a keen reader to guess the extent of the catastrophe. Indeed, since the Chaḡatāyids had “the intention to capture all of the Iranian Lands” and because, upon hearing the news of their invasion, Uljāyту “ordered the protection and pacification of the Iranian Lands,” one clearly gets a hint at how dangerous the situation had become.⁴¹

The second reporting, probably inserted during the reign of Abu-Sa`id, when the *Abu-Sa`id-nāmeḥ* project was revived and the Chaḡatāyid threat had dissipated, provides a more explicit account of the Il-Khānid debacle. It not only describes the initial defeat of the local commanders, but also the routing of the army sent by Uljāyту and the plight of its ill-fated commanders. Among these, Bujāy b. Dānešmand Khājeḥ was killed and Yasāul himself was hit by an arrow and only saved in extremis by a warrior who carried him out of danger on the back of his horse. The door for the Chaḡatāyid conquest of Khorāsān and Māzandarān was left wide open. If the Chaḡatāyid invasion was stopped, it was not due to Il-Khānid resistance, but to the fact that the enemy had exhausted its provisions, and Isan-buqā had to recall his commanders to face the troops of the Qān Buyāntu (r. r.1311-20), who had attacked his eastern frontiers. Yesāur however, chose to stay and demanded the protection of Uljāyту against his own cousins.⁴²

Against this background, we are now able to evaluate the content of Letter 53 and the veracity of the events described therein. Rašid was in Qandahar, within the territories

³⁸ Kāšāni, *Tārikh-e Uljāyту*, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-2 and 208-9

³⁹ Soudavar, “The Saga,” *op. cit.*, pp. 173-75

⁴⁰ The feast was in celebration of the wedding of the daughter of Yasāul with the son of Pulād Ching-Sāng, Kāšāni, *Tārikh-e Uljāyту*, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

⁴¹ Kāšāni, *Tārikh-e Uljāyту*, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-54.

⁴² Kāšāni, *Tārikh-e Uljāyту*, *op. cit.*, pp. 211.

recently wrested from Dāud Khājah. That he could suddenly find himself entrapped in a dangerous situation should come as no surprise to us, since we saw how rapidly the situation could change in these borderlands where Yasāul himself nearly perished in a counterattack. While the Chaḡatāyid counterattack of 1313 could well be the cause of the entrapment that Rašid alluded to in his letter, an earlier possibility also exists as will be explained further below.

Next, we must address the question of whether fiscal administrators such as Rašid and his son Jalāl, could be involved in a military operation. There is ample evidence to prove that, in the later Il-Khānid era, administrators took an active role in military campaigns and for obvious reasons: their organizational skills were needed for logistical support and their negotiation talents were necessary for wresting surrenders or finding a way out of an impasse. It was Rašid for instance, who negotiated a face-saving surrender with the commander of the Fort of Raḡba in the 1312 Syrian campaign of Uljāyту.⁴³ And, in one case, Rašid's son, Khājah Ġiyāṣ-od-din Moḡammad, personally led a wing of the imperial troops into the battlefield.⁴⁴

For the situation at hand though, Kāšāni provides some pertinent information. First, he states that Uljāyту, after ordering a general mobilization for the protection of the Iranian Lands, ordered a "considerable number of the fiscal administrators to get involved."⁴⁵ It emphasizes once more the gravity of the situation following the Chaḡatāyid counterattack, and, at the same time, provides credibility to the participation of Rašid and his son in the eastern campaigns. Secondly, in describing the decisions taken in the aftermath of the Khorāsān army debacle, he states that Uljāyту appointed Jalāl to protect the Iranian heartland, `Erāq-e `ajam. His sequencing of events though is such that one clearly gets the impression that Jalāl was pulled from the eastern front to protect the heartland.

More importantly, we have corroborating evidence in the form of one of the illustrations of the *Abu-Sa`id-nāmeḡ*; one which had previously eluded my search for the identification of its corresponding event of Mongol history. Said image (Louvre Museum, Paris, 7095) illustrates the *Šāh-nāmeḡ* episode in which Farāmarz attacks the Kābolis to avenge the murder of his father, Rostam, who was led by them into a death trap (fig. 1). Its common denominator with Letter 53 is the fact that in both events the son of a

⁴³ Eqbāl-e Āshṡtiani, A., *Tāriḡh-e moḡol*, Tehran 1347, p. 324; Amitai-Preiss, "New Material from the Mamluk Sources," in *The Court of the Il-Khāns 1290-1340, The Cultural and Intellectual Milieu*, Oxford, 1996, p. 29.

⁴⁴ Khājah Ġiyāṣ-od-din Moḡammad was in command of the left wing of Arpā Kāun's (d. 1336) army against `Ali Pādšāh; Ḥāfeṣ-e Abru, *Zayl-e jāme`-ot-tavāriḡh-e rašidi*, Tehran, 1350/1971 p. 194

⁴⁵ *az šavāheb-e `ezām, tāyefeh-yi az ahl-e divān-e bozorg*; Kāšāni, *Tāriḡh-e Uljāyту*, op. cit., p. 154

prominent Iranian figure is attacking the Kābolis in reprisal of their treachery. Even though in the *Šāh-nāmeḥ* episode, Farāmarz leads the Zābolis in an attack against the Kābolis, the presence of the two armies fighting each other provides a link to the attack on “Kābol and Zābol” mentioned in Letter 53, which is further strengthened by Ferdowsi’s narration that goes on to describe how the armies of “Hend” and “Sind” were annihilated as well.⁴⁶ More importantly, while the picture depicts Farāmarz (alias Jalāl) fighting the enemy, the corresponding heading of the episode simply mentions “The Journey of Farāmarz to Kābolestān” and minimizes the military role of Jalāl in the operation. Finally, the illustration depicts a vivid picture of the attack on the Chaḡatāyids and, at the same time, establishes the Rašidi Letters as an additional source for the rostrum of texts from which illustrations corresponding to *Šāh-nāmeḥ* episodes were extracted.⁴⁷

Morton question’s the “meteor-like” speed of the raids towards Sind, even though speed was the most important characteristic of Mongol units, especially the Neguderis. The raids that took the Neguderis all the way to Šuštar and back during Ġāzān’s reign, was conducted in a mere two month period. The feat becomes even more impressive when we consider that their troops numbered 1 or 2 *tumāns* (10-20,000).⁴⁸ What is important to note however, is the switch of terms by Rašid from the Kābol operation to the Sind one. In the first, he uses the term *lašgar* denoting Il-Khānid troops, and in the second, he uses the term *bā omarā-ye moḡol*, which clearly indicates an operation *in conjunction* with Mongol commanders not part of the regular Il-Khānid army. It obviously referred to the Neguderis of Teymur son of Abāchi, whom Kāšāni evaluated as 20,000 strong.⁴⁹ Year after year, they had conducted these kind of forays into Sind and India on their own. This time they were accompanied by Jalāl and some of his troops. For Rašid, it was a golden opportunity to shift the credit of the operation to his own family members.

⁴⁶ The two couplets below the illustration read:

هم از پرمش نامداران سند	بکشتند چندان زگردان هند
پراکنده شد هند و سندی سپاه	که گل شد همه خاک آوردگاه

⁴⁷ The rostrum initially comprised the 1st volume of the *Jāme`-ot-tavāriḵh*, but was gradually expanded to include all the volumes comprised in the compendium of Rašid-od-din’s works entitled the *Jāme`-ot-tašāniḡ-e Rašidi* in order to increase the chances for finding a suitable match; Soudavar, “The Saga,” pp. 172-76. The addition of the Rašidi Letters—after Abarquhi presented it to Khājeḡ Ġiyāṡ-od-din Moḡammad who supervised the *Abu-Sa`id-nāmeḥ* project—to that expanding base of texts used for the project was thus very much in line with the natural progression of the project.

⁴⁸ Vaṡṡāf, *Tāriḵh*, *op. cit.*, p. 367-68. At one point, 50,000 Neguderis were concentrated near Ġaznayn, *idem*. Šabānkārei estimates the Neguderis at 20,000; Šabānkārei, *Majma`-ol-ansāb*, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

⁴⁹ Kāšāni, *Tāriḵh-e Uljāyṡu*, *op. cit.*, p. 120

Finally, the request for military gear from Ebrāhim stationed in Širāz seems to be the natural consequence of the general mobilization declared by Uljāytu in the wake of the Chaġatāyid counterattack.

The sequence of events presented in the letter is not very clear: the raids of Jalāl can be read both as parallel events to Rašid's entrapment or preceding it. In the latter case, one must perhaps assume that, the Neguderis who were split between the two camps of Teymur and Dāud Khājeḥ, were not steadfast in their alliances. At one point, some may have shifted their allegiance to the other side, and provoked the unexpected entrapment of Rašid.

The more important problem to probe, however, is the reason for Rašid's presence in Qandahar. One suspects that Uljāytu's decision to engage the Chaġatāyids aimed for a higher goal than reestablishing Teymur's grazing rights. According to Vaṣṣāf, two years earlier, Uljāytu had sent an embassy to Solṭān `Alā'od-din of Delhi chiding him for not having acknowledged his enthronement with envoys and presents, and demanded the *solṭān* to send one of his daughters to reinstate the goodwill that his predecessors had expressed towards the Mongols. `Alā'od-din's response was to imprison the envoys and have eighteen of them trampled by elephants.⁵⁰ Such affront could not be left unanswered. After all, a similar maltreatment of envoys had provoked Changiz' invasion of Iran. It is therefore more than likely that Uljāytu's alliance with the Neguderis splinter group was to create a base for military operations against India: if not contemplating a full scale invasion, he certainly envisaged harassment and gradual encroachment upon `Alā'od-din's kingdom. In that scheme of things, Rašid's role in Qandahār must be viewed as the coordinator of reprisal efforts against `Alā'od-din. As we shall see, such role concurs with Rašid's constant preoccupation with India.

The Chaġatāyid counterattack of 1313 put an end to Uljāytu's alliance with the Neguderis, and, in effect, turned the initial success into defeat. Thus, Mostowfi, whose *Ẓafar-nāmeḥ* was to be a versified version of the *Jāme`-ot-tavāriḥ*,⁵¹ preferred to scratch the earlier episode in order to avoid recounting the embarrassment of subsequent defeat. The only hint of the Chaġatāyid devastating counterattack comes in the form of some background information as to why Yesāur decided to stay in Iran: because he was a Muslim, he had refused to go along with the massacre of the Khorāsānian people and had, thus, attracted the animosity of Kebek. Since the Yesāur story finally unfolded to the advantage of the Il-Khānids there was no harm in reporting it.⁵² As a result, Ḥāfez-e

⁵⁰ Vaṣṣāf, *Tāriḥ*, p. 528

⁵¹ Soudavar, "The Saga," p. 211.

⁵² Soudavar, "The Saga," pp. 140-50.

Abru's account of the reign of Uljāyту, which scrupulously follows the *Zafar-nāmeḥ* of Mostowfi,⁵³ is devoid of the Neguderi episode as well. Considering the high degree of concordance that we have established between Letter 53 and the *Tāriḫ-e Uljāyту*, if one is to pursue Morton's chain of reasoning, one must now accept that, unlike the most important of Teymurid historians, Ḥāfez-e Abru, who never came into possession of *Tāriḫ-e Uljāyту*,⁵⁴ the presumed forger had a copy of it but never revealed the manuscript to anybody else and fashioned Letter 53 to suit its content!

**LETTERS 6, 10, AND 44 ADDRESSED TO THE AMIR MAḤMUD
"GOVERNOR" OF KERMĀN**

In his analysis of the letters addressed to Rašid's son Maḥmud, Morton first assumes Maḥmud to be the same as the Šayḫ Maḥmud mentioned in the *Mojmal-e Faṣiḫi* to be born in 1309, then discovers that he was born after the date of the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ-ye Rab`-e Rašidi* (The endowment document of the Rašidi Quarters) which contains the name of Maḥmud, but avoids confronting this dilemma by stating that "for the sake of argument, it is here assumed that Maḥmud was not excluded by youth from acting as a governor."⁵⁵ Since his birth-date problem is treated inconclusively, I see no necessity to address the issue here and will discuss it further below in the context of Letter 37 and the list of Rašid's children mentioned therein.

The above remark notwithstanding, the crux of Morton's arguments against the authenticity of the above-mentioned three letters, is that Kermān was the dynastic fiefdom of the QarāḫetāyidQarāḫetāyids up to 1304, when the last ruler of that lineage, Qoṭb-od-din Šāh-jahān (r. 1302-1303), was arrested and replaced by Malek Nāṣer-od-din-e Ġuri who remained governor of Kermān for the whole period of Uljāyту's reign. The three letters were therefore "fictitious." Once again, wrong assumptions generate a wrong conclusion.

The problem with Morton's argument is his understanding of the word *ḥākem*—used in the headings added by Abarquhi—to mean an omnipotent governor with control over all other appointees to that province. Unfortunately, the hierarchy of power under the Il-Khānids constantly shifted and changed, and the word *ḥākem*, rather than defining a well-established title, usually referred to the person who actually held the reigns of power in that province. Thus, when Amir Sugunchāq was appointed to collect the tax

⁵³ Soudavar, A., "The Shāhnāma and Zafarnāma of Mostowfi," in *Iranshenasi*, Washington D.C. 1996, vol. VII/4, pp. 758-59; Melville, C., "Hamd Allāh Mustawfi's Zafarnāmah and the Historiography of the Late Ilkhanid Period" in *Papers in Honor of Iraj Afshar*, ed. K. Eslami, Princeton 1998, pp. 5-7.

⁵⁴ Soudavar, "The Saga," *op. cit.*, p. 175.

⁵⁵ Morton, "The Letters," *op. cit.*, 175.

arrears of Širāz and pacify that region, his appointment was labeled by Vaṣṣāf as *ḥokumat* (governorship),⁵⁶ despite the fact that the nominal ruler of Širāz was the Solgorid Abash Khātun (d. 1286), who continued to strike coins in her name well after Suqunchāq's intervention.⁵⁷

In the early years of the Il-Khānids, it was the Mongol warlords who held the reigns of power, but with the reforms of Ġāzān, fiscal administrators became as important, if not more, as the local military commanders and each new military appointment was usually accompanied by that of an administrator or vizier. And the practice continued up to the reign of Abu-Sa'id (r. 1317-36) when for instance, in conjunction with Amir Chupān (d. 1327) appointing his son Teymurtāš to Anatolia (*Rum*), Rašid-od-din appointed his own son Jalāl as the fiscal administrator of the province.⁵⁸

The balance of power between the two appointees shifted depending on who stayed on the spot and took effective control of the province, and who remained at large. In the case of high-ranking administrators such as Rašid's sons for instance, Mostowfi relates that many remained with the Il-Khān (*bar-e šāh*).⁵⁹ Same is true for military commanders. Amir Mobārez-od-din Moḥammad (the future founder of the Moẓaffarid dynasty, r. 1314-58) for instance, who was appointed in stead of his father to the province of Meybod, remained for four years at the court of Uljāyту.⁶⁰

More to the point is the situation in Kermān, under the last of the Qarākhētāyids. Upon his ascent to the throne, Ġāzān confirmed Solṭān Moḥammad Šāh (r. 1294-1302), and Qāzi Fakhr-od-din of Herāt was designated as his vizier. Vying for absolute power, Fakhr-od-din provoked a crisis, after which both contenders headed for the Il-Khānid court. Upon the intervention of Rašid and with the approval of the grand vizier Sa'd-od-din-e Sāvaji, Fakhr-od-din was entrusted with all responsibilities (*manāseb*) except *salṭanat* (i.e. kingly prerogatives such as striking coins).⁶¹ Accordingly Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru,

⁵⁶ Vassāf, *Tārikh*, *op. cit.*, pp. 195, 205. Moreover, for the fiscal year of 771AH, Suqunchāq himself farmed out several of the provinces to members of his retinue with the stipulation that they would be *ḥakem-e moṭlaq* (full-power governors); *idem*.

⁵⁷ Soudavar, A., *Art of the Persian Courts*, New York, 1992, p. 32.

⁵⁸ Rašid appointed his son to accompany Teymurtāš; Samarqandi, 'Abd-or-razāq, *Matla'-e sa'dayn va majma'-e bahrayn*, ed. A. Navai, Tehran, 1372/1993, p. 61.

⁵⁹ Mostowfi, Ḥamdollāh, *Zafar-nāmeḥ*, facsimile reproduction of the British Library manuscript (OR2833), Tehran 1377, 2 vols., II:1251.

⁶⁰ Kotobi, Maḥmud, *Tārikh-e āl-e moẓaffar*, ed. A. Navā'i, Tehran, 1364, p. 34. Aḥmad b. Ḥasan-e kāteb alleges that the delay in the departure of Amir Mobārez-od-din Moḥammad was due to the fact that Rašid had an eye on his properties, *Tārikh-e jadid-e Yazd*, p. 81.

⁶¹ Šabānkārei, *Majma'ol-ansāb*, *op. cit.*, p. 204

qualified Fakhr-od-din as “vizier and *ḥākem*” of Kermān.⁶² His successor to the vizierate is Khājah Šadr-od-din-e Abhari, whom Mostowfi also qualified as *ḥākem*.⁶³ Thus, both viziers were referred to as *ḥākems*, despite the fact that the nominal rulers of Kermān were the Qarākhētāyids.⁶⁴

Sołṭān Moḥammad Šāh remained at the Il-Khānid court, and the vizier almost succeeded to replace him with his cousin Qoṭb-od-din Šāh-jahān before he was executed in a rebellion led by local commanders. Šāh-jahān ascended the throne of Kermān in 1302, and upon the death of Ġāzān, ordered his “representative” Majd-od-din to be killed.⁶⁵ Majd-od-din was obviously another administrator who had the upper hand in Kermān and paid a deadly price for it. Šāh-jahān’s removal put an end to the long rule of the Qarākhētāyids in Kermān.⁶⁶ Consequently, Uljāytu appointed Malek Nāṣer-od-din-e Ġuri as the new military commander for Kermān; and as usual, he was accompanied by an administrator, Nāṣer-od-din-e Khāfi.⁶⁷

If an administrator could have the upper hand against a local Qarākhētāyid dynast with deep roots in Kermān, then there is no reason to think that the same would not be true with Malek Nāṣer-od-din who, like most other military commanders, must have been regularly asked to participate in military campaigns outside his domain. Furthermore, contrary to Morton’s assertion of uninterrupted “governorship” of Malek Nāṣer-od-din in Kermān, we have Kāšāni’s testimony to the effect that, at least in one instance, he was superseded not only administratively, but also militarily. Indeed, in the aftermath of the 1313 Chaḡatāyid counterattack, and similar to Suqunchāq’s appointment in Širāz, `Alā’od-din-e Hendu, “a fifth generation scion of administrative and military commanders,” was appointed to “pacify and protect Kermān and the Coastal Provinces.”⁶⁸ Immediately after reporting this appointment, Kāšāni emphasizes that “and from Tāj-od-din `Ali-šāh’s *side*, Fakhraddin Aḡamd-e Tabrizi was appointed to the armies of Arrān and Āzarbāyjān.”⁶⁹ The lack of mention of the name of `Alā’od-din-e Hendu’s mentor then becomes obvious: `Alā’od-din was—by default—the appointee of

⁶² Hāfez-e Abru, *Joḡrāfiyā*, ed. S. Sajjādi, 3 volumes, Tehran, 1378, III:91.

⁶³ Mostowfi, خواجه صدرالدین ابهری که بحکم یرلیخ بر جای فخرالدین بوزارت منصوب شده بود، حاکم کرمان شد Hamdollah, *Tārikh-e gozideh*, Tehran, 1339/1960, p. 535.

⁶⁴ In his study of Mongol administration, Rajabzādeh equates *ḥākem* with *motešarref* (i.e. the official in charge of administering the revenues obtained from each locality on behalf of the central administration); Rajabzādeh, *Ā’in-e kešvardāri*, p.205.

⁶⁵ Hāfez-e Abru, *Joḡrāfiyā*, *op. cit.*, III:95.

⁶⁶ The Qarākhētāyid Qarākhētāyids ruled for 83 years.

⁶⁷ Hāfez-e Abru, *Joḡrāfiyā*, *op. cit.*, III:99

⁶⁸ Kāšāni, *Tārikh-e Uljāytu*, *op. cit.*, p. 154

⁶⁹ *Idem*.

the grand vizier Rašid-od-din.⁷⁰ In addition, two of the Letters, no. 19, and no. 48 (that I shall discuss next), as well as the *Zafar-nāmeḥ* of Mostowfī attest to the subordination of `Alā`od-din to Rašid.⁷¹

Finally, following the falling-out of Rašid with his rival, Tāj-od-din `Ali-šāh (d. 1324), in 1315, Uljāyṭu split the vizierate between the two; and Kermān was among the provinces left for Rašid.⁷² In that split, Rašid lost territory to the new contender and it is only fair to assume that the provinces that were given to him were those he firmly controlled. Thus, from the reconfirmation of the vizier Fakhr-od-din, to the appointment of `Alā`od-din-e Hendu, to the split of the vizierate in 1315, we see that Rašid exercised a high degree of control over Kermān that justified his boast in Letter 10 that the province “belonged” to him and his family (*ta`alooq be mā dārad*) since the time of Ġāzān.⁷³ It also makes sense that he would appoint one of his sons as full administrator or as his deputy to that province. And, given the effective power that this son would wield on behalf of Rašid, it was justified for Abarquhi to call this son a *ḥākem*, in the same way that Ḥāfez-e Abru called Fakhr-od-din a *ḥākem*, and Mostowfī called Ṣadr-od-din-e Abhari a *ḥākem*.

LETTER 48

According to its title, Letter 48 is sent by Malek `Alā`od-din “from Hendustān” to Rašid-od-din, “with accompanying gifts.” It’s an erroneous title that has led many to believe that the named person therein referred to its namesake, Solṭān `Alā`od-din of Delhi (r. 1296-1316). To Morton’s credit, he avoids falling into this trap, but then construes its writer as a person from India, whom Rašid could have not met there because he “was never in India.” As for his alternative assumption that Malek `Alā`od-din visited him in Iranian territory, it should also be disregarded because the “internal coherence” that it provides with other letters “is evidence, not of their authenticity, but of the fact that they are a conscious and deliberately forgery.”⁷⁴ Internal incoherence is generally a proof of forgery, and not the other way around!

⁷⁰ After the death of Sa`d-od-din-e Sāvaji, Rašid acted as Grand Vizier.

⁷¹ In Letter 19, Rašid orders `Alā`od-din-e Hendu to gather pharmaceutical ingredients for the hospital of Tabriz, *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-67. Mostowfī recounts that following the death of Uljāyṭu, `Alā`od-din-e Hendu was among the group of administrators who came to Rašid to propose their readiness for testifying against his rival Tāj-od-din `Ali-šāh; Mostowfī, *Zafar-nāmeḥ*, *op. cit.*, II:1450, Ḥāfez-e Abru, *Zayl*, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁷² Kāšāni, *Tāriḫ-e Uljāyṭu*, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

⁷³ *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, p. 29; Morton, “The Letters,” *op. cit.*, p. 176

⁷⁴ Morton, “The Letters,” *op. cit.*, p.171.

We do not need here to refute every argument that Morton advances against the authenticity of this letter, for the negation of his very first assumption will provide a sufficient argument to the contrary.

The very tone of the letter clearly indicates that its author was a professional administrator; with a literary style even more fluid than Rašid himself, and that he was his subordinate. Indeed, the author first praises Rašid's benevolence to himself, and notes that it should not come as a surprise since "all powerful military commanders (*moluk-e `ezām*) and magnanimous administrators (*šodur-e kerām*)" of the realm have similarly benefited from his munificence;⁷⁵ he obviously considers himself as one belonging to one of these two categories, if not both. And then concludes his letter with a scribal metaphor: "may the white sheet of days and the pages of passing years be marked by the official signet of the one whom I serve (*makhdum*)."⁷⁶

Before we identify the author, some clarification is necessary on the meaning of the word *malek* (plural *moluk*) that I translated as military commander. In early Islamic times, the word *malek* invoked such high degree of power that the `Abbāsis caliphs repeatedly refused to bestow it as a title to even the most powerful of Muslim *sultāns*. By the Mongol era though, this epithet became debased and was regularly applied to local commanders, especial in the southeast of Iranian territories. The profusion of this debased epithet is nowhere better shown than in Mo`in-od-din-e Naṭanzi's *Tāriḫ-e moluk-e Šabānkāreh* where most commanders are referred to as *malek*. One sentence therein is particularly revealing:

And Sevinch Noyān, who counted Šabānkāreh as one of his *bolukāt* (counties), issued an edict of *maleki* (i.e. *malekmanship* or *captainship*) in the name of Neẓām-od-din Ḥasan.⁷⁷

Firstly, it indicates that from the word *malek* a new function was derived called *maleki*, which referred to military command. Secondly, it confirms once more the division of authority in the appointment of local officials: *maleki* fell under the authority of a regional warlord such as Amir Sevinch (d. 1317), in the same way that fiscal administration, or vizierate fell under the authority of one of the Il-Khānid viziers.

⁷⁵ *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

⁷⁶ بیاض ایام و صفحات شهر و اعوام به توقیع احکام مخدوم مرقوم باد , *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, p. 255. The author of the letter had previously addressed Rašid as *makhdum-e jahāniān* which literary means "the one served by the whole world" (*ibid.*, p. 253). That is too general a term to show specific subordination. On the other hand, the solitary use of the word *makhdum*, in the above-mentioned sentence, clearly refers to the person the author considered to be serving.

⁷⁷ Naṭanzi, Mo`inod-din, *Extraits du muntakhab al-tavarikh-i mu'ini*, ed. J. Aubin, Tehran, 1335/1957, p. 8.

Based on the above, the identity of the writer of the letter becomes obvious: he is the aforementioned `Alā'-od-din-e Hendu, that Kāšāni had qualified as the scion of a long line of both commanders and administrators, and therefore one that could legitimately claim to belong to the two groups of *moluk* and *şodur*, as he did in his letter.⁷⁸ Since, in the wake of the 1313 Chaġatāyid counterattack, he was appointed by Uljāyту to pacify “Kermān and the Coastal Provinces,” Abarquhi naturally added the *malek* title to his name.⁷⁹ We must then assume that a later copyist, seeing the name of Solţān `Alā'-od-din of Dehli within the text, thought him to be the author of the letter, and tried to make the Abarquhi title more explicit by changing “Hendu” to “from Hendustān.” Such supposition is not wholly unreasonable, for we have a clear example of an unwarranted modification in the heading of Letter 16, where a copyist has by mistake amalgamated the addressing sentence of Rašid-od-din with the heading of Abarquhi.⁸⁰ In addition, several points included in this letter confirm our identification of its writer:

- 1- `Alā'-od-din writes that he is sending his gifts to Rašid via the port of Basra. This ties in well with his jurisdiction that not only included Kermān but the “Coastal Provinces.” With the risk of Neguderis and other marauding bands of Mongols constantly attacking the eastern provinces, the Persian Gulf route was a more secure way to ship goods to the western provinces where the Il-Khānids exercised a higher degree of control.
- 2- The variety of goods enumerated in the letter attest to a provenance from a port with a broad import activity from South and Southeast Asia. They include, not only goods traditionally associated with India such as spices and parrots (*tuṭi*), but also some specifically named as originating from India: *tamr-e hendi* (tamarind), *zāġ-e hendi-ye sokhan guy* (mya bird), *sāj-e hendi* (sage-wood).⁸¹ They also include goods from the Tibet, and goods from China, qualified as *şini*. As a whole, the list confirms once more `Alā'-od-din's control over the Coastal Provinces and southern trade routes.

⁷⁸ One should note that Letter 47 is from another administrator, Mo'in-od-din-e Parvāneh, who is also qualified as “Malek.”

⁷⁹ In Letter 19 written which is written by Rašid, Abarquhi's simply refers to its recipient as `Alā'-od-din-e Hendu, *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, p. 65. One must then conclude that said letter was written prior to `Alā'-od-din's mission to Kermān.

⁸⁰ Part (A) obviously denotes the original Abarquhi heading and part (B) represents the opening sentence of Rašid's letter (they are now amalgamated together in one heading):

(A) مکتوب که بر امیر ستای حاکم موصل و سنچار نوشته است در باب حسن مستوفی
 (B) امیر معظم، واسطه عقد الامارة السياسية، وارث مناقب الولاية و الرئاسة، امیر نصره الدين ستای دعوات مالا
 نهاییه و تحیات اقصى الغایه قبول فرماید

⁸¹ *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-57.

Among the listed Chinese goods, there was the *şiniyeh* (i.e. Chinese porcelain) that interestingly included the *lājevardi* type (i.e. blue-and-white) in the form of trays, bowls, and ewers. The earliest archeological evidence for the production of blue-and-white porcelain for the Yuan imperial household seems to be dateable to 1328 from the kilns of Zhushan.⁸² But sub-imperial and commercial grade production must have started earlier. Since I shall argue that this letter was written circa 1315, it provides the first evidence for blue and white production and export to the Iranian territories, albeit not of imperial grade. Considering that `Alā`-od-din was in control of Kermān, which supplied the cobalt blue for Chinese blue-and-white production,⁸³ he enjoyed a natural—and perhaps unique—access to the very traders who were exporting the cobalt blue and had partially reoriented the production of the Chinese kilns towards the Iranian markets.⁸⁴

The list of gifts sent by `Alā`-od-din to Rašid-od-din, is an example of what Kāšāni qualified as “bribes and gifts (*rošvat o khedmati*) that he (Rašid) receives day by day from his agents and subordinates.”⁸⁵ It constituted a main source of revenue for Rašid. And perhaps the letter that he first wrote to `Alā`-od-din, to which the latter was responding through Letter 48, was a reminder that no gifts had been received.

`Alā`-od-din was appointed to his post at the end of 1313 and Rašid must have waited a while before sending him a reminder. Because of ongoing feud in between Rašid-od-din and `Ali-šāh, `Alā`-od-din undoubtedly postponed the payment of his tribute pending the outcome of the feud. His letter was thus most probably written circa 1315, when Kermān was once again reassigned to Rašid.

In his letter, `Alā`-od-din praises Rašid’s efforts in trying to bring about an understanding between Uljāyту and Solţān `Alā`-od-din of Delhi.⁸⁶ `Alā`-od-din-e Hendu’s control of the coastal provinces made him an indispensable ally, and probably an active agent, for Rašid’s undertakings with India and the channeling of his gifts to the Delhi Court. If he writes about this subject it means that he was involved with Rašid’s endeavors in this respect.

Abol-faʒl-e `Allāmi provides corroborating evidence that Rašid did indeed send gifts to India. In a passage of his *Ā’in-e Akbari* where he lists the visits of dignitaries to India, and under a “Khājah Rašid” heading, he writes:

⁸² Valenstein, S.G. (*Concerning a Reattribution of Some Chinese Ceramics*, in “Orientations, Hong Kong Dec. 1994, pp. 71-74) citing kiln-site archeological evidence reported in Chinese publications.

⁸³ M. Medley, “Islam, Chinese Porcelain and Ardabil”, in *IRAN* vol. XIII, London, 1975, p. 32-34.

⁸⁴ “A Chinese Dish from the Lost Endowment of the Princess Soltānum,” in *Papers in Honor of Iraj Afshar*, ed. K. Eslami, Princeton, 1998, pp. 125-36.

⁸⁵ Kāšāni, *Tārikh-e Uljāyту*, *op. cit.*, p. 197

⁸⁶ *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, p.254

Soltān Uljāyту, sent as a goodwill message (*be paygām-gozāri*) the *Jāme`-e rašidi* to Soltān Qoṭb-od-din, son of Soltān `Alā`-od-din, and strengthened the bonds of friendship.⁸⁷

The entry was misread by Morton, who understood it as referring to a visit of Rašid himself to the court of Soltān Qoṭb-od-din, and therefore excluded.⁸⁸ What was sent, of course, was a partial copy of the ten-volume *Jāme`-ot-taṣānif-e rašidi* (The Rašidi Compendium) that according to Vaṣṣāf was presented by Rašid-od-din to the *il-khān* in 1312. In an addendum to the endowment document of the Rab`-e Rašidi, dated 1313, Rašid-od-din left precise instructions for his works to be copied each year, and "sent to all cities of Islam, in Arabic to Arab cities and in Persian to Persian cities, beginning with the most important cities."⁸⁹ The city of Delhi was certainly a priority in Rašid's vision of the Islamic world, especially after the failure of the joint military operation with the Chaḡatāyids in 1312. The gift of a colossal compendium that represented the height of erudition of that era, was perhaps the only means left for the Il-Khānid vizier to buy respect for his patron. It is therefore quite possible that the gift was sent for Soltān `Alā`-od-din but actually arrived in Delhi after his death and was thus given to his son Qoṭb-od-din Mobārak Šāh, who succeeded his father shortly after his demise in January of 1316.⁹⁰ Alternatively, it could have been sent to Delhi, soon after Qoṭb-od-din seized power, and before Uljāyту's death in mid-December 1316.

Even though Rašid sent his compendium in the name of Uljāyту, and in pursuit of a smoother relationship between the two kingdoms, he must have expected a hefty reward for himself as well. Rewarding authors of intellectual and literary works, even if attached to rival courts, gave sovereigns the opportunity to enhance their own intellectual credentials. Thus, some two centuries later, when the celebrated Sufi poet `Abd-or-Raḡmān-e Jāmi was at the Teymurid court of Herāt, the Ottoman Bāyazid II (r. 1481-1512), would send him 1000 gold *florins*, and Soltān Ya`qub Āq-qoyunlu, 10,000 *šāhrokhi* gold coins in reward for his poems.⁹¹

⁸⁷ `Allāmi, Abol-faẓl, *Ā'in-e Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann, Osnabruck, 1985 (reprint), 2 vols., II:206.

⁸⁸ Morton, "The Letters," *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁸⁹ Vaṣṣāf mentions ten books presented by Rašid (Vaṣṣāf, *Tārikh*, *op. cit.*, p. 538) but the latter left instructions in an addendum to his *Vaqfnāma* for only seven to be copied each year; Rašid-od-din Faẓlollāh, *Vaqf-nāmeḡ-ye rab`-e rašidi*, eds. M. Minovi and I. Afshar, Tehran, 2536/1977, p. 239. For a change in the composition of the compendium see Soudavar, "The Saga," *op. cit.*, p. 206, notes 11-12.

⁹⁰ In the interim, there was a short-lived attempt by the courtiers to elevate an infant son of `Alā`-od-din to the throne.

⁹¹ *Asnād va mokātebāt-e tāriki-ye Iran*, ed. A. H. Navā'i, Tehrān 1341, p. 437. The text describes the gold coins as florins, i.e. the Florentine ducat used by the Ottomans. Minorsky, V., *Persia in A.D. 1478-1490: An Abridged Translation of Ruzbihan Khunji's Tārikh-i `Ālamārā-yi Amini*, London, 1957, p. 60.

LETTER 30

According to its heading, Letter 30 was addressed from the city of Multān to Qoṭb-od-din-e Mas`ud-e Širāzi (d. 1310),⁹² and gave an account of Rašid's mission and journey to India during the reign of Solṭān `Alā'-od-din of Dehli. As the text now reads, Rašid embarked on his mission by order of the Il-Khān Arġun (r.1284-91), whose reign ended before that of `Alā'-od-din commenced. To avoid this discrepancy A.K. Nizami proposed that Uljāyту's name should be substituted for Arġun's. In reply, Morton argues that Rašid's "presence in Persia is mentioned every year during the period 703-08, and most other years of the reign, by Qāshāni."⁹³ In addition, he argues that had Rašid been to India, he would have mentioned it in the India section of the *Jāme`-ot-tavārikh* and/or in his *Āsār o Ahyā'* where he discusses Indian plants and herbs.⁹⁴ Without exploring other possibilities, he concludes that Rašid was never in India, which in turn becomes the basis for other ill-founded arguments.⁹⁵

As in previous cases, the best guide for understanding the letter is its internal evidence. The name of Arġun is followed by the Islamic wish formula: *khallad-allāho molkohu va solṭānohu* (may god eternalize his reign and his kingdom) that obviously relates to one of his two Muslim sons, Ġāzān or Uljāyту.⁹⁶ Supposing that Morton's arguments for the whereabouts of Rašid during the reign of Uljāyту are correct—which is far from obvious—one must still explore the reign of Ġāzān. As a matter of fact, there are two pointers to indicate that Rašid's expedition was on behalf of Ġāzān and not Uljāyту. First, the ruler is referred to as *pādšāh-e `adel* (the just emperor) which, as demonstrated elsewhere, was Ġāzān's distinctive epithet.⁹⁷ Second, in parallel to his ambassadorial mission, Rašid was ordered to bring back "useful spices and syrups unfound in Iranian territories," which given Ġāzān's interest in similar topics such as the medicinal herbs described in the *Āthār o Ahyā'*, or the animals described in the *Manāfe`-ol-ḥayavān* of

⁹² His full name is Qoṭb-od-din Maḥmud b. Mas`ud-e Širāzi. Thus, the reading of the letter title should include the Persian ezāfeh, which indicates a father and son relationship between the two portions of the name.

⁹³ Morton, "The Letters," *op. cit.*, p. 168.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168-69.

⁹⁵ As Morton himself notes, the present edition of the *Āsār o Ahyā'* is a fragmentary document without a preface where general observations such as a previous trip to India would have been mentioned. Many entries however, show strong familiarities with the original environment or use of Indian plants. For instance, in the case of the pepper plant he mentions that "in the same way that people here plant vine in their yards and gardens, the Indians do the same with the pepper tree there" (Rashid-od-din Fazlollāh, *Āsār o Ahyā'*, ed. M. Sotudeh and I. Afshar, Tehran, 1368, p. 80), or a certain type of rice that "only the elderly ate" in India (*ibid.*, p. 147). Although the information contained in the extant text may have been relayed to him by a knowledgeable source, it offers no contrary evidence on the possibility of a previous trip to India.

⁹⁶ One may even suppose that the name of the Il-Khān was initially written as Ġāzān (or Uljāyту) b. Arġun.

⁹⁷ For the systematic use of this epithet for Ġāzān see Soudavar, "The Saga," *op. cit.*, pp. 126-27.

the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (m.500), makes him a better candidate than Uljāyту for sending Rašid to India.⁹⁸

That Rašid would not mention his trip to India in the *Jāme`-ot-tavārikh* or any other official work is obvious since he had failed in his main mission to have the Indian ruler accept Ġāzān's suzerainty. The Il-Khān would be better served if all allusions to such failure were suppressed. Moreover, his trip was hurried, uncomfortable and hazardous, and certainly not conducive to medicinal fieldtrips or information gathering sessions for a historical work on India. Indeed, early in his letter, Rašid puts his journey into perspective: he complains that it was God's will to take away his "comfort and security" and set him on the course of a most hazardous journey that brought him in contact with scary people whose "shirts were made of pitch and the fire covering their faces" (Qorān 14:50), and "turned his garden of fortune into a furnace of pain."⁹⁹ He was able to reach the outskirts of Delhi in a very short time (*zamān-e andak*), and after meeting the *solṭān*, he hurried back through the land route, via Kabul and Khorāsān.¹⁰⁰

Morton then compares Rašid's mission to India with the embassy sent by Uljāyту in 1310, whose members were trampled to death by `Alā'-od-din's elephants. If Vaṣṣāf reported the latter, why didn't he or any other author report the less unsuccessful mission of Rašid? In reply, one should bear in mind that the very fact that the dramatic 1310 incident was reported by Vaṣṣāf, and omitted by subsequent authors, proves that it was not reportable in the normal scheme of things. Vaṣṣāf's reporting was, thus, an anomaly, and most probably purposeful.

The 1310 failed mission was certainly conducted under the aegis of the Grand Vizier Sa`d-od-din-e Sāvaji,¹⁰¹ who was killed in 1311 by the instigation of Rašid. The tragic end of the emissaries must have provided Rašid with a decisive argument to do away with his rival. Vaṣṣāf, who in 1312 presented his work to Uljāyту through the auspices of Rašid,¹⁰² most probably thought that such an entry would be a reminder of the failure of the executed vizier, and by comparison, would highlight Rašid's diplomatic skills for not allowing a similarly unfavorable situation to get out of hand.

⁹⁸ This second mission may have been simply invented by Rašid to de-emphasize the importance of his dealings with `Alā'-od-din, and on his way back from India.

⁹⁹ *Savāneh-ol-afkār, op. cit.*, p. 147

¹⁰⁰ *Savāneh-ol-afkār, op. cit.*, p. 151.

¹⁰¹ Sāvaji who had been appointed as grand vizier in the year 1300 by Ġāzān, had been entrusted with the Gold Seal that adorned the most important of Il-Khānid correspondence; Rašid-od-din, *Jāme`-ot-tavārikh*, vol.3, p. 342.

¹⁰² Vaṣṣāf, *Tārikh, op. cit.*, p. 544.

Moreover, Morton's contention that no other source mentioned the visit is not exactly true, for we have to date, several sources that hint at Ġāzān's interactions with Solṭān `Alā'-od-din of Delhi. The first is the *Bayāz-e tāj-od-din aḥmad-e vazir*, which reproduces the text of two letters: one dated 17th October 1329 and sent by Solṭān Moḥammad Šāh-e Toghloq (r. 1324-51) to the Il-Khān Abu-Sa'id, and the other, a reply letter from the latter dated end of October 1330.¹⁰³ In his reply letter, Abu-Sa'id remarks how, despite the constant efforts of his uncle Ġāzān and father Uljāyту to combat idolatry and promote Islam, "the doors of openness and friendship had remained closed between the kings of [our] two countries."¹⁰⁴ Abu-Sa'id's letter clearly puts Uljāyту and Ġāzān on the same footing in regards to relationship with the sultans of Delhi, and thus if Uljāyту had a failed mission to India, Ġāzān must have had one as well.

The second is the *Jāme'-ot-tavārikh*, which mentions the arrival of foreign emissaries to Ġāzān's camp near Nahāvand in the year 1302, "bringing with them the Syrian commanders who had fled (Syria) and switched allegiance," followed by the sentence: "the *moqaddam-e išān* (the forerunner/most important of them) being `Alā'-od-din Pādšāh."¹⁰⁵ As the text now reads, said `Alā'-od-din Pādšāh is almost presented as a Syrian commander. But the text is obviously corrupted, for Rašid who called Ġāzān "Pādšāh-e Islam," would not bestow the same title to a defecting Syrian commander. Furthermore, in a slightly earlier passage, Rašid had already announced the defection of the three Syrian commanders and had the *moqaddam-e išān* named as `Ali-šir and not `Alā'-od-din.¹⁰⁶ The second sentence must have originally announced a string of foreign emissaries starting with those of `Alā'-od-din Pādšāh who happened to arrive at Ġāzān's encampment at the same time as the defecting Syrian commanders. Indeed Rašid continues his narrative with the account of emissaries from the "Pādšāh of Istanbul (i.e. Byzantium),"¹⁰⁷ which also confirms that stylistically, Rašid was using the title Pādšāh only for heads of state and not mere commanders.

The above reconstruction of text is supported by Mostowfi's *Zafarnameh*, which relates that after the arrival of the emissaries of Teymur Qāān came "the emissaries of the

¹⁰³ Under the events of the year 728/1328, Faṣiḥi-ye Khāfi confirms that the two rulers did indeed exchange ambassadors. Abu-Sa'id's ambassador is named as Sayyed `Azod-od-din; Faṣiḥi-ye Khāfi, *Mojmal-e Faṣiḥi*, ed. M. Farrokh, Mašhad, 1339/1960, p. 39.

¹⁰⁴ *Bayāz-e tāj-od-din aḥmad-e vazir*, eds. I. Afshar and M. Teymuri, Tehran, 1353 (facsimile edition), pp. 408-11.

¹⁰⁵ Rašid-od-din, *Jāme'-ot-tavārikh*, *op. cit.*, p. 352. This `Alā'-od-din is listed in the index by its editor `Alizādeh as "one of the Syrian commanders;" *ibid.*, p. 643.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

¹⁰⁷ The Byzantium Emperor is named "Fasilyus" (Basileus, i.e. Andronicus II Paleologus (r. 1282-1328)).

King of Farang (i.e. Byzantium) and Soltān `Alā'-od-din of Sind.”¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, under the events of the year 1303, Rašid himself mentions that Ġāzān decided to ride “the elephants that had been brought to him as presents from India.”¹⁰⁹ In sum, `Alā'-od-din did send emissaries and presents to Ġāzān in 1302. The question then is: did he initiate it on his own or was it in response to a previous overture from Ġāzān?

In 1298 `Alā'-od-din had wielded a crushing defeat against a joint Chaġatāyid-Neguderī expedition that was acclaimed by chroniclers in the following terms: “This victory raised the fame of the King’s arms, established his power at home, and overawed his foreign enemies.”¹¹⁰ Another Chaġatāyid-Neguderī invasion was thwarted the following year, circa 1300. Clearly, `Alā'-od-din’s fame and power rested on his victory over the Mongol forces. He had no incentive to dispatch an embassy to a Mongol court on his own initiative, since it would have been perceived—by both courts—as a sign of submission to Ġāzān, and would have undermined `Alā'-od-din’s claim to fame. On the other hand, he had everything to gain in acknowledging the visit of Rašid as an embassy from Ġāzān, and reciprocating it on an equal to equal basis. This, of course, is not what Ġāzān had aimed for.

This second scenario also has the merit to fit the chronology at hand. Since `Alā'-od-din’s embassy arrived in 1302, Rašid’s mission must have taken place a year or two earlier,¹¹¹ most probably after the failure of the second Syrian campaign. Had Rašid gone right after the first successful Syrian campaign, when Ġāzān sent envoys and “victory letters to Tabriz and neighboring countries” subsequent to the surrender of the Homs citadel,¹¹² his mission would have been more assertive. The very hesitant tone of his letter indicates that his mission was undertaken at a time when the military potential of the Il-Khānids was in doubt, i.e. circa 1300, in between the second and third campaign. Rašid was hoping to achieve through diplomacy what was not possible militarily. He may have even tried to woo `Alā'-od-din into accepting Ġāzān’s suzerainty by promising Il-Khānid support against the Chaġatāyids, who were constantly harassing Sind and Punjab territories. The very fact that he came back overland and through Kabul indicates that he returned after the Chaġatāyids’ pullback circa 1300.

¹⁰⁸ Mostowfī, *Ẓafar-nāmeḥ*, *op. cit.*, II:1414

¹⁰⁹ Rašid-od-din, *Jāme`-ot-tavāriḫ*, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

¹¹⁰ Nijjar, B.S., *Panjab under the Sultans*, Lahore, 1979, p. 49 (quoting the *Tāriḫ-e feresḫteh*); Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

¹¹¹ The time span for instance between the two letters exchanged between Abu-Sa`id and Moḥammad-e Toġloq was one year. Adding the time for the journey from Iran to India, the total time span from the Indian perspective amounted to some 15-16 months.

¹¹² Rašid-od-din, *Jāme`-ot-tavāriḫ*, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

Finally, even though he failed in his diplomatic mission, Rašid had success at a personal level. Traditionally, men of science were richly rewarded when visiting a foreign court, and Rašid had a knack for extracting such rewards. Mamluk sources for instance, accused him of receiving bribes from the governor of Raḥba during the negotiations pertaining to the surrender of its citadel.¹¹³ Whether considered a bribe or an insurance policy, its purpose was to have an advocate in the opposite camp. For `Alā'-od-din, who was about to send an embassy to Ġāzān, it would have made sense to buy the goodwill of the man who had the *il-khān's* ear. The type of gifts and endowments that Rašid lists as having received in India were therefore very much in tune with the practices of the day.¹¹⁴

LETTER 37

Morton begins to fault this letter for having a heading that claims it to have been written by Rašid when he had a “fatal” disease.¹¹⁵ The heading qualifies Rašid’s illness as *hālek*, which in English can be translated as both deadly and fatal. The fact that Morton chooses the latter rather than the former is indicative of his biased reasoning in this matter. The presumed forger-scribe that Morton describes would have certainly known Rašid’s fate and would not have made the mistake that Rašid died from illness. In Persian, as in English, one can very well dramatize an illness by qualifying it as *hālek* or deadly, without projecting fatal outcome. Moreover, in fairness to Rašid, he himself only used the term *makhowf* (scary) within the text of his letter to qualify his illness, and not *hālek* as Abarquhi did in the heading.¹¹⁶

Morton next finds it odd that sources would not report a severe illness of Rašid. But Persian chronicles were written to praise the glory of the king and not to report the illness of a vizier. If they did report it from time to time, it was in conjunction with a kingly visit such as Uljāyту’s visit to Rašid in 1304, or with a political event such as Rašid’s refusal to come to court during the 1315 vizierate crisis.¹¹⁷ In both cases Rašid was supposedly suffering from a leg ailment that prevented him to be present at court,¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Amitai-Preiss, R. , “New Material from the Mamluk Sources for the Biography of Rašid al-Din” in *The Court of the Il-Khāns 1290-1340, The Cultural and Intellectual Milieu*, Oxford, 1996, pp. 30-31, 23-37.

¹¹⁴ It also highlights one other source of revenue for the immensely rich vizier, Rashid-od-din.

¹¹⁵ Morton, “The Letters,” *op. cit.*, p. 181.

¹¹⁶ *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, p. 204

¹¹⁷ Kāšāni, *Tārikh-e Uljāyту*, *op. cit.*, pp. 44 and 195.

¹¹⁸ According to Eqbāl, he probably suffered from gout, Eqbāl, *Tārikh-e moḡol*, *op. cit.*, p. 323. This theory may further be corroborated by the fact that Rašid himself avows that he had also chronic pain in his fingers, Rašid-od-din Faẓlollāh, *Laṭā'ef-ol-ḥaqā'eq*, ed. Gh.Ṭ āher, Tehran, 2535/1976, p. 69.

and one suspects that the present letter was also conceived to buttress a claim of ill health for not heeding a summon.

As Morton points out, the letter is conceived as a will letter with references to prior endowment documents (*vaqfnāmeḥ*); it was presumably written towards the end of Rašid's life.¹¹⁹ In it, Rašid reconfirms the terms of his previous endowments and distributes the remainder of his wealth among his children. In addition, he emphasizes that one hundred copies of this letter are to be sent to various dignitaries at the four corners of the empire.¹²⁰ Had this solely been a testament, a few copies would have sufficed. If Rašid went through the extra pain of sending one hundred copies out, chances are that he was feeling threatened and was trying to advertise his illness through the bias of this letter. All factors thus point to the time that after the death of Uljāyṭu, the commander in chief, Amir Chupān, summoned Rašid and the latter refused to comply. He was seventy years old, felt threatened,¹²¹ and tried to persuade Amir Chupān to appoint some of his children to the vizierate in his stead.¹²² To no avail, Amir Chupān insisted on his return and Rašid finally acquiesced; and suffered its consequences.

At the end of Letter 37, Rašid lists fourteen sons, and four daughters, as heirs to his fortune. On the heading above the list however, the number of the sons is given as thirteen. Morton finds the number of sons to be erroneous and exaggerated in comparison to the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ*, even though he admits that Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru had also mentioned thirteen sons for Rašid.¹²³

One must note that Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru's information is inserted within a section which is a *word for word* prose-rendering of the corresponding section in the versified *Zafar-nāmeḥ* of Mostowfī. Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru emphasizes that the Khājeḥ had thirteen sons "at the very time" that Amir Chupān was inviting Rašid to come back and he instead was proposing his sons to replace him.¹²⁴ This remark is presented as an interjection based on a source other than the *Zafar-nāmeḥ* that Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru was translating into prose. When dealing with a multitude of sons, historians are generally reluctant to commit to a number unless they have an authoritative document summing up the count. This document cannot be but Letter 37, which clearly provides the same information in the heading for Rašid's

¹¹⁹ In the title of Letter 37, Abarquhi states that it was meant to be a *vaṣiyyat* (will-letter) for his children, with a list of *matrukāt* (lit. "what is left behind," i.e. Rashid's estate).

¹²⁰ *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

¹²¹ Rašid probably suspected Abu-Sa`id to hold a grudge against him for not responding to his urgent fund requests when the young prince was stationed in Khorāsān; Eqbāl, *Tāriḫ-e moḡol*, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

¹²² Mostowfī, *Zafar-nāmeḥ*, *op. cit.*, II:1451; Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru, *Zayl*, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

¹²³ Morton; *The Letters*, *op. cit.*, p. 196. The Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru number is then turned around by Morton who suggests that the presumed forger used got his number from him; *idem*.

¹²⁴ Ḥāfeẓ Abru, *Zayl*, *op. cit.*, p. 126-27, Mostowfī, *Zafar-nāmeḥ*, *op. cit.*, II:1451.

list of sons, and was written a few months before his death. The number 13 in the heading is a mistake that the presumed forger who supposedly composed these fifty-four letters would have certainly avoided. If one hundred copies of this letter were sent out, it is obvious that—at most—only one copy was written by Rašid, and the rest by copyists.¹²⁵ Either Rašid inadvertently made a mistake in his count (and that can happen to fathers with numerous children), or the copyist misread and miswrote Rašid's number (13 instead of 14). The copy of Letter 37 that Hāfez-e Abru had, in hand, probably bore the number 13 in its heading, because it's almost impossible to find any other explanation for the appearance of the erroneous number 13 in both Hāfez-e Abru's account and in the *Rašidi Letters*.

Morton contends that in Letter 37, the presumed forger treated a son named Šaykhi and a son named Maḥmud as two different ones even though according to the sources they are the same person.¹²⁶ Unfortunately, the references provided by the sources are conflicting and one must resolve their discrepancies before issuing a judgment on the validity of Letter 37.

Three names appear in the sources: Maḥmud, Šaykhi and Šaykh Maḥmud. As already mentioned, Faṣiḥi gives a precise date (13th of Jumādā I 709/19 October 1309) for the birth of Rašid's son "Rokn-od-din Šaykh Maḥmud," in a location that Morton judges to be historically correct.¹²⁷ The latter is then construed as Faṣiḥi's proof of precise knowledge about the event. Faṣiḥi's information, though, presents two problems. The first is that Šaykh Maḥmud was born two months after the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ* which is dated Rabi` I 709/August 1309 and which names Maḥmud as one of Rašid's sons. The second is that the "Šaykh" in Šaykh Maḥmud's name was obviously not an epithet, for neither Rašid nor any of his sons ever reached a religious status to be regarded a *Šaykh*. It was rather an integral part of his name and reflecting the complete name of the Sufi *Šaykh* after whom he was named,¹²⁸ in the same way that Šaykh Abu Es'hāq-e Inju (r. 1344-56)

¹²⁵ Rašid confirms on several occasions his *modus operandi* for the writing of his works: that he would prepare a draft and then hand it out to fast-writing scribes (*zud-nevis*) for transferring it onto proper paper and format (*bayāz*); see for instance Rašid-od-din, *Laṭā'ef*, *op. cit.*, pp. 61 and 69.

¹²⁶ Morton, "The Letters," *op. cit.*, p. 185.

¹²⁷ Morton, "The Letters," *op. cit.*, p. 175.

¹²⁸ He may have been named after the contemporary *sufi šaykh*, Šaykh Maḥmud-e Shabastari (d. 1320), who resided in Tabriz and, even though very young at the time of birth of Rašid's son, he had already established a following for himself. Another contemporary *sufi šaykh* was Šaykh Maḥmud-e Kojuji. It is highly unlikely that Rashid's son was named after the wily administrator, Šaykh Maḥmud, whom Rashid accused to have undeservingly taken the title Šaykh-ol-mašāyekh along with Gayhkhātu's vizier Šadr-od-din who took the title Šadr-e Jahān; Rašid-od-din, *Jāme`-ot-tavārikh*, *op. cit.*, p. 448.

was named after the celebrated Šaykh Abu Es'ḥāq-e Kāzeruni (963-1035), and his name was always mentioned with the epithet “Šaykh” included.¹²⁹

Hāfez-e Abru, who is generally considered as a reliable source, names the vizier appointed by the Chupānid Šaykh Ḥasan (d. 1343) in 739/1338 as “Rokn-od-din Šaykhi-ye Rašidi” (i.e. son of Rašid), and a few pages later, uses the name “Rokn-od-din Šaykh Maḥmud” to describe the abdication of the same man from the vizierate.¹³⁰ Abd-or-Razzāq-e Samarqandi also names this Chupānid vizier as “Rokn-od-din Šaykhi-ye Rašidi.”¹³¹ The same person is next reported by Maḥmud-e Kotobi, under the name “Rokn-od-din Maḥmud b. Rašid” to have joined Mobārez-od-din Moḥammad-e Moẓaffar in Moḥarram of the year 744/1343 in an attack on the citadel of Bam after which he comes back to Kermān.¹³² Furthermore, Aḥmad b. Ḥosayn-e Kāteb, mentions that “Amir Šaykhi” had married the daughter of Mobārez-od-din Moḥammad-e Moẓaffar, and Fašihī specifies that “Rokn-od-din Šaykh Maḥmud” died in 744/1343 in Kermān.¹³³

What can be deduced from the preceding information is that we have a son of Rašid whose activities are only reported for circa 1339 and later (which concurs with the information that he was born in 1309), was in Kermān in 1343 and died there, and that, with the exception of Kotobi, all chroniclers name him as either Šaykh Maḥmud, or Šaykhi which is a well attested nickname for those who are named after a Sufi *šaykh*.¹³⁴ It makes a lot more sense to treat Kotobi's reporting of the son of Rašid's name as erroneous—an error that may also be imputed to scribal inadvertence or lack of knowledge—than to try to identify the Šaykhi (alias Šaykh Maḥmud) of the sources with the Maḥmud of the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ*, whom Rašid names without the epithet Šaykh.¹³⁵

Rashid thus had two similarly named sons, one Maḥmud and one Šaykh Maḥmud. This was not the only instance that he had named his sons similarly, for as we shall see he had named his eldest son Amir-`Ali, and two other sons as `Ali-šāh and `Ali.

We may also note that in the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ*, Rašid had envisaged the possibility of sons that would be born later on.¹³⁶ It therefore seems logical that the name of Šaykhi,

¹²⁹ Same is true for the names of other rulers and dignitaries of that period such as the Jalāyerid Šaykh Ḥasan and the Chupānid Šaykh Ḥasan.

¹³⁰ Hāfez-e Abru, *Zayl*, *op. cit.*, pp. 204 and 208

¹³¹ Samarqandi, *Matla`-os-sa`dayn*, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

¹³² Kotobi, *Tāriḫ-e āl-e Moẓaffar*, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

¹³³ Aḥmad b. Ḥasan-e kāteb, *Tāriḫ-e jadid-e Yazd*, *op. cit.*, p. 162

¹³⁴ Dehkhodā, *Loḡat-nāmeḥ*, *op. cit.*, IX:12919

¹³⁵ In Letter 35, one of the quarters is named Roknieh which must relate to Maḥmud's *laqab*. It therefore seems likely that Rokn-od-din was first the *laqab* of Maḥmud, and upon his death was adopted by his namesake Šaykh Maḥmud alias Šaykhi.

¹³⁶ In listing his sons, Rašid foresees an expansion of the group of sons by giving the same privileges to new additions (من يتوالد بعدهم): Rašid-od-din, *Vaqf-nāmeḥ*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

who was born two months later than the compilation date of the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ*, should not appear in the latter document but instead emerge in Letter 37, which was written at a much later date.

Another mystery name alluded to by Morton is Sa`d-od-din to whom two of the Letters are addressed. For the reasons provided below, it seems that Sa`d-od-din should be identified with Amir-`Ali, whom Rašid presents as the eldest of his sons in the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ*:

- 1- Sa`d-od-din's name appears at the top of the list of Rašid's children in Letter 37, i.e. the very logical place for the name of the eldest son.¹³⁷
- 2- Rašid states in the 1309 *Vaqf-nāmeḥ* that in a prior version of it, he had designated his most valiant son (*aršad*) as the main trustee (*towliat*) and his second most valiant son (*aršad-e ṣāni*) as the trust controller/protector (*ešrāf*), but had to revoke his decision because they had proved to be unworthy. Implicitly, he faults his two sons for their lack of piety and a behavior that had aroused the animosity of the rest of the children and had put them in conflict with him.¹³⁸ Rašid doesn't give us the name of the two rejected sons but provides a clue to the identity of one of them when he specifies that the children of his eldest child (*farzand-e mahin*) Amir-`Ali were eligible to participate in the rotation of trustees but not Amir-`Ali himself. Since *aršad* is commonly understood as the "eldest male" rather than the most valiant, we must assume that the initial main trustee that Rašid had appointed was Amir-`Ali.¹³⁹ Interestingly, in Letter 11, Sa`d-od-din is accused of being immersed in wine and music (i.e. impiety), and bringing ruin and depopulation to the territories assigned to him.¹⁴⁰ Sa`d-od-din must have persisted in his debauchery for Rašid to denounce his behavior in an open letter. His behavior certainly made him unfit for the trusteeship of a pious foundation such as the Rab`.
- 3- In the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ*, which is supposed to be a testimony of the donor's piety, the names of eight of Rašid's sons are reduced to a bare minimum, devoid of titles and epithets. Since Rašid refers therein to his eldest son as Amir-`Ali, we must accept the word "Amir" to be an integral part of his name (like "Solṭān" in Solṭān-`Ali or "šāh" in `Ali-šāh). Thus, Amir-`Ali is distinct from `Ali, and this ties in well with the mention of `Ali's name in Letter 37, after that of Aḥmad (i.e. in a subordinate

¹³⁷ *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

¹³⁸ Rašid-od-din, *Vaqf-nāmeḥ*, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-19.

¹³⁹ Rašid used the literal meaning of *aršad* to extricate himself from the first appointment by arguing that it is truly difficult to find out who the most valiant is and one can make mistakes; Rashi-od-din, *Vaqf-nāmeḥ*, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

¹⁴⁰ *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, p. 33

position) as inheritor of a palm-plantation near Ḥella.¹⁴¹ If `Ali was the same as the eldest son, no matter how much he had slid into disfavor, his name, if mentioned, would be written prior to any of his brothers. `Ali (without Amir) is also mentioned in seventh place in the announcement that Rašid made through Letter 24 for the marriage of his sons.¹⁴²

In comparing the list of names in the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ* with the one in Letter 37, Morton makes the implicit assumption that the former presented a complete list of all the surviving sons at that time. To the contrary, a will letter such as Letter 37 may include all sons because according to Islamic laws, the sons of concubines inherit at par with those from regular wives, whereas *vaqf* documents, generally name only the most important or the most trustworthy of the sons, or those the donor favored. By his own avow, Rašid eliminated two of his sons from trusteeship. One of them was Amir-`Ali, but the second is unnamed in the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ*. Because of the Letters, one can argue that the second removed son is Pir-Solṭān.

Indeed, as a son of Rašid, Pir-Solṭān's identity is attested by Ḥāfez-e Abru and most other historians writing about the defeat of Arpā Kāun (r. 1335-36) and the subsequent murder of the vizier Khājeḥ Ġiyās-od-din Moḥammad. Six days later, the latter's brother Pir-Solṭān was also killed.¹⁴³ The sources provide no more information on him. But according to Letter 45, he was the *ḥākem* of Georgia during the reign of Ġāzān,¹⁴⁴ and in Letter 39, one of the walled districts on the shores of a canal that Rašid had ordered to be dug near Mosul, was named after him.¹⁴⁵ Thus, with the additional information provided by the Letters, one can readily see that the only *senior* son of Rašid not to be named in the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ*, is Pir-Solṭān. He is probably the *aršad-e ṣāni* that Rašid removed from trusteeship.

As for the three other names in Letter 37 that are not included in the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ*, i.e. Homām, `Ali, and `Ali-Šāh, like Šaykhi they may have been born after the compilation of this document, or alternatively, they were considered by Rašid as unfit (perhaps due to lineage problems)¹⁴⁶ to hold a trustee position. The fact that their names appears in Letter 24 in which Rašid announces the simultaneous marriage of nine of his

¹⁴¹ *Savāneh-ol-afkār, op. cit.*, p. 211.

¹⁴² *Savāneh-ol-afkār, op. cit.*, p. 120.

¹⁴³ Ḥāfez-e Abru, *Zayl, op. cit.*, p. 196

¹⁴⁴ The expression "Pādšāh-e sa'id" was exclusively used by Rašid in reference to Ġāzān, and same is true of Abarquhi who uses it in the heading of this letter; *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, p. 240. The allotment of Georgia to Pir-Solṭān continued until the very last days of Rašid, for according to Letter 37, the revenues from that province were to be obtained through the deputies (*novvāb*) of Pir-Solṭān; *Savāneh-ol-afkār, op. cit.*, p. 209.

¹⁴⁵ *Savāneh-ol-afkār, op. cit.*, pp. 222-23.

¹⁴⁶ That may be the case of `Ali who is named as governor of Baghdad in two of the letters.

sons, does not necessarily vouch for maturity and advanced age. In 1304, Uljāyту married two of his sons, Bastām and Bāyazīd (aged seven and four respectively), on the same day.¹⁴⁷ That Il-Khānid double-wedding must have inspired Rašid to organize a multiple wedding for his sons as well.¹⁴⁸

As for the other sons mentioned in Letter 37, their names, responsibilities and rank certainly agree with what is known from other sources. Jalāl-od-din, for instance, who is named in the *Vaqf-nāmeḥ* as the new main trustee, who was important enough to be attacked independently by the vizier Tāj-od-din `Ali-šāh in his quest to secure the vizierate for himself, who was appointed administrator of Rum along with Teymurtāš son of Amir Chupān, and stands out as the most prestigious son of Rašid in all of the sources, is also portrayed by the Letters as the most powerful of Rašid’s sons.

LETTER 35

Whereas the *Jāme`-ot-tavāriḵh* was written after the fact, and with an eye on posterity, Letter 35 gives us a glimpse of the propaganda that Rašid was generating in the heath of interactions with different neighbors.

In this letter, Rašid mentions that Ġāzān had the intention to winter on the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea (Daryā-ye Rum) but decided to go to Qarabāgh instead. He gives four sets of reasons for Ġāzān’s change of plans, the first three of which are simply preludes to the fourth one. First, he mentions that the rulers of Cyprus and other principalities of Rum (i.e former Byzantium principalities) and warlords of Syria and Egypt came to pay their respects. Second, they were followed by all the dignitaries and nobles of the European islands and coastal cities (*jazāyer-e afranj*) such as Istanbul, who undertook paying the Islamic poll-tax for non-Muslims (*jezya*), and a tribute similar to what was paid to the `Abbāsīd Caliphs, Hārūn-ar-Rašīd, Ma`mun, etc. Third, with ambassadors arriving every day, came envoys from Sistān and Kābol who claimed that the warlords of Sind were ready to submit to Ġāzān. As a result, Ġāzān is said to have planned to winter in Qarabāgh, go to Neyšābur the next summer, and attack India the following winter.

Because of an emphasis on the multitude of foreign visitors, especially from Istanbul and Syria, the time frame of the letter must be circa 1302, the year in which—as we saw—the *Jāme`-ot-tavāriḵh* and the *Zafar-nāmeḥ* had reported the arrival of numerous foreign emissaries. But whereas both of these sources underlined the arrival of

¹⁴⁷ Kāšāni, *Tāriḵh-e Uljāyту*, *op. cit.*, p. 42

¹⁴⁸ Especially since the same subject offered a link to a *Šāh-nāmeḥ* episode for the *Abu-Sa`id-nāmeḥ* project; Soudavar, “The Saga,” pp. 135-36.

ambassadors (*ilchi*), in Letter 35 Rašid switched the focus of attention to the accompanying nobles and dignitaries, and presented their gifts as a payment of the *jezva*. It was a clever ploy to portray Ġāzān—in his capacity of receiver of the *jezva*—as the real Pādšāh-e Islam, and successor to the most famous of the `Abbāsīd Caliphs, in opposition to the puppet `Abbāsīd Caliph that the Mamluks had established in Cairo.

One can also read in between the lines that the proclaimed decision not to winter near the Mediterranean Sea was made to dissimulate Ġāzān's retreat from the west (perhaps because of the deteriorating position of the Il-Khānīd troops in the Syrian campaign) under the pretense of preparations for a forthcoming Indian campaign. Since Ġāzān died the following year and such a campaign never took place, it is hard to ascertain whether he had really harbored the thought of an Indian invasion. Chances are that he did not. For if he did, he would have certainly avoided publicizing it fifteen months in advance.¹⁴⁹ At the same time, since he was not going to stay in the west, it was good propaganda to claim that Ġāzān had originally set plans to winter in Donguzlu on the Aegean Sea, in order to boast how far his dominion extended.

The stated purpose of Letter 35 was to present Rašid's son Majd-od-din, with the list of imperial requirements for the coming winter. As these requests were to be copied and dealt with in different stations of the Il-Khānīd administration, Rašid saw in them a vehicle for spreading official propaganda throughout the empire. He would cleverly find excuses for Il-Khānīd retreats and setbacks, and subtly twist reality in order to project an image of power and success, and tuck them in a routine letter addressed to one of his sons or subordinates. Letter 35 is a sample of the sophisticated and artful political propaganda that Rašid was able to generate.

PROBLEMS OF METHODOLOGY

In Letter 20 Rašid provides a list of fifty one learned men to his son `Ali who, according to its heading, is the “governor” of Baġdād, with detailed instructions on goods to be sent to each of them. Morton picks one name out of this list, that of “the peerless Indian Mathematician Šams-od-din-e Hendi, resident at Delhi,” claiming that his existence is otherwise unconfirmed and construes that as part of the presumed forger's scheme to sprinkle the Letters with various references to India which “seem to tally with

¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, in a pattern that may recall Uljāyту's dealings with the Neguderis, it is possible that some contacts were initiated with them, and it is the Neguderis that Rašid is referring to when talking about the envoys from Sistān and Kābol.

those in others” but when “the Letters come under serious suspicion the opposite is true.”¹⁵⁰

That of course is one way to look at the record. A less biased approach (with less “suspicion”) would be to notice that Šams-od-din-e Hendi is not the only hitherto unknown name of the list. As a matter of fact, the late Dānešpazhuh with his encyclopedic knowledge of names could only cross-reference twenty five of the names with other sources, two with names that appear elsewhere in the Letters, and one whom he surmised to belong to a prominent family of learned men.¹⁵¹ What’s interesting though, is that none were found to be unreal or anachronistic, and for many that were cross-referenced, Dānešpazhuh provided life dates that overlapped with Rašid’s.

Four judges (*qāzis*) were included in the list (those of Kermān, Fām, Āmol and Tabriz), the identity of the latter two can be ascertained, since they had written letters in praise of Rašid.¹⁵² The information about *qāzis*, though, was not of a type readily available in the Teymurid era. And, yet, we see that the names of half of the listed *qāzis* are corroborated through independent means, and the other half are not contradicted by any other source. Thus whether looked upon as a whole or at group levels, the list has the same consistency throughout, and the case of Šams-od-din-e Hendi is no different than half of the other persons mentioned in this letter.

Unlike prominent theologians like Ḥasan b. Moṭahhar-e Ḥelli and `Azod-od-din-e Iji, the men in the list may have been famous in their own time, but the fame of many never reached the following century. It was not an easy task for a Teymurid researcher to dig through the names of the learned men of the past in order to come up with such a wide-ranging list of scholars that included mathematicians, astronomers, theologians, judges, and *ḥadiṣ* experts.

Besides **Shams**Šhams-od-din-e Hendi, there was at least one other prominent figure from India, namely Zakaryā of Multān. In addition, Sayf-od-din of Egypt who lived in Antioch, Jamāl-od-din Eslim of Tarmaz and Shekar-lab of Sayrām,¹⁵³ came from regions outside Il-Khānid domains, and Ḥojjat-od-din Musā of Mārdin, Kahf-od-din of Tarsus and Fāzel of Ḥasankeyf from the fringes or contested areas.¹⁵⁴ Overall, the list was to show the extent of Rašid’s prestige in the community of scholars and scientists whose members came from a domain even wider than the one defined by “from the Oxus to the Nile” slogan. At the same time, it gives us a clue of how Rašid built up—or

¹⁵⁰ Morton, “The Letters,” *op. cit.*, p. 170.

¹⁵¹ *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, p. (12-27).

¹⁵² *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, pp. (14), (17).

¹⁵³ Sayrām is situated to the east of the Turfan oasis in eastern Turkeṣtān.

¹⁵⁴ *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, p. 72-73.

Nile” slogan. At the same time, it gives us a clue of how Rašid built up—or actually bought—support for himself: by being magnanimous towards important communities such as that of the scholars and the learned. To have lived as long as he did, with the power and wealth that he enjoyed, in a hostile environment where every associate or subordinate was ready to stab him in the back, he certainly needed solid support from all those who counted, that is, from the pillars of the state and the supports of the realm.

STYLISTIC COMPARISON

The arguments presented so far show how the contents of the Letters concur with the sources, follow the normal progress of events in that period, and give complementary information that make sense. These can still be regarded by the skeptics as circumstantial evidence and not proof of authenticity. The one undeniable proof, however, of early compilation of these letters (i.e. about the time that Abarquhi claims to have presented his work to Khājah Ġiyās-od-din Moḥammad) is provided by the comparison of the text of the aforementioned *Al-mo`jam* of Fażlollāh Monši-ye Qazvini with the *Rašidi Letters*. For what we have in the *Al-mo`jam* is not a case of discreet plagiarism from the *Rašidi Letters*, but wholesale plagiarism of almost unparalleled magnitude. Because of the importance of the argument, I thought it best to reproduce in the Appendix the corresponding passages of the two works as first noticed by Moḥaddes-e Ormavi, especially in view of his erroneous conclusion regarding the question: who copied whom?

A simple comparison of the two texts clearly shows that sections of Rašid’s letter that were part of a lengthy discourse addressed to his son Sa`d-od-din, have been selectively chosen to be used in various parts of a work in praise of Atābak Noşrat-od-din Aḥmad (r. 1295-1334) of the Lor-e Bozorg principality. A series of advices listed for Sa`d-od-din as the administrator in charge of a province, have been turned into a list of merits for the Atābak Aḥmad, which at times does not make sense. For instance, the subject of the return of the lands unjustly confiscated for the benefit of the Divān (the central administration)—i.e. essentially for the benefit of the Il-Khān—was not a decision for a local ruler to make; it was the responsibility of the administrator representing the Il-Khān in that province. Thus Rašid could advise Sa`d-od-din to be just and return these lands to their rightful owners, but Qazvini shouldn’t have listed such returns among the accomplishments of the Atābak.

It also seems rather obvious that the plagiarist is the one who takes apart an almost continuous text and uses its different parts in various sections of his work rather than the other way around, since it is much more difficult to reassemble a disparate text

into a congruent flow. Furthermore, if Rašid's modus operandi was to search provincial chronicles as copy models for his writings, one wonders where he would have found the time to produce such an important body of work and why further cases of his plagiarism have not been detected.¹⁵⁵ In a provincial milieu, where competition was scarce, Qazvini could get away with massive plagiarism but at the Il-Khānid court where Rašid had many enemies, each trying to expose his slightest mistakes, the vizier could not.

Moreover, the accomplishments that Qazvini lists for the Atābak Aḥmad project the image of a ruler with many years of rule behind him, which, in all probability, places the work past the death of Rašid.

Finally, as Ormavi reluctantly concedes, Qazvini not only copied a hefty part of his introduction (where he praises the Atābak Aḥmad) from another work, the *Al-mo`jam fi ma`āyir-e ash`ār-el-`ajam* of Šams-e Qays-e Rāzi (see Appendix), but also formulated the title of his own work after it.¹⁵⁶ Interestingly, where his plagiarized text differs from the Rašidi original, it is due to a "cut and paste" from the Šams-e Qays-e Rāzi text.¹⁵⁷

If Qazvini used the Letters for wholesale plagiarism, other contemporaries did it more subtly. Kāšāni for instance used them in several passages of his *Tāriḫ-e Uljāyṭu* which were added within the context of the *Abu-Sa`id-nāmeḥ* project in order to create new links between episodes of the *Šāh-nāmeḥ* and events of Mongol history.¹⁵⁸ As in the case of Qazvini, Kāšāni's integration of Rašid's compositions into his own was not always successful. Whereas, Rašid's vast Qorānic knowledge allowed him to incorporate verses into his prose in a fluent and congruent manner, Kāšāni's adoption of the same was incongruent and ill-advised. For example, Rašid used the verse "like scattered locusts (Qorān 54:8)" to describe enemy troops,¹⁵⁹ while Kāšāni used the same to describe Il-Khānid troops!¹⁶⁰

The above examples provide a confirmation that in the latter years of Abu-Sa`id's reign, the Letters were used indeed as a copying source by scribes, just as Abarquhi wanted it to be.

¹⁵⁵ Rašid's style, like that of many other writers, is clearly affected by classical Persian works such as the *Qābusnāmeḥ* (see *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, p. (51) where Dānešpazhouh quotes Falina), or the *Golestān* of Sa`di (compare for instance p. 75, with the preface of the *Golestān*).

¹⁵⁶ See Rāzi, *Šams-e Qays*, *Al-mo`jam fi ma`āyir-e ash`ār-el-`ajam*, eds. M. Qazvini and Modarres-e Razavi, p. xxv). This work was composed for the Solgōrid Atābak Abu-Bakr b. Sa`d (r. 1231-60); see also footnotes of `Aqili, *Āḡār-ol-vozarā*, *op. cit.*, pp. 321-22.

¹⁵⁷ See for instance Qazvini's first paragraph in the Appendix in which he has inserted the following sentence from Šams-e Qays: بميامن شهامت و دها و محاسن حصافت رای انور خدايگانی

¹⁵⁸ Soudavar, "The Saga," *op. cit.*, p.p. 173-76.

¹⁵⁹ Kāšāni, *Tāriḫ-e Uljāyṭu*, p. 131.

¹⁶⁰ Kāšāni, *Tāriḫ-e Uljāyṭu*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

CONCLUSION

After the death of the vizier and his sons, Kāšāni decided to claim authorship of the *Jāme`-ot-tavārikh* and accused Rašid of stealing the fruit of his labor.¹⁶¹ It cast a cloud on the statesman's writings and set the stage for further accusations so much so that Moḥaddes even accused him of copying the arch-plagiarist Qazvini. And today, Morton is obstinately trying to discredit his Letters.

There is a popular saying that if a bird walks like a duck, quacks like a duck and looks like a duck, it must be a duck! In looking at the *Rašidi Letters* as a whole, one cannot escape the conclusion that if its author:

- had a detailed fiscal administrative knowledge of various province as Rašid did,
- had medicinal knowledge about various ingredients to be ordered for the Tabriz hospital and described a program of “intern” training that only a physician with Rašid's experience can devise,
- had a command of Qorānic verses that only a commentator of the Qorān such as Rašid would have,
- was able to quickly respond to intricate philosophical and religious questions asked by prominent theologians, as Rašid had done on numerous occasions,¹⁶²
- had a vast knowledge about geography that only a much traveled official such as Rašid would have,
- was in contact with so many scholars and learned men as Rašid was,¹⁶³
- had detailed information about agriculture and agricultural products that only an important landowner such as Rašid would have,
- and finally, possessed literary skills comparable to Rašid,

then he must be Rašid himself. For it is a tribute to the genius of Rašid that no other statesman of that period, or perhaps even in the entire history of Iran, ever accumulated so much power, knowledge and wealth in order to be able to write such a varied set of letters.

The existing editions of the *Rašidi Letters* certainly suffer—as many texts from that period do—from inaccuracies that may be attributed to traditional factors such as scribal inadvertence, author's exaggerations or intentional alterations of truth, that may

¹⁶¹ See for instance Soudavar, “The Saga,” *op. cit.*, pp. 174-75, 207.

¹⁶² See for instance Soudavar, “The Saga,” *op. cit.*, pp. 116-19; also, one of the volumes of the *Jāme`-ot-tašāniḡ-e Rašidi*, is entirely devoted to such questions and answers and is thus entitled *Asvela va ajveba* (Questions and Answers), and another, the *Laṡā`ef-ol-ḡaqā`eq*, contains a fair amount of them.

¹⁶³ Dānešpazhuh provides a proof of the independent circulation of Letter 38 also addressed to Ṣadr-od-din Moḡammad Torkeh, by invoking its inclusion, albeit in a modified version, in Ḥāfeḡ Ḥosayn Karbalāi's *Roḡāt-ol-janān va jannāt-ol-janān* written in 975/1596; *Savāneh-ol-afkār*, *op. cit.*, p. (37).

render the text partly incomprehensible or suspect at first glance. But as the few examples presented above demonstrate, in most cases, it's possible to reconstruct the events and obtain, through the information provided by the Letters, a more detailed picture than traditional sources permit. Because of the unusual type of information that they offer and the variety of topics that they cover, the Letters must be considered as one of the most important sources of Iranian studies in general, and Mongol studies in particular. The condemnation of such a valuable source of information cannot be taken lightly. Rather than pursue a futile exercise in condemning the *Rašidi Letters*, it is perhaps time to fully explore the vast potential that they offer for all spheres of Persian studies.

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