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The story of Ghazan and Nawrūz: changing narratives in the Chinggisid crisis of the fourteenth century

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Abstract

The fragmentation of the Ilkhanate (1258–1335) midway through the fourteenth century coincided with the publication of several verse histories that were based upon the Blessed History (*Tārīkh-i Mubārak*) of Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī (d. 1318). Seen by many as lacking originality, these texts have often been treated as a new form of literary expression rather than a source of information about key episodes in Ilkhanid history. While it may be true that the verse histories are largely reliant on other sources for information about events that occurred before their time, the choice of what to copy and how it was presented reveals a great deal about changing attitudes to power, religion, and class as the Hülegüid Dynasty weakened and new power brokers appeared. This article will analyse how four verse histories—the *Shāhnāmah-yi Chingīzī* of Shams al-Dīn Kāshānī (1312–1316), the *Zafarnāmah* of Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī (1335), the *Shāhanshāhnāmah* of Aḥmad Tabrizī (1337), and the *Ghāzānnāmah* of Nūrī Azhdarī (1361)—reproduced the biography of the prominent Ilkhanid commander, Amīr Nawrūz (d. 1297), to gauge how changing circumstances influenced their view of the past. It will be shown that, although these stories may not offer much in the way of new information about Nawrūz, they do show how writers attempted to reshape their narratives to reinforce values of piety, justice, and loyalty during the Chinggisid crisis of the fourteenth century.

Keywords: Ghazan; Ilkhanate; Nawrūz; Rashid al-Din; *Shāhnāmah*

Introduction

The final four decades of Ilkhanid rule (1258–1335) coincided with the production of a number of verse histories, based closely on the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak-i Ghāzānī* (*Blessed History of Ghazan*) of Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī (d. 1318). The potential importance of these texts has long been known to modern researchers, with J. A. Boyle enthusiastically predicting in 1974 that a careful study would help historians to develop a deeper understanding of the period.¹ Yet, nearly five decades later, these same sources have remained largely unused in literary and political histories of the Ilkhanate. Several recent studies have made passing reference to the existence of the verse histories and their significance as part of a broader Persian cultural and literary revival, but there is widespread reluctance to make use of them as historical sources due to their perceived lack of originality

¹ J. A. Boyle, 'Some thoughts on the sources for the Il-Khanid Period of Persian history', *Iran* XII (1974), p. 186.

and tendency to embellish information.² While there may be justified hesitation to accept their account of some events, there is still great scope to analyse the verse histories as artefacts of cultural life in the late Ilkhanid court. As a number of recent studies on Rashīd al-Dīn have revealed, historians were never simply impartial reporters of events, but historical agents themselves.³ The information that they chose to reproduce therefore reveals much about the changing cultural, social, and political values following the disintegration of the Ilkhanate.

The texts in question were produced between 1312 and 1361 at the Mongol administrative capital, Tabriz. The first of these histories, the *Shāhnāmāh-yi Chingīzī*, was composed by the scribe Shams al-Dīn Kāshānī at the behest of the seventh Ilkhan, Ghazan Khan (r. 1295–1304), albeit the text was not completed until the reign of his successor, Öljeitü (r. 1304–1316), most likely between 1312 and 1316. Kāshānī claimed that his history was to be a verse rendering of the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak* by Rashīd al-Dīn, which he copied very closely.⁴ His work was followed by two later verse histories: the *Ẓafarnāmāh* of Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī (1335) and the *Shāhanshāhnāmāh* of Aḥmad Tabrizī (1337), both of which were completed shortly after the death of the last effective Mongol ruler of Iran, Abū Saʿīd Bahadūr Khan (r. 1318–1335). To these three texts, we can also add the *Ghāzānnāmāh* of Nūrī Azhdarī—a verse history of Ghazan Khan’s reign, which the author completed in November of 1361 in honour of the Jalayirid ruler, Sultan Shaykh Uways (r. 1356–1374).⁵

The verse histories span a period of dramatic upheaval in Mongol-ruled Iran. The first verse histories were part of a broader campaign of literary production that celebrated the conversion of the Mongol leadership to Islam and the creation of a more centralised government that bore closer resemblance to idealised forms of Iranian autocratic kingship. Writers from across the Ilkhanate took advantage of these developments to seek office and patronage from the khans, especially Ghazan, whose reign was eulogised as a model for later Ilkhans to follow. This optimism evaporated when Abū Saʿīd died without an heir, effectively ending his dynasty in 1335. The following two decades were characterised by instability as Abū Saʿīd’s former commanders and governors competed to place their own candidates on the throne. The political turmoil was exacerbated by the plague, which struck Iran in 1347 and brought both social and economic dislocation.⁶ Coins were minted during this period in the name of multiple Chinggisid princes, but

² C. Melville, ‘The Mongol and Timurid periods, 1250–1500’, in *History of Persian Literature: Persian Historiography*, (eds.) E. Yarshater and C. Melville (London, 2012), vol. X, pp. 192–197; C. Melville, ‘Between Firdausi and Rashīd al-Dīn: Persian verse chronicles of the Mongol period’, *Studia Islamica* CIV (2007), pp. 45–65; J. Rubanovich, ‘Persian narrative poetry in the eight/fourteenth to early ninth/fifteenth centuries and the legacy of Ferdowsi’s *Shāhnāmāh*’, in *Iran after the Mongols*, (ed.) S. Babaie (London, 2019), pp. 235–269; M. Murtaḍawī, *Masʿāl ‘Aṣr ilkhānān* (Tehran, 1384/2005–2006), p. 557; C. Melville, ‘Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī’s *Ẓafarnāma* and the historiography of the late Ilkhanid period’, in *Iran and Iranian Studies: Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar*, (ed.) K. Eslami (Princeton, 1998); Gūharī, ‘Abbāsī and Maḥdavi, ‘Arziyābi jāyghāh Mughūlān va Īrāniyān dar *Shahanshāhnāmā-yi Aḥmad Tabrizī*’, *Justārḥā-yi Adabī* XLVI/1 (Spring, 1392), pp. 57–84; M. Sárközy, ‘Mongol kán—muszlim szultán—iráni padisah: a Ghāzānnāme és az iráni mongol arisztokrácia énképe a XIV. Század derekán’, *Studia Caroliensia* 3–4 (2006), pp. 31–46.

³ J. Brack, ‘Mediating Sacred Kingship: Conversion and Sovereignty in Mongol Iran’ (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2016), pp. 135–139; D. Krawulsky, *The Mongol Ilkhāns and Their Vizier Rashīd al-Dīn* (Frankfurt am Main, 2011), pp. 36–34; S. Kamola, *Making Mongol History: Rashīd al-Dīn and the Jami’ al-Tawarikh* (Edinburgh, 2019); B. Hoffman, ‘Speaking about oneself: autobiographical statements in the works of Rashīd al-Dīn’, in *Rashīd al-Dīn: Agent and Mediator of Cultural Exchanges in Ilkhanid Iran*, (eds.) A. Akasoy, C. Burnett, and R. Yoeli-Tlalim (London, 2013), pp. 1–14.

⁴ Shams al-Dīn Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh-yi Chingīzī*, (ed.) V. Qanbarī Nanīz (Tehran, 2019), p. 8.

⁵ Nūr al-Dīn (Nūrī) Azhdarī, *Ghāzānnāmāh-yi Manẓūm*, (ed.) M. Mudbirī (Tehran, 2002), p. 379.

⁶ A. Fazlinejad and F. Ahmadi, ‘The impact of the Black Death on Iranian trade (1340s–1450s)’, *Iran and the Caucasus* XXIII/3 (2019), p. 228.

true power lay with their non-Chinggisid commanders. By the middle of the fourteenth century, these commanders had become so entrenched that they established their own dynasties. These changes, which were typical of the Chinggisid crisis of the fourteenth century, were reflected in the way in which history was remembered and rewritten.

The dramatic reconfiguration of the Ilkhanate during the fourteenth century put the themes of loyalty and betrayal at the centre of the Mongol verse histories. Following the example of the *Shāhnāmāh*, almost all of the verse histories treated kings as the vessels through which God's will would be manifested. Service to the king was, therefore, often equated with devotion to God, with several verse histories characterising royal mandates as '*kish*' (creed) or '*dīn*' (faith), while rebellion against the king's orders was described as '*fitna*' (spiritual turmoil/conflict).⁷ Yet, the will of God was often difficult to comprehend, as the violent disruptions of the fourteenth century caused seemingly virtuous and pious individuals to fall victim to vengeful monarchs. Such outcomes were even harder to accept if the throne was contested or if a leader was violently overthrown. Under these circumstances, it was not always clear what chivalrous (*javānmardī*) or faithful service (*bandagī*) to a ruler entailed. Writing shortly after Abū Sa'īd's death, one author lamented: 'Where are you kings of the earth? No Caesar in Rūm (Rome, i.e. Anatolia) and no khaghan in Chīn (China) [...] who knows what game the time[s] are playing?'⁸ The crisis of the fourteenth century caused authors to re-evaluate their loyalty to religious creeds, political institutions, and social classes.

The story of Amīr Nawrūz is a particularly prescient example of how historical memory was affected by the changing circumstances. Amīr Nawrūz (d. 1297) was a prominent Mongol commander who played a central role in Ghazan Khan's conversion to Islam and subsequent rise to power, making him an important figure in both Rashīd al-Dīn's *Tārīkh-i Mubārak* and the verse histories, which focus heavily on Ghazan's life story. A strong advocate for the Islamisation of the Ilkhanid court, with close connections to the religious and political elite of Khurasan, Nawrūz was a perfect subject for Persian authors who felt increasingly comfortable interacting with their Mongol leaders. Yet, he was also a very capable commander, whose power had the potential to eclipse that of the khan. Nawrūz viewed himself as a kingmaker and led two unsuccessful rebellions to replace Ghazan in 1289–1294 and 1297. He was defeated and killed during the second uprising, but the influence of commanders such as Nawrūz continued to be a sensitive topic both during and after the reign of Abū Sa'īd, who assumed power when he was only 12 years old and relied upon a series of guardians to help him in the first decade of his rule. The status of the commanders increased following the death of Abū Sa'īd in 1335, when the Ilkhanate disintegrated into a series of warring states, each acknowledging their own ruler. This volatility led authors to repeatedly recast the story of Nawrūz to reflect changing power structures in the fragmented Ilkhanate.

The story of Nawrūz

Nawrūz was representative of the new Ilkhanid court culture of the early fourteenth century. His father Arghun Aqa (d. 1286) had been sent to investigate and then supervise tax

⁷ Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, pp. 71, 254–255, 420, 446; Ḥāḥīm Zajjājī, *Tārīkh-i Manẓūm-i Ḥāḥīm Zajjājī*, (ed.) 'A. Pīrniyā, (Tehran, 1383), vol. I, pp. 288, 295, 307; vol. II, pp. 938, 1099. I could find no evidence that any of the verse histories were copied directly from one another. They simply shared the same source material in the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak*.

⁸ Aḥmad Tabrizī, *Shāhanshāhnāmāh: Tārīkh-i Manẓūm-i Mughūlān wa ilkhānān az Qarn-i Hashtum-i Hijrī*, (eds.) M. G. Kākhī and J. Rāshkī 'A. Ābādī (Tehran, 1397), p. 865.

collection in Iran during the regency of Töregene Khatun (r. 1241–1246).⁹ In this capacity, he worked closely with a number of local princes (*maliks*) and secretaries, not least the famous Juvaynī family, with whom he built a close bond. By the time Ghazan's ancestor Hülegü (r. 1256–1265) had arrived to continue extending Mongol frontiers westward, Arghun had firmly established himself in Iran and there were even some rumours that he had converted to Islam. He was strongest in Khurasan, where he was appointed overseer (*muqtaʿ-i mamālik*) by Hülegü's heir Abaqa (r. 1265–1282) in 1265. He subsequently entered into marriage alliances with the *atābaks* of Yazd and Kirman, while also maintaining close ties with the Kartid rulers of Herat.¹⁰ These networks were inherited by his son Nawrūz, who had cordial relationships with regional rulers in Herat, Sistan, and Yazd.¹¹ The power of Nawrūz and his relatives in Khurasan meant that they were courted by successive Ilkhans, who sought their support in protecting their eastern frontier and securing the throne.

Nawrūz first appears in the histories of the Ilkhanate during the reign of Ghazan's father Arghun (r. 1284–1291). Prior to that point, Nawrūz was documented as helping Abaqa to defend against a destructive invasion by Baraq, the ruler of the Ulus Chaghadaï, in 1269–1270.¹² Once order had been restored, Abaqa left his eldest son Arghun behind to serve as viceroy of Khurasan and he used this position to bid for the throne when his father died in 1282. Arghun's claim was unsuccessful, as the council of notables (*quriltai*) named Arghun's uncle Aḥmad Tegüder (r. 1282–1284) the next Ilkhan. In spite of this reversal, Arghun contested control of his father's wives, their camps (*ordus*), and his appanages (*emchü*), which he attempted to seize violently.¹³ Aḥmad naturally viewed these moves as a challenge to his authority and, when rumours began to circulate that Arghun had conspired with his uncle Qonghurtai to depose him, the Ilkhan decided to act. He murdered Qonghurtai and dispatched an army to capture Arghun. Both Aḥmad and Arghun sought the support of Arghun Aqa's sons in this conflict and it is notable that they did not present a united front. Nawrūz's brother Lakzi Güregen sided with Aḥmad, while Nawrūz supported Arghun, who was beaten and apprehended by the larger Ilkhanid army in 1284.¹⁴ Arghun was sentenced to death, but widespread discontent among Abaqa's former courtiers led them to suddenly turn on Aḥmad. The faction opposed to Aḥmad was led by Abaqa's former bondsman Buqa Chingsang, who released Arghun before putting the Ilkhan to death. A new *quriltai* was called and, despite competition from several relatives, Arghun was able to take the throne through Buqa's support.

In spite of not being one of Arghun's more prominent supporters, Nawrūz's loyalty was rewarded in 1287 when the new Ilkhan sent his son Ghazan to serve as viceroy of Khurasan. Ghazan was 16 years old and was too young to govern on his own so Nawrūz

⁹ I. Landa, 'New light on early Mongol Islamisation: the case of Arghun Aqa's family', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* XXVIII (January 2018), pp. 77–100; G. Lane, 'Arghun Aqa: Mongol bureaucrat in Iran', *Iranian Studies* XXXIV (Fall 1999), pp. 459–482.

¹⁰ Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *Jāmʿi al-Tavārikh (JTK)*, (ed.) B. Karīmī (Tehran, 1988), p. 898; Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Shāhī Qarākhātāyān*, (ed.) M. I. Bāstānī Pārīzī (Tehran, 1976), p. 183.

¹¹ M. Hope, 'The Nawrūz king: the rebellion of Amir Nawrūz in Khurasan (688–694/1289–1294) and its implications for the Ilkhan polity at the end of the thirteenth century', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* LXXVIII (October 2015), pp. 6–8.

¹² Sayf al-Dīn Muḥammad Harāwī, *Tārīkh-nāmah-yi Harāt*, (ed.) Gh. R. Ṭabāṭābaʿī Majd (Tehran, 2016), p. 339.

¹³ J. Aubin, *Emirs Mongols et Vizirs Persans dans les remous de l'acculturation*. *Studia Iranica*, Cahier 15. (Paris, 1995), p. 34; M. Hope, *Power, Politics, and Tradition in the Mongol Empire and the Ilkhānate of Iran* (Oxford, 2016), p. 132.

¹⁴ Aubin, *Emirs Mongols*, p. 39; 'A. Āshtiyānī, *Tārīkh-i Mughūl* (Tehran, 1985), p. 243.

was named as his *atābak* (protector).¹⁵ This position made Nawrūz the pre-eminent figure in Khurasan, allowing him to strengthen his ties to Mongol vassals in eastern Iran. Over the next two years, Nawrūz interceded in the politics of regional dynasties in Herat, Sistan, and Yazd to ensure that their leaders were loyal to him personally.¹⁶ He also cultivated alliances with some of the leading religious officials of Khurasan, although he achieved mixed results in this department. The *Rawḍat al-Rayāḥīn* makes reference to a quarrel between Nawrūz and the shaykhs of Turbat-i Jām without providing any details.¹⁷ Writing several decades later in the fourteenth century, ‘Alā al-Dawla Simnānī also recalled a frosty meeting with Nawrūz during a pilgrimage to Mashhad-i Tus. The Mongol amir presented him with the gift of a horse, but the shaykh refused the offering because the amir had extorted millet from the people of Khurasan to feed it.¹⁸ The rejection of gifts from profane political leaders was a common allegorical trope in Sufi literature from this period, so we may be sceptical of Simnānī’s account. Yet, it does suggest that Nawrūz’s attempts to win support amongst the religious establishment were not universally successful.

Nawrūz also fell out of favour with his master Arghun in 1289. The Ilkhan had appointed Buqa to the head of his army and his chancellery, rendering him the most powerful figure in the Ilkhanate after the khan. His influence was unprecedented and, over time, other senior commanders and secretaries became frustrated with Buqa’s overweening authority. A vocal group informed Arghun of Buqa’s problematic behaviour. They claimed that fewer officials paid court to Arghun than his chief minister and that the khan’s orders would go unheeded unless they bore Buqa’s seal.¹⁹ These allegations had the desired effect of estranging Arghun from Buqa and it was not long before the latter began to fear for his position. He hatched a plot to overthrow Arghun and replace him with a cousin, Jushkab, but the prince betrayed the plan to the khan, who had Buqa apprehended and executed along with his sympathisers in 1289.²⁰ The betrayal of Buqa produced a marked change in Arghun, whose rule became far more autocratic. The fourteenth-century author Vaṣṣāf al-Ḥaḍrat claimed that, whereas Arghun had even pitied the sheep that were slaughtered for his table prior to Buqa’s execution, he suddenly became indifferent to the loss of human life, as he brutally purged anyone suspected of plotting rebellion.²¹ Muḥammad Shabānkāra’ī likewise noted that Arghun ceased to trust his commanders after Buqa’s plot and rumours began to circulate that Nawrūz would be next to fall victim to the khan’s insecurity.²²

It is uncertain whether there was a genuine threat to Nawrūz or not. Vaṣṣāf stated that Nawrūz was indeed accused of rebelling with Buqa, without supplying any explanation.²³ He might have fallen afoul of Arghun’s new vizier, the former physician Sa’d al-Dawla. Sa’d al-Dawla concentrated the control of revenues in his own hands, depriving provincial commanders and governors of their autonomy. Vaṣṣāf claimed that he even ordered

¹⁵ Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū’l Faraj, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus Being the First Part of his Political History of the World*, (trans.) E. A. Wallis Budge (Oxford, 1932), p. 500.

¹⁶ Hope, ‘The Nawrūz king’, pp. 456–458.

¹⁷ Darvīsh ‘Alī Būzjānī, *Rawḍat al-Rayāḥīn*, (ed.) H. Moayyed (Tehran, 1966), p. 48.

¹⁸ ‘Alā al-Dawla Simnānī, *Opera Minora*, (ed.) W. M. Thackston Jr. (Cambridge, MA, 1988), p. 190.

¹⁹ Vaṣṣāf al-Ḥaḍrat, *Tajziyat al-amṣār wa tazjiyat al-a’ṣār* (Bombay, 1853), p. 239; Rashid al-Dīn, *JTK*, p. 815; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, p. 477.

²⁰ Āshtiyānī, *Tārīkh-i Mughūl*, p. 252; S. Kamola and D. O. Morgan, ‘The Ilkhanate, 1260–1335’, in *The Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire*, (eds.) M. Biran and H. Kim (Cambridge, 2023), vol. 1, p. 205; Hope, *Power, Politics, and Tradition*, p. 142.

²¹ Vaṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, p. 242.

²² Muḥammad Shabānkāra’ī, *Majma’ al-Anṣāb*, (ed.) M. H. Muḥaddith (Tehran, 1984), p. 266.

²³ Vaṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, p. 313.

another prominent Khurasani commander, Toghan Quhistānī, to be bastinadoed for requisitioning too many horses.²⁴ There are no claims that Nawrūz faced similar chastisement, but the increased scrutiny of Sa'd al-Dawla's regime, combined with Buqa's execution, likely rendered Nawrūz far more suspicious. Rashīd al-Dīn stated that Nawrūz detained Ghazan's envoys to interrogate them about the mood at court and, while these tactics provided no clear sign that he was in danger, Nawrūz decided to make a pre-emptive attack. He ambushed Ghazan's army as they moved to Kashafrūd, south of Sarakhs, in April 1289, capturing several of his senior commanders.²⁵

The assault on Ghazan's army inaugurated a rebellion that lasted for the better part of five years. By drawing on his connections to vassal rulers in the major urban centres of Khurasan, Nawrūz was able to build a diverse army, including his relatives and their *hazāras* (nominal units of 1,000 soldiers).²⁶ He supplemented his army by mobilising the Qaraunas divisions, which had been based in Ghur and Gharjistan from the middle of the thirteenth century. They abandoned Ghazan's forces in droves, leaving their commander Aladu to submit to Ghazan on his own.²⁷ Nawrūz also cultivated an alliance with the Ögödeyid ruler Qaidu, who had become the leading powerbroker in Central Asia. Qaidu happily provided reinforcements to Nawrūz's army in the hopes of extending his authority across the Amu-darya.²⁸ This diverse coalition allowed Nawrūz to sustain an effective campaign against Ghazan, who lacked consistent support from the imperial centre. Arghun sent several squadrons to help Ghazan take back control of key towns and pastures, but these reinforcements were obliged to return west during the winter, allowing Nawrūz to recover lost ground.²⁹ The situation deteriorated further when Arghun died in 1291. His successor, Ghazan's uncle Geikhatu (r. 1291–5), paid little heed to Ghazan's requests for reinforcements.³⁰ Thus, the two sides remained deadlocked until the end of 1294, when a fracture in Nawrūz's coalition caused him to seek a rapprochement with Ghazan.

In that year, Nawrūz had a serious falling-out with his ally Qaidu. Vaṣṣāf claimed that Nawrūz took an Ögödeyid prince named Ürüng-Temür and obliged him to convert to Islam before leading a campaign to drive Qaidu's forces back across the Amu-darya.³¹ Rashīd al-Dīn confirms that Nawrūz clashed with Qaidu's army over their strategy: Qaidu's generals were mainly interested in plundering Khurasan, whereas Nawrūz wanted to impose permanent rule over the territory.³² The conquering and garrisoning of towns cost manpower and led to Nawrūz's army's being bogged down in long sieges. Qaidu's generals naturally blamed Nawrūz for their losses and their acrimony may explain Nawrūz's sudden change of heart towards his allies.³³ His perfidy also cost him the trust of Ürüng-Temür, who abandoned Nawrūz and returned to his pastures in Turkistan in the same year. Left to face the army of Qaidu on his own, Vaṣṣāf stated that Nawrūz sought support from Ghazan.³⁴ Ghazan accepted his proposal and the two

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

²⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh* (JTRM), (eds.) M. Rawshan and M. Mūsawī, vol. II, p. 1219.

²⁶ Rashīd al-Dīn, JTRM, II, p. 1217.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1222; P. Jackson, *From Genghis Khan to Tamerlane: The Reawakening of Mongol Asia* (New Haven, 2023), pp. 207–213.

²⁸ M. Biran, *Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State in Central Asia* (Richmond, Surrey, 1997), pp. 57–58.

²⁹ Rashīd al-Dīn, JTK, pp. 859–866; Aubin, *Emirs Mongols*, p. 55.

³⁰ Rashīd al-Dīn, JTRM, II, p. 1232.

³¹ Vaṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, p. 315.

³² Rashīd al-Dīn, JTK, pp. 859–866; Aubin, *Emirs Mongols*, p. 56.

³³ M. Biran, 'Mongol Central Asia: the Chaghadaids and the Ögödeids, 1260–1370', in Biran and Kim (eds.), *Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire*, vol. 1, p. 339; Aubin, *Emirs Mongols*, p. 56.

³⁴ Vaṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, p. 315.

men exchanged messages before Nawrūz met the prince in January of 1295 to seek forgiveness and pledge his allegiance. The pair then joined forces to expel what remained of Qaidu's soldiers from Khurasan before departing to their respective summer pastures.³⁵

Shortly after their separation, Ghazan received word that his uncle Geikhathu had been deposed by a group of disgruntled commanders. Some of the leading figures in the rebellion pledged their fealty to Baidu, the viceroy of Iraq, as the new Ilkhan. But there was also a faction led by Geikhathu's widows and commanders who supported Ghazan as an alternative candidate. They sped messages to Ghazan, summoning him to Azerbaijan.³⁶ This news was quickly followed by reports that Baidu had taken the throne for himself without convening the customary *quriltai* (meeting of notables) to achieve a consensus. Ghazan consulted with his supporters and, while opinions varied on the best course of action, Nawrūz advised Ghazan to march west.³⁷ Ghazan agreed and the pair moved quickly to strike Baidu's advance force at Qongqur-Oleng, near Zanjan. Ghazan's army were victorious but the prince refused to follow up his victory. Rashīd al-Dīn claimed that Ghazan halted out of feelings of compassion for his opponents, many of whom had served his father.³⁸ Yet, other Mamluk and Syriac authors make it clear that Ghazan did not have the soldiers necessary to face down Baidu's reinforcements.³⁹ Outnumbered and far from his powerbase in Khurasan, Ghazan hastily agreed to make peace on the condition that he would receive the wives, camps, and appanages of his father, while Baidu would retain the throne.⁴⁰ Oaths were sworn and the two armies departed, but Ghazan moved only as far as the southern slopes of Mt. Damavand, where he remained for four months. During this time, Baidu dispersed his army, presenting Ghazan with a golden opportunity to rally his forces in the Autumn and make a second bid for power. Nawrūz was charged with this vital operation and, having already colluded with several of Baidu's commanders to switch sides, he led a small contingent of 4,000 soldiers on a blitz through Azerbaijan, forcing Baidu to seek shelter in the southern Caucasus before he was apprehended and killed.⁴¹

Ghazan assumed the throne in Tabriz on 19 October 1295 and proceeded to reward Nawrūz with the management of both the army and the chancellery. Their triumph was short-lived. Ghazan's victory over Baidu may have been hailed as a decisive victory by later historians such as Rashīd al-Dīn, but his rivals thought his position was tenuous and attempted to overthrow him. Qaidu's ally Du'a launched an incursion into Khurasan during his absence, forcing Ghazan to scramble an army eastwards under the leadership of Nawrūz and several princes. Yet, the defensive action stalled when several of the princes who were sent with Nawrūz, led by Söge, plotted to murder the amir and seize the throne for themselves. Nawrūz learned of their plan and ambushed the rebels as they were about to spring their attack.⁴² A second, though apparently coordinated, attack was made by another prince named Arslan Oghul on the *ordu* of Ghazan in Arran at roughly the same time. This, too, was suppressed before Nawrūz was able to make his

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 315; Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, pp. 1242–1243.

³⁶ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1243. Bar Hebraeus suggests that even Baidu supported Ghazan's enthronement until the commanders flattered him and convinced him to seize power for himself (in *Chronography*, p. 500).

³⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTK*, p. 878.

³⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, pp. 1246–1247.

³⁹ Abū'l Fidā', *The Memoirs of a Syrian Prince*, (trans.) P. M. Holt (Wiesbaden, 1983), p. 24; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-ārāb fī funūn al-ādab*, (eds.) N. M. Fawāz and H. K. Fawāz (Beirut, 2004), vol. 27, p. 275; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, pp. 501–502.

⁴⁰ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1249.

⁴¹ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTK*, p. 912.

⁴² Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, pp. 1267, 1263; Vaṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, p. 328.

way to Khurasan in 1296.⁴³ By this point, it seems that the threat from Du'a had subsided, but it was not long before fresh tumult appeared within Ghazan's coalition.

Ghazan's supporters were far from homogenous and victory over their common enemy, Baidu, caused them to fight among themselves for precedence in the imperial court. Aside from Nawrūz, Ghazan drew on the assistance of the princesses and commanders who served his father and uncle. Many of them resented Baidu's rise to power, which resulted in several of them being pushed from office or even executed during his brief reign. This was the case for the family of Geikhātu's chief commander Aq-Buqa, who was murdered by Baidu during Ghazan's march west.⁴⁴ Others, such as the commander Taghachar Noyan and the former vizier Šadr al-Dīn Aḥmad Khālīdī Zanjānī, made their allegiance to Baidu conditional upon receiving high office. When their plans were frustrated, they switched sides. Taghachar, who had briefly been appointed chief commander by Baidu, was later sent to govern Anatolia, leaving him disillusioned and willing to sell his support to a higher bidder.⁴⁵ These volatile allies shared space with Ghazan's household suite from Khurasan, led by the commanders Qutluḡshah and Nurin Aqa. They had been in Ghazan's service from the time he was sent to Khurasan in 1287 and, in the case of Qutluḡshah, even served in Ghazan's personal bodyguard (*keshig*).⁴⁶ They remained loyal to Ghazan during the rebellion of Nawrūz and were undoubtedly Ghazan's most trusted advisers. These two factions—Ghazan's personal companions and the old pillars of state—competed with Nawrūz for offices and patronage in Ghazan's new government.

Ghazan's decision to award complete control of both the military and fiscal administration of the empire to Nawrūz may have been politically expedient when Ghazan assumed the throne in 1295, but it made the amir a target for other ambitious players at court. Rashīd al-Dīn makes it clear that Ghazan's old companions took a strong dislike to Nawrūz. They warned Ghazan against trusting Nawrūz when he was reconciled to the prince at the end of 1294 and they continued to council him against placing too much faith in his one-time enemy.⁴⁷ They had fought bitterly against Nawrūz in Khurasan and it was difficult for them to forget their past enmity. Ghazan's father-in-law Noqai Yarghuchi died when fighting Nawrūz in Khurasan and his sons plotted to murder him when they were placed under his command in 1295.⁴⁸ The same problem afflicted one of Nawrūz's brothers, Oyiratai, who served in the division of soldiers that was commanded by Nurin Aqa. Their mutual disrespect led to a public quarrel between Nurin and Nawrūz, which led Rashīd al-Dīn to observe: 'They thoroughly despised each other.'⁴⁹ Both Qutluḡshah and Nurin Aqa seized upon any opportunity to portray Nawrūz in a bad light to their sovereign, equating peace with him to having 'a snake as a companion'.⁵⁰

No less serious was Nawrūz's competition with the former courtiers of Arghun and Geikhātu. Nawrūz's appointment as the head of the chancellery afforded him a source of patronage to extend his support outside of Khurasan and this brought him into conflict with the empire's leading power brokers. Jean Aubin has shown how this tension manifested in Shabānkārah, where members of the Ismā'īlī Dynasty attached themselves to prominent figures in the Ilkhanid court. During the reign of Geikhātu, the Ismā'īlī princes

⁴³ Vaṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, p. 328; Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1264.

⁴⁴ P. Wing, *The Jalayirids: Dynastic State Formation in the Mongol Middle East* (Edinburgh, 2016), p. 56.

⁴⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, pp. 1256–1257; Vaṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, pp. 321–322.

⁴⁶ J. Masson Smith Jr, 'Hülegü moves west: high living and heartbreak on the road to Baghdad', in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, (ed.) L. Komaroff (Leiden, 2012), p. 158; Kamola, *Making Mongol History*, p. 42.

⁴⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTK*, p. 878.

⁴⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1269.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 1267; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh Hamadānī, *Jami'u't-Tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles*, (trans.) W. M. Thackston (Cambridge, 1998), p. 633.

⁵⁰ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTK*, p. 878.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn and Niẓām al-Dīn ingratiated themselves with Taghachar, who granted them control of Shabānkārah.⁵¹ The situation was complicated in 1295 when their relative, Jalāl al-Dīn Tayyibshāh, visited the *ordu* of Ghazan and gifted his sons to the new Ilkhan, making them part of Ghazan's household.⁵² Ghazan naturally gave one of the sons, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, a share of the government of Shabānkārah. Yet another prince, Bahā al-Dīn, sought to bolster his position by marrying Nawrūz's sister, giving him pre-eminence over his relatives. These appointments not only left Shabānkārah divided, but also led to disputes over precedence between the Ilkhan and his commanders.⁵³ Indeed, it was impossible for Nawrūz to appoint new officials without causing animosity with his rivals in Tabriz. Similar problems were reported by Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū in Kirman and by Ibn al-Fuwaṭī in Baghdad, where Nawrūz's rivals claimed that he was seizing control of the empire for himself.⁵⁴ Their allegations persuaded Ghazan, who sent an army to apprehend and kill Nawrūz in 1297.

Yet, Nawrūz refused to submit meekly. When he received word that the khan was arresting and executing his family members in Iraq, he rallied his forces and withdrew to Turbat-i Jām, where the superior Ilkhanid army won a decisive victory.⁵⁵ Nawrūz took what was left of his army to Herat, where he hoped to draw on the support of his one-time ally Fakhr al-Dīn Kart. Yet, the arrival of Qutlughshah at the head of a 70,000-strong army convinced Fakhr al-Dīn to abandon his friendship with Nawrūz and hand him over to his pursuers. The Kartid panegyrist Sayf al-Dīn Harāwī tried to absolve Fakhr al-Dīn by claiming that Nawrūz was planning to seize control of the city for himself. Yet, Harāwī harboured bitter memories of Nawrūz's attacking the city during his rebellion in 1289 and it is more likely that the author was simply trying to depict his patrons in a good light.⁵⁶ Fakhr al-Dīn's motives mattered little to Nawrūz, who was put to death on the spot by Qutlughshah. His spirited resistance, combined with the allegations of sedition, convinced many authors that Nawrūz had indeed rebelled a second time.⁵⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn gave a far more cryptic assessment. He claimed that Nawrūz denied the charges against him, while also pondering: 'God! I do not know if I am right or wrong in this. Both antagonists are Muslims.'⁵⁸ This ambiguity provided fertile soil for future authors to speculate on Nawrūz's place in the history of the Ilkhanate.

Nawrūz in the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak* and the *Shāhnāmah-yi Chingīzī*

The *Tārīkh-i Mubārak* is one of the main sources of information on the relationship between Ghazan and Nawrūz, which makes it very difficult to distinguish the 'true narrative of events' from Rashīd al-Dīn's perspective of what happened. Nevertheless, there are enough contemporaneous reports to allow us to identify points that Rashīd al-Dīn either chose to emphasise or ignore entirely. It seems that this choice was determined chiefly by how the narrative reflected on him personally. Like Nawrūz, Rashīd al-Dīn joined Ghazan's service after Geikhatu's death, which placed him outside the circle of Ghazan's long-term supporters, but also made him a potential rival to more established

⁵¹ Shabānkārah-i, *Majma' al-Anṣāb*, p. 174.

⁵² *Ibid*, pp. 177–178.

⁵³ Aubin, *Emirs Mongols*, p. 77.

⁵⁴ Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Jughrāfiyā Ḥāfiẓ Abrū*, (ed.) Š. Sajjādī (Tehran, 1999), pp. 85–87; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *al-Hawāḍith al-Jāmi'* wa *al-Tajārūb al-Nāfi'ah fī al-Mā'ya al-Sāba'a*, (trans.) 'A. M. Ayatī (Tehran, 2002), p. 295.

⁵⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1277; Vaṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, p. 342.

⁵⁶ Harāwī, *Tārīkh-nāmah-yi Harāt*, p. 449.

⁵⁷ al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-ārāb*, p. 276; Rabban Sauma, *History of Mar Yahballaha and Rabban Sauma*, (trans.) P. G. Borbone (Hamburg, 2021), p. 161; Harāwī, *Tārīkh-nāmah-yi Harāt*, p. 442.

⁵⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1278.

figures at the Ilkhanid *ordu*.⁵⁹ Sharing the same factional rivals may have rendered Rashīd al-Dīn sympathetic to the plight of Nawrūz, but his ultimate loyalty lay with Ghazan, who remained the main focus of his history. This ambiguity imparted a degree of suppleness and complexity to the story of Nawrūz in the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak*, which gave later authors room to interpret the text for themselves and attribute their own meaning to the commander's actions.

Virtually the same tendencies appear in the *Shāhnāmāh-yi Chingīzī* of Shams al-Dīn Kāshānī, who was the first author to put the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak* to verse. Indeed, the *Shāhnāmāh-yi Chingīzī* was written while Rashīd al-Dīn was still alive, which may explain Kāshānī's faithful adherence to the earlier author's account. The arrangement of the two histories is very close, with only minor stylistic alterations and omissions made by Kāshānī to avoid interruptions to the narrative flow. For example, the *Shāhnāmāh-yi Chingīzī* begins with praise of Ghazan and his brother Öljeitü before providing an account of 'the reason for devising this book' (*dar sabab-i vaq' in kitāb*), mirroring Rashīd al-Dīn's introduction, which has an 'account of the reason for writing this book' (*dhikr sabab-i ta'lif in kitāb*). Both authors then move on to an account of the Turks from the time of Noah and the Deluge to the reign of Oghuz Khan, the legendary ancestor of both the Mongols and the Muslim Turks.⁶⁰ Kāshānī eschewed the list of Turkish and Mongol tribes, which appears in the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak*, most likely because it disrupts the genealogy from Oghuz to Chinggis, before rejoining the story with a description of the 'Condition of the Mongol people and the forefathers of Chingiz Khān', in which Rashīd al-Dīn has a chapter called 'Recounting the condition of Chingiz Khān's forefathers'.⁶¹ These gobbets indicate that, with only minor abbreviations and occasional poetic digressions, Kāshānī followed the basic structure of the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak* very closely.

There is even less to separate the accounts of Rashīd al-Dīn and Kāshānī when it comes to the story of Nawrūz ('*hikāyat Nawrūz*' in the *Shāhnāmāh-yi Chingīzī*). Both the arrangement and content of Kāshānī's narrative follow those of Rashīd al-Dīn. Take, for example, this extract from the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak*, which describes the meeting between Ghazan and his commanders to plan the final assault against Nawrūz in 1297:

And on Tuesday the twentieth of Rajab Prince Kharbandah arrived from Khurasan to the court in the region of Bisutun. And on the fifth of Sha'bān in Asadabad-i Hamadan, Amir Qutlughshah arrived from the side of Mughan and after that Amir Chuban and Buladqiya came from the direction of Rayy and it was ordered that Buladqiya go to Khurasan to apprehend Nawrūz.⁶²

Kāshānī deviates from this account in style, but not in substance, to bring the narrative to life:

The emperor (*jahān-dār*) Kharbandah arrived
Coming by way of Khurasan like the sun;
Ghazan Khan kissed his face
And when he alighted at Hamadan,
There came the battle-hardened chief, Qutlughshah,
Next, Mir Qutlughqiya departed
To seize Nawrūz unawares.⁶³

At the court of that eminent shāh.
Longing for his brother, [his] breast full of love.
His heart was gladdened at the sight of him
The spirit in the body of 'Iraq 'Ajam,
Likewise, Amir Chuban, the breaker of armies [...]
Under order, by way of Rayy

⁵⁹ Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, p. 496; Kamola, *Making Mongol History*, p. 41.

⁶⁰ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, I, pp. 32, 39–64; Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, pp. 5–12.

⁶¹ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, I, p. 218; Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, p. 23.

⁶² Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1276.

⁶³ Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, p. 441.

The content of Kāshānī's narrative remained true to that of Rashīd al-Dīn, with only minor alterations. The views of both authors on Nawrūz are virtually inseparable and it was only in the later verse histories that we see significant divergence.

Perhaps the most salient point that is stressed by Rashīd al-Dīn and Kāshānī's portrayal of Nawrūz is that he was a champion of the faith. Both authors characterised Ghazan's conflict with Baidu as a war between an Islamic and a pagan ruler. Rashīd al-Dīn noted that Baidu gave patronage to Christians and that his envoy to Ghazan was a 'bakhshī' (i.e. Buddhist monk). By contrast, Kāshānī claimed that those who turned against Ghazan were doomed to failure by Heaven (*ḥalak*) and that Ghazan's secret messenger to the queens and princes of the court was the future *shaykh al-Islām* Maḥmūd Dīnavarī, a cleric who was serving in the house of his grandfather's wife, Bulughan Khatun.⁶⁴ Ghazan's victory over Baidu was therefore equated by both authors to the triumph of Islam over paganism. Kāshānī wrote that Ghazan caused 'the principles of Islam to flourish; he made the spirit of Muḥammad joyful'.⁶⁵ Upon his arrival in Tabriz on 19 October 1295, 'the destruction of temples, Christian churches, and Jewish synagogues was begun, and temples in which idols were housed, clappers, and crosses were entirely eliminated from the region of Azerbaijan, particularly Tabriz'.⁶⁶ Although Rashīd al-Dīn and Kāshānī tried to minimise the role of Nawrūz in Ghazan's conversion, both were aware that he was to thank for the more favourable situation for Muslims and Rashīd al-Dīn had Maḥmūd Dīnavarī state that 'Ghazan was most worthy of the throne because he had Nawrūz as a servant'.⁶⁷ The literary narratives of both Rashīd al-Dīn and Kāshānī worked to entwine Ghazan's leadership with the religious charisma of Nawrūz.

The religious transformation of the Ilkhanate under Nawrūz and Ghazan coincided neatly with Rashīd al-Dīn's own goal of converting the imperial ideology of the Mongols to a new form of Islamic universalism. Rashīd al-Dīn, who had converted to Islam himself, believed that it had a superior claim to truth, based on 'reason and knowledge'.⁶⁸ He championed the faith in the ecumenical religious debates that gave lustre to the court of Ghazan's brother Öljeitü (r. 1304–1316). Indeed, his contemporary, Abd Allāh Qāshānī, credited him with playing a critical role in steering Öljeitü away from the influence of Shī'ī populists towards Shāfi'ī jurists and theologians.⁶⁹ Jonathan Brack has recently shed light on the religious treatises that were penned by Rashīd al-Dīn to inform a new culture of pious kingship under the Ilkhans. Rashīd al-Dīn appears prominently in these texts as the khan's religious confidant and adviser—a role that he abjures in the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak*.⁷⁰ It is therefore possible that Rashīd al-Dīn portrayed Ghazan and Nawrūz as enjoying the kind of relationship that he had hoped to cultivate with Öljeitü at the start of the fourteenth century. Nawrūz's success in spreading Islam at Ghazan's court certainly coincided with that of Rashīd al-Dīn during the reign of his brother.

Viewing history through the same polemical lens, Rashīd al-Dīn turned Nawrūz's victory over Baidu into the victory of Islam over paganism. Ghazan's father was a pious Buddhist and the prince had been raised to follow in his footsteps. Ghazan had even built temples in Khurasan, before Nawrūz pushed him to accept Islam.⁷¹ Vaṣṣāf

⁶⁴ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTK*, p. 904; Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, p. 429.

⁶⁵ Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, p. 436.

⁶⁶ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTK*, p. 914.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 906.

⁶⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1255.

⁶⁹ 'Abd Allāh Qāshānī, *Tārīkh-i Pādshāh Sa'īd Ghiyāth al-Dunyā wa al-Dīn Ūljāytū Sultan Muḥammad Ṭayyib Allāh Marqada*, (ed.) M. Hamblī (Tehran, 1969), p. 76.

⁷⁰ J. Brack, *An Afterlife for the Khan: Muslims, Buddhists, and Sacral Kingship in Mongol Iran and Eurasia* (Berkeley, 2023), p. 15.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

claimed that Nawrūz first suggested that Ghazan should convert when they were reconciled in 1294, but Rashīd al-Dīn argued that it was during their march against Baidu. The proposal came at a critical moment in Rashīd al-Dīn's story, after Ghazan met the vanguard of Baidu's army at Qongqur-Oleng. During the ensuing peace negotiations, Ghazan withdrew, leaving Nawrūz to finalise the agreement. Before his departure, Nawrūz asked Ghazan to consider accepting the faith, to which the prince responded: 'This thought has been on my mind for a long time.'⁷² With this preliminary agreement, Nawrūz entrusted a valuable jewel to the prince as a reminder of their conversation. Dā'ūd Banākātī, another of Rashīd al-Dīn's copyists, was more explicit and stated that this pledge was a tacit acknowledgement of the precariousness of their position. Nawrūz remained with Baidu to allow Ghazan to make a strategic withdrawal before their enemy received further reinforcements. The Ilkhan therefore swore to convert to Islam if Nawrūz's God would 'free him from this fearful peril'.⁷³ Nawrūz's gift served as a reminder of Nawrūz's service to Ghazan and the obligation this imposed on the prince in the event that he returned alive. Ghazan duly agreed to convert to Islam when Nawrūz extricated himself from Baidu's clutches, having secured alliances with the Ilkhan's leading commanders.⁷⁴ His success entwined the fate of Ghazan with the triumph of the faith.

Other authors were more equivocal in linking Ghazan too closely with Nawrūz's religious reforms and persecutions. The Mamluk author Ibn al-Jazarī cited the account of Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥammūya, who presided over Ghazan's conversion, noting that the young prince seemed nervous and confused as he performed the profession of faith (*shahada*). Indeed, it was Nawrūz who showed Ṣadr al-Dīn hospitality and insisted on his participation in Ghazan's conversion.⁷⁵ In his narrative, Nawrūz was the driving force behind the prince's conversion. The attacks on non-Muslim communities, reported by Rashīd al-Dīn after Ghazan's coronation, likewise appear to have been almost entirely instigated by Nawrūz. The Armenian bishop Stéphanos Orbélian reported that Ghazan disavowed any knowledge of the persecution of Christians in his meeting with King Het'um of Cilicia shortly after his enthronement.⁷⁶ The continuator of Rabban Sauma's history of the Catholicos Mar Yahballaha III claimed that Het'um had in fact paid a ransom to ensure that some churches were spared. Yet, Ghazan was still willing to give Mar Yahballaha an audience and receive a blessing.⁷⁷ He and his monks received a much more positive reception from Ghazan one year later, when Ghazan renewed the tax exemptions that were customarily granted to all religious institutions by the Mongols. Indeed, the khan drank wine with the Catholicos and agreed to be sensed by him in July of 1296, much to the chagrin of Nawrūz and his supporters, who continued to extort money from the Christians.⁷⁸ The same clemency towards Christians and Jews was attested by the Mamluk sources who documented Ghazan's invasion of Syria in 1300. They state that Ghazan proclaimed that it was incumbent on him to protect the property of non-Muslims who paid the *jizya* in the same way as he protected the property of faithful

⁷² Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1254.

⁷³ Dā'ūd Banākātī, *Tārikh-i Banākātī: Rawḍat Ūlī al-Albāb fī Ma'rifat al-Tavārikh wa al-Ansāb*, (ed.) J. Shi'ār (Tehran, 1969), p. 453.

⁷⁴ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1255.

⁷⁵ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ta'rikh Hawāḍith al-Zamān wa Anbā'ia wa Wafiyāt al-Akābir wa al-A'yān min Anbā'ia*, (ed.) 'U. Tadmurī (Beirut, 1998), vol. 1, pp. 254–255; C. Melville, 'Pādshāh-i Islām: the conversion of Sultan Maḥmūd Ghāzān Khān', *Pembroke Papers* 1 (1990), pp. 159–177.

⁷⁶ Stéphanos Orbélian, *Histoire de la Siounie*, (trans.) M. F. Brosset (St. Petersburg, 1864), p. 262.

⁷⁷ Sauma, *History of Mar Yahballaha and Rabban Sauma*, p. 145.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 153–155.

Muslims.⁷⁹ Thus, Ghazan appears to have been far less enthusiastic about imposing Islam on his subjects than Rashīd al-Dīn implies. The initiative came from Nawrūz, whose aggressive support for the faith won him popular support with Muslims across the empire.

Yet, devotion to Islam was not the only point that Rashīd al-Dīn chose to emphasize in his story of Nawrūz. He also stressed the role of Ṣadr al-Dīn Zanjānī (d. 1298) in the amir's downfall. Zanjānī had come to prominence during the reign of Ghazan's uncle Geikhatu (r. 1291–1295) due to his connections with the powerful Mongol commander Taghachar (d. 1296), who served as the bodyguard (*keshik*) of Abaqa Khan (r. 1265–1282) and commanded the khan's personal army in Iraq-i 'Ajam.⁸⁰ Geikhatu was reputedly very generous and his liberality was matched only by that of Zanjānī, who satisfied the khan's seemingly limitless demand for fresh revenue. Rashīd al-Dīn claimed that Zanjānī was only able to cover Geikhatu's exorbitant costs through borrowing, which plunged him into debt and damaged his reputation following Geikhatu's overthrow in 1295. When his creditors demanded their money, Zanjānī decided that he would be better served by switching loyalties to Ghazan on the condition that he be returned to his former position of vizier. Ghazan agreed, but subsequently appointed Nawrūz as the head of both the army and the *divān* when he came to power.⁸¹ This dual appointment relegated Zanjānī to a subordinate position and his anger caused him to plot against Nawrūz.

In fact, Rashīd al-Dīn claimed that Zanjānī was so jealous of Nawrūz's position that he confected false evidence of treason against him. Ṣadr al-Dīn knew of a merchant named Qayṣar, who plied his trade between Baghdad and Egypt and regularly visited Nawrūz. He posted one of his companions at Baghdad to inform him of Qayṣar's movements and, once he had left for Cairo, Ṣadr al-Dīn forged a letter from Nawrūz to the Mamluk sultan proposing an alliance. The letter stated that Nawrūz wished to promulgate Islam, but the khan's commanders were preventing him from fulfilling his ambition. He therefore called on the sultan to invade from the west, while Nawrūz would lead a rebellion in Iran to topple Ghazan and install himself as sultan. Zanjānī had the letters planted on Qayṣar before arresting him in Baghdad. These letters alone were not enough to convict Nawrūz and Ṣadr al-Dīn had more letters forged from Nawrūz to his brother Ḥajjī Narin, telling him to prepare his army ahead of the Mamluk invasion. When Ghazan summoned Nawrūz's brothers to answer questions relating to Qayṣar, the fresh forgeries were discovered and Ghazan ordered their execution. An army was then dispatched to Khurasan under the command of Ghazan's trusted companions Qutluḡshah and Buladqiya to capture and kill Nawrūz.⁸²

Both Rashīd al-Dīn and Kāshānī were unequivocal that the charges against Nawrūz were false. Kāshānī had Ghazan describe Zanjānī as 'that gibberish speaker' and explicitly states that he wrote 'false letters' and got Nawrūz's brother, Ḥajjī Narin, drunk in order to place the 'letters he forged' in his satchel (*qabturqai*).⁸³ Kāshānī went into dramatic detail, recalling how Nawrūz's relatives and even their children were rounded up for trial and that 'no screaming or truthfulness was beneficial [to them]'. Both they and Ḥajjī were beheaded 'unjustly' according to Kāshānī.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, Nawrūz sought sanctuary in Herat, claiming that he had missed three days of prayers and that he would perform

⁷⁹ Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā al-Yūnīnī, *Early Mamluk Historiography: al-Yūnīnī's Dhayl Mir'āt al-zaman*, (trans.) Li Guo (Leiden, 1998), p. 141; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-ārāb*, p. 278.

⁸⁰ S. Hirotsuchi, 'The Qaraunas in the historical materials of the Ilkhanate', *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* XXXV (1977), p. 178; J. Aubin, 'L'ethnogenese de Qaraunas', *Turcica* I (1969), p. 87.

⁸¹ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTK*, p. 911; Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, p. 429.

⁸² Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, pp. 1272–1276; Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, pp. 438–441.

⁸³ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1275; Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, p. 440.

⁸⁴ Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, p. 440.

his devotions under the protection of the local prince Fakhr al-Dīn Kart (r. 1295–1307).⁸⁵ It was there that Ghazan's army finally caught up with him and he was betrayed to his pursuers by his host, Fakhr al-Dīn. In a confused state, Nawrūz asked for a sword so that he might face his enemies, saying: 'Then I will be both a warrior and a martyr.'⁸⁶ He was denied this last honour and was summarily executed by Ghazan's commander, Qutlughshah.

While other sources also made note of Ṣadr al-Dīn's role in Nawrūz's downfall, it was far from the only cause of his demise. The prominence of Ṣadr al-Dīn in Rashīd al-Dīn's account reflected his own antipathy towards the former vizier. According to the *Tārikh-i Mubārak*, shortly after Nawrūz was toppled, Ṣadr al-Dīn was appointed as the head of the *dīvān*, where he became envious of the influence that others such as Qutlughshah and Rashīd al-Dīn enjoyed over Ghazan. Ṣadr al-Dīn once again determined to undermine his rivals through deception. He told Ghazan that Qutlughshah had misappropriated the revenues of the southern Caucasus, leaving the treasury empty and the common people destitute. Qutlughshah was scolded by Ghazan for his mismanagement and the relationship between the two men became cold as a result of the allegations. Bewildered as to his change in fortune, Qutlughshah questioned Ṣadr al-Dīn, who told him that Rashīd al-Dīn had slandered him to Ghazan. Qutlughshah angrily confronted Rashīd al-Dīn, who professed ignorance of the whole affair and demanded to know where he had received his information. Qutlughshah refused to name Ṣadr al-Dīn, so Rashīd al-Dīn went directly to Ghazan with his grievances. Ghazan summoned the concerned parties and obliged them to tell what they knew. It soon became obvious that Ṣadr al-Dīn had been turning the khan's leading officials against one another. He was questioned before being put to death.⁸⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn's earlier account of Nawrūz's demise at the hands of Ṣadr al-Dīn therefore plays a critical role in setting the stage for his own troubles with the devious vizier. The shared enmity of both men for Ṣadr al-Dīn leaves the reader with a sympathetic view of Nawrūz, who was killed under false pretences.

Yet, Rashīd al-Dīn did not entirely exonerate Nawrūz of wrong-doing. His sympathy for the Mongol commander was of secondary importance to his greater goal of portraying Ghazan as the renewer of Islam and the first of a new generation of pious Mongol rulers.⁸⁸ His loyalties to Ghazan took precedence over any other attachments. Besides, Nawrūz had been unfaithful in the past. Rashīd al-Dīn attributed his rebellion in Khurasan to his pride, noting that Nawrūz was 'by nature stubborn and proud' and, during his time at the court of Qaidu, he 'kept on as haughty as before', thereby alienating the Ögödeyid commanders.⁸⁹ Pride was intimately tied to rebellion in the *Tārikh-i Mubārak*, which used it to explain the earlier conspiracy of Buqa. Kāshānī concurred that Buqa's arrogance (*ghurūr*) caused all to hate and loath him. Kāshānī even devised a jaunty rhyme for the occasion, noting that Buqa's swollen ego (*sarigāh*) had caused his decapitated head to be stuffed with straw (*khūdākāh*).⁹⁰ Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī elaborated on Kāshānī's work, noting that pride was the worst sin because it was the crime committed by Satan against God: 'And if there is any pride in your heart, know that, like Iblis, it is from the fire. When a man boasts beyond his strength, he ought to take God as his guide. When Iblis became too haughty to obey, as profit from his action, he was

⁸⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1278.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1280.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1282–1285.

⁸⁸ S. Kamola, 'History and legend in the *Jāmi' al-tawārikh*: Abraham, Alexander, and Oghuz Khan', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* XXV (2015), p. 565; Kamola, *Making Mongol History*, p. 30; Brack, 'Mediating Sacred Kingship', p. 6.

⁸⁹ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTK*, p. 857.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

accursed.⁹¹ Displays of pride before the king indicated that a vassal did not know his proper place in the cosmic hierarchy. Kāshānī advised his readers to beware of arrogant behaviour and instead follow the example of Rashīd al-Dīn, who always sought to do good for others.⁹²

Nawrūz continued to behave with his former haughtiness when Ghazan appointed him over the *divān* and the army. He was sent to Khurasan to protect the eastern borders and, when he was summoned back to court, he refused, telling Ghazan that his wife Toghan Khatun had fallen ill and that he would tend to her first before presenting himself to the khan. Nawrūz's tactlessness angered Ghazan and gave his rivals the opportunity to accuse him of sedition.⁹³ Nawrūz's pretext for not paying Ghazan for court appears to have been legitimate, as his wife Toghan died of her illness, but he never had the opportunity to redeem himself. Although Nawrūz had not committed an open act of rebellion, his pride was enough to see him condemned. When Ghazan's commander Qutlughshah apprehended Nawrūz at Herat, he asked why Nawrūz had rebelled against Ghazan. Kāshānī claimed that Nawrūz refused to answer to anyone but Ghazan.⁹⁴ This final act of pride was enough to see him cut in half on the spot. Rashīd al-Dīn and Kāshānī were intent on elevating the khans to the status of supreme autocrats and they would not countenance partners.

The biographical profile of Nawrūz in the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak* and the *Shāhnāmāh-yi Chingīzī* is therefore highly complex. On the one hand, Rashīd al-Dīn and Kāshānī celebrated his strong advocacy of Islam and the role he played in the conversion of Ghazan. He was also a competent commander, whose military and diplomatic strategy defeated Baidu and elevated Ghazan to the throne. Yet, his success went to his head and he quickly lost the support of his fellow commanders before showing signs of disloyalty to the khan. His final downfall at the hands of Ṣadr al-Dīn Zanjānī may have been unjust, but his former indiscretions made it prudent that Ghazan should remove this potential source of danger as part of his greater strategy to concentrate power in his own hands.

Competing loyalties

The *Tārīkh-i Mubārak* became a template for historians to follow throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It appealed to rulers who wanted to link themselves to the firm, benevolent form of kingship that was attributed to Ghazan in Rashīd al-Dīn's history. It was also popular among the Persian secretarial class, who believed that such kings acted as the Shadow of God on Earth, spreading justice and protecting the faith across their domain. Yet, the ideal very rarely matched the reality and, when Ghazan's nephew Abū Sa'īd came to the throne at the age of nine in 1317, it allowed military strongmen and regents to build their own regional powerbases before the khan died in 1335, plunging the realm into civil war. Authors who wrote during this period had to pivot from writing for kings to writing for their viziers and commanders, who often enjoyed greater permanence than the monarchs they served. Under these unstable circumstances, the tragic story of a loyal commander who fell out of favour with his ruler and was unjustly put to death drew obvious comparisons with contemporary actors. It allowed

⁹¹ Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī, *Zafarnāma* (ZS), (ed.) M. Sharīfzādah (Tehran, 2009), vol. X, pp. 162–163; L. J. Ward, 'The Zafar-nāmāh of Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī and the Il-Khān of Iran' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Manchester, 1983), vol. III, p. 320.

⁹² Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, p. 415.

⁹³ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1268; Kamola, *Making Mongol History*, p. 47.

⁹⁴ Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, p. 443.

authors such as Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī and Aḥmad Tabrizī to use the story of Nawrūz to address the rise of non-royal commanders, while also reinforcing the values of piety, loyalty, and justice that they prized in a ruler.

Qazvīnī and Tabrizī wrote their histories at the end of Abū Saʿīd's rule. Although both authors copied the earlier sections of their histories from Rashīd al-Dīn, they brought their account of events to their own time, reporting what they had witnessed and heard at the Ilkhanid court. Qazvīnī completed his *Ẓafarnāmah* in the year of Abū Saʿīd's death (1335). His last entry concerned a group of commanders who rampaged through the khan's camp in 734/1333–1334, angry that he had appointed a new overseer in the city of Shiraz without consulting them.⁹⁵ The ringleaders were arrested and sent to prisons throughout the empire, but it was an augury of things to come. Two years later, Aḥmad Tabrizī completed his *Shāhanshāhnāmah* at the court of Shaykh Ḥasan Buzurg (r. 1340–1356)—a commander who had temporarily seized control of Tabriz in the name of a prince called Muḥammad Khan. He finished his work with a chapter on the 'State of the three emperors' (*sefat-i se pādishāh*) in reference to Muḥammad Khan in Tabriz, Toghai Temür Khan in Khurasan, and Mūsā Khan in Iraq.⁹⁶ Mongol rule had occasionally been tumultuous and unpredictable, but there had always been a clear centre of power. Hence, the political jockeying between three different regional courts caused Tabrizī to lament that 'there is no such action in the *Shāhnāmah*; no one recalls such a thing'.⁹⁷ In the absence of a strong khan, he pinned his hopes on the commander Ḥasan Buzurg, whom he described as both 'royal and just', but he too was evicted from Tabriz in the following year, leaving Tabrizī to an uncertain fate.⁹⁸ The instability was bound to have an impact on how each author chose to reproduce Rashīd al-Dīn's history.

Even the early texts of Rashīd al-Dīn and Kāshānī show signs of subtle editing during the authors' lifetime in order to keep contemporary readers happy. The most obvious example of such an interpolation is in the case of battles. The Mongol khan, his intimate companions (*ināqs*), and his commanders (*noyans*) valorised heroism in battle. Participation in warfare ensured that soldiers received a share of the loot as well as the prestige, but it also helped to build bonds between the ruler and his chief officials, who would celebrate their victories with banquets at which they would regale one another with their exploits. Some of the most notable battles of Ghazan's reign were fought against the Mamluks and the number of commanders swelled with every retelling. During his first attack on the Mamluks in 1299, Rashīd al-Dīn listed 13 commanders.⁹⁹ Kāshānī listed the same number, but he altered the names and the presentation of the commanders. As with Rashīd al-Dīn, he began by listing Qutlughshah and Satalmish before introducing a new sub-heading entitled 'Amīr Choban's manly display' (*mardī nimūdan-i Amīr Chūpān*).¹⁰⁰ Then follows a list that closely corresponds to that of Rashīd al-Dīn, albeit that he replaced the last name given by the earlier author—Kör Buqa—with Ḥajjī Toghai, the son of Sutay Noyan.¹⁰¹ Sutay had assumed the governorship of Diyarbakr in Öljeitü's reign and he would hold the position throughout the time of Abū Saʿīd, allowing his son Ḥajjī Toghai to become entrenched in the region. Ḥajjī Toghai would go on to form a semi-

⁹⁵ Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī, *Ẓafarnāmah: Facsimile of Manuscript, Facsimile of the Manuscript Contained in the British Library Or. 2833* (Tehran, 1999), vol. II, p. 1472; Ward, 'The Ẓafar-nāmah', p. 671; C. Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan and the Decline of the Ilkhanate, 1327–37: A Decade of Discord in Mongol Iran* (Bloomington, 1999), p. 32.

⁹⁶ Tabrizī, *Shāhanshāhnāmah*, p. 864.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 865.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 872.

⁹⁹ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, p. 1292.

¹⁰⁰ Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmah*, p. 456.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 458.

independent amirate in south-eastern Anatolia for two decades after Abū Saʿīd's death before being overthrown by Choban's descendant, Ḥasan Kuchik.¹⁰² The later verse histories were obliged to make further amendments, with Qazvīnī's multiplying the number of commanders from 13 to 33 in the *Ẓafarnāmah*. While some of the names that were listed by Qazvīnī may be accounted for by the fact that he most likely borrowed them from the *Tārīkh-i Vaṣṣāf*, not all of the names appear in that source either.¹⁰³ Instead, it seems that Mustawfī simply added the names of those who had risen to power in the courts of Öljeitü and Abū Saʿīd following Rashīd al-Dīn's death.

One of these commanders was Choban Noyan, who had been a leading commander during Ghazan's reign. His fortunes improved dramatically following his heroic performance in Ghazan's last invasion of Syria in 1303. The attack was a disaster and the Mongols had been routed with heavy losses. In fact, more may have been killed had it not been for Choban's bravely guarding the escape of his compatriots. His heroism ensured that he was one of the few commanders not to be punished in the subsequent inquiry into the debacle.¹⁰⁴ Ghazan died the following year, but Choban retained his position under the new khan Öljeitü. Indeed, he reaffirmed his military brilliance during the invasion of Gilan in 1307. The invasion was yet another blow to the Ilkhanate's prestige, as Öljeitü's commander-in-chief Qutlughshah was killed after making an unnecessary attack on Tulim. Choban, by contrast, had untrammelled success in capturing Isfahbad and Gaskar, before returning in triumph to Öljeitü and being appointed commander-in-chief.¹⁰⁵ He held this position well into the reign of Abū Saʿīd, over whom the verse histories claim he was made protector. Aḥmad Tabrizī, in particular, stated that he had been named the 'protector' and 'shepherd' (i.e. *chūpān*) of the army and the world by Öljeitü, and he retained this position for nearly ten years before he was violently deposed in 1327.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, Choban's descendants remained in prominent positions, as one of his daughters (Baghdad Khatun) married Abū Saʿīd and one of his granddaughters (Dilshād Khatun) married Ḥasan Buzurg. This strategic marriage with the Chobanids played no small part in Ḥasan Buzurg's seizing control of Azerbaijan in 1337. Yet, it also meant that he was easily expelled from Tabriz by another of Choban's grandchildren, Ḥasan Kuchik, in 1338.¹⁰⁷ Both Qazvīnī and Tabrizī had to tread carefully when touching upon the legacy of Choban and this had an influence on their perceptions of Nawrūz.

Nawrūz and Choban shared a great deal in common. Both men served as protectors for young princes during the early stages of their careers (Nawrūz for Ghazan and Choban for Abū Saʿīd), granting each a claim to the gratitude of their respective rulers. This gratitude, and possibly even obligation, on the part of the khans to Nawrūz and Choban caused both men to be given virtually absolute power to run the government. Their sudden rise to power alienated rival courtiers and commanders, who slandered them to their respective rulers and ultimately brought about their downfall.¹⁰⁸ Yet, both men were treated with a

¹⁰² M. Gül, *Orta Çağlarda Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu* (Istanbul, 2010), p. 118; M. Hope, 'The political configuration of late Ilkhanid Iran: a case study of the Chubaniid Amirate (738–758/1337–1357)', *Iran* (2021), p. 8 (DOI: 10.1080/05786967.2021.1889930).

¹⁰³ Qazvīnī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, II, p. 1392; Ward, 'The Ẓafar-nāmah', p. 491.

¹⁰⁴ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTRM*, II, pp. 1313–1315.

¹⁰⁵ C. Melville, 'The Ilkhān Öljeitü's conquest of Gīlān (1307): rumour and reality', in *The Mongol Empire and Its Legacy*, (eds.) R. Amitai-Preiss and D. O. Morgan (Leiden, 1999), pp. 100–102; C. Melville, 'Abū Saʿīd and the revolt of the amirs in 1319', *L'iran Face à la Domination Mongole*, (ed.) D. Aigle (Tehran, 1997), p. 92.

¹⁰⁶ Tabrizī, *Shāhanshāhnāmah*, p. 750.

¹⁰⁷ Wing, *The Jalayirids*, p. 92; Hope, 'Chubaniid Amirate', p. 8; A. I. Āshtiyānī, *Tārīkh-i Mughūl* (Tehran, 1930), p. 465.

¹⁰⁸ C. Melville, 'Wolf or shepherd? Amir Chupan's attitude to government', *The Court of the Ilkhans, 1290–1340*, (eds.) T. Fitzherbert and J. Raby (Oxford, 1996), p. 79; Melville, 'Revolt of the amirs', p. 97.

degree of sympathy in the subsequent historiographical literature for their public displays of piety and the ongoing presence of their relatives at the khan's court. Choban was killed by Abū Sa'īd in 1327 after his son Dimashq was found to have had an affair with one of Öljeitü khan's widows. He was obliged to flee east before stopping in Herat, where he, like Nawrūz, was betrayed by the Kartid castellan to the pursuing Ilkhanid soldiers and was executed.¹⁰⁹

The parallels between the stories of Nawrūz and Choban were obvious to historians in the fourteenth century, who at times appear to have deliberately conflated the two commanders in their narrative. Choban was listed by Rashīd al-Dīn as being among a host of Mongol commanders who defected from Baidu to Ghazan in 1295. When he came to proffer his fealty, he and another commander, Qurumshi, professed their desire to 'join Nawrūz and Qutlughshah in their bravery', establishing the earlier commander as a model of behaviour.¹¹⁰ Yet, Choban was not mentioned again by Rashīd al-Dīn in Ghazan's rise to power. Kāshānī deviated slightly from this script to accentuate the importance of Choban's submission. In his version, he claimed that 'Amīr Chūpān came to his majesty before all [other] amīrs'.¹¹¹ This was clearly an exaggeration, as Choban had joined Ghazan alongside other commanders, not least Taghachar Noyan, the governor of Anatolia, and the aforementioned Qurumshi. Nevertheless, Choban was Öljeitü's commander-in-chief at the time at which Kāshānī wrote the *Shāhnāmāh*, so he needed to be the first to join with Ghazan. Qazvīnī also enhanced the importance of Choban and his family, strategically inserting Choban's ancestors at important historical events, from Hülegü's conquest of Baghdad in 1258 to Abaqa Khan's successful defence of Khurasan against a Chaghadayid attack in 1270.¹¹² Following Kāshānī's lead, he made a point of noting that Choban was the first of Baidu's commanders to join Ghazan, adding that 'before him the sultans of the world were as slaves'.¹¹³ This statement was certainly true for the first half of Abū Sa'īd's reign, when Choban assumed almost absolute control of the realm on the child khan's behalf. Introducing Choban into the narrative of Ghazan's early career not only gave him a claim to status and power in the reign of his grandson Abū Sa'īd; it also drew closer comparisons between him and Nawrūz.

Both Qazvīnī and Tabrizī had Choban mimic Nawrūz's more notable achievements in order that some of his charisma would rub off on the Chobanids. Aḥmad Tabrizī had a particular reason for replacing Nawrūz with Choban, since Nawrūz's nephew Arghunshah supported Toghai Temür, one of the two other rival kings who were contesting for power with Ḥasan Buzurg. Indeed, he had attempted to steal control of Azerbaijan from Tabrizī's patron just prior to the completion of his *Shāhanshāhnāmāh* and would attempt to do so again in 739/1338–1339.¹¹⁴ Tabrizī's account of Nawrūz is correspondingly rather perfunctory, but the author could still see the potential for appropriating some of Nawrūz's achievements for his own patron. The most notable instance of such appropriation was Tabrizī's claim that Choban, not Nawrūz, led the vanguard of Ghazan's army to victory over Baidu's army. Tabrizī claimed that 'his fame (lit. name) [grew] one-hundred fold from that day on', but the credit actually belonged to Nawrūz, who was responsible for this victory in the three earlier versions of the tale.¹¹⁵ Qazvīnī was not beyond playing the same game and, in his account, Choban was given a parallel

¹⁰⁹ Melville, 'Wolf or shepherd?', p. 89; Melville, *Fall of Amir Chupan*, p. 19.

¹¹⁰ Rashīd al-Dīn, *JTK*, p. 912; Vaṣṣāf-i al-Ḥaḍrat, *Tajziyat al-amāsh*, p. 322.

¹¹¹ Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmāh*, p. 430.

¹¹² Qazvīnī, *Ẓafarnāmāh*, II, pp. 1207, 1264–1265, 1274; Ward, 'The Ẓafar-nāmāh', pp. 99, 207–208, 229.

¹¹³ Qazvīnī, *ZS*, II, p. 266.

¹¹⁴ J. Aubin, 'Le *quriltai* de Sultan Maydān (1336)', *Journal Asiatique* CCLXXIX (1991), p. 183; S. Mahendrarajah, *A History of Herat* (Edinburgh, 2022), p. 61.

¹¹⁵ Tabrizī, *Shāhanshāhnāmāh*, p. 704.

role to Nawrūz in putting down the revolt of prince Söge.¹¹⁶ While Nawrūz was busy battling Söge's rebellion in the east, Qazvīnī claimed that Choban led an army to deal with his accomplice Arslan Oghul in Arran, thereby winning him a greater reputation in the eyes of his readers.

The close parallels in the stories of Choban and Nawrūz led to the latter being treated as a paragon of chivalry at the end of Abū Sa'īd's reign. Qazvīnī provided the most favourable view of the commander in his reconstruction of the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak*. He almost entirely omitted any mention of Nawrūz's first revolt against Arghun in 1289, noting simply that Nawrūz 'turned away from him [Ghazan]' and 'dislike sprang up between the one and the other' until Nawrūz returned to obedience.¹¹⁷ Qazvīnī went on to minimise any negativity from his earlier rebellion by portraying Nawrūz as both contrite and reformed. Having tasted Ghazan's wrath, he pledged: 'I have been your enemy and have sought power, and you have been very angry with me, but now I am penitent and will become your messenger. Although I am fearful of Baidu, I despise myself; in this matter of your life, I cannot remain aloof.'¹¹⁸ This self-effacing loyalty distinguished Nawrūz from other kinds of rebellious commanders, such as Buqa, who worked solely for themselves, earning Qazvīnī's condemnation: 'He had no courtesy for anyone, and to him a man was less than a fly.' In Qazvīnī's estimation: 'That amir [Buqa] attributed his fortune to his bravery; he did not acknowledge that it came from God.'¹¹⁹ By contrast, Nawrūz was a model of piety and virtue: 'Nawrūz of pure faith, a thousand praises upon him, was responsible for the *farr* of Ghazan adorning the Muslim religion, at this time.'¹²⁰

Nawrūz's character was such that he would even seek to keep his promises to his enemies. Qazvīnī recalled that Nawrūz was apprehended by the pretender Baidu and was only able to secure his release by promising to send him Ghazan in chains. Baidu fell for the charade and Nawrūz returned to his true master. The same story was told by Rashīd al-Dīn to demonstrate Nawrūz's cunning, but it was used by Qazvīnī to display Nawrūz's sincerity and chivalry: 'he did not wish to be considered as having committed a sin, nor did that pure man wish to be despised for breaking his oath' so he sent Baidu a pot (*ghazghān*) in chains in order to fulfil his earlier promise.¹²¹ Even Ghazan himself could not help praising Nawrūz in the *Ẓafarnāmah*, saying: 'There is no one braver than you. You are the defender of the kingdom and the support of the army, and you have given me crown and throne. May you always be happy and your authority increase, and may evildoers always be far from you.'¹²² Neither Rashīd al-Dīn nor Kāshānī had ever doubted the utility of Nawrūz to Ghazan's cause but, in the *Ẓafarnāmah*, success was inextricably tied to him: 'Victory spoke to Nawrūz and said "I will be your guide on the battlefield. Since empire has chosen its place on your left, fortune will appear on the right. Good luck will be the advance guard before the army".'¹²³

Like the earlier authors, Qazvīnī and Tabrizī were in no doubt that Nawrūz was not guilty of the charges of treason that were levelled against him. Yet, unlike Rashīd al-Dīn, neither had a vendetta against Ṣadr al-Dīn Zanjānī, so Aḥmad Tabrizī opted to omit Zanjānī's conspiracy from his story entirely, while Qazvīnī included a spirited defence of Zanjānī's character and blamed any animosity between the two on Nawrūz. He claimed that Nawrūz had conceived a dislike for the vizier that caused the latter to

¹¹⁶ Qazvīnī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, II, p. 1355; Ward, 'The Ẓafar-nāmah', III, p. 400.

¹¹⁷ Qazvīnī, *ZS*, X, p. 152; Ward, 'The Ẓafar-nāmah', II, p. 313.

¹¹⁸ Qazvīnī, *ZS*, X, p. 245; Ward, 'The Ẓafar-nāmah', II, p. 372.

¹¹⁹ Qazvīnī, *ZS*, X, p. 166; Ward, 'The Ẓafar-nāmah', II, p. 322.

¹²⁰ Qazvīnī, *ZS*, X, p. 261; Ward, 'The Ẓafar-nāmah', II, p. 382.

¹²¹ Qazvīnī, *ZS*, X, p. 255; Ward, 'The Ẓafar-nāmah', II, p. 378.

¹²² Qazvīnī, *ZS*, X, p. 254; Ward, 'The Ẓafar-nāmah', II, p. 377.

¹²³ Qazvīnī, *ZS*, X, p. 269; Ward, 'The Ẓafar-nāmah', II, p. 387.

fear for his life. Under such circumstances, Qazvīnī argued that ‘it was not unwise to use deceit to avert evil’. In fact, he claimed that ‘if by that means, one found escape from perdition, it was acceptable, even if that duplicity was the result of fear’.¹²⁴ In any case, Qazvīnī argued that Ghazan ‘no longer liked Nawrūz’ by the time Zanjānī had concocted his plan, so his lies were hardly to blame for Nawrūz’s downfall. Moreover, the mutual antipathy between Zanjānī and Nawrūz did not reflect negatively on Nawrūz. On the contrary, he described Zanjānī’s campaign against Nawrūz as a ‘shameful mission’ and professed that ‘he [Nawrūz] was innocent in this matter’.¹²⁵ Having committed no crime, Nawrūz was ‘astonished’ at the charges and noted that Ghazan ‘had no justification for seeking to harm me’.¹²⁶ Under these circumstances, the only pretext for Nawrūz’s execution was his refusal to come to court because of the illness of his wife, which both Tabrīzī and Qazvīnī agreed had caused great antipathy between the khan and his commander.

In the absence of any clear guilt or even excessive pride on the part of Nawrūz, his demise was treated as a tragedy. Both Qazvīnī and Tabrīzī were perplexed and fascinated by the story of Nawrūz, who had earned Ghazan’s wrath, despite his professed devotion to his master. This contradiction caused Qazvīnī to lament: ‘No one in the world knows why you were killed, and hearts shed much blood for your pain’ and ‘Your fate is not caused by love or by hatred, but I do not know why the world is so. You have no shame as a result of evil actions, and no one has seen in you a soft disposition’.¹²⁷ Tabrīzī, who was less inclined to be charitable to Nawrūz, simply lamented the fickle nature of fate, observing that ‘there never was a person [who was] perpetually triumphant; what a hidden thing the work of the world is! Those who know the world do not count on it’.¹²⁸ Fate could be cruel and those who read the verse histories of Qazvīnī and Tabrīzī no doubt sympathised with Nawrūz’s plight, as they suffered the loss of their own livelihoods to the seemingly endless bickering of warlords and princes.

A paragon of loyal service

By the middle of the fourteenth century, the commanders’ takeover was complete and the former Ilkhanate was ruled by a constellation of dynasties that were descended from Abū Sa’īd’s former courtiers. Azerbaijan fell to the Chobanids, Fars and Kirman came under the control of the Injuīds (former managers of the Ilkhans’ crown-land, i.e. *emchū*), and Baghdad passed under the control of Aḥmad Tabrīzī’s former patron Ḥasan Buzurg and his Chobanid wife Dilshād Khatun. In 1361, their son Shaykh Uways conquered Azerbaijan to reconstitute the core territories of the former Ilkhanate under the Jalayirid Dynasty (1335–1411). This triumph coincided with the dedication of a new verse history to Shaykh Uways, based upon the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak*. The author—a physician by the name of Nūr al-Dīn ‘Nūrī’ Azhdarī—stated that his father had been a secretary in the service of Ghazan. He successfully cured Uways of a mysterious disease and, by way of reward, was given a stipend of 100,000 dinars, which he claimed was first bestowed on his family by Ghazan Khan himself. Nūrī therefore titled his history the *Ghāzānnāmāh* and dedicated it to Uways in gratitude.

The text was probably well received, as Shaykh Uways had a fascination with all things related to Ghazan. Another contemporary of Uways, Muḥammad Nakhjivānī, likewise copied many of the wise sayings that were attributed to the Ilkhan by Rashīd al-Dīn in his

¹²⁴ Qazvīnī, *Ẓafarnāmāh*, II, p. 1358; Ward, ‘The Ẓafar-nāmāh’, II, p. 408.

¹²⁵ Qazvīnī, *Ẓafarnāmāh*, II, p. 1359; Ward, ‘The Ẓafar-nāmāh’, II, p. 409.

¹²⁶ Qazvīnī, *Ẓafarnāmāh*, II, p. 1361; Ward, ‘The Ẓafar-nāmāh’, II, p. 414.

¹²⁷ Qazvīnī, *Ẓafarnāmāh*, II, pp. 1364–1365; Ward, ‘The Ẓafar-nāmāh’, II, p. 421.

¹²⁸ Tabrīzī, *Shāhanshāhnāmāh*, p. 713.

manual on chancellery style entitled the *Dastūr al-Kātib*. The Jalayirid Dynasty were of Mongol stock and still had to operate within the political parameters that were left behind by Ghazan and his successors. Highlighting their long-standing connection to the most famous Ilkhan after their recapture of Tabriz could only enhance their claim to power. The story of Nawrūz was an important component of this strategy, highlighting the contribution made by pious, brave, and loyal commanders to the golden age of Mongol rule that the Jalayirids hoped to revive.

There was to be no ambivalence in Nūrī's portrayal of Nawrūz, who remained a faithful servant to God and his khan. The *Ghāzānnāmāh* goes further than any of the other verse histories in exonerating Nawrūz. Following the example of Qazvīnī, Nūrī all but denied the fact that Nawrūz had ever rebelled against Arghun, claiming that the rebellion had in fact been the work of Buqa, '[the] commander of that country', and Nawrūz had simply been sent to quell the unrest.¹²⁹ His absence from Arghun's court in Azerbaijan had allowed envious rivals to slander him and Nūrī blamed an unnamed villain 'with one crippled leg' who soon 'entrusted his soul to hell' for convincing Arghun of Nawrūz's disloyalty.¹³⁰ This entirely confected introduction to Nawrūz was followed by genuine passages from the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak* that portrayed him in a more favourable light. Nūrī compared Nawrūz to the Wolf of Yūsuf, which had falsely been accused of attacking the Islamic prophet by his treacherous brothers, who had thrown him in a well and left him for dead.¹³¹ He also had Nawrūz sum up his position by telling the story of the fox who was seen fleeing in panic through a forest. When he was asked why he was running away, the fox stated that he was in flight because the king was hunting onagers. It was pointed out that the fox was not an onager, so he had nothing to fear, but the clever fox responded that he would only consider himself safe if someone reassured him that the king knew the difference between foxes and onagers.¹³² By recasting and rearranging sections of Rashīd al-Dīn's narrative, Nūrī portrayed Nawrūz as the innocent victim of a horrible misunderstanding.

Like Qazvīnī, Nūrī emphasised the deplorable nature of Nawrūz's demise by comparing him to other tragic figures from Iranian literature. One such comparison was with Bīzhan—a Persian prince who had been lured to Tūrān (Turkistan and East Asia) by promises of a beautiful garden, but had been imprisoned after falling in love with the king of Tūrān's daughter.¹³³ An even more apt comparison was made to Siyāvash—one of the famous heroes of the *Shāhnāmāh*. Siyāvash, the prince of Iran, had been forced to flee after his mother-in-law Sūdābah made romantic advances towards him. Siyāvash turned back these advances out of sincere loyalty to his father, but Sūdābah took revenge by confecting allegations of treason against him. Siyāvash was forced to flee and was sadly killed before his innocence could be proven. The clear implication was that Nawrūz, like Siyāvash, was innocent of all the charges that were levelled against him by Zanjānī and that his death was a sad chapter in Ilkhanid history.

Nawrūz's reputation was further enhanced by oblique comparisons to other heroes from Iranian literature, which solidified his reputation for justice and piety. He was, for example, often compared to Rustam for his purity and martial heroism.¹³⁴ Rustam was also a hero of the eastern Iranian world, where he ruled Nīmruz (i.e. Sistan). Indeed, Nūrī went so far as to refer to Nawrūz as the 'commander of Nimruz' (*farmāndah-i Nīmruz*) to ram home the comparison.¹³⁵ Although of royal descent, Rustam did not

¹²⁹ Nūrī, *Ghāzānnāmāh*, p. 43.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 106, 219.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 93.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

become shāh, but he held the eastern marches of Iran as a semi-independent principality, guarding the frontiers against Tūrānīan (i.e. Turkish) invasions. He presented a useful parallel to Nawrūz, whose power and prestige rivalled, and perhaps sometimes eclipsed, those of his monarch, without implicating him in disloyal behaviour. On the contrary, like Rustam, Nawrūz was a valuable pillar of Ghazan's realm. His victory on behalf of Ghazan over Baidu was, after all, the reason that Ghazan was able to take the throne. Nūrī compared this success to the victory of Rustam over Afrāsiyāb, the king of Tūrān—the Iranians' traditional enemy.¹³⁶ Thereafter, he remained in his home of Nīmruz, where he served his king faithfully.

Comparisons with heroes of the Iranian *Shāhnāmāh* tradition helped Nūrī to build a profile of Nawrūz's character, but he was far more famous for his championing of Islam. Hence, Nūrī also compared Nawrūz to Abū Muslim (d. 755), the hero of the 'Abbasid Revolution, which led to the imposition of the 'Abbasid caliphate (750–1258).¹³⁷ Although the 'Abbasids had been deposed by the Mongols, several of their leaders remained archetypes of pious kingship and were celebrated in some of the other verse histories and mirrors for princes literature of the late Ilkhanate.¹³⁸ Abū Muslim also continued to be regarded as a native hero to Muslims in Khurasan. He was invoked by Nūrī alongside Nawrūz to highlight the latter's 'good faith and purity'. Nawrūz even assumed some of the outward accoutrements of the pious hero, with Nūrī's referring to him as the 'black-robed one' and 'Nawrūz Ghāzī'.¹³⁹ This vague reference to Abū Muslim and the 'Abbasid Revolution had earlier been hinted at by Vaṣṣāf-i Ḥaḍrat, whose work had likely been consulted by some of the earlier verse histories, and almost certainly by Nūrī, who lifted other sections of his work from the same author.¹⁴⁰ Just as Abū Muslim had brought the 'Abbasids to power, so too had Nawrūz been responsible for leading Ghazan's armies to victory over Baidu, thus ushering in a new age of Islamic rule in the Mongol empire. Nawrūz was, after all, one of the chief agents for the promulgation of Islam in Nūrī's story. Not only did he affirm that Nawrūz was responsible for commending Islam to Ghazan, but he also burned the pagan, Christian, and Jewish centres of worship upon his capture of Tabriz in 1295 until 'no call of the cross or the clapper remained; no sorrow for the faith of Islam remained'.¹⁴¹ There was certainly a close association between Nawrūz's success and the victory of Islam. Nūrī claimed that Nawrūz had worked to rid the kingdom of false religions so that 'no repute was left to Zardusht in the world'.¹⁴² The combination of piety and patriotism further reinforced the tragic nature of Nawrūz's demise.

The *Ghāzānāmāh* was easily the most critical of Ghazan's actions out of any of the verse histories. Not only did Nūrī defend Nawrūz, but he even suggested that the khan made a mistake in attacking his loyal commander. Such an accusation would have been unthinkable for the earlier authors, such as Kāshānī and Rashīd al-Dīn, who endeavoured to reinforce the authority of the khan in the face of disloyal commanders. Yet, with the

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 219.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹³⁸ Ibn al-Ṭīqṭaqā, *Al-Fakhri: On the Systems of Government and the Moslem Dynasties*, Composed by Muḥammad Son of 'Alī Son of Tabataba, Known as the Rapid Talker, May God Have Mercy on Him, (trans.) C. E. J. Whitting (London, 1947); Zajjājī, *Tārīkh-i Manzūm*.

¹³⁹ Nūrī, *Ghāzānāmāh*, pp. 122, 219.

¹⁴⁰ His account of Nawrūz's conflict with Arghun references the fact that Nawrūz began to write proclamations in the name of two other princes, which he signed 'Nawrūz yarlighindin' (Nawrūz orders that ...). This appears to be a transcription of a similar passage in Vaṣṣāf's account of Nawrūz's revolt against Arghun, which has the proclamations read 'Nawrūz sözinden'. Vaṣṣāf-i al-Ḥaḍrat, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, p. 315; Nūrī, *Ghāzānāmāh*, p. 45.

¹⁴¹ Nūrī, *Ghāzānāmāh*, p. 126.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 186.

collapse of Ghazan's dynasty, Nūrī could be a little more bold. Like Rashīd al-Dīn and Kāshānī, Nūrī blamed Nawrūz's downfall on the machinations of Ṣadr al-Dīn Zanjānī, whom he accused of forging six letters to implicate Nawrūz in a conspiracy against Ghazan. Yet, he stressed that the final order for Nawrūz's execution came from Ghazan, who had been in the wrong (*nikūhīdah*).¹⁴³ Nūrī prayed that future monarchs would take the tale of Nawrūz as a warning to be aware of all that is good and bad in their realm.¹⁴⁴ Nūrī's story even has Ghazan's showing signs of contrition for his error. Following the execution of Nawrūz, Nūrī claimed that Ghazan had a dream in which he suffered from terrible thirst. He searched for water and found a fountain, only to discover that it was completely dry. He then heard a voice which told him that he should not search for water in that place and that a malevolent spirit (*dīv*) had misled him. The voice claimed that Nawrūz had also been led to that place, where he had died as an innocent. Ghazan suddenly awoke from his nightmare and knew that he was in the wrong, but Nūrī lamented: 'what use is it to regret an action [that has] been taken.'¹⁴⁵ Ghazan had clearly been misled by malicious actors in his court.

The *Ghāzānnāmah* is not, however, a condemnation of Ghazan, whom the author identifies as a model for his own master, Shaykh Uways. Rather, the *Ghāzānnāmah* saw the apotheosis of Ghazan to the pantheon of great Iranian kings. This was most likely the role that Rashīd al-Dīn had always envisioned for him—joining figures such as Jamshīd, Alexander (Iskandar), Anūshīrvān, and Maḥmūd of Ghaznah as staples of the mirror for the princes genre.¹⁴⁶ These archetypal rulers were not perfect, but they did not have to be. The episodes of their life, both good and bad, were treated as a source of wisdom and instruction for future kings. Alexander had conquered the world, only to discover that it was transient and that the greatest attainment of life would be the immortality of salvation and a good name. Anūshīrvān, similarly, had built a tremendous reputation as a just and equitable ruler, albeit he had failed to attain the truth of Islam.¹⁴⁷ Unlike these pre-Islamic kings, Ghazan had achieved the felicity of Islam, but this did not render him infallible.

The same was true of Nawrūz. Although Nūrī championed Nawrūz's innocence, he also noted that his continued resistance, first to Arghun and then to Ghazan, had caused him to 'burn everything like wind and fire'.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Nawrūz and his family had been left miserable, deprived of all their connections and filled with regret.¹⁴⁹ Nūrī had Nawrūz's wife Princess Toghan explain the circumstances to her husband, noting that 'greatness is not from arms or might. Those that God Almighty created—those who behold Him with contempt—will eventually [be rendered low] like dust on the road'.¹⁵⁰ She advised Nawrūz to return to obedience and submit to Ghazan. These sentiments were clearly those of Nūrī himself, who advised that '[t]he shah is the shadow of the Creator; there is no turning away from his path'.¹⁵¹ There could only be one ruler in order for justice and piety to prevail and therein lay the true tragedy of Nawrūz's story. He had not been a bad bondsman (*bandah*) or a faithless rebel—he simply could not be allowed to rival his khan's authority.

Iranian allegories in Persian literature can be highly complex, with multiple layers of meaning, and so too was the story of Nawrūz. He served as the model of a good leader, exemplifying pious and chivalrous service to God and his people. Yet, these same virtues

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹⁴⁶ Kamola, *Making Mongol History*, p. 173.

¹⁴⁷ Kāshānī, *Shāhnāmah*, p. 436.

¹⁴⁸ Nūrī, *Ghāzānnāmah*, p. 55.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 62.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

rendered him a source of danger. One particular episode highlighted the reason why Nūrī believed Nawrūz had to be killed. Nūrī reported that, even after his conversion to Islam, Ghazan had been willing to provide some charity to Buddhists who had been left helpless by the persecutions of Nawrūz. He stated that Ghazan intentionally tried to keep these payments a secret from Nawrūz, knowing that he was a firm defender of Islam. Yet, one of his servants surreptitiously informed Nawrūz of what had happened and the commander chastised Ghazan, ‘warning him not to divert from the road of justice and faith. He said that it was not noble to break one’s oaths’. Ghazan promptly found the servant and asked him why he had informed Nawrūz of the payments to the Buddhists. The servant responded that he was fearful of the wrath of Nawrūz if he had not. Ghazan decried the servant’s actions as a serious crime, warning those present to ‘fear the person who has no fear of the shāh’ for he would be a source of upheaval.¹⁵² At this time, Nūrī claimed that Ṣadr al-Dīn Zanjānī began to plot against Nawrūz, with Ghazan’s tacit consent. He went on to note that, ‘[even] if a commander becomes the shāh of the country, he will [still] not be equal to the shāh’.¹⁵³ Unlike Qazvīnī or Tabrīzī, Nūrī had a very clear sense of where the centre of power was in his realm and, while it did not lie with the descendants of Ghazan, he was unwilling to compromise his position with Shaykh Uways by suggesting that commanders could rival their king’s prestige.

Conclusion

The story of Nawrūz is a curious chapter in the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak*. Nawrūz played a leading role in the elevation of Ghazan Khan to the throne, while also becoming one of his most deadly enemies. During Rashīd al-Dīn’s own lifetime, the story of Nawrūz became an allegory for the danger that overmighty commanders posed to the throne. Yet, these warnings were not heeded and the power of the Mongol commanders continued to grow during the reigns of Öljeitü and Abū Sa’īd, forcing writers such as Mustawfī Qazvīnī and Aḥmad Tabrīzī to afford them greater space in their histories, and even to celebrate the virtues of men such as Nawrūz, whom they hoped others would emulate. By the middle of the fourteenth century, these commanders had entrenched themselves and formed new dynasties, which allowed the likes of Nūrī Azhdarī to once again affirm the need for an absolute ruler to bring order to the world.

Yet, the fact that the story of Nawrūz and Ghazan was used as a medium through which to explore changing attitudes to political loyalty, religious piety, and heroic chivalry suggests that the dynastic crisis of the fourteenth century did not completely undermine the social and political order of the Ilkhanate. Each of the authors mentioned in this study endeavoured to show continuity with Ghazan, Nawrūz, and the court culture that they had embodied. The commanders had a shared history with the Chinggisids and it would have been problematic and costly to jettison their legacy entirely. Rather, subtle modifications were made to the original narrative of Rashīd al-Dīn, reflecting the enhanced power of individual commanders during the final years of Abū Sa’īd’s rule. Decades would pass before the newly empowered commanders and their dynasties—the Jalayirids, Sutayids, Chobanids, and later Timurids—were willing to forge a new path for themselves.

Conflicts of interest. None.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 177–178.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

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